

LESSON 12

PSALMS 43—46

PSALM 43: “BRING ME TO YOUR TEMPLE”

The basic theme, a kind of refrain, as was the case with Psalm 42, is: “Why are you in despair, O my soul?” (42:5a, 11a; 43:5a).

The psalm is made up of three short, passionate petitions. The writer is being severely afflicted by the adversaries of God and His people. They are scorning him and making sport of his faith. They ridicule him by saying that his God has forgotten him. This taunt has brought him the most misery. Coupled with the pain inflicted by his foes is his sorrow over being separated from God’s chosen place of worship. He prays fervently, therefore, that he might worship God in Jerusalem once again.

To “feel with” the writer of this psalm, picture yourself in a foreign land, among people who do not believe in God, who scoff at you because you cling to your faith in Him. Within you is an intense struggle regarding worshiping God at His appointed place and in His appointed way. When these woes are mixed together and poured into the life of the psalmist, they produce a heart that is burdened with painful emotions such as sorrow, disappointment, loneliness, misunderstanding, and a sense of separation from God.

1. What does he want God to do about light and truth?
2. How does he talk to himself?
3. How does God lead us?
4. How should we see God?

PSALM 44: IN THE ABSENCE OF MIGHTY WORKS

Considered a national lament, this prayer was prayed by someone at a time when Israel had suffered a defeat or a series of defeats. The nation’s bewilderment over the humiliation of their setback is its burden. The writer’s question is “Why has the great and awesome God of past victories not brought us similar current victories?”

We do not know what event or events form the background to the psalm. Consequently, dating the psalm is extremely difficult, if not impossible. The context suggests that Israel had a standing army, existed as an independent nation, and occasionally went to war against the hostile nations around her. These indications would require a date sometime during the mon-archy. After being written, this song/prayer was probably used at junctures when the nation was concerned about the cessation of God's blessings upon them.

Underlying the psalm is the theology of the workings of God. The believer, sooner or later, must accept the truth that God does not always act in a public, demonstrative, clearly-observed way. When He works quietly and behind the scenes, we are put to the test to trust in Him even though we do not see His hand taking care of our affairs. At such times, we "must trust His heart even though we cannot trace His hand."

5. What is in the background of this psalm?
6. What has the writer heard about God?
7. What does he say that God has done for him?
8. How should we respond to the silence of God?
9. Why do we suffer?

PSALM 45: AN ODE TO A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING

No hymn book would be complete without a nuptial song. This psalm might be said to fill that role. It could be labeled "Wedding Music."

The message of it rejoices over the marriage of a king to a king's daughter. In the sense of its relation to a king, it would be classified as a royal psalm.

We do not know whose marriage the psalm was written to celebrate—whether it was Solomon's or someone else's. Possibly, it came to be used in connection with Israel's royal weddings, becoming a piece that would be read or sung as part of the ceremony.

As is true of the Song of Songs, this song reminds us of the beauty, dignity, and sacredness of human love. Interpreters often allegorize its images into a picture of God and Israel or Christ and the church. While it can be used to illustrate these divine relationships, the most obvious interpretation is that of seeing it as a rejoicing over the wonder and joy of marital love in the context of a royal wedding.

10. Whose wedding is this?
11. How does the writer approach his writing about it?
12. How is the groom described?
13. How are the words of verse 7 applied to Jesus?
14. What are the implications from this psalm for our weddings?

PSALM 46: "A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD"

A beautiful psalm of confidence in God, this one has endeared itself to multitudes of distressed hearts. It tells the disturbed and troubled believer that regardless of what may happen in the world, he or she can trust in the protection and peace of God. Martin Luther's great hymn of faith "A Mighty Fortress" was inspired by this psalm.

The background of the psalm may be God's miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, the great Assyrian monarch (2 Kings 18; 19; 2 Chron. 32; Is. 36; 37). The psalm does not provide extensive evidence upon which to make a determination, but a few of the details in this psalm seem to point to this event. It may have been written shortly after this remarkable deliverance to portray love and appreciation for God because of His intervention. Even if this psalm was not written about this historical event, the Sennacherib encounter stands as a vivid illustration of what it envisions.

The psalm presents three comforting promises about life in three equal stanzas, each ending with "Selah." These truths relate to living by faith in the face of traumatic experiences.

15. What may be the possible background to this psalm?
16. What does a "very present help" mean?
17. What does the "river" and its "streams" symbolize?
18. Why does he ask that they "come" and "behold the works of the LORD"?
19. Why should the believer cease striving?