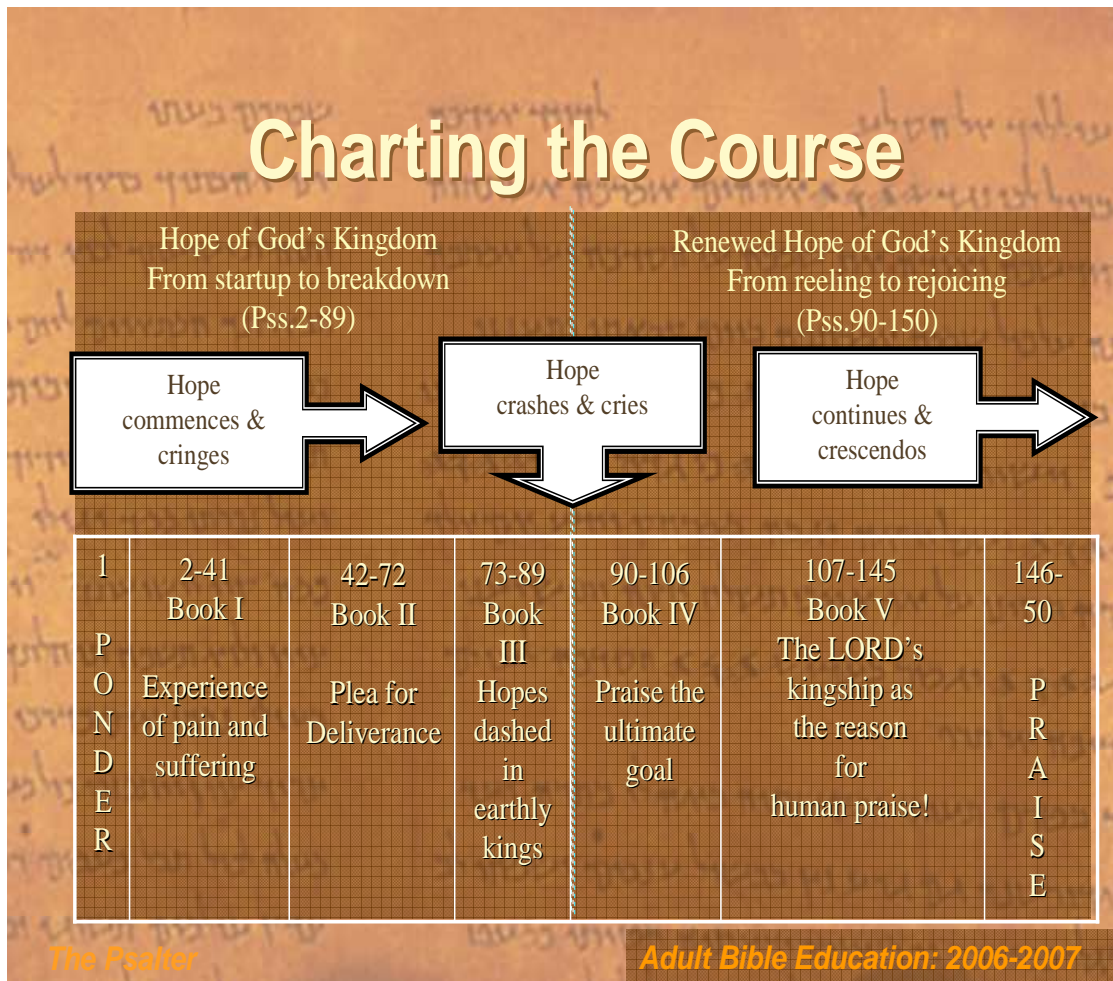


Charting the Course

A look at the shape of the Psalms

The layout of the “land”



Implications

Having looked at the basic shape of the Psalter we now want to examine the implications of this thesis. What is the meaning of this shape (that is, editorial involvement)? How can insight into this idea assist in interpreting the Psalter as whole and individual psalms in particular? It is this topic to which we now turn.

1. A Matter of Life and Death
 - a. The words to God (i.e. the psalms are largely talk to God) have become the revealing word of God. Ps.1, the Psalter's introduction, calls for the reader to delight in the Torah (i.e. the instruction). This points us toward the fact that the Psalter cannot be approached with a somewhat casual indifference. It is a matter of life and death. It is the difference between being known by God or perishing.
2. From Performance to Meditation
 - a. Due to Ps.1's placement one can see how a "collection of hymns" used for performance at cultic activities is now changed into a body of Truth on which one is to meditate day and night.
3. From Lament to Praise
 - a. The Hebrew title may strike some to be rather odd. Tehillim (i.e. praises) seems like an inadequate title for the entire Psalter. But further thought may yield the notation that this title is not so far off after all. And this is due to the Psalter's shaping by the final editor(s).
 - i. Notice the considerable concentration of laments found in the first half of the Psalter.
 - ii. Whereas the last half is increasingly dominated by various forms of praise (this trend moves toward and is expressed in the Psalter's conclusion; pss.146-50)
4. From Individual to Community
 - a. Likewise, the final editorial arrangement demonstrates a movement from individual to community. This can be seen as one notices how the first half of the Psalter is dominated by individual psalms. Whereas, the second half is dense with community.
5. Yahweh enthroned on the praises of His people
 - a. That praise is the final goal of the Psalter is confirmed for me by the central message of the 4th book (Pss.90-106). This book has an elevated significance in light of the following reasons.
 - i. Its Position: It stands at the juncture of the two major segments of the Psalter.
 - ii. Its Response: It responds to the agonizing cry of dismay voiced at the end of Ps.89. This cry is induced from a national hope pinned on the Davidic Covenant (seen in the first two books) have come crashing down into the real world of defeat and exile.
 - iii. The Demise: The demise of the national kingdom in the Exile

- iv. The Failure: The failure of divine promises associated with the Davidic Covenant. How can a people continue to live faithfully when...the former hopes are gone! The fourth book in the Psalter points the readers away from the inadequacies of human kings and to the adequacies of Yahweh as King.
- v. The central psalms of the book point in this direction.
 - 1. Pss. 93,95-99 are celebrations of the Kingship of Yahweh who rules forever.
 - 2. The call is not so much dutiful obedience. It is a call to submission / trust – a complete surrender to the eternal King whom they experience anew as Creator / Sustainer.
- vi. WORTHY OF PRAISE EVEN AMID EXILE
- vii. Exile is the result not of infidelity in the Heavenly King but sin and disobedience with his people (cf. 90:7-8; 106:6-42).
- viii. Notice how book 4 ends. Any hope of restoration must be based on acknowledgment of guilt and need of mercy.
 - 1. 101 = call for integrity
 - 2. 102 = lament over sin
 - 3. 103 = thanksgiving for mercy
 - 4. 104 = praise for his sustaining power
 - 5. 105 = a history of gracious deeds of Yahweh
 - 6. 106 = confession of sin
- b. Again, at the end of book 5 it is Yahweh's kingship that precipitates human praise!

