

VI THE HISTORICAL PSALMS

a. Definition:

Remembering the arbitrary way in which some of the psalms are categorized, we note the following in definition:

The historical psalms are those basing their message on the history of God's dealings with His people. They are in two general classes:

Those using a historical narrative of some part of Israel's history...such as Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135, 136

Those using a personal reflection or meditation that is based on a historical reality...such as Psalms 44, 66, 89, 107, etc.

In this defining process do not confuse the character of a historical psalm with the historical background that may be seen for other psalms. Ironically we may have a historical psalm for which the actual background of its writing may not be clear although the history it treats for its lesson may be very clear!

B. Content and Purpose:

It would be better if we studied the psalms first and did this as a result but for the ease of the operation, the content and purpose of the historical psalms may be seen on three lines:

1. To review some particular aspect of God's dealings with His people for the purpose of correction and/or revival.
2. To remind God's people of His faithfulness and covenant in the face of their own challenges.
3. To renew allegiance and loyalty

And, of course, you will think of many subsets to these things that are also important. But in general, the great purpose of history in the past is to guide us in living more fully today. It does not mean much, however, if it is not laid to heart.