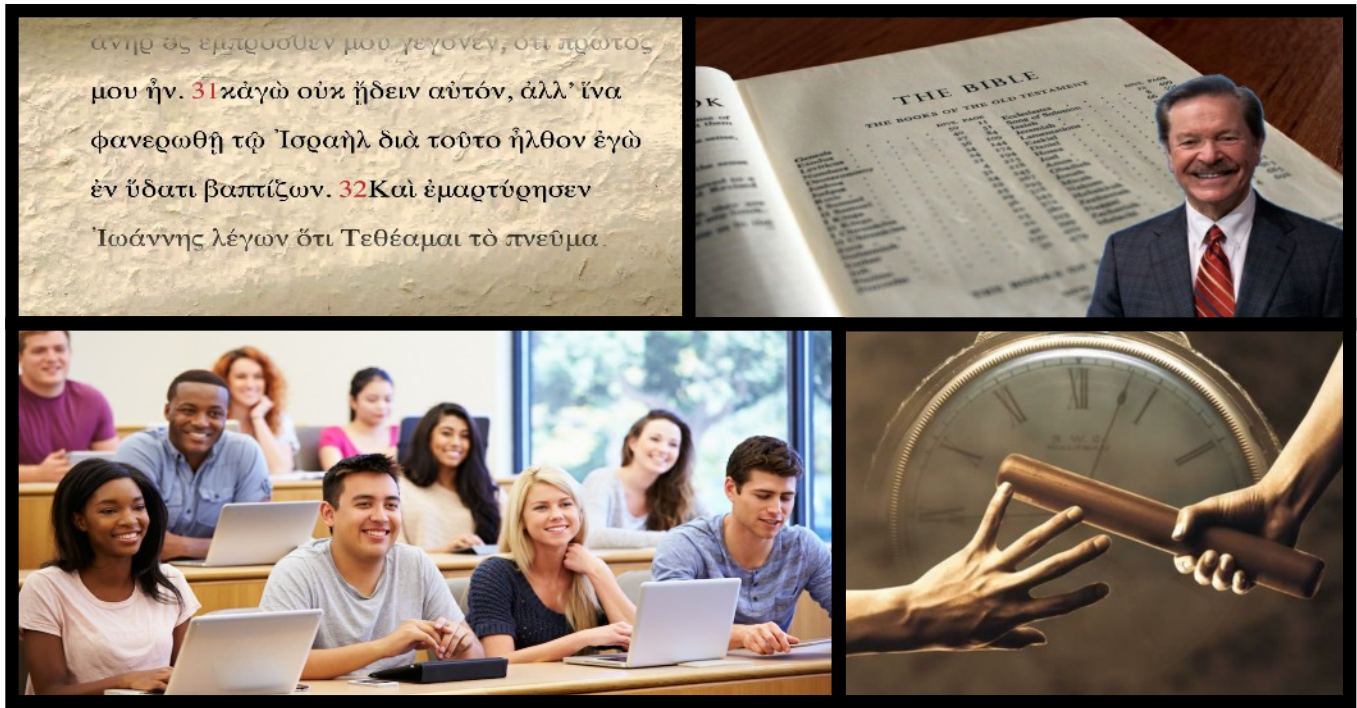


EMBASSY COLLEGE



SYLLABUS AND STUDY GUIDE

Psalms: A Hebrew History

OT645

Dr. Charles Gaulden

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Course Syllabus

The Book of Psalms

Charles H. Gaulden, D.Min., Instructor

I. Course Description

This course is a topical and expository study of the Book of Psalms.

II. Course Rationale

A. Philosophical

1. To examine the key principles of worship mentioned in the Psalms and their significance for the belief in and practice of Christian life.
2. To produce a profound respect for the value of these writings.
3. To enable the student to understand the key relationship between the historical illustrations and the biblical principles on worship.

B. Practical

1. This course will help students develop a respect for the relevance of the Psalms.
2. This course will help the student understand the worship life of the Old Testament saints.
3. This course will assist the student to develop knowledge of scripture that can be used in his or her personal life and ministerial vocation.

III. Course Objectives

A. Cognitive Domain

1. The student will be able to demonstrate and explain a working knowledge of the key categories of the Psalms (knowledge).

2. The student will be able to understand and relate key Psalms to worship and how they relate to the modern believer (comprehension and synthesis).
3. The student will be able to discuss the relationship between the knowledge gained in this class and his or her own theological/spiritual development (comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).

B. Affective Domain:

1. The student will become aware of the various critical issues that confront Christians as they are introduced to the psalms (receiving).
2. The student will be ready to answer key theological points concerning worship (responding).
3. The student will be able to appreciate the connection of the historical illustrations to the biblical principles (valuing).
4. The student will gain an ability to arrange the knowledge in such a way that he or she will be able to share his or her informed opinions with others (organization).
5. The student will become comfortable with his or her ability to discern the biblical principles that have the greatest value to the student and use them to better assist in his or her overall theological development (value complex).

