

BIB 221 Poetry and Wisdom

Lesson 4 - Divisions of Psalms

Intro. "There is no system of classification to which all the psalms are easily accommodated. That is not a criticism of the book but rather a confession of our inability to comprehend the scope of this collection." Bullock

Because there is such variance of opinion we should hesitate from drawing hard and fast lines in the ordering of the psalms. Rather we should understand the different groupings and have a better idea of how they were arranged.

The Division by books - The most obvious division and one that is widely accepted is that the book of Psalms are divided into five separate books:

- A. Book I 1-41
- B. Book II 42-72
- C. Book III 73-89
- D. Book IV 90-106
- E. Book V 107-150

The Basis for the 5 Book divisions

1. They correspond to the Pentateuch
 1. Book I deals with man and his relationship to God like Genesis
 2. Book II Deals with redemption and the nation Israel like Exodus
 3. Book III Deals with the sanctuary like Leviticus
 4. Book IV Starts with Moses and deals with wandering spiritually like Numbers
 5. Book V Deals with thanksgiving and the importance of the word of God like Deuteronomy

Note: most of our hymn books are divided up according to subject: praise, heaven, salvation, invitation, etc.

2. Each book ends with a doxology

DOXOLOGY, n. [Gr., praise, glory; to speak.] In Christian worship, a hymn in praise of the Almighty; a particular form of giving glory to God.

- A. Book I 41:13
- B. Book II 72:18-19
- C. Book III 89:52
- D. Book IV 106:48
- E. Book V Ps. 146-150

3. The Books are divided based on the name of God primarily used

4. Book I Jehovah psalms
5. Book II Elohim psalms
6. Book III uses both names, though with a division
 7. 73-83 Elohim
 8. 84-89 Jehovah
- D. Book IV Jehovah psalms

Example: There are some duplicate Psalms such as 14 and 53 yet in 14 Jehovah is used and 53 Elohim

4. The Primary authors of each Book of Psalms

4. Book I mostly David – early
5. Book II mostly David – later life
6. Book III mostly Asaph - not necessarily one man but descendants with the same name
7. Book IV anonymous
8. Book V David and anonymous

Note: David writes 73 Asaph 12 Sons of Korah 11 Solomon 2 Moses 1 Heman 1 Ethan 1 the rest (50) anonymous

5. The People who may have arranged the different Books of Psalms

6. Book I David
7. Book II Solomon
8. Book III Sons of Korah
9. Book IV Hezekiah
10. Book V Ezra

Note: likely a combination of all of them as more were collected and canonized into the scriptures. Likely Ezra would have had the most influence upon their present order because he was the latest compiler.

Conclusion

“As the occasions of life diversify and emotions intensify, the value of the Psalms increases proportionately.” Bullock

As we grow spiritually and experience more in our Christian life we appreciate their value more.