

The Key to America's Future Hidden in the Book of Psalms

No doubt these are distressing times. Possibly those of which the apostle Paul prophesied (2 Tim. 3:1). As wars and rumors of wars abound, Christian persecution ramps up, deadly plagues threaten our well-being and the economy gets thrust into limbo, we're all searching for solutions.

Every two years or so we pin our hopes upon the election of some political figure. Sound bytes promising protection and prosperity fill our airwaves. And the solution for these times is offered with the institution of an ideology. But inevitably, history repeats itself. The man or woman we counted on to lift us from the rubble turns out to be just that—a man or a woman—and not the savior he or she was professed to be.

Is there an answer for our tumultuous times? Can there be a way back to the prosperity and protection that America once knew? I dare say yes. And the solution is right in front of our noses, where it's been for thousands of years, embedded in one of the most beloved books of the Bible—the book of Psalms. Yes, this book that's used by so many as a source of comfort, also contains the single greatest key to the vitality of America.

What's Hidden in the Psalms?

The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 poems and hymns, often written in times of battle and great despair. It's a book many use devotionally, and thus, thumb through as a topical reference to find something to which they might relate.

But Psalms isn't just a piecemeal assortment of poems that happened to find their way into a book. No, like any book,

there's a logical arrangement: introduction, body and conclusion. Divided into five sections (Psalms 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; 107–150), the book progresses through a plot of tragedy and triumph—in an order that scholars contend was meticulously arranged to tell a story.

The Story in the Psalms

Like any good storybook, the book of Psalms begins with an introduction, which sets the overall theme of what's ahead. As you'll understand by the end of this article, Psalm 1 serves this purpose well. "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous," it exclaims (NIV). Perhaps no words could better prepare the reader for the story he or she is about to encounter.

'Give Us a Leader'

Israel was chosen by God to be His people. That is, it was to be a nation governed by God as King. This was the arrangement God made with His people: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7, NIV). With their obedience to His law, God promised a blessed land under the protection of His dominion, flowing with prosperity. God's blessing was to make Israel the desire of the nations—a sign to the world that He is creator and King, and those in relationship with Him enjoy abundant prosperity and protection.

Over time, however, Israel came to desire the other nations and, in particular, what the other nations had—a human leader. "Appoint a king to govern us, like all the other nations," they begged. "Give us a king to govern us" (1 Sam. 8:5-6, ISV). With this, the Lord revealed that the people rejected His kingship in order to be like the rest of the world. God didn't deny their request, however. He granted it upon the condition that He appoints the man who would lead Israel: first Saul, then David.

Psalm 2 begins here, with the institution of David's kingship,

which is given divine confirmation by having authority over all the other nations (Ps. 2:2).

The Blessings of God's Covenant

With David as King, God reaffirmed His covenant with Israel, promising to provide a place where they are protected from the oppression of the wicked (2 Sam. 7:10).

The remaining psalms of section one (Ps. 1–41) largely detail the typical process of the godly: felt pain from suffering and attacks, subsequent cries and trust in God for help, followed with thanksgiving for His deliverance.

The section ends with David thanking God for upholding His covenant blessings. “But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever,” David affirms. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps. 41:12–13, ESV).

Losing Their Way ... and Back Again

Section two (Ps. 42–72) suggests that the faithfulness of Israel began to wane. The consequences of disobedience—consequences they were warned of in Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 28:15–68)—came to pass. And Psalms 42–50 indicate that Israel began to experience being scattered, accompanied with lack of rain and crops.

Suddenly, a repentance theme arises. The next few psalms call the people to return to God, whereby their transgressions, sin and guilt will be cleansed and their fortunes restored (Ps. 50–53).

After these cries, many of the remaining psalms of section two speak of the return of God's blessings. God is again referred to as “the upholder of my life” and the one who “delivered me from every trouble” (Ps. 54, ESV). Israel's apparent repentance is credited for their restoration.

The Collapse of the Nation

Restoration is short lived, however, and when Israel returns to wicked ways, it experiences the complete removal of God's blessings. By Psalm 74, Israel has fallen to its enemies and the people are in exile, scattered from Jerusalem.

The psalms of section three (Ps. 72–89) display a theme of great distress and pleadings for God to show Himself faithful to His promises. "Why do you hold back your hand?" the Psalmist cries. "Have regard for your covenant," he begs of God (Ps. 74:20, NIV).

Obviously the people haven't regarded their end of the covenant, which is the root cause of their distress. They don't see it that way, however. Through many of the remaining psalms in section three, God is arrogantly accused of turning His back upon His covenant and His people.

Israel Finds the Answer

With the beginning of section four (Ps. 90–106), the book of Psalms makes a dramatic shift. The emphasis turns from hope in a human king to hope in God as Israel's true King. David is never again mentioned as king; rather, he is noted only as God's servant.

Most notably, a decidedly different attitude is taken in regards to the agonies of exile. Israel finally comes to terms with its sinful condition and takes responsibility for its distress. Now, human strength is seen as fragile and in need of God; and sin—not God's absence—is recognized as the reason for their struggles.

The results of Israel's realization are astounding, as observed in the triumphant praise that characterizes the fifth section (Ps. 106–150). The book of Psalms dramatically concludes with a five-psalm crescendo of praise that boasts, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Ps. 150:6,

NIV)!

Israel found the answer for its suffering and the solution for its future. The 150 hymns and poems that make up the book of Psalms unfold the story of the Israelites' realization. It tells of the rise and fall of human kingship, the pain and agony of disobedience to God's law, then the victory found in repentance and renewed trust in God.

A Message for Today

Embedded in the book of Psalms is a message to America today. It serves as a warning not to repeat the mistakes of Israel. Campaigning for capable leadership for America is wonderful. Undoubtedly, we should pray that God's man or woman is appointed to our offices. But still, no human leader alone, nor his or her philosophies, can restore the nation to the prosperity and protection that it once knew.

Additionally, we must not find our solutions in the ways of the world. The answer to our economic struggles doesn't hinge upon having what other nations have, or doing what other nations do. Education won't be improved by removing God from the classrooms. Human equality won't be realized by shunning God's Word. Certainly, no one political party can be our savior.

Like Israel learned, the key to America's future lies in our willingness to acknowledge our wicked ways, turn from them and place our confidence, trust and obedience in God, who is our true leader. As the introduction psalm instructs, it would be wise for us to "meditate day and night" on such a message.

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