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How to Read the Psalms

Lesson 1, 1st Quarter December 30-January 5, 2024.

Sabbath Afternoon, December 30

Memory Text:

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." KJV — Luke 24:44

The Bible, you know, consists of three parts: (1) History, (2) Commandments and Statutes, (3) Prophecy. The Psalms and the Proverbs, along with The Song of Solomon, come under these same categories.

As you read Acts, chapters two, three, and four, you receive a most beautiful insight into the meaning of some of the Psalms and the writings of the Prophets. It was the application of the Old Testament Scriptures by those apostles of Christ which led hundreds, yes thousands to accept the Saviour…

"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me." Luke 24:44. The Spirit of God led the Psalmist to inscribe the words, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies….The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalm 110:2, 4.

Though we cannot comprehend such infinite wisdom, it gives us better understanding of God's love for sinners, and our misconception of so-called human knowledge of things. To the eternal "I AM," who inhabits eternity, before whom the darkness is light, and the remotest boundaries in space His footstool, who sees the end from the beginning, and to whom a thousand years are but as yesterday, all things are open and naked unto Him.

Sunday, December 31

The Psalms in Ancient Israel's Worship

Read 1 Chronicles 16:7, Nehemiah 12:8, Psalm 18:1, Psalm 30:1, Psalm 92:1, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 105:2, Colossians 3:16, and James 5:13. What were the occasions that prompted the writings of some psalms? When did God's people use the Psalms?

"The solemn ceremonies attending the removal of the ark had made a lasting impression upon the people of Israel, arousing a deeper interest in the sanctuary service and kindling anew their zeal for Jehovah. David endeavored by every means in his power to deepen these impressions. The service of song was made a regular part of religious worship, and David composed psalms, not only for the use of the priests in the sanctuary service, but also to be sung by the people in their journeys to the national altar at the annual feasts. The influence thus exerted was far-reaching, and it resulted in freeing the nation from idolatry. Many of the surrounding peoples, beholding the prosperity of Israel, were led to think favorably of Israel's God, who had done such great things for His people." PP 711.2

"When Martin Luther received discouraging news, he would often say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm." This psalm commences with the words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Instead of mourning, weeping, and despairing, when troubles gather about us like a flood and threaten to overwhelm us, if we would not only pray for help from God, but would praise him for so many blessings left,—praise him that he is able to help us,—our course would be more pleasing to him, and we would see more of his salvation." RH November 1, 1881, par. 13

"Let us cultivate the grace of gratitude. Let the praises of God and of the Lamb be continually upon our lips; let the heart be a well-spring of gratitude that cannot be repressed, Christ in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. '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. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.'" RH January 2, 1894, par. 7

Monday, January 1

Meet the Psalmists

Read Psalm 25:1-5; Psalm 42:1; Psalm 75:1; Psalm 77:1; Psalm 84:1, 2; Psalm 88:1-3; and Psalm 89:1. What do these psalms reveal about the experiences their authors were going through?

"Some lift up their soul unto vanity, seeking for the supremacy. They accept as truth the suggestions of Satan. Those who, notwithstanding the blessings God has given them, fail to honor and reverence God and His truth, who do not openly proclaim their allegiance to Him, have forfeited their right to God's blessings, and the Lord cannot work in harmony with them. 18LtMs, Ms 108, 1903, par. 16

"Those who truly believe in the Word of God will say, "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in Thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Show me Thy ways, O Lord, teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation: on Thee do I wait all the day." [Psalm 25:1-5.] 18LtMs, Ms 108, 1903, par. 17

"What a precious privilege is ours—that of learning from the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Teacher, and of forming our characters according to His example!" 18LtMs, Ms 108, 1903, par. 18

"There is need of prayer, earnest, fervent, agonizing prayer, such prayer as David offered when he exclaimed, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." [Psalm 42:1.]" GW 257.2

"Since the days of David, there had reigned no king who had wrought so mightily for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God in a time of apostasy and discouragement as had Hezekiah. The dying ruler had served his God faithfully, and had done much to strengthen the confidence of the people in Jehovah as their Supreme Ruler. And, like David, he could now plead: "Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; for my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." Psalm 88:2, 3." RH May 6, 1915, par. 3

Tuesday, January 2

A Song for Every Season

Read Psalm 3, Psalm 33:1-3, and Psalm 109:6-15. What different facets of human experience do these psalms convey?

"What were the feelings of the father and king, so cruelly wronged, in this terrible peril? "A mighty valiant man," a man of war, a king, whose word was law, betrayed by his son whom he had loved and indulged and unwisely trusted, wronged and deserted by subjects bound to him by the strongest ties of honor and fealty—in what words did David pour out the feelings of his soul? In the hour of his darkest trial David's heart was stayed upon God, and he sang: PP 741.4

"'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; My glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, And He heard me out of His holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, That have set themselves against me round about….Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: Thy blessing is upon Thy people.'" Psalm 3:1-8. PP 742.1

"'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright.' [Psalm 33:1.] If praise is comely for the upright, why should we not praise the Lord in our assemblies? Would it not be well for the silent ones to break the seal that closes their lips by words of praise? Fashion, custom, say, Keep silent. But by keeping silent we forget God and His mercy toward us. Shall we not return unto our God, with repentance for our backsliding, and learn to praise Him more and more?" 17LtMs, Ms 116, 1902, par. 52

"Let us catch the spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Forgetting our own difficulties and troubles, let us praise God for freedom from sin and for an opportunity to live for the glory of His name." 17LtMs, Ms 116, 1902, par. 54

Wednesday, January 3

Inspired Prayers

Read 2 Samuel 23:1, 2 and Romans 8:26, 27. What do these texts teach us about prayer?

"David's "last words," as recorded, are a song—a song of trust, of loftiest principle, and undying faith: PP 754.1

"'David the son of Jesse saith, And the man who was raised on high saith, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me: …One that ruleth over men righteously, That ruleth in the fear of God,

He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, A morning without clouds; When the tender grass springeth out of the earth, Through clear shining after rain. Verily my house is not so with God; Yet He hath made me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things, and sure: For it is all my salvation, and all my desire.' 2 Samuel 23:1-5, R.V. PP 754.2

"Great had been David's fall, but deep was his repentance, ardent was his love, and strong his faith. He had been forgiven much, and therefore he loved much. Luke 7:47. PP 754.3

"The psalms of David pass through the whole range of experience, from the depths of conscious guilt and self-condemnation to the loftiest faith and the most exalted communing with God. His life record declares that sin can bring only shame and woe, but that God's love and mercy can reach to the deepest depths, that faith will lift up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God. Of all the assurances which His word contains, it is one of the strongest testimonies to the faithfulness, the justice, and the covenant mercy of God." PP 754.4

"We do not value as we should the power and efficacy of prayer. 'The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered.' God desires us to come to Him in prayer, that He may enlighten our minds. He alone can give clear conceptions of truth. He alone can soften and subdue the heart. He can quicken the understanding to discern truth from error. He can establish the wavering mind, and give it a knowledge and a faith that will endure the test. Pray then; pray without ceasing. The Lord who heard Daniel's prayer, will hear yours if you will approach Him as Daniel did."—(The Review and Herald, March 24, 1904.) Pr 90.2

Thursday, January 4

The world of Psalms

Read Psalm 16:8; Psalm 44:8; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 47:1, 7; Psalm 57:2; Psalm 62;8; Psalm 82:8; and Psalm 121:7. What place does God occupy in the psalmist's life?

"Enoch walked with God. So may every laborer for Christ. You may say with the psalmist, "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."[Psalm 16:8.] While you feel that you have no sufficiency of yourself, your sufficiency will be in Jesus. If you expect all your counsel and wisdom to come from men, mortal and finite like yourselves, you will receive only human help. If you go to God for help and wisdom, He will never disappoint your faith." GW 417.4

"When Martin Luther received discouraging news, he would often say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm." This psalm commences with the words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Instead of mourning, weeping, and despairing, when troubles gather about us like a flood and threaten to overwhelm us, if we would not only pray for help from God, but would praise him for so many blessings left,—praise him that he is able to help us,—our course would be more pleasing to him, and we would see more of his salvation." RH November 1, 1881, par. 13

"Laden with spoil, the armies of Judah, with Jehoshaphat "in the forefront," returned home "with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord." They had come for rejoicing. In obedience to the command, "Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord: …. fear not, nor be dismayed," they had put their trust wholly in God; and he had proved their fortress and their deliverer. Now they could sing with understanding the inspired hymns of David:" RH January 1, 1914, par. 17

"'O clap your hands, all ye people; Shout unto God with the voice of triumph'…" RH January 1, 1914, par. 19

"'For God is the King of all the earth: Sing ye praises with understanding'…" RH January 1, 1914, par. 20

Friday, January 5

Further Thought

"'Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.' Psalm 62:8. Mar 86.1

"We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise. Now the day of God is nearer than when we first believed, and we should be more earnest, more zealous, and fervent than in those early days. Our perils are greater now than then." 37 Mar 86.2

"David could not be present at the burial of Samuel, but he mourned for him as deeply and tenderly as a faithful son could mourn for a devoted father. He knew that Samuel's death had broken another bond of restraint from the actions of Saul, and he felt less secure than when the prophet lived. While the attention of Saul was engaged in mourning for the death of Samuel, David took the opportunity to seek a place of greater security; so he fled to the wilderness of Paran. It was here that he composed the one hundred and twentieth and twenty-first psalms. In these desolate wilds, realizing that the prophet was dead, and the king was his enemy, he sang:" PP 664.2

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