

Psalms 146-150 – Chapter Study

INTRO

These psalms were most likely written for the dedication of the Second Temple.

The sequence of events following the return of the exiles from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem is a bit confusing.

So as we begin tonight, I thought it might help to do a quick review of the history of Israel during that time.

This is for those Bible students who are familiar with the basic outline of Israel's history.

If you're a new believer & the Bible is a relatively new book to you – this may be a bit beyond what you're used to.

539 – October, Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon.

538 - Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah, led a contingent of Jews back to the Promised Land. He was accompanied by Joshua the priest, some Levites, & heads of the tribes of Judah & Benjamin.

536 - Foundations of the new temple laid, aided by a grant from Cyrus. Samaritans asked to help & were rebuffed; they began to harass the builders. They hired lawyers to misrepresent the Jews at the Persian court. For 16 years nothing further was done on the temple. The reigns of the Persian kings Cyrus, Cambyses, & Smerdis came and went, while this neglect of the temple continued.

520 - Prophet Haggai exhorted Jews to get on with the temple in August. One month later work began again. Prophet Zechariah added his voice in October, encouraging builders to keep up the work & enlarged their vision of the future.

519 - Persian governor Tattenai wrote to Persian king Darius I challenging rebuilding. Joshua the high priest was symbolically crowned by Zechariah to illustrate the coming of Messiah as a priest-king.

518 - The temple was completed & dedicated with great ceremony amid public rejoicing.

These Psalms were composed as part of the celebration to dedicate the Second Temple.

The 5 psalms we'll look at tonight all begin & end with the Word – "**Hallelujah!**" = Praise to Yah; short for **Yahweh**, the covenant name of God.

These songs are celebrations of God as the King, the Ruler of His people.

He is all a king was supposed to be for His people; Provider, Protector, Uniter.

There was another dimension of the reign of king that's not often realized by the modern student of history, since the rule of kings is unfamiliar to us.

A king wasn't just the protector & provider for his people, he was their Leader.

The best kings were those who took their people on a noble mission, to better their kingdom & world.

David was a great king because he understood Israel's mission to be a light to the nations, and led Israel to its Golden Age.

Alexander dreamed of bringing the Greek culture to the rest of the world.

Many of the Roman rulers were great in that they desired to spread the benefits of Greco-Roman civilization to the ends of the world.

Sadly, as noble as their original visions may have been, they were corrupted by sin, power, & man's baser desires.

As the Perfect, Heavenly King, Jesus also has a mission, a vision for His people.

That is a world of justice, where all people are treated fairly. Where evil is banished, fear is a distant memory, and shame is no more.

David led the armies of Israel in battle with those who wanted to snuff out Israel.

Alexander & the Romans fought against those who resisted their vision of a better future for all.

And God leads His people against the forces of evil who oppose the dawning of that bright new day.

These Psalms are a celebration of God's plan for the Ages & how the Messiah will come as a Conquering King to bring in the Restoration of all things.

Psalm 146

1 Praise the Lord!

Hallelujah!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

From deep within; the soul being the mind, emotions & will.

2 While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

The Psalmist declares his intent to praise God the rest of his life.

He knows days will come when the reasons to [praise God may be eclipsed by trouble, but they are only a temporary distraction.

So even when the clouds of doubt cover the sun of God's faithfulness, he will walk in faith & keep praising the Lord.

3 Do not put your trust in princes, *Nor* in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help.

4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish.

In contrast with the unchanging, undying God are human rulers who devise lofty plans but can't pull them off.

Or if they manage to; can't sustain them because when they die, another ruler rises to implement his plans.

Listen – what the Psalmist says here is an important reminder for us as we look to November & the next election cycle.

Without doubt, the next couple years will be crucial in determining the future of our nation.

The current political structure in Washington DC has it as their agenda to fundamentally alter our form of government away from what the Founders intended.

The President & his associates are globalists who are steering the Country toward a European style socialism so that they can more easily implement a global government.

Their reasoning is that in an age of WMD like nuclear weapons & biological agents, the only sure solution is to merge all nations into one so that war becomes a thing of the past.

They think they're the elite guardians of humanity's future – making unpopular choices for the uneducated masses. They see themselves as martyrs.

The problem is because they've rejected God & are Biblically illiterate, they don't realize they are only repeating the same error as the builders of the Tower of Babel.

They also thought they were taking action to protect humanity, from another flood.

Their plan – get everyone together in a man-made solution to the threat of annihilation.

What they were really doing was rebelling against God who'd told them to fill the Earth.

If history teaches us anything, it's that we learn **nothing** from history.

The leaders of the world are walking the same path as the builders of Babel.

The end this time will be worse.

So, we don't put our trust in princes, in rulers, on political candidates & leaders.

We study their positions & vote for those who most closely adhere to a Biblical worldview, but we don't look to them to install the Kingdom of God on Earth.

5 Happy *is he* who *has* the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope *is* in the Lord his God,

6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that *is* in them; Who keeps truth forever,

Unlike human rulers who rule for a few decades, then pass – God dies not & His power diminishes not.

He is a potent today as when He spoke creation into existence.

7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners.

Whereas human rulers tend to focus their attention on the rich & powerful because they're the one who control things, God's attention is on those who are usually overlooked – the poor & oppressed.

His aim isn't to ensure that the comfortable stay that way; He's more concerned to alleviate the pain of the suffering.

8 The Lord opens *the eyes of* the blind; The Lord raises those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous.

God loves the righteous!

That's another contrast with human rulers who often **begin** their career with a commitment to lofty ideals, but quickly compromise when they discover there's too much inertia in the system to get anything done.

All too often in human affairs, ***pragmatism trumps conviction***.

