

Psalms

Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)

I. The title of this book. It is called Psalms or The Book of Psalms, which literally means "poem songs", hence the Chinese translation “诗歌”. The Lord Jesus called this book "Psalms " in Luke 24:44. Apostle Peter referred to "The Book of Psalms" in Acts 1:20.

II. The division of the book into separate books. The book of Psalms is divided into five books, each concluding with Amen or Hallelujah. This division is as early as we know about the book of Psalms itself (probably formed along with the original compilation of the Psalms), rather than a rational convenience added much later. Careful reading of the book of Psalms will show that this division is meaningful.

III. The author of Book 2 of Psalms. Several authors contributed to the 31 psalms of Book 2. These authors include David (18 or more), sons of Korah (6-8), Asaph (1), Solomon (1), and anonymous (3). Like in other books of Psalms, David is the author of the majority of psalms in Book 2. David is called the "sweet psalmist of the Israel" (2 Samuel 23: 1). The genius of David is without doubt a special gift from God to His Church. It is befitting that The King of Israel, the man who is after God's own heart was given this special gift laying towards poetry and music for the purpose of expressing the most sacred thoughts and feelings a man could have about God and unto God. Just as Moses was given a special genius to establish the tabernacle and the law according to the words spoken by God, David was given a special gift to speak the spiritual reality behind the tabernacle and the law. The law was given through Moses but grace comes through Jesus Christ, who is typified by David in the Old Testament. It is only in the spiritual realm that psalmist could proclaim "for you desire not sacrifices...", which if spoken by another in a different context would have been clearly a contradiction to God's law.

IV. Central thought contained in Book 2 of Psalms. Psalms describes an intimate relationship between God and God's people by revealing the soul and heart of Israel looking upward and inward to God in reaction to the world (both inside and outside). In this regard, Book 2 is in contrast with Book 1 because Book 1 focuses on a covenant relationship between God and His people while in Book 2 that relationship is tested or even broken. It is reflected in the way the psalmists address God. In Book 1, God is called "Jehovah" which is the name of God uniquely given to Israelites. Only God's people called God Jehovah. No other nation, even those who knew God in a general notion, did not call God Jehovah. The name of Jehovah not only symbolizes but also seals the covenant relation between God and His people. But in Book 2 God is called, most of the time, just "God" (Eloheem), a name that is also used by other nations to address God in general. The name "God" is of course no less divine than the name Jehovah, but often the name of Jehovah is used with an emphasis on the covenant relationship. As far as the condition of God's people is concerned, the covenant trust is lost, which is precisely the point to be proven by God in the Old Testament (that is, the law cannot save). But God is faithful. In Book 2, the need for Messiah is more evident because of this dreadful condition of God's people. When the Israelites focused the eyes on the covenant, they tended to think that they were special. But when they came to face the reality of the sin, they started to understand their only hope is in the "Promised One", Messiah.

V. How to read Book 2 of Psalms? The general principle applies to reading all Psalms. Psalms is of a peculiar nature among the books of the Old Testament. While many other books in the Old Testament recount God's action through His people, Psalms narrates, in the highest, deepest and purest form, God's thought and emotions experienced with His elect. Psalms isn't a mere record of the most admirable spirituality of a few excellent individuals, most notably David, for the benefit of inspiration and encouragement of its intended readers. The Spirit of Christ, before the Word became flesh in Jesus, did not just guide God's Israel, but in fact lived with Israel, co-experienced everything, shared His holy feeling and emotion with an earthly but elected people. He co-lived and co-suffered with them, fully sympathized with them in their internal frustration, external oppression, their failure and sorrow of living in a sinful world with their own sinful flesh. But equally important, He also rejoiced and was exalted with their victories. In the midst of this long journey, the Holy Spirit found a few worthy souls and tongues, no less than that of David and several other special individuals, to express all that. We thus have before us these precious Psalms.

It is a good thing for Christians to read Psalms as a source of spiritual inspiration and help, as God's power is made real through our affection. However, reading for personal inspiration is not the central and most important purpose why God gave us Psalms. There's often a shortcoming of reading Psalms from a self-centered view. It is the desire of the Holy Spirit that we read Psalms in such a way that we enter into the fellowship with Christ through the Spirit of Christ. Although this is true for reading every book in the Bible, Psalms occupies a unique position for this purpose. Just as God did not reveal everything to His people through history and action alone but reserved some deepest and highest thoughts to Psalms, we cannot today understand the heart of Christ by merely doing good Christian deeds, although that is extremely important. There is a peculiar aspect of our spiritual life which the Lord desires, which is to enter into the spiritual fellowship with Him by reading, reciting and meditating on the Psalms. If the Psalms does not affect every aspect of our life, it should at least affect our prayer life.

