

PSALMS 73-106

(Books 3 and 4)

Sorrow and joy. Longing and fulfillment.
Remembrance of the past and the wisdom of the ages.

The Bible Book of the Month series concludes with the third and fourth sections of the Psalms.

The division of the Psalms into five sections (or books) is very ancient. They are Psalms 1-41, Psalms 42-72, Psalms 73-90, Psalms 90-106, and Psalms 107-150. Each section concludes with a doxology or psalm of praise. Psalm 150 is a concluding doxology for the whole book. *Let everything that breathes, praise the Lord!*

The reasons for the divisions are lost in time. Perhaps they were collected at five different time periods. Author may be a factor. Book 3 is primarily Psalms identified as “of Asaph” (73-78) or “of the sons of Korah” (84, 85, 87, 88). Book 4 begins with a psalm attributed to Moses followed by nine without any names above the verses. Books are not divided by type of Psalm, for each contains many types and yet different books seem to have distinctive emphasis.

Book 3 has many Psalms, which express the sorrow of hard times and the feeling that God has turned away. *Stir up your might, and come and save us. . . . How long will you be angry with your people’s prayer? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure,* is read from Psalm 80 on the first Sunday in Advent (Year B) once every three years (see below). These Psalms also voice hope in God’s promises and longing to see them fulfilled. Psalm 85, appointed for the second Sunday of year B, says: *Surely his salvation is at*

hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Psalm 80, for the fourth Sunday (Year A), remembers God said: *I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David, I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.*

Christmas answers Advent: Jesus has come in holy mercy – and he will come again in glorious judgment. The Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Psalms (96, 97, 98) are included in a series of joyful Psalms, which emphasize God as victorious king. (93, 95-99, 100.) Biblical scholars have named these “enthronement” Psalms, and they are especially appropriate for the celebration of our newborn King. *O sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth . . . Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.* 96:1,2

The Psalms of Book 4 are the answer to Book 3. Agonizing questions are put in perspective. Psalm 90, subtitled a Prayer of Moses, begins: *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* Psalms 102-106 also draw hope and instruction from the past.

Psalm 104:24-35 is read every Pentecost: Verse 30 says, *You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; and so you renew the face of the earth.*

This is the last month for the Bible Book of the Month series.

Congratulations to everyone who has participated!

Congratulations to everyone who has read all 66 books!!

What will you do now? The oldest, most often used habit is to read/pray at least one Psalm each day. I can also give you schedules for daily reading, guided courses through the bible, and the writings of humble pray-ers (they do not call themselves great, although they are) sharing their experience and wisdom. ASK!

The Bible Book of the Month is a five-year Bible reading program which is organized around the bible readings assigned for Sunday worship. There is a three-year cycle called the Revised Common Lectionary. This set of readings (lectionary) identifies the years as A, B and C. It is used internationally by Roman Catholic and many Protestant congregations including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The introductions are written by Pastor Linda Theophilus to help you benefit from your Bible reading alone or during worship.