

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today we introduce the book of PSALMS - PART 2. We will learn about the poetic nature of the book of Psalms, its message about the Messiah and its practical use for Christians today.

POINT 5. THE POETIC NATURE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

First. Parallelism.

The main feature of Hebrew poetry is called *parallelism* and consists of a correspondence of thought between the first and the second line of a verse. Hebrew poetry is written in couplets, usually consisting of two lines that are related to each other in some way. There are four kinds of parallelism:

One. There is the *repetition kind of parallelism* in which the two lines express the same or a similar thought, but in different words. The second line may help to determine the writer's intended meaning. For example, Psalm 32:2 says, "Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre." Here *praise* means to make music. Psalm 96:3 says, "Declare his glory among the nations; his marvellous deeds among all peoples." Here the Lord's *glory* is his marvellous deeds. Sometimes the first line is a *literal statement* and the second line is a *figurative statement*. For example, Psalm 42:1 says, "As the deer pants for the streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God". This is a simile. Or Psalm 46:11 says, "From the East I summon a bird of prey; from the far-off land, a man to fulfil my purpose". This is a metaphor. (Also Proverbs 1:22,30,31).

Two. There is the *progressive kind of parallelism* in which the second line adds an additional thought. Sometimes it may *express the reason* and begins with the word "for". For example, Psalm 9:10 says, "Those who know your name will trust in you, *for* you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you." And sometimes it may *express the purpose*, and begins with the word "so that". For example, Psalm 55:6 says, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, *so that* (in Hebrew) I would fly away and be at rest."

Three. There is the *antithetical kind of parallelism* in which the second line expresses a contrasting or even contradicting thought and begins with the word "but". For example, Psalm 1:6 says, "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, *but* the way of the wicked will perish." (Also Prov 15:1; Eccl 4:10; Jn 3:20-21; Phil 3:7-8).

Four. There is the *climatic kind of parallelism* in which the second line expands the effect of the first line. For example, Psalm 1:1-3 is a climatic statement consisting of three other climatic statements. In verse 1, the wicked action rises to a climax from "walking" to "standing" to "sitting". It says, "Blessed is the man who does not *walk* in the counsel of the wicked, or *stand* in the way of sinners or *sit* in the seat of mockers." In verse 2, the good action is expanded from "delighting in" to "meditating on" God's law. It says, "His *delight is in the law* of the Lord, and *on his law he meditates* day and night." In verse 3, the results are expanded from "fruit in season" to "everything he does". It says, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its *fruit in season* and whose leaf does not wither. *Whatever he does* prospers." The three verses together also form a climatic statement: Verse 1 says what you *should not do*. Verse 2 says what you *should do*. And verse 3 says what will be *the result*. (Also Isaiah 55:6-7).

Second. Hyperbolic language.

Hyperbolic language consists of exaggerated statements, which are not always meant to be taken literally. Poetry often expresses strong emotion in which the writers seem to use extravagant language to express their intense feeling. In the Psalms we have so-called "Imprecatory Psalms". They are *prayers that call down God's judgement*. For example, in Psalm 28:4-5, the writer saw that evil people showed no regard for the works of the Lord, that they secretly made evil plans against their neighbour and that they did evil, he prayed, "*Repay* them for ... their evil work; *repay* them for what their hands have done and *bring back upon them* what they deserve." When the writer of the Psalms saw gross injustice done to the weak and oppressed, he expressed his indignation at the injustice of the wicked people, at the immorality of the perverse people and at the oppression of people in authority. When he saw how wicked people used violence and strife to further their selfish plans, he prayed in Psalm 55:9, "Lord, *confuse* the wicked." When he heard how wicked people told lies, he prayed, "*Confound* their speech."

As long as the wicked continued to triumph and their prosperity seemed to refute the justice of God, the writer of the Psalms suffered deep affliction of his soul (Ps 73:2-16). The writer then identified himself with God and God's cause in this world, and therefore he could only regard God's enemies as his enemies too. He expressed his love for God as well as his deep concern for God's holiness, righteousness, truth and glory, by imploring God to uphold his holiness, righteousness, truth and glory by inflicting a crushing blow upon people who are unholy, unjust, liars and arrogant against God. The intense feelings in his prayers are expressed in violent language, like for example, that he "*hates* his enemies" (Ps 28:4-5; 83:1-3,15-18; 139:19-22). Behind these prayers, which call down the judgement of God, is the

writer's believe that God is the sovereign and moral ruler of the world. "Right" and "wrong" are very meaningful to God and therefore, besides "God's grace", "God's judgement" must operate in the moral world. Therefore he *prayed for evil people*, that they may turn from their evil to God and receive God's grace. However, if they refused to repent and continued with their evil, then he *prayed against evil people*, that God would intervene and stop them with his judgements.

