

Finding God in the Psalms

This is a collection of unpolished thoughts on this book which I have been reading over the last month.

What I have taken away which I consider of most importance is that all of creation is worshipping God, and that when we engage in worship, especially singing and praying the psalms, we are transformed. Like the tree mentioned in Psalm 1 beside a stream that produces fruit at the proper time, worship transforms us.

I also found it helpful to consider the different context of each Psalm. Was it written near the Temple, or after its destruction, or far away from it? Considering the importance of Psalms that focus on Torah, presumably after the destruction of the Temple, such as Ps 119.

I hadn't really considered looking at successive psalms and topics carried over.

N T Wright mentions Time and Space. In regard to Time, the Psalms look back to Israel's covenant with God and times of deliverance, particularly the Exodus. They also look forward in hope to when God will rescue them again.

In terms of space, many Psalms talk of YHWH dwelling at the Temple. Others about YHWH filling the whole earth.

N T Wright recommends reading through the Psalter each month – so 5 a day.

Which came first the Didache or the Gospels?

The Didache definitely has common material with the gospel of Matthew. The Didache presents this as the teaching of the apostles; Matthew presents this as the teaching of Jesus. Is this a significant difference? Surely the followers of Jesus would follow Jesus, and his teaching, if they are faithful. The Didache does say the teaching of the Lord through the apostles. It also talks about the Lord giving commands such as “Do not give what is holy to the dogs (9:5).”

One point – he does mention Bishops and Deacons (15:1). That surely is not earliest Christianity, as these positions come later.

What about Christology – Matthew presents Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us. The Didache also says “For where his lordship is discussed, there the Lord himself is (4:1).” Similar to “where two or three are gathered in my name... “. It is also interesting that commands from the Torah and from Jesus are put all together and called the commandments of the Lord. Sometimes it is clear that the teaching of the Lord refers to Jesus, but sometimes it seems to be from the Old Testament, e.g. the quotation of Malachi in 14:3.

Matthew's interweaving of Old Testament Texts



Matthew often quotes from more than two places. Here he has the main body from Isaiah 9, but hints from Isaiah 42, such as using 'sat in darkness' as in Chapter 42 rather than 'walked in darkness' as in Chapter 9. The implication is that Jesus is the light to the nations. There is another link with the light dawning echoing the Septuagint in spring forth in 42:9. The implication is of new things bursting forth.

Matthew 4:12-17

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

15 'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the
Gentiles—

16 the people who **sat in darkness**
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned.'

17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

Isaiah 9:1-2

9 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who **walked in darkness**
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—

on them light has shined.

Isaiah 42:6-9

⁶ I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,

⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who **sit in darkness**.

⁸ I am the Lord, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they *spring forth*,
I tell you of them.



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