In Book 2 in particular, we should focus on two things:

- (1) On one hand is the sense of rejection, contradiction and sorrow Christ suffered when He was down on earth. The Father knew what His Son was going to suffer. He therefore expressed that through His psalmists prophetically. The life experience of the greatest psalmist, David, typified the experience of Christ. Even if the psalmists might not have been fully conscious of the work of the Holy Spirit then, the sacred expressions recorded in the Psalms are nevertheless the true spiritual expression by the Holy Spirit. Unless we gain this sympathy with the Holy Spirit, we will always be quarrelsome with Him with regard to the prophetic nature of Psalms, and be left with either shallow reading of poems or dry and dead theology.
- (2) On the other hand is the exultation of Christ on high, which is the evidence of our salvation, beyond having a mere notion of a loving God. How joyful and perfect is the union of Christ and His beloved in the Psalms when read by the regenerated souls!

VI. A brief summary of Psalms 42-72

Psalm	Main thoughts
42-43	The cry of the heart after God Himself. The godly man is outside of the tabernacle, separated from God. This man represents the remnant of God's people. His true heart is proven when he is separated from what he loves. His faith is tested when the enemy can provoke, with well supported confidence, "where is your God?" (42:3). The psalmist praises God for His countenance alone, because for him that is the only help and comfort (42:5). The authorship of these two psalms is unclear. Although many attribute them to sons of Korah, some believe they were actually written by David but given to the sons of Korah, who are dedicated singers of psalms, to sing.
44	God's people were cast off and scattered (44:9). They were slaughtered for the sake of their God; but God is silent. They recall the old days when God did great things among them. If psalms 42-43 are about the faithful inner condition of the remnant, psalm 44 is the life testimony of the remnant. The chastisement came down as a result of the people's unfaithfulness, but the suffering was most felt by the faithful remnant. But it is God's will that the remnant take the suffering because it is their prayers that awaken God for reconciliation - this is the way of Cross; and it is the faithfulness and victory of the remnant that is counted as a benefit toward the people - this is the way of the Lamb. Psalm 44 is a vivid picture of the state of God's people, a picture that must be clearly in the conscience of the remnant today.
45	The answer to the elect's cry for God's help is the Messiah in glory and judgment. 45:6-7.
46-48	The result of the coming of Messiah: recovery of the covenant relationship; the name of Jehovah is again called upon.
49	The psalmist turns his attention to man, making a firm conclusion: all that is exalted in man is but emptiness. It is always fitting to tell man to put off his candle when the Sun has risen.
50	If Psalm 49 is a warning, Psalm 50 is judgment. It should be noted that Psalm 50 is written in direct words spoken by God. The true judgment can only be from God Himself. But even in the judgment, God calls to His own people (50:7) to repent and to escape .
51	If psalms 42-43 were written by sons of Korah, Psalm 51 is probably the first Psalm written by David in Book 2. This is on a different ground. If the previous psalms proclaim the truth on behalf of God, this psalm is the revelation of the truth itself to the heart of a man of God. How terrible the truth is! David came to the end of himself to realize how awful the nature of his life is. He no longer comes to God as a member of His covenant people, always assuming that sacrifice made at the altar is sufficient to cleanse one's sin. The situation was such that David came to a realization, with a broken heart, that the forgiveness of sin

