**BLS 527E “Theology of the Psalms”**  **NAME:**  Dennis Yeung

**Dr. Ray Lubeck** 100 points possible

Instructions: This is an open Book exam on Psalms.

**Short answer** (1 point each - total 15 points):

1. What literary clue points to the Psalter being divided into 5 smaller “books”? **For the ending of the first 4 books, there are concluding words 'amen, amen'. At the end of the second book, there is even the word 'the end of David's prayer' after 'amen,amen'. I.E. A REFRAIN**

2. How are Psalms 9-10 linked together? **same acrostic across both psalms**

3. How are Psalms 42-43 linked together? **same refrain**

4. How are Psalms 103-104 and 105-106 linked together? **shared inclusios**

5. How are Psalms 120-134 linked together? **same superscription**

6. How are Psalms 146-150 linked together? **all beginning and ending with 'Prasie the Lord' I.E. INCLUSIOS, WITH AN ADDITIONAL "DOUBLE INCLUSIO"**

7. What element is found in nearly all the Psalms in book 1 (excluding 1-2)? **superscription I.E. "OF DAVID"**

8. According to the text, who are the wicked in Psalm 1? **those who do not love to meditate on the instructions of God**

9. According to the text, who are the wicked in Psalm 2? **those who do not align themselves with God and His Anointd One**

10. Psalms 3-7 all fit into which literary form of psalm? **lament psalms**

11. Psalms 93-99 all focus on what theme? **God being the highest ruler of all beings I.E. YAHWEH REIGNS/IS KING**

12. What is it that brings about a change of perspective for the psalmist in Psalm 73? **When he seeks God in His temple, God helps him see what will happen 'after death' - 1/2 IN PARTICULAR, THE FINAL DESTINY FO THE WICKED, ARROGANT**

13. Explain the structure of Psalm 119. **divided into 22 stanzas corresponding to 22 Hebrew letters; all eight verses within the same stanza begin with the same Hebrew letter**

14. New Testament authors take Psalm 22 to be referring to what event? **Jesus being crucified**

15. Of the five books of the Psalms, which one focuses most on God’s dealings with his people throughout their history (patriarchs, Moses, exodus, etc.)? **book 4**

**Short answer** (1 point each - total 10 points):

Provide the chapter number for each of the following familiar passages from the Psalms.

1. **8**  *What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*

2. **139** *Search me, O Yahweh, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

3. **19** *The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

4. **51** *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

5. ­­­­**22** *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

6. **2** *Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain?*

7. **42** *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.*

8. **118** *The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.*

9. **1** *But his delight is in the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

10. **45** *Your throne, O God lasts for ever and ever, a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.*

**Short answer** (2 point each - total 20 points):

List five of the themes in the book of Psalms which are introduced in Psalms 1 & 2.

1. **The righteous one being the one obeying the instructions of Yahweh**

2. **The wicked being those who do not align themselves with the Anointed One**

3. **Those who have a good relationship with Yahweh will last forever**

4. **Those who do not have a good relationship with the Anointed will perish**

5. **It is the will of Yahweh for the Anointed One to rule over all nations**

6. What dilemma is being addressed in Psalm 73? How does the structure of the Psalm reflect this conflict? **The psalmist knows God is good/righteous and yet the the wicked are not necessarily punished during their life time. Even worse, the wicked may prosper until death. The first and the last verses of pthe salm affirm that God is good. The first half (vv. 2-15) of the psalm talks about how the wicked are not condemned before death. Yet the second half (vv. 15-27) of the psalm tells us how he has got the dilemma resolved. - 1/2 THE PIVOT OCCURS WHEN THE PSALMIST ENTERS THE TEMPLE**

7. What dilemma is being addressed in Psalm 89? How does the structure of the Psalm reflect this conflict? **On the one hand God has promised that His chosen nation (the anointed one and his offspring) will triumph over all her enemies because of His almighty power (vv.1-29). Even if they sin, He will discipline and restore them (vv. 30-37). However, the chosen nation is now being trampled under the feet of the enemies without any signs of salvation from the Lord (vv. 38-51).**

