

Learn the Bible in 24 Hours

8 – The Poetical (Wisdom) Books

Job

Considered one of the greatest books in world literature. Written at an unknown period of Israelite history, Job tells the story of a good man who weathers disaster without blaming God for his problems. The outline of the story can be found in the first two chapters and the last (1-2, 42). 19.25-27 contains a powerful testimony to belief in the resurrection.

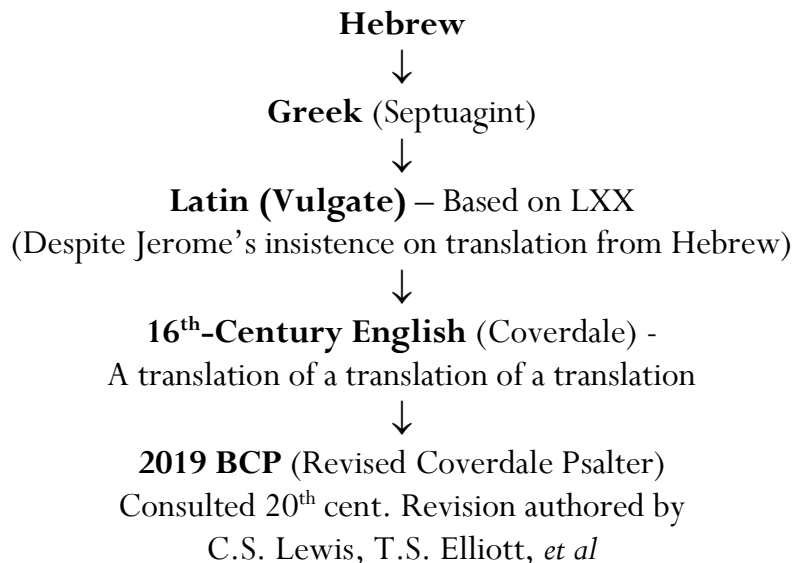
- Read Prologue: ch's 1-2
- Dialogue between Job and his "friends: ch's 3-37
 - "worthless physicians are you all" (13.4); "miserable comforters..." (16.2)
 - "Though he slay me, I will hope in him" (13.15)
 - Read 19.25-27
- Divine Response & Epilogue: ch's 38-42
 - Read 38.1-13
 - "Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me" (40.7)
 - "And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job..." (42.10-17)

Psalms

As the Hymnal of the Hebrew people and beloved by the Christian Church, this is possibly the best-known book in the world. The book of Psalms covers the gamut of human emotion. David is credited as the author of nearly half of them (Psalm 23 is the most famous). Jesus quotes Psalm 22 from the cross (Matthew 27.56). The collection we have was written by a variety of authors over a thousand years or more.

- Name from Greek Old Testament: "stringed instruments"; Hebrew title: "Praises"
- No O.T. book has been more important in the history of the church than Psalms (2nd place Isaiah)

- John Calvin: “An Anatomy of all Parts of the Soul”—“For there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror...the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs and sorrows, fears, doubt, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.”
- “The Prayer-book both of Jews and Christians”
- Separated into five “books” mirroring the 5 books of Moses in the O.T.—1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150; 1st two books are oldest
- “A Collection of Collections” (NIV)
 - “the prayers of David son of Jesse” (72.20). 73 in all refer to David ~ ½ Book
 - 1-41 (Book I) freq. use *Yahweh* (“the LORD”)
 - 42-72 (Book 2) freq. use *Elohim* (“God”)
 - 93-100 freq. use “the Lord reigns”
 - 111-118 “Hallelujah psalms”
 - 138-145 all include “of David” in their titles
 - 146-150 freq. use “Praise the LORD”
- Book treated as a whole: Introduction (Pss 1-2); Conclusion (Pss 146-150)
- Translations:



- Many types of psalms
 - **Praise:** 8, 19.1-6, 29, 33, 47, 65, 66.1-12, 78, 93, 95-100, 103-6, 111, 113, 114, 117, 134, 135, 136, 145-150
 - **Thanksgiving:** 18, 30, 32, 34, 40.1-10, 66.13-20, 92, 116, 118, 138
 - **Songs of Zion:** 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122