Third. Imagery.

Imagery are figurative illustrations embellished with flowery language with the purpose to create a particular effect. For example, Psalm 104:2-4 describes the Lord's creation in beautiful language, saying, "The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants." (Also Job 38:31-35).

POINT 6. THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

First. The book of Psalms prophesies about the life of Christ.

In Luke 24:44, Jesus Christ himself gave us the warrant for looking for him in the book of the Psalms. He said, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." We find much about the life of Jesus in the Psalms:

One. The divine nature of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 102:25-27 (Heb 1:10-12), Psalm 8:5-6 (Heb 2:7-8) and Psalm 97:7 (Heb 1:6).

Two. The human nature of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 8:2-5 (Mt 21:15-16; Heb 2:6-7).

Three. The office of Jesus Christ as Prophet is prophesied in Psalm 22:22 (Heb 2:12).

Four. The office of Jesus Christ as Priest is prophesied in Psalm 40:6-8 (Heb 10:5-7), Psalm 49:7-8 (Mt 16:26), Psalm 22, Psalm 23 and Psalm 110:1 (Mt 22:44, Act 2:34; Heb 1:13).

Five. The office of Jesus Christ as King is prophesied in Psalm 2:7 (Mt 3:17, Act 13:33, Heb 1:5; 5:5; 7:28; 2 Pet 1:17), Psalm 24:7-10 (1 Cor 2:8), Psalm 45:6-7 (Heb 1:8-9) and Psalm 72:10-11 (Rev 21:24).

Six. The rejection of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 118:22-23 (Mt 21:42).

Seven. The betrayal of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 41:9 (Mt 26:23).

Eight. The sufferings of Jesus Christ are prophesied in Psalm 8:5 (Heb 2:9), Psalm 22, Psalm 31:5 (Lk 23:46), Psalm 69:4 (Jn 15:25), Psalm 69:9 (Jn 2:17) and Psalm 109:25 (Mt 27:39).

Nine. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 16:10 (Act 2:25-28; 13:55).

Ten. The ascension of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 68:18 (Eph 4:8).

Second. Psalm 22 prophesied in detail about the sufferings of Christ.

Psalm 22 is a prophetic picture of what happened at Calvary when Jesus Christ died for our sins. Verse 1 says that Jesus Christ experienced being forsaken by God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). Verse 6-7 says that he was despised and insulted by people (Mt 27:39; Lk 23:35-36). Verse 8 says that the people challenged him to save himself (Mt 27:39,41,43). Verse 12-13 says that he was surrounded by mocking soldiers and insulting robbers (Mt 27:27-31,36,44). Verse 14 says that the intense agony of his sufferings broke his heart (Jn 19:34-35). Verse 15 says that he suffered intense thirst (Ps 69:21; Jn 19:28-29). Verse 16 says that he was crucified. His hands and his feet were pierced by nails (Isa 53:5; Mt 27:35). And verse 18 says that soldiers divided his clothes by casting lots (Mt 27:35). All these prophecies were literally fulfilled.

Third. The Messianic Psalms 2, 22, 45, 72 and 110 prophesy the reign of the Messiah as King in his Kingdom.

Psalm 2 says that the Messiah will inherit all the nations on earth (8) and he will rule as King in God's kingdom with great authority (9-12). Psalm 22 says that he will rule over all the nations and all the families of the nations will bow down before him (27-28)(1 Cor 15:23-25; Phil 2:9-11). Psalm 45 says that he will rule with justice. He will love righteousness and hate wickedness. And his kingdom will last for ever and ever (6-7). Psalm 110 says that he will sit at God's right hand (1) and crush all the rulers on earth who remain enemies of God (6). Psalm 72 says that he will judge all people in righteousness (2), he will defend the afflicted, save the needy, crush the oppressor (4) and he will rule over the whole earth (8). All the kings will bow down before him and all the nations will serve him (11). But also all the nations will be blessed through him (17), because people in every nation of the world will believe in him and be saved! These Psalms not only point to the reign of Jesus Christ as King before his second coming, but also to his reign in the new heaven and on the new earth after his second coming.

POINT 7. THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

First. The book of Psalms occupied a very important place in the lives of Jesus and the apostles.

The book of Psalms was the book of prayers that Jesus would have used when he attended the services in the synagogue and the book of songs he would have sung during the festivals at Jerusalem. Jesus Christ used the book of Psalms in his teachings (Lk 20:42; 24:44) and he used the Psalms when he suffered on the cross (Mt 22). The book of Psalms was also an inspiration for the apostles when they were persecuted (Act 4:25-26). They too used the Psalms in their teaching

and preaching (Act 2:25-28; 13:33) and used it to set forth their profoundest beliefs concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 1:6,10-13; 2:6-8; 5:6; 10:5-7).

