

Mythbusting the Psalms

What you thought you knew about the Book of Psalm;
developed from 2016 Florida College lectures by Tom Hamilton
“Five Well-Known (But False) Facts About the Psalms” and
David McClister “Literary Structures in the Psalms”

Do You Really Know The Psalms As Well As You Think You Do?

- “Psalms has the longest chapter in the Bible; it has 176 verses.”
- Psalm 119 is not the longest chapter in the Bible if you count words and not verses.

Do You Really Know The Psalms As Well As You Think You Do?

- Stephen Langton divided the Bible into chapters in the year A.D. 1227. Langton was a professor at the University of Paris and later he became the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Robert Stephanus, a French printer, divided the verses for his Greek New Testament. It was published in 1551.
- The first entire Bible in which chapter and verse divisions were used was Stephanus' edition of the Latin Vulgate (1555).
- The first English New Testament to have both chapter and verse divisions was the Geneva Bible (1560).

Do You Really Know The Psalms As Well As You Think You Do?

- So by word count, what is the longest chapter in the Bible?
 - Deuteronomy 28 - 1409 words
 - Numbers 7 - 1373 words
 - Leviticus 13 - 1347 words
 - Psalm 119 - 1340 words
 - Luke 1 - 1186 words
 - Jeremiah 51 - 1185 words

Do You Really Know The Psalms As Well As You Think You Do?

- “Psalms is the longest book in the Bible; it has 150 chapters.”
- The Book of Psalm is not the longest book of the Bible if you count words and not chapters
 - Jeremiah - 30,264 words
 - Genesis - 28,865 words
 - Ezekiel - 26,621 words
 - Exodus - 23,937 words
 - Numbers - 23,374 words
 - Psalms - 25,476 words
 - Isaiah - 23,247 words

Do You Really Know The Psalms As Well As You Think You Do?

- “The Psalms were written for reading.”
- Psalms written for hearers, not readers, to be heard more than read
 - Very few people in Bible times could read
 - Very few copies of the written scriptures were made

Do You Really Know The Psalms As Well As You Think You Do?

- Rev. 1:3 - “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it”
- Soferim 11:2 (Talmud, p. 218): “A town in which there is only one who reads; he stands up, reads (the Torah), and sits down, he stands up, reads and sits down, even seven times.”
- “In rural farmlands, 1% could read; in towns, 5%; and in cities, 15%.” (*“Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries AD”* by Meir Barilan)

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- Some mistakenly think the Psalms are mostly for devotion and that they only incidentally communicate doctrine.
- The Psalms are intended to be more doctrinal than devotional; they are not merely the song book of Israel.
- We err when we try to separate doctrine from devotion or to remove devotion from doctrine

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- The Psalms are not about what the writers say to God, but what God had already said to humankind.
- The Psalms are designed for teaching, just as our hymns are for instruction
 - Col. 3:16 - “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- The Psalms were one third of the scriptures used by the first century Christians
 - Heb. 8:5 - “Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”
 - Heb. 9:23 - “Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”
 - 1Cor. 10:6 - “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- Luke 24:44-49 - “Then He said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- The Psalms teach and establish authority by the same means as the doctrine of Christ in the NT
 - Explicit statement
 - Divinely approved example
 - Divine implication

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- 1Tim. 3:14-17 - “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- Matt. 5:17-18 - “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”
- Gal. 3:8 - “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed.”
- The Psalms teach us that some things are right or wrong and have always been right or wrong regardless of the dispensation and covenant.

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:14-15 do not void the authority of the Psalms; they only speak to the Divinely imposed and revealed limits on Psalms and all other OT texts
 - Col. 2:14 - “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”
 - Eph. 2:14-15 - “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- We must learn to distinguish between the Old Testament and the Old Covenant
 - Rom. 15:4 - “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”
 - 2Tim. 3:15 - “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- The Old Testament argues for the end of the Old Covenant
 - Ex. 34:35 - “And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- Jer. 31:31-34 - “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- Zech. 8:8 - "I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness."
- Isa. 54:13 - "All your children shall be taught by the LORD, And great shall be the peace of your children."
- 2Cor. 3:7-18

The Psalms Were Written Above All To Teach Doctrine

- The purpose of the Psalms is summed up in teaching man about himself and His God
 - Psalm 39:4-8 - “LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. 5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Selah 6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them. 7 And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.”