The testimony of so many freshmen politicians is that they go to Sacramento or Washington with the best of intentions.

They have an good agenda to turn things around but quickly discover they can't get anything done unless they fit in to & play the political game.

And after a few years, they've become just one more of the old cronies clinging to power.

God's rule is different in that He doesn't need to go along to get along with the corrupt system of this World.

Righteousness is His pragmatism because His will cannot be thwarted.

What politicians in Sacramento & Washington need to hear is this = God loves the righteous!

So don't compromise with evil. // Don't become pragmatic & shakes hands with the devil just to get something done.

Stand for righteousness even if you're the only one.

This was the position ***William Wilberforce*** took in England regarding slavery.

It's the position taken by ***Abraham Lincoln***.

9 The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.

The wicked may thrive for a season, as the Spirit works on them to repent.

But if they will not repent, then judgment comes.

10 The Lord shall reign forever— Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 147

Both Psalms 146 & 7 were probably written by either Haggai or Zechariah, or both.

This song in particular parallels what Zechariah says in his prophecy of the coming Messiah.

1 Praise the Lord! For *it is* good to sing praises to our God; For *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is beautiful.

Praise to God is the appropriate response of intelligent people to His might, majesty & mercy.

It's both pleasant & beautiful >> to God.

It might not SEEM so to us, but it is to God.

Because He doesn't gauge the ***quality*** of our praise by the sound.

He sits enthroned among the angles whose voices make Andrea Bocelli sound like the croaking of a frog.

What determines the quality of our praise is the condition of our hearts as we tell God how awesome He is & how e year for Him.

If when we sing, you remain silent because you don't have a good voice, we appreciate your concern – but don't let that stop you from singing, from praising.

2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.

That's precisely what they'd all seen done.

3 He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds.

4 He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.

[Name – purpose // Us]

5 Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding *is* infinite.

6 The Lord lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God,

8 Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

9 He gives to the beast its food, *And* to the young ravens that cry.

10 He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.

God's not ***impressed*** by the things that impress us.

These were images of physical strength & prowess in fighting.

In battle there was the strength of the cavalry & the foot soldiers, who drew their power from their legs.

11 The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, In those who hope in His mercy.

Think about that. God enjoys it when we hold Him in the reverence & honor due Him.

He likes it when we hope in His mercy.

The only people who care about God's mercy are those who realize they **NEED** it.

12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

13 For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.

14 He makes peace *in* your borders, *And* fills you with the finest wheat.

15 He sends out His command *to the* earth; His word runs very swiftly.

16 He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes;

17 He casts out His hail like morsels; Who can stand before His cold?

18 He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

19 He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel.

20 He has not dealt thus with any nation; And *as for His* judgments [ordinances], they have not known them. Praise the Lord!

While those nations who seek to live by the light of God's Word & revelation will know His favor, there's only one nation that God has entered into covenant with – Israel.

Several of the promises God made to the geo-political entity known as Israel have yet to be fulfilled.

Hundreds have already been fulfilled, ***literally & specifically***.

That gives us a clue that the remaining promises will also be fulfilled in the same way.

There are Christian today who think that God is done with Israel and that all the promises God made to her have been turned over to the church & are fulfilled spiritually.

This is called ***Replacement Theology*** – thinking that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan.

It was a popular view within the Church for many years, until 1948, when the nation of Israel was reborn in a day, in eerie fulfillment of Ezekiel 37.

Then, in fulfillment of ch. 38, the nations surrounding Israel began to line up in a coalition hostile to her.

Events today place us squarely & literally at the beginning of Ezekiel 38.

No – as the angle told Daniel in ch. 9 of his prophecy – There is one more period of 7 years that God has set aside to deal specifically with the nation & people of Israel.

The Church has NOT replaced Israel because God doesn't change His mind and never fails on His promises.

Psalm 148

This is a song of pure praise in which the author names everything he can think of to join in the adoration of God.

1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights!

2 Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!

3 Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light!

4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! [clouds]

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created.

6 He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths;

8 Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;

9 Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars;

10 Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl;

11 Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth;

12 Both young men and maidens; Old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory *is* above the earth and heaven.

14 And He has exalted the horn [strength] of His people, The praise of all His saints— Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 149

This psalm is a joyous but sober celebration of the Messianic Age when God's people will follow their King in bringing an end to evil.

1 Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, *And* His praise in the assembly of saints.
The saints sing a new songs because a new day has come – the Messiah reigns on Earth.

2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
He's come & is seated on His throne.

3 Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.
In light of this, it's a wonder there are some Christian groups that forbid dancing.

When Jesus comes again, His people will dance for joy before Him!

4 For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation.
The salvation Jesus brings us makes us more lovely; more & more lovely.

“Ugly Christian” is an oxymoron.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds.
The bed is often a place of worry, anxiety, fretting.

God's people ought to rejoice even there as they rest in His goodness.

6 *Let* the high praises of God *be* in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand,

7 To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples;

8 To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 To execute on them the written judgment— This honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!

Rev. 20:4 says that when Christ comes again & establishes the Kingdom of God on Earth He reigns for a thousand years & the saints shall rule ***with & for Him***.

They will administer His rule with perfect justice & equity, executing swift judgment on evildoers & immediate reward to those who do good.

The basis of their judgment will be the Word of God, represented here by the 2-edged sword they carry.

Our lives right now are training for that time when we return with Him in Glory & become the agents of His authority & rule.

Think of this life as your apprenticeship to rule, your mentoring to be an agent of Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

Psalm 150

As we come to the last song – the sobs & sighs that have marked so many of the earlier psalms are stilled & absorbed into this glorious finale of praise to He who dries all tears & makes all things right.

1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp!

4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!