

Assignment 3 – Book Review

DML970: Preaching Psalms – Spring 2023

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Assignment 3: Book Review - Bellinger, Reading and Studying the Book of Praises

Bellinger, W.H. Jr. (Kindle Edition) *Psalms: A Guide to Studying the Psalter*.
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.

THE SAME AS:

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

3) Write a 3-page book review for Bellinger, Reading and Studying the Book of Praises. Be sure to include a summary of the chapters, examples he cites, and how the book might aid in your sermon preparation.

Summary of the Text

Biblically and theologically, Bellinger organized this text (Bellinger, 1990/2012-Kindle Version) into eight chapters as “A Guide to Studying the Psalter”. The first three chapters: **Getting Started; Lessons from the Past & Reading the Psalms** are to introduce us his interpretive method; then by chapter 4-7 to cover four major psalm types: **Laments, Praise, Royal & Wisdom Psalms**; and finally with a concluding chapter 8, **The Psalms and Faith** to describe *Nine Theological Themes (The Honest Dialogue of Faith, The Reign of God, Worship, Praise, Pain, Hope, Justice, Community & Providence)* in the Psalter related to our life of faith!

In Chapter 1 Getting Started. Bellinger reminds us that the Psalms have greatly affected the community of faith and so to developing and applying a method in studying psalm must discover their historical impact and their relevance for contemporary life by three introductory matters: *1. Setting (framework and the setting of OT occurred); 2. Shape (title, structure, superscriptions, & collections of the book of Psalms); 3. Poetry (poetic quality of the texts, like Parallelism).*

In Chapter 2, Lessons from the Past. Firstly, Bellinger makes a concise review on Early Psalm Study by mostly and narrowly focused of Personal/Historical Method, and concerning Dating the Psalms. Then from a new beginning in psalm scholarship in 20th century, Hermann Gunkel explored a more objective, clear, and logical method in approaching and studying Psalm. Gunkel discovered *Five Major Psalm Types (Hymns, Community laments, Individual laments, Individual psalms of thanksgiving & Royal psalms)* and *Seven Distinctive Minor Types (Pilgrimage songs, Community psalms of thanksgiving, Wisdom psalms, General liturgies, Prophetic liturgies, Torah liturgies & Mixed types)*. By this insight to cover the Book of Psalms, Bellinger pursues and discusses into detail by chapters 4-7 in a classification of the

Four Psalm Types: *I. Praise, II. Lament (Individual & Community Psalms), III. Royal & IV. Wisdom psalms*. Also, Bellinger summarized the approach from Walter Brueggemann, classifying the Psalms with the categories of orientation (e.g., Psalm 1), disorientation (laments, discussed detail in chapter 4), and new orientation (expression in thanksgiving psalms and some hymns remembers the doubt but focuses on a new depth of life found in the struggle). Additional to the works of Mowinckel, and Childs/Wilson, this chapter, relating more to the cultural or sociohistorical context, has raised three issues in studying psalms: type/structure, use in worship, and shape/shaping.

In Chapter 3, Reading the Psalms. In combining the above efforts in Literary Study of the Psalter, Bellinger leads us into Rhetorical Analysis (e.g., divine names, repeating, loaded terms, figures of speech) that enables the readers of Psalms to move beyond questions of origin. With that, the four questions are prompted when examining and interpreting a psalm: *1. What is the type/structure of the psalm? 2. How was the psalm used in worship? 3. In what context does the psalm occur in the book of Psalms? 4. How does the psalm use language specifically, parallelism, divine names, repetition, loaded terms, figures of speech?*

Reflection by Cited Examples

My Takeaway from chapter 1-3. I thank God that Bellinger brings me into a broader and deeper approaches in general by using four analytical aspects: *1. Type/Structure; 2. Setting/Use in Worship; 3. Shaping; 4. Rhetoric*, to read, interpret and apply the four Psalm classification discussed in chapter 4-7. Take my assignment 1 of Psalm 121, required in this course as an example. By again viewing back my previous work as sermon preparation on this particular Psalm, I almost missed totally the coverage work on the setting, shaping and rhetoric, resulting that my sermon not only disgraced the original text interpretation and insight, but also

to side-track my focus on this psalm into other not so correlated passages in relating to my main message topic: The Lord is Your Keeper!

My Selected takeaway from chapter 4-7 & 8. Firstly, I appreciate much that Bellinger takes four worked examples (Psalms 6, 26, 64, 12) in chapter 4, Psalms of Laments by going through the same analytical process, *1. Type/structure; 2. Use in Worship; 3. Shaping; 4. Rhetoric.* By this, I trust the Lord that this definitely assists me in preparing the sermon on all Psalms of Laments, classified by Bellinger: *Individual psalms: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9-10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42-43, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 77, 86, 88, 94, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140, 141, 142, 143; Community psalms: 12, 14, 44, 53, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 106, 108, 123, 126, 137.* (Verifying that I am convicted my short sermonette assignment on Psalm 137 also missing crucial pieces as an anointing sermon.) Secondly, by handling the same four issues in studying the Royal psalms (*2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144*): *type/structure, setting, shaping & rhetoric*, Bellinger acquires three worked examples (Psalm 2, 101, 132) presented in chapter 6. In preparing my last assignment on Psalm 2, I find a great insight as to preach this sermon: *“this psalm would declare God’s commitment to the monarch and God’ guarantee of the Davidic rule... The conclusion of Psalm 2 calls nations to make the wise decision for life found with Yahweh... that it has a broader application to the life of faith, wherein God’s response to rebellion is firm! the Davidic choice and covenant stand... then this Palm calls nations to the reality that Yahweh, with Yahweh’s Davidic Representative, is the authoritative giver of life.”* Lastly, I resonate the concluding reflection by Bellinger in chapter 8: *“The Psalms relate to all of life... the Psalms function as pilgrimage songs of faith from the depths of human experience...”* I trust that the Psalters’ life of faith ensures my sermon delivery into a world full of the divine gift of life!