 **- 1/2 SPECIFICALLY, IT IS GOD'S PROMISE OF FAITHFULNESS TO HIS MESSIAH THAT IS NOW JEOPARDIZED**

8. Who is the central illustrative character in Psalm 110, and what offices does he represent? **The central illustrative character is Melchizedek. He represents the everlasting offices of God Anointed King and Priest.**

9. Psalm 103 quotes from an earlier scriptural passage. What is the reference of the passage being cited, and what other Psalms quote from the same passage? **Exodus 34:6 being cited. Psalm 86 and 145 also cited from this passage - 1/2 PS. 103.**

10. Psalm 72 begins with a superscription “Of Solomon,” and ends with “This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.” How do you reconcile these? **I think it is possible that David prayed for Solomon on his death bed and Solomon wrote it down as a psalm - 1 1/2 THE SUPERSCRIPTION REFERS TO THIS PSALM, THE LAST VERSE WAS ADDED BY AN EDITOR WITH REFERENCE TO THE ENTIRE BOOK**

**Medium-length answers***,* (3 points each - total 15 points)

1. The majority of the psalms fit into one of three literary forms. What are these, and include the characteristic formal elements for each.

**1. LAMENT: A psalm in which the author complains to God about his current hardships and calls upon God to deliver him. Typical elements include:(a) OPENING CRY or question (b)Description of CIRCUMSTANCES or enemies (c) PETITION asking God to do something to help, punish his enemies (“imprecation”) &/or an explanation of reasons why God should act (d) Statement of CONFIDENCE and faith in God (e) VOW which promises to thank God when deliverance does come;**

**2. PRAISE: A specific kind of psalm which honors God for his CHARACTER &/or ATTRIBUTES. Usual elements include:(a)CALL to praise (b) LIST of those who should praise; (c) REASONS for praise (d) Concluding “PRAISE YHWH!” [= “Hallelujah!”]**

**3. THANKSGIVING: A Psalm that honors God for his gracious ACTIONS toward people. Elements include: (a) CALL to give thanks (b) DESCRIPTION of distress before deliverance (c) PRAISE to God for his compassion, faithfulness, etc. in delivering (d) GENERAL STATEMENT about how God cares for all his people (e) PROMISE to fulfill one’s vows (f) FINAL STATEMENT of praise Praise YHWH!**

2. There are several major variations of Hebrew parallelism. List these and provide an example from the Psalms for each.

**(1) the second unit expresses essentially the same idea as the first, with less addition to meaning, i.e. “synonymous parallelism”, e.g. Yahweh is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?(27:1)**

**(2) the second unit relates to the idea of the first, but adds another thought element to it, i.e. “synthetic parallelism”, e.g. Vindicate me, O Yahweh, For I have led a blameless life (26:1)**

**(3) the second unit expresses essentially the same idea as the first, but the order is reversed, i.e. “inverted parallelism”, e.g. O LORD, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. (38:21)**

**(4) the second unit expresses the opposite side of the same truth, usually with the adversative “but”, “antithetic parallelism”, e.g. those YHWH blesses will inherit the land, BUT those he curses will be cut off (37:21-22).**

3. The superscription, “A song of ascents” has been taken by interpreters to refer to different times or activities. List at least four of these alternatives. **(1) for the sunrise; (2) for the dawn; (3) when smoke rising from the altar; (4) when going up the Mount Zion**

4. What is the significance of Acts 224-32 for understanding the Psalms? **Acts 2:24-32 is very important for understanding the Psalms because verse 30 clearly asserts that David was a prophet and he wrote Psalm 16:8-11 because he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:31). Firstly, Peter was a close disciple of Jesus and Jesus' way of viewing Psalms should have profound influence on him. So his way of quoting Psalms should have been the same as Jesus'. Secondly, in Psalm 16 David seemed to be praying to God himself. There is no clue of any kind before Psalm 16: 8 to indicate that David is now going to say a prophecy about Christ with Christ as the first person. Logically therefore the whole Psalm 16 can be viewed as the prayer of Christ written by 'prophet' David. Thirdly, if the whole Psalm 16 can be viewed as a prophetic psalm with Christ as the first person, then it is possible that other psalms (at least many of them) can also be viewed as Christ speaking in the first person.**

