

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 27
Psalms 11, 49, 59, 73, 77, 78, 84, 85, 87

Key Concepts: The key concepts here are that the Psalms are a complex mix of genres which were composed over an extended period of time.

Stories: As with many of the Psalms we are not sure when they were composed or the exact situation in which they were written. Fortunately they can speak and have spoken to people across the centuries.

Psalm Themes: Once again we encounter the themes of people who are beset by enemies, hurting, crying out for God's help, seeking deliverance, viewing God as a protector and a place of refuge, and yet are willing to give God thanks and praise in the midst of tough times.

Psalm 11 - This is a psalm of justice where God sits enthroned in heaven and watches the actions of human beings. God hates violence and loves righteous deeds. God will also make an end to those who harm others.

Psalm 49 - This is a Wisdom psalm meaning that it speaks of the transient nature of life. Everyone dies. No one lives forever. All of the chasing after wealth and pomp is foolishness. So even when people are happy in this life, they are like "the animals that perish."

Psalm 59 - The writer is seeking deliverance both personal and national. This psalm contains some vivid language describing those who seek to do harm. "Each evening they come back like howling dogs and prowling about the city. They roam about for food and growl if they do not get their fill."

Psalm 73 - This is another Wisdom Psalm in which the writer makes it clear that he almost fell into the trap of thinking that riches were the be all and end all of life. Instead he went to the Temple and realized that God was the only thing that lasts.

Psalm 77 - This Psalm returns us to a writer who is in despair. He wonders if God will leave him forever. But then he remembers the great deeds of the Lord and so finds hope.

Psalm 78 - This Psalm was probably used at some of Israel's religious festivals. It recounts the mighty deeds of God in liberating Israel, but also reminds the people of Israel's faithlessness.

Psalm 84 - This is probably a pilgrim psalm, used by those who are traveling to the Temple (which means it would have been written after the time of David). In it we hear about how much people desire to be in the house of God. We find the following line here, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness." It is a reminder to us of the place and importance of the Temple in the life of Israel.

Psalm 85 - The underlying assumption of this psalm is that the nation has drifted away from God (such as during the time of the Judges) and God has punished them for it. The people seek forgiveness and restoration. They desire to once again experience God's steadfast love. In order to receive this forgiveness the people know that they must once again orient their lives to God's ways. If they do so peace will reign.

Psalm 87 - It has been speculated that this Psalm is somewhat fragmented...it does not flow as well as others. None-the-less it is a psalm which glorifies Zion (Jerusalem). Its citizens have spread out across the world, and yet are greatly prized by God.

1. How do you see God meting out justice?
2. What sort of songs would you classify as Christian pilgrim songs?
3. What is your take on the idea of national repentance?