	requires something much more than the sacramental sacrifices. This Psalm should be in the conscience of every child of God, because it is the confession to the death of Christ, the absolutely necessary atonement to sin. David knew that, and that's why he accepted the fact that his child was taken away as a result of his sin.
52-55	These psalms, including the ten subsequent psalms (56-65), depict the test of the faith and trials of the faithful in the midst of the ungodly. These psalms are rich spiritual experiences of David, testifying the relationship between the godly and the ungodly world and the relationship between the godly and God. Note that Psalm 53 is almost identical to Psalm 14 except that here it speaks of God instead of Jehovah.
56-59	<p>Psalms 56 -59 are David's golden Psalms, all written in his greatest trials rather than any of David's "golden times". God's definition of gold is different from man's.</p> <p>Psalms 58-59, and also some other psalms by David, contain calls of the righteous for judgment of the wicked. This is the call of the Israel at the end, at which point they came to conclude that only with the judgment of the world can the faithful be delivered from their suffering. That is the natural and rightful conclusion under the old covenant. This psalm is applicable to the elect under the new covenant, but on a higher ground. As for us who are saved by grace, our deliverance is not conditioned on the judgment of wicked but solely on the merit of the death of Christ. Nevertheless, there will be a time at the end when the prayers of the saints will be calling for the judgment of the world (Revelation 6:9-11), not to the people personally but to the kingdom of Satan.</p>
60	David recognizes the true condition of Israel as an outcast of a broken covenant. But he continues to cry out to God for help. There is no desire to turn to elsewhere for help, and no spirit of rebellion: God has abandoned us, but He is nevertheless righteous, and furthermore the only hope. This is the true spirit of Israel in God's heart, and shows why David is a man of God. It is from this spirit that the lifeline in Israel continues until the coming of the Messiah.
61	The precious faith continues despite of the depressing condition.
62	David's heart matures to become more like that of Christ. He approaches God with a quieter spirit, learning waiting upon God. "Upon God alone, O my soul, rest peacefully; for my expectation is from Him." (62:5).
63	The spirit and the experience of Psalms 62 deepen. "My soul thirsts for thee, my flesh languishes for thee, in a dry and weary land without water..." (63:1).
64	The trial is even more severe and gets personal, placing David's life in danger. Previously, he could see his enemy, but now the danger was from the dark and David could not see it

	but only knew it was there. His trust in the Lord continues.
65	David receives a new revelation. He now not only further acknowledges that salvation is by grace, but also that the salvation is by the election of God. (65:4).
66	Trials are over and the godly have overcome. A psalm of praise. The people of God have been brought to a place of abundance, not just in hope and faith, but in actual experience. (66:10-12)
67	The blessing even reached the world through God's people.
68	David recounts the history of God's dealing with His people: a summary of victory. The covenant is kept by God: "His name is Jehovah" (68:4). David receives a high revelation of Christ's Ascension: "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive." (68: 18). This is the same revelation apostle Paul received (Ephesians 4:8-11 and Colossians 2: 15).
69	The godly is in deepest distress. This is one of the psalms that use the tone called "lilies". Compare this lily with the lily in Psalm 45. That was the golden lily blooming in the fair garden; this is the lily among thorns, the lily in the Garden of Gethsemane. The godly are lilies in the eyes of God, beautiful and will be rewarded with glory, but the beauty of all lilies is based on the humiliation of this Lily, and all reward is based the suffering of this Lily. "Those who hate me without reason outnumbered hairs of my head" (69:4). Among all who are but flesh, who is more qualified than David to suffer such suffering in order to prove the unjust of the persecution! Yet David's soul pauses and recognizes that no matter how unreasonable his suffering is, he deserves it because his guilt is not hidden from God (69:5). But all that suffering is but an illustration of what the true Lily, who is completely sinless and does not know sin, was subject to suffer. Why did the Holy Spirit place this psalm, and also the following one, after the glorious and the victorious psalms 66-68? Perhaps even in eternity, we will be reminded of what the Lord did for us by looking at His pierced hands.
70	A continuation from Psalm 69. "Aha, Aha..." is the sound of the ungodly when Christ was on the cross. Hearing that sound may help us understand better the desire of the Holy Spirit to deliver the godly.
71	The psalm is also by David. But unlike 69-70, this one is more personal to David. It is as if the Holy Spirit, after entering through David the messianic experience in psalms 69-70, and before concluding Book 2 through the sovereign psalm 72 by the Son of David, once again deeply looks at the heart of David who in this psalm represents the godly rather than Christ Himself. David thus summarizes his life. A delivered life his is! It is as if the Holy Spirit needs to look at the status of God's people one more time before concluding from the Throne.

72	A Book 2 is concluded by the Psalm by Solomon, the son of David. This is the only psalm in the Psalms that is identified to be written by Solomon. But the psalm ends by stating "This concludes the prayers of David, son of Jesse." So it is still the prayer of David after all, but this is about reign of the King and His peace, pointing more directly to the Son of David, the true Solomon, our Blessed Lord.
----	--