- **Laments or Prayers:** *Communal* –12, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 90, 94, 108, 123, 129, 137; *Individual* – 3-7, 9-10, 13-14, 17, 22, 25-26, 28, 31, 35-36, 38-40, 41-43, 51-59, 61, 64, 69-71, 77, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140-43
- **Penitential Psalms:** 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
- **Wisdom and Torah Psalms:** 1, 19, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128, 133
- **Psalms of Confidence:** 11, 16, 23, 62, 129, 131
- **Royal Psalms:** 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144.1-11
- **Liturgies:** 15, 24, 50, 68, 81, 82, 95, 115, 132
- **Messianic Psalms:**
 - Jesus' suffering 22, 35, 41, 55, 69, 109
 - Messianic claims 2, 72, 89, 110, 132
 - Priestly ministry 95
 - Son of Man 8, 16, 40
 - Coming Judgment & redemption 18, 50, 68, 96-98, 102
- With 150 chapters, it is hard to pick favorites, but a few highlights would be Psalms 1; 42; 46; 51; 84; 91; 95; 100; 103; 119; 121; 122; 127; 133; & 150

Proverbs

As a book of practical advice for living, Proverbs has a different feel than the Old Testament books that precede it. Having 31 chapters, many people read a chapter a day and so read through the book every month. Solomon is credited as the author of most of the book, but the whole set probably spans authors from the 900's to 500's B.C. "An excellent wife" (31.10-31) is a favorite of many.

- "Proverbs is to our practical life what Psalms is to our devotional life" (*Chuck Missler*)
- Sonnets extolling **Wisdom:** ch's 1-9
- Proverbs encouraging **Prudence:** ch's 10-31
- The "fear of the Lord" – 19 Occurrences
 - The fear of the LORD is *the beginning of knowledge* (1.7)
 - It is *hatred of evil* (8.19)
 - and *the beginning of wisdom* (9.10)
 - In the fear of the LORD one has *strong confidence* (14.26)
 - It is a *fountain of life* (14.27)

- We are told that “*Better is a little with the fear of the LORD* than great treasure and trouble with it.” (15.16)
- By the fear of the LORD one *turns away from evil* (16.16)
- And the reward for humility and fear of the LORD is *riches and honor and life* (22.4)
- We are told not to envy sinners, but to *continue in the fear of the LORD all the day*. (23.17)
- “For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” (2.6)
- “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.” (3.27)
- “Wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.” (8.11)
- “Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.” (14.4)
- “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” (14.12)
- “A soft answer turns away wrath.” (15.1)
- “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.” (15.22)
- “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (16.18)
- “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.” (17.6)
- “A joyful heart is good medicine” (17.22)
- “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.” (19.21)
- “An inheritance gained hastily in the beginning will not be blessed in the end” (20.21)
- “The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.” (20.29)
- “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” (22.6)
- “Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.” (28.6)
- “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.” (31.30)

Ecclesiastes

Practical, like Proverbs, but more cynical, Ecclesiastes is the advice of an old man, reflecting on the meaning of life. Possibly written by King Solomon at the end of his life—author simply calls himself “the Preacher.” Memorable phrases include “All is vanity” (1.2) and “there is nothing new under the sun (1.9).” Other highlights include “For everything there is a season” (3.1-8); and “the whole duty of man” (12.13).

From a sermon¹:

Ecclesiastes is kind of like that uncle that comes to your family gatherings. You’re sure that he belongs in the family, you love him, but you’re never quite sure what he is going to say or how he is going to say it.

There are passages in the book that make you laugh out loud; some make you nod or shake your head; some make you scratch your head [like] “If a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie” (11.3)

... There are verses that you are surprised to find in the Bible [like]: “Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you ruin yourself?” (7.16)

[Or how about this one: “Go, eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.” (9.7)]

There is a passage that a bishop might be tempted to think about as he looks at the next generation: “I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?” (2.18f)

There is a verse for students and theologians: “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” (12.12)

[And] a good verse to use during your stewardship campaign: “Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.” (10.19)

- Read 1.12-14
- Read 3.1-8
- Read 3.9-13
- “And I commend joy” (8.15)
- “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (12.13)

¹ The Rev. Rusty Ellisor, ACNA Provincial Council in Massachusetts, July 2010

Song of Solomon (Songs)

A Hebrew love poem, unique in the Bible. Read by the early Christian church as an allegory of God's love for his people (following Jewish tradition)

- “Here is a book with only 117 verses...yet it is among the least studied and most emotionally controversial.” (*Chuck Missler*)
- An outline:
 - The Royal Wedding Relived (1-2.7)
 - The Bride's Courtship Reminiscences (2.8-3.5)
 - The Occasion of Betrothal Recalled (3.6-5.1)
 - The Bride's Troubled Dream Related (5.2-6.3)
 - The King's Meditation on His Bride (6.4-7.10)
 - The Bride Longs to See Her Old Home (7.2-8.4)
 - The Renewal of Love at Lebanon (8.5-8.14)
- Some compliments have lost their impact (see *e.g.* 4.1-4a)
- Hebrew view of human sexuality vs. Augustinian