5. What evidence is there that Psalms 1 and 2 can be taken as a literary unit?

**Firstly, there is no superscription for these two psalms while all the following psalms have a superscription except a few that may have been mistreated as an independent psalm.**

**Secondly, These can be taken as a literary unit that serves as the introduction to the whole book of Psalms because the main ideas in these two psalms summarize the main ideas of all psalms.**

**Thirdly, both Psalm 1 and 2 share the same 'blessed is/are' motif. Psalm 1 starts with 'Blessed is the man …' while Psalm 2 ends with 'blessed are all who…' So they work like an inclusio.**

**Fourthly, both Psalm 1 and 2 share the same 'way/perish' motif. Psalm 1: 6 goes like 'the way of the wicked will perish' while Psalm 2:12 goes like 'perish in the way'. THEY ALSO SHARE THE MOTIF OF MEDIATATE/PLOT (HAGAH)**

**Essay Questions.**(20 points each - total 40 points)

**Question 1.**

You are leading a campus Bible study at a nearby university. Someone in the group approaches you afterwards and says that she believes that OT believers in God were spiteful and cruel because they prayed such evil prayers against their enemies. She says that she can’t even read the psalms anymore because she can’t see how such vindictiveness can possibly be God’s Word for us today. How would you answer?

 **If you carefully read the whole book of Psalms, you will find that the psalmists knew the God they believed in was full of grace and mercy and was slow to anger (Psalms 103, 86, 145). So I believe when a psalmist prayed 'evil' prayers against their enemies, those enemies must have been really 'evil' like Hitler. So I do not think the psalmists were encouraging people to pray such prayers but expressing their anguish in their interaction with those really evil people. It is important for us to know that 99.999% of those people who upset us today do not belong to those kinds of people. Let us remember that Jesus told us to bless those who cursed us and his apostle John said, 'Pray for those who commit a sin not leading to death and God will give them life.' (1 John 5:16)**

 **Actually the psalmists who prayed such prayers were not repaying 'evil' with 'evil' because they were asking God to do justice instead of actively seeking revenge, e.g. Psalm 59:9-10. 'O my Strength, I watch for you; you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God.' Those who take matters in their own hands and torture their enemies are really evils.**

 **AFter all, God must intervene to prevent further acts of violence against the righteous and innocent In order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more. (Psalm 10:18) If the wicked people are not severely punished, many people will suffer even more. For the sake of the victims we do need to pray that God's justice be served on them so that innocent people will be protected, other people may fear the Lord and the wicked may be humbled and ask for forgiveness.As a matter of fact, a high view of God’s character requires the judgment of sin. God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day. (Psalm 7:11)**

 **Besides, a wrong against God’s people (especially against his anointed) is seen as an attack upon YAHWEH. That was a big sin, not an ordinarily sin. Normally it was done by the devil itself and those belonging to it. Their eternal punishment would be burning in hell. So, the psalmist is not seeking vindication of his own name, but YAHWEH’s, e.g. 'Zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.' (Psalm 69:9)**

 **Furthermore, the people of God were expected to support the curses of God upon the ungodly (cf. Dt. 2715-26). And judgment of sin necessarily means judgment on sinners. However with the gospel of Jesus Christ now and the birth of His church, those who attack are those who attack the church. Yet Jesus has told us to pray for those who persecute us. Primarily we would pray that God will bring them to repentance. However, we know that there are people who are simply the representative of Satan. Even the Apostle Paul cursed them two times (Galatians 1:6-9).**

 **So, we have to bear in mind that those imprecatory prayers are the prayers for justice to be served, not for any kinds of favoristism or patronism. David prays that judgment may come on HIM if he is sinful. 'O YAHWEH my God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands–if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me or without cause have robbed my foe– then let my enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. (Psalm 7:3-5)**

