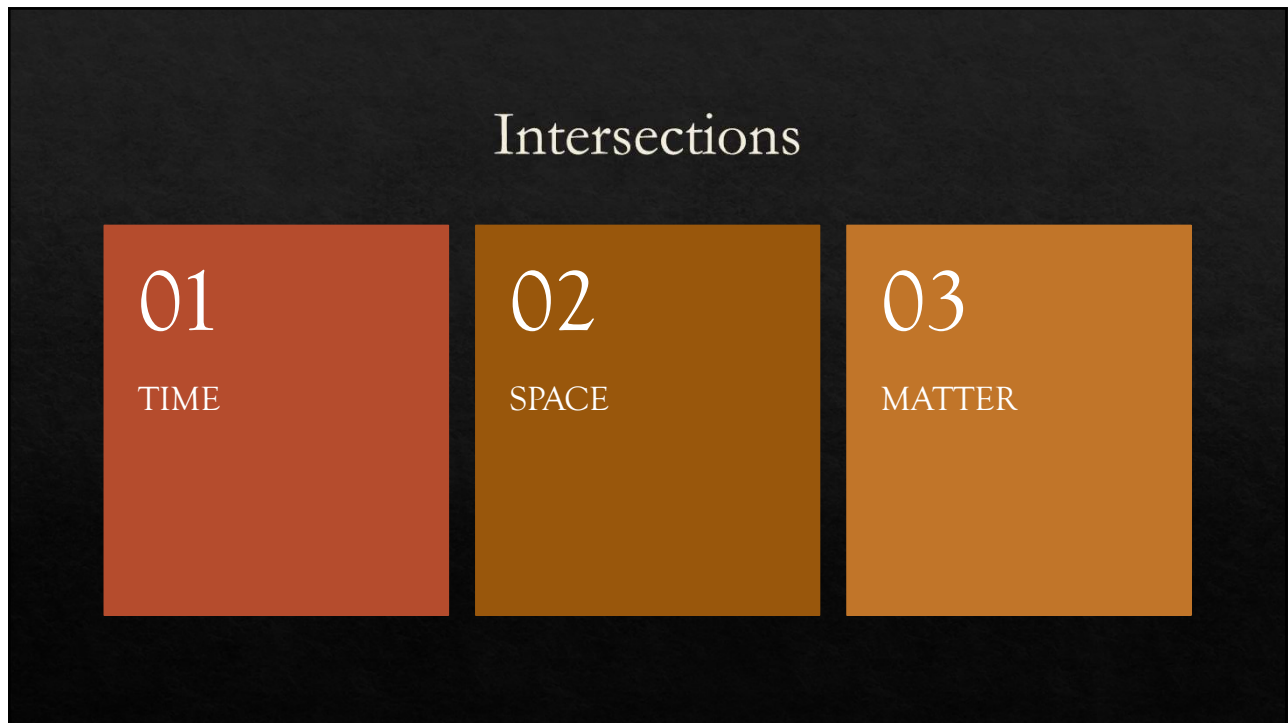




# The Psalms

At the Intersections of Time, Space, and Matter (*Continued*)

37



38

## WHAT?!?

- ◆ Reading, Praying, Breathing the Psalms is to inhabit them as the intersections/crossing points of time, space, and matter.
- ◆ Psalms allow us to enter a Biblical worldview that does not shy away from the heights or the depths, giving us some language with which we may express the good, bad, and other.
- ◆ Understanding these intersections, finding ourselves in them, allows us to see the significance of the Incarnation, of Jesus as the zenith of all these intersections: time, space, and matter.

39

## TIME

- ◆ Intersections within our time
  - ◆ Past: History
  - ◆ Present: Life
  - ◆ Future: Eschatology/Prophecy
- ◆ Intersections with God's time
- ◆ Psalms are contextual, but not merely in the sense of the Psalmist's day, or ancient Israel, or even the modern context in which we read it. They are contextual in the whole of the Book of Psalms, the whole of Scripture, and the whole of the created order.

