

Praise in Book II of the Psalter: Call to Praise

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Keywords

Praise, Psalms, Elohistic Psalter, Call to Praise, Cause for Praise, Sanctuary, Zion, Exodus, Creation, Hese

Abstract

This teaching session explores the nature, mechanisms, content, and locations of praise within Book II of the Psalter (Psalms 42–72). Dr. Ted Hildebrandt analyzes how praise originates from individual and communal lament, driven by a deep delight in God and anchored in moral integrity. The lecture examines physical, musical, and proclamatory methods of worship, demonstrating how localized praise centered at Zion expands into universal adoration of God's mighty acts. Ultimately, it challenges modern worship culture to regain historical depth, biblical literacy, and passionate hope in God.

Outline

I. Introduction and Canonical Context of Book II

A. Overview of Book II (Psalms 42–72) and Canonical Context

1. Predominance of Psalms of Lament and the Second Davidic Collection
2. The Elohistic Psalter: Preference for 'Elohim' over 'Yahweh' (e.g., Psalm 14 vs. Psalm 53)
3. Contributions of Jerry Wilson on catchwords and intertextual psalm relationships

B. The Three Characters in the Psalms

1. The Psalmist under enemy attack pleading for rescue
2. The King acting as deliverer and agent of divine justice
3. The Enemy facing shame, confusion, and defeat

C. Foundations of Praise in Ritual and Experience

1. Ritualistic worship context: Temple, sacrifices, and formal processions
2. Deep lament and sorrow as the vital experiential basis for praise
3. Imprecation and divine deliverance as catalysts for worship

II. The Call to Praise

A. Definition and Imperative Structure

1. Opening commands encouraging collective worship ('Sing', 'Shout', 'Clap')
2. Textual illustrations: Psalms 47:1 ('Clap your hands'), 66:1 ('Shout with joy'), and 67:3–5 (Inclusio structure)

B. Variations of the Call

1. Commitment to Praise: Self-invocation and personal resolve (Psalm 71:6)
2. Vow to Praise: Promises made during trial and distress (Psalm 61:5–8)

C. Doxological Conclusion of Book II

1. Transition from lament to praise across psalm collections
2. Double praise and double amen at the end of Book II (Psalm 72:18–20)

III. The Cause for Praise

A. The Grammatical Trigger: The Kî Clause

1. Use of 'Kî' ('for' / 'because') to provide the logical rationale for worship
2. Textual examples: Psalm 47:1–2 ('for the Lord Most High is awesome') and Psalm 57:9–10 ('for great is your love')

B. Poetic Features and Ellipsis

1. Omission of 'Kî' for poetic brevity and rhythm (Psalm 66:8–9)
2. Verb gapping and truncated expressions in Hebrew poetry

C. Blending of Cause and Praise

1. Declaring divine attributes as inherently an act of worship
2. Merging rationale with adoration (Psalm 63:3)

IV. How to Praise: Underpinnings, Prerequisites, and Methods

A. Spiritual and Moral Prerequisites

1. Underpinnings: Exuberant joy and passionate delight in God (Psalms 42:4, 43:4)
2. Moral prerequisite: Righteousness required; rejection of wicked hypocrisy (Psalm 50:16–17)

B. Physical Expressions of the Body

1. Vocal participation: Lips, tongue, and mouth proclaiming righteousness (Psalms 51:15, 71:23–24)
2. Physical actions: Clapping hands, loud shouting, and lifting hands in prayer (Psalms 47:1, 63:4–5)

C. Musical Instruments of Worship

1. Stringed instruments: The Navel (large 12-string harp) and Kinnor (smaller portable lyre)
2. Wind and percussion: Shofar (ram's horn for gathering/war) and Timbrel/Tambourine (played in processions)

D. Corporate and Proclamatory Dimensions

1. Singing in festal processions and the great assembly (Psalm 68:24–26)
2. Personification of creation: Hills, meadows, and valleys shouting and singing (Psalm 65:13)
3. Articulate proclamation and intergenerational storytelling (Psalm 71:15–18)

V. The Place of Praise: From Sanctuary to Universal Praise

A. Sacred Localized Spaces

1. Topographical anchors: The House of God, Holy Mountain, and Altar (Psalms 42:4, 43:3–4)
2. Historical shift of divine presence: Movement from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion (Psalm 68:16–20)
3. Zion and Jerusalem as the City of the Great King (Psalms 46:4–7, 48:1–3, 65:1–4)

B. The Universal Expansion of Worship

1. Breaking out of local boundaries: All the earth and all nations called to praise (Psalm 66:1–2)
2. Refrain of global scope: 'Let your glory be over all the earth' (Psalm 57:5, 11)
3. Prophetic foreshadowing of the global Church worshipping in spirit and truth

VI. Content of Praise: Descriptive and Declarative

A. Categories of Praise (Klaus Westermann Framework)

1. Descriptive Praise: Adoring God for His attributes, character, and ongoing nature
2. Declarative Praise: Thanking God for specific acts of deliverance and answered prayer

B. Specific Content Areas

1. Creation and providential care: Forming mountains, stilling chaotic seas, and sending rain (Psalm 65:6–10)
2. Historical redemptive acts: The Exodus split waters, Conquest of the land, and Shekinah glory (Psalms 44:2–4, 66:6)
3. Personal acts and restoration: Father to the fatherless, personal rescue, and forgiveness of sin (Psalms 51:14–18, 68:5–6)
4. Divine attributes: Covenant love (Hesed), supreme power, unyielding righteousness, and divine name (Psalms 62:12, 71:19)

VII. Implications for Contemporary Worship and Conclusion

A. Contemporary Worship Critiques

1. Loud, exuberant worship vs. modern self-focused narcissism
2. Addressing biblical illiteracy: Overcoming flat, rootless praise by rediscovering historical redemptive acts

B. Spiritual Realities in Worship

1. Embracing lament as a vital foundation for authentic praise rather than superficial joy
2. Celebrating divine victory over real evil in the world

C. Final Exhortation and Hope

1. Hope as the dynamic engine of praise in trial (Psalms 42:5, 71:14)
2. The ultimate pursuit: Passionate thirst for the living God (Psalm 42:1–2)