 **Last but not least, we should be rest assured that the God of the psalmists is not a cruel God. If these so-called imprecatory prayers have been honored by God and those prayers/psalms have actually been inspired by the Messiah (which I believe), then ultimately the curses or condemnations have eventually come upon himself, as long as the 'evil' ones accepted Him as their personal Savior and Redeemer. On the one hand, these prayers remind us that evil acts really deserve severe punishments. On the other hand, they also remind us how great the grace we have received from God that He had His Son to take up all the curses for us.**

 **I believe we do need those verses and God put those in the Scripture for our good.**

**Question 2.**

In a well-developed response, present, explain, develop, and defend what you believe to be the primary theological message(s) of the book of Psalms.

 **Many theologians have already made their case saying that Psalm 1 and 2 should have been taken as a single unit serving as the preface to the whole Book of Psalms. Let me briefly review some of the arguments here:**

 **Firstly, there is no superscription for these two psalms while all the following psalms have a superscription except a few that may have been mistreated as an independent psalm. Secondly, both Psalm 1 and 2 share the same 'blessed is/are' motif. Psalm 1 starts with 'Blessed is the man …' while Psalm 2 ends with 'blessed are all who…' So they work like an inclusio. Thirdly, both Psalm 1 and 2 share the same 'way/perish' motif. Psalm 1: 6 goes like 'the way of the wicked will perish' while Psalm 2:12 goes like 'perish in the way'.**

 **As I believe Psalm 1 and 2 should have been taken as a unit serving as the preface to the whole Book of Psalms, I believe the primary theological messages contained in Psalm 1 and 2 are the primary theological messages of the book of Psalms. The primary theological messages in these two psalms are: (1) The righteous are those who obey the Torah (instructions) of Yahweh. (2) The wicked are those who do not align themselves with the Anointed One. (3) Those who have a good relationship with the Anointed will last forever. (3) Those who do not have a good relationship with the Anointed will perish. (4) It is the will of Yahweh for His Anointed One to rule over all nations.**

 **However, even one does not think that Psalm 1 and 2 serve as the preface, one will also agree that the above theological messages are the primary messages for the whole Psalm. In the first Psalter we have Psalm 19, a Torah Psalm, that clearly points to the centrality of the instructions of the Lord. In the last Psalter we Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the whole book, each of the 176 verses of which contains a message pertaining to the significance of God's Torah.**

 **When we read through the whole Book of Psalms, it will become even clearer to us that people living in a wicked world must focus their faith on Torah (God’s Word). The wicked will not be eradicated right away. They will continue to give the people of God a hard time. That's why 63 out of the 150 psalms are classified as lament psalms. If we do not focus our faith on Torah, we will have a crisis of faith (Psalm 73:24). However, the Torah says time and again that righteous will last forever while the wicked will persih (Psalm 73:26-27).**

 **When we read through the whole Book of Psalms, it will also become clearer that living in this wicked world one must take refuge in the Anointed (God’s Son) (Psalm 2 & 3). As there are wicked people here on earth, the people of God will suffer. Therefore throughout the whole book a good relationship with the Messiah is demonstrated time and again by taking refuge in the Lord. The pervasiveness of the refuge metaphor is testimony to this central theme e.g. 'rock' (21 times), 'shield' (16 times), 'fortress' (13 times), 'shelter' (7 times), 'shadow' (6 times), 'stronghold' (7 times), 'fortress' (6 times), 'rock' (another Hebrew word for rock, 5 times), 'dwelling' (3 times), 'strong tower' (1 time), and 'place of safety' (1 time).**

 **Why is there hope in trusting God so that we can hang on in times of difficulties due to the presence of the wicked? This is answered by another primary message of the Book of Psalms: Eventually YHWH will reign through his messiah–King over ALL the people of the earth. There are 22 psalms classified as royal psalms that carry such a theme. We can clearly see that there is a shifting of governing dominion of the Anointed from being the king of Israel to a kingdom which is over “all” people. For example, “all” appears 16 times in Ps. 145, the last royal Psalm.**

 **Last but not least, the greatest theme of the whole book of Psalm is that our final response to God should be praise and thanksgiving. There are