Second. The book of Psalms is a rich source of knowledge concerning God.

For example, Psalm 1 teaches that the God of the Bible watches over the way of the righteous (6). Psalm 2 teaches that the God of the Bible laughs at the kings and rulers of the earth who oppose him (2). Psalm 3 teaches that God is a shield around us (3). Psalm 4 teaches that God has set the righteous people apart for himself and that he will hear when they call to him (3). Psalm 5 teaches that God does not allow the wicked people to dwell with him, nor the arrogant people to stand in his presence. He hates all people who do wrong and he will destroy all who tell lies (4-6). Psalm 9 teaches that the God of the Bible will never forsake those who seek him and he will not ignore the cry of people who are afflicted (10,12). Psalm 10 teaches that God helps the fatherless and defends the oppressed (14,18). And Psalm 14 teaches that God is present in the company of the righteous people (5).

Third. The book of Psalms is a rich source for prayers.

In the Psalms, the biblical poets gave expression to their deepest feelings, emotions and experiences. They expressed sorrow or joy, fear or hope, bitter disappointment or glowing expectation and their puzzling questions or childlike trust in the Psalms. In the Psalms, they expressed their innermost thoughts, convictions and dedication, as they lifted up their hearts to God. Therefore, because we can identify ourselves with them, the Psalms can become the means by which we pray, worship, meditate or teach. The Psalms may be classified into several groups of prayers:

One. Psalms of repentance and forgiveness.

Psalm 32 is a prayer asking forgiveness. It says, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away ... Then I acknowledged my sin to you, ... and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (3,5). Psalm 51 is a prayer confessing sin. It says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. ... Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ... Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (1-4).

Two. Psalms of praise and thanksgiving:

Psalm 68 praises God for daily bearing our burdens (19). Psalm 103 praises God for all his many benefits. Psalm 145 is a prayer praising God's divine attributes, especially his greatness which no one can fathom (3).

Three. Psalms of worship and practising the presence of God.

Psalm 16 says "I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." Psalm 96 is a prayer worshipping and adoring God. It says, "Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth" (9).

Four. Psalms of expressing confidence and trust.

Psalm 18 says, "With your help, I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall. ... He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle" (29,33). Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness" (1-3).

Five. Psalms of dedication.

Psalm 101 says, "I will set before my eyes no vile thing. ... I will have nothing to do with evil men" (3-4).

Six. Psalms of petition.

Psalm 13 is a prayer in times of distress. David prays, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (1-2). Psalm 38 is a prayer pleading for God's intervention and deliverance in time of sickness.

Seven. Psalms of intercession.

Psalm 67 is a prayer for the nations, that they may know God's ways and salvation (2). The Imprecatory Psalms ask God to vindicate his holiness and righteousness against all those who continue to live in unholiness and unrighteousness. For example, Psalm 10 says, "Break the arm of the wicked and evil man; call him to account for his wickedness that would not be found out" (15).

Fourth. The book of Psalms is a rich source for instruction.

The Psalms may also be classified into several groups of instruction:

One. Psalms of instruction about God's word.

Psalm 19 teaches the nature of God's law and its effect on the obedient heart. It says that the words in the Bible are "perfect, reviving the soul". They are "trust-worthy, making wise the simple". They are "right, giving joy to the heart". They are radiant, giving light to the eyes" (7-8). Psalm 119 is a testimony of the effects of studying and practising

God's word. It says, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts" (97-100).

Two. Psalms of instruction about God's wisdom.

Psalm 37 teaches that it is wise to be patient when you see the wicked prosper. It says, "Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger ... do not fret - it only leads to evil. For evil men will be cut off" (7-8). Psalm 127 teaches that whatever is done without the Lord is in vain. It says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. ... In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat - for he grants sleep to those he loves" (1-2).

Three. Psalms of instruction about God's will.

Psalm 40 teaches that God does not desire animal sacrifices, but obedience to his will (6-8). Psalm 50 teaches that God does not desire animal sacrifices, but the bringing of thank offerings (12-14). Psalm 78 is a teaching about the need to pass God's truths on to the next generation. It says, "Tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done. ... Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his command" (4,7).

Four. Psalms of instruction about God's power.

Psalm 33 says that the Lord foils the plans of the nations, ... but the plans of the Lord stand firm forever" (10-11). Psalm 47 teaches that God reigns over the nations. ... The kings of the earth belong to him" (7-9). Psalm 104 is a teaching about God's providential care of people on earth. It says, "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate - bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart" (14-15).

Five. Psalms of instruction about God's promises.

Psalm 32 promises, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (8). Psalm 55 promises, "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall" (22). Psalm 84 promises, "No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (11). And Psalm 138 says, "The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me" (8).

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read Proverbs 1-15. Next week we will introduce the book of Proverbs - part 1.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".