40

## TIME

- ◆ It is a repeated assertion of the divine purpose, not only for Israel but through Israel.  
*N.T. Wright, The Case for the Psalms (p. 61).*
- ◆ It is the intersection of God's time and our time, of the past kingdom of Israel and the future kingdom of God, both with Jesus in the middle.
- ◆ We stand with the Psalms, psalmists, David, Israel, in the eschatological tension.
- ◆ It allows us to cry out in the midst of trying realities:
  - ◆ "Remember" when looking back
  - ◆ "Blessed be God" in the moment,
  - ◆ And to pray for the future, "Arise, O God"

41

## SPACE

- ◆ Jerusalem is where God chose to dwell in the midst of Israel, and so Israel is the place where God's space and human space meet.
- ◆ Temple is a microcosm of creation, with echoes of Genesis 1 and 2 wherein all of creation was established as a Temple, heaven and earth together with God in the midst of his creatures
- ◆ Holiness is not so much the physical space itself but the dwelling of God in that space. Where God is, there is the holy.

42

## SPACE

- ◇ Israel are called to be holy not because they worship at the Temple, but because they live holy lives, according to the Torah, and so have the dwelling of God within them.
- ◇ Just as the Temple hearkens back to Creation, so too does it look forward to Jesus as the one perfect place where Creator and creation intersect.
  - ◇ The Word became flesh and tabernacled with us.
  - ◇ Temple personified in the son of the temple builder
  - ◇ New creation breaking into the world with the Incarnation and Resurrection

43

## SPACE

- ◇ If it is true in Jesus, then it is also supposed to be true in us, like a church is not the building but the people, the Temple of the Holy Spirit
- ◇ Looks from the present Jerusalem/Temple forward to the new Jerusalem/Temple which is to come
- ◇ Zion/Jerusalem/Israel is meant to be a bridge, and Israel is not to withdraw from the world, but go forth from Jerusalem, bringing the saving knowledge and presence of God to the world and bringing the world back to Zion.

44

# Matter

- ◇ Matter matters. It is neither beyond help nor evil to be endured. It is good, though not perfect.
- ◇ Psalm 72:2-7
  - 2 That he may rule your people righteously \*  
and the poor with justice.
  - 3 That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, \*  
and the little hills bring righteousness.
  - 4 He shall defend the needy among the people; \*  
he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.

45

- 5 He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, \*  
from one generation to another.
- 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, \*  
like showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his time shall the righteous flourish; \*  
there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

46

## Matter

- ◆ The king is called to bring justice, and creation bears witness to his rightly ordered rule. Prays that such a rule would last.
- ◆ We see what this idea of the earth being filled with divine glory actually means: it means on the one hand the glorious combination of creation being fully alive, fully itself, and on the other hand human society being properly ordered through justice and prosperity. *N.T. Wright, The Case for the Psalms (p. 126).*
- ◆ It comes back to the Temple again, and creation being infused with God's glory.

47

## Matter

- ◆ Psalm 104
  - ◆ 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; \*  
O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness!  
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.
  - ◆ 2 You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak \*  
and spread out the heavens like a curtain.
  - ◆ 3 You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above; \*  
you make the clouds your chariot; you ride on the wings of the wind.

48

## Matter

- ◇ 4 You make the winds your messengers \*  
and flames of fire your servants.
- ◇ 5 You have set the earth upon its foundations, \*  
so that it never shall move at any time.
- ◇ 6 You covered it with the Deep as with a mantle; \*  
the waters stood higher than the mountains.

49

## Matter

- ◇ Creation set in order according to God's provision until finally, when all is set, humans enter the picture (Genesis 1-2)
- ◇ 14 You make grass grow for flocks and herds \*  
and plants to serve mankind;
- ◇ 15 That they may bring forth food from the earth, \*  
and wine to gladden our hearts,
- ◇ 16 Oil to make a cheerful countenance, \*  
and bread to strengthen the heart.

50

## Matter

- ◇ Creation is made in wisdom from the beginning:
  - ◇ 20 You appointed the moon to mark the seasons, \*  
and the sun knows the time of its setting.
  - ◇ 21 You make darkness that it may be night, \*  
in which all the beasts of the forest prowl.
  - ◇ 22 The lions roar after their prey \*  
and seek their food from God.

51

## Matter

- ◇ 23 The sun rises, and they slip away \*  
and lay themselves down in their dens.
- ◇ 24 Man goes forth to his work \*  
and to his labor until the evening.
- ◇ 25 O LORD, how manifold are your works! \*  
in wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

52



## Matter

- ◆ Speak of the glory of God in the midst of creation
  - ◆ Beauty, Complexity/Simplicity, Order, etc. show it forth
  - ◆ Think the Wow! Factor
- ◆ Humanity – made to reflect the glory of God into the world
  - ◆ Be people of praise and worship
  - ◆ Stewardship, Kingship, Service, Obedience
- ◆ From the beginning, it is made good. Yes, it is corrupted, but not beyond redemption.

53

## Matter

- ◆ “Matter” matters because it is God’s “matter,” made not as a temporary ornament for a world doomed to decay and death but as the raw material for the new world full of glory.” *N.T. Wright, The Case for the Psalms (p. 133).*
- ◆ Psalms point not only to Genesis but also to the new creation
  - ◆ Creation renewed, remade through the valley of the shadow of death
  - ◆ Speak of the glory of God filling creation through the resurrection, and not just humanity
  - ◆ Humanity – made to reflect/reveal the glory of God is remade to be filled by it
  - ◆ Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

54

## Matter

- ◇ “Matter” matters because it is God’s “matter,” made not as a temporary ornament for a world doomed to decay and death but as the raw material for the new world full of glory.” *N.T. Wright, The Case for the Psalms (p. 133).*
- ◇ Psalms point not only to Genesis but also to the new creation in light of Jesus
  - ◇ Creation renewed, remade through the valley of the shadow of death
  - ◇ Speak of the glory of God filling creation through the resurrection, and not just humanity
  - ◇ Humanity – made to reflect/reveal the glory of God is remade to be filled by it

55

## Matter

- ◇ “The glory of God is a human being fully alive.” *Irenaeus*
- ◇ More than simply the words of the Psalms, but the embodied prayer/singing of them participates in that glory.
- ◇ The act of singing, of being a living, breathing musical instrument, is in itself an experience of the physical, emotional, and mental connection with God’s glory, so that one cannot help but be transformed by it.

56

## Matter

- ◆ Transformation of the Individual, of Israel, and of all Creation
  - ◆ That which is to serve as an agent of redemption is itself in need of redemption
  - ◆ Ex. Redemption comes to Israel time and again just as it is supposed to come through them to all the people of the earth, “Blessed to be a blessing.”
  - ◆ By prayer and repetition, it becomes 2nd nature, changing us from within
- ◆ We are his “workmanship,” say some of the translations of Ephesians 2:10. The Greek word Paul uses there is *poiema*, the very word from which the English word “poem” is derived. God gives us these poems, the Psalms, as a gift, in order that through our praying and singing of them he may give us as a gift to his world. We are called to be living, breathing, praying, singing, poems.

57

## Matter

- ◆ There are, of course, different types of poems. Some of us, perhaps, are sonnets. Some are haikus, or even limericks. Some are long, epic narrative poems. Some of us are in strict form, complete with rhymes. Some of us are in blank or free verse. The Psalms themselves come in many shapes and forms, because God want people-poems of many shapes and forms. And he wants this rich variety so that through it all he may challenge the small and sterile imagination of his wider world. The Psalms are not only poetry in themselves; they are to be the cause of poetry in those who sing them, together and individually. They are God’s gifts to us so that we can be shaped as his gift to the world. At both levels, this gift functions by transforming the imagination. It isn’t so much that the world doesn’t believe in God. Most people simply can’t imagine what it might be like to live in God’s world, in his time, in his space, and in his matter.  
*N.T. Wright, The Case for the Psalms (p. 36).*

58

## Next Week

- ◇ Psalms of Lament
  - ◇ What do we see?
  - ◇ Where does it apply to the Biblical narrative?
  - ◇ Where does it apply to our individual and corporate life?