

DML970: Preaching the Psalms

Bellinger Book Review

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Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises provides a helpful framework for studying the Psalter. The interpretive questions help unpack the context of the psalm while at the same time drawing one into the perspective of the psalmist and the psalm's place in the Psalter. Though I did research for my first sermon for this class, I failed to approach the Psalter from the perspective of the psalmist and incorrectly read my personal perspective from 2023 into my text. Studying type/structure, use of psalm, community shaping, and language better connects me with the intent of the psalmist and the place of the psalm in the larger Psalter. Attention to each of these details will help future teaching/preaching of the Psalter be more biblically aligned.

Chapter 1 - Getting Started

The author provided an overview of the organization of the Psalter.

- Setting of the Psalter - "A socio-historical setting in the ancient Near East and reflect Israel's encounter with God in that setting (p. 6)"
- Shape of the Psalter - title, structure, superscriptions, and collections
- Poetry of the Psalter - "thought rhyme and its parallelism is the primary characteristic" (p. 14)

Chapter 2 - Lessons from the Past

This chapter introduced foundational voices on how best to research/study the worship and literary context of the psalms (p. 41-42).

Hermann Gunkel did significant foundational research for the question: ***What is the type and structure of the psalm*** (p. 24)?

- Praise (Psalm 100); Lament (Psalm 6); Royal Psalms (Psalm 101); Wisdom Psalms (Psalm 1)

Sigmund Mowinckel's research led to the next analysis question: ***How was this psalm used in worship*** (p. 26)? The research of Brevard Childs and others led to the analysis question: ***How***

has the community shaped the psalm (p. 31)? To better understand the concept of community shaping one needs to examine (p. 28-30):

1. Community emphasis
2. Influence from exile
3. Hope for the future
4. The language of the Psalter
5. Superscriptions
6. The organization of the Psalter

Chapter 3 - Reading the Psalms

This chapter was an examination of the rhetoric of the Psalms and provided the final analysis question: ***How does the psalm use language*** (p. 41)? Embedded in this one question are the following three examinations (p. 37):

1. How does the psalm use divine names?
2. What words or phrases (or synonyms) does the psalm repeat?
3. How does the text use quote “loaded” terms such as “justice, righteousness, steadfast love?” Loaded terms carry special significance for the tradition of ancient Israel’s faith.
4. What figures of speech (metaphors, images) does the psalm incorporate?

Examples: Parallel structures (Psalm 103); Petitions (Psalm 86); Contrast (Psalm 1)

Types of Psalms

Chapters four through seven each unpack a specific type of psalm.

Chapter 4 - Laments: Out of the Depths

Setting: Some form of crisis

Structure: Community & Individual - Invocation, Complaint, Petition Conclusion

Examples: Psalms – 6, 13, 102, 6, 26, 64, 12

Chapter 5 - Psalms of Praise: Enthroned on the Praises of Israel

Setting: “Joy of God’s presence” (p. 74)

Structure: Declarative (Introduction, Narrative, Conclusion) & Descriptive (Introduction, Body, Conclusion)

Examples: Psalms - 100, 46, 23

Chapter 6 - Royal Psalms: A Covenant with My Chosen One, David My Servant

Setting: “Different settings in the life of the Jerusalem king” (p. 107)

Structure: Lament, thanksgiving, prayers for battle and wedding

Examples: Psalms - 2, 101, 132

Chapter 7 - Wisdom Psalms: I will Instruct You

Setting: “Instructs and encourages wisdom and righteousness” (p. 129)

Structure: Fear of Yahweh, love of torah, contrast righteous and wicked, instruction in daily living (p. 125-126)

Examples: Psalms – 1, 37, 49, 112, 73, 32, 37, 78, 133, 119

Chapter 8 - The Psalms and Faith

The concluding chapter presents eight theological themes from the Psalter.

1. Honest Dialogue of Faith (Psalm 1)
2. Worship (Psalms – 46, 48, 15, 24)
3. Praise (Psalms – 98, 150, 117, 122, 134)
4. Pain (Psalms – 88, 7, 109, 27, 22)
5. Hope (Psalms – 130, 57, 61, 8, 139)
6. Justice (Psalms – 17, 26, 74, 72)
7. Community (Psalms – 1, 2, 12, 14, 133)
8. Providence (Psalms - 20, 21, 67, 124, 126, 136)

Reference

Bellinger, W.H. (1990). *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises*. Hendrickson Publishers.