III. Suggested Tools of Study

- A. The Bible - The King James and the New King James recommended. Used by permission from Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- B. This study guide
- C. Textbook required: Laud O. Vaught. *Psalms, A Thousand Years of Hebrew History*, Published by Pathway Press in Cleveland, Tennessee, 2000. Special thanks is acknowledged to Pathway Press for allowing me to use some quotes from the textbook to be included in the syllabus.

IV. Suggested Study Habits

- A. Read through Psalms prayerfully before the course begins.

- B. Study this course workbook and the textbook as much as possible before the course begins.
- C. Do not miss a single class session.
- D. Take many notes - it will help if you share notes with a study partner at the end of each class.

V. Classroom Methodology

- A. Lecture followed by class discussion
- B. Questions and answers are encouraged at appropriate times.

VI. Final Exam

The final exam will be taken from the textbook and syllabus.

VII. Selected Bibliography

Delitzsch, F., *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, Book 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980)

Clarke, Adam, *Clarke's Commentary*, vol 3 (Nashville: Abingdon)

Ellicott, Charles John, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan)

Flanders, Henry J., *People of the Covenant* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988)

Halley, Henry H., *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965)

Leupold, H. C., *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969)

Tann, Paul Lee, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974)

Vaught, Laud O., *Psalms, A Thousand Years of Hebrew History* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2000)

Lesson One

“The Uniqueness of the Book of Psalms”

Introduction:

The Book of Psalms is unique in the Old Testament and, indeed, in the whole Bible. With 150 divisions, it is the longest book in the entire Bible. Historically, the time period is the longest of any other book. In fact, the material in the Psalms covers a time period representing virtually of the entire Old Testament. In terms of authorship, no other book in Scripture represents the writing of so many individuals. It is also unique in Scripture in that it contains both the longest (Psalm 119) and the shortest (Psalm 117) chapter in both the Old and New Testaments.

As to its location, it is central to the entire Bible in as much as Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse in the Word. No other book in the entire Bible has five distinct books within a book.

Time Element in Psalms

The oldest Psalm is Psalm 90, which was written by Moses who also wrote the first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch. In the providence of God, Moses had been “taken out” (which is the meaning of the name “Moses”) of the water and became an adopted child of Pharaoh’s daughter. In this capacity, he received the best schooling available, because Egypt was the a center of learning (13).

“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years,” (90:10).

Now concerning the close of Psalms. We know that Psalm 137 was written during the Babylonian Captivity. This psalm would have been later than 586 B.C., which was the date of the destruction of Jerusalem. Psalms 120-134 are believed to have been written after the return from captivity. The second Temple was built in 515 B.C. This is especially borne out in the following passage:

Lesson One

“When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream” (126:1).

We have no difficulty then in determining a time span of about 1500 B.C. to about 500 B.C. Some think the closing psalm to be even later, but the 1000-year span can be determined by internal evidence.

Title of the Book

We do not know with assurance whether the psalms that bear David’s name were written by him, because the same preposition is used in Hebrew - whether it is “by David,” in the sense of being written by David, or “for David,” in the sense of being written at David’s request, or “to David,” in the sense of being dedicated to him. The Hebrew language of that day simply did not make that distinction. Psalm 2 is ascribed to him in Acts 4:25.

“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:’ Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.”

The Greek title was simply “Psalmoi,” meaning “songs which were accompanied by stringed instruments.’ This was supplied by the Septuagint, the Greek translation from the Hebrew made about 250 B.C. Many English Bibles still use the word “Psalter,” which was made a household word by Martin Luther through his German translation.

Authorship of Psalms

There are five distinct books identified in Psalms:

- Book I Psalms 1-41
- Book II Psalms 42- 72
- Book III Psalms 73-89
- Book IV Psalms 90-106

- Book V Psalms 107-150

The collector of Book I clearly intended to bring together the psalms of David, because each of these psalms bears his name. This leaves only Psalm 1, which was probably not Davidic, but written as an introduction to the entire five books by the final collector.

Rabbinic tradition holds that Psalms 90-100 are of Mosaic authorship.

A credible theory is that many untitled psalms were written by David.

In terms of number of psalms, David is followed by Asaph and then by the sons of Korah. Solomon is regarded as the author of two, while Moses has one ascribed to him, but may have indeed written the first 11 of Book IV. Heman, who was known for his wisdom during Solomon's reign (I Kings 4:31), is assigned authorship of Psalm 88. Ethan, a descendant of Judah (I Chronicles 2:6) is credited with Psalm 89.

Psalms 146-150, according to F. Delitzsch, resemble the language of the liturgy of the Second Temple Period. This means they would have been written well after the Second Temple would have been in use. If this is accurate, it places these last psalms in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Nature of Hebrew Poetry

The Hebrew of the Old Testament is a language 3,000 years old. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme of sound.

Hebrew poetry rhymes in thought rather than sound.

Types of Hebrew Poetry

There are four basic types:

1. Synonymous Parallelism

This is the basic type in which one line is followed by another of the same meaning but in different words. Below are some examples:

- “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27).
- “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge” (19:1, 2).
- “The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein” (24:1).
- “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (33:6)

2. Antithetical Parallelism

A statement is made and the exact opposite appears on the next line. Here are a few examples:

- “They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright” (20:8).
- “For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (1:6).
- “In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;”
- “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you” (Is. 60:1).