

Bible - General Questions

Aside from devotional reading, is the book of Psalms relevant for the church today?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

The book of Psalms is one of the most doctrinally rich books in the Bible. That is the main reason it is quoted so frequently in the New Testament.

All Scripture is Profitable

The over-arching principle of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 applies to the Psalms as well as to the rest of Scripture: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Doctrinal Riches

Although the Psalms are Hebrew poetry in the setting of Old Covenant Israel, and often employ figurative language, no Christian should think of them as less weighty than any other part of the Word, or less relevant in our New Covenant time. Virtually every doctrine of the Bible is taught in the Psalms. This is the main reason that the Psalms are so frequently quoted in the New Testament.

A very brief and un-detailed list of the doctrines taught in the Psalms would include the doctrine of God; the inspiration and authority of Scripture; the creation; the fall of man; man's total depravity; the covenants; God's foreknowledge and election; the law of God; salvation through faith in the promised Messiah; the believer's regeneration, justification, and sanctification; the perseverance of the saints; our future glorification; life after death; the New Heavens and New Earth; the last judgment; the church; proper worship; and the relationship of the believer to the world and to civil authority.

Messianic Prophecies

Many of the Psalms are Messianic prophecies. Others express praise to God for His attributes, works, and mercies. Others are historical accounts of the creation of the universe, and God's calling of and dealings with the nation of Israel.

Devotional Comfort

Many of the Psalms are devotional, expressing the believer's penitence for sin, trust in times of trouble, hope in times of sorrow, desire for God's help in various circumstances, and intercession on behalf of both individuals and the people of God generally.

The Right View of the Psalms

However, the Christian today must never read or use the Psalms in a vacuum, but in the light of the completed canon of Scripture, and especially in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Messianic prophecies of the Psalms are all fulfilled in Him. The ceremonial types and symbols of the Psalms find their antitype (fulfillment) in Christ. The law of God embodied in the Psalms has been our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and God's commandments are not a burden to the believer but a delight, because we are in Christ. In the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and we need not fear, as David did, that the Lord would take Him away. New Covenant light makes the Psalms even more glorious for the Christian believer than they were for the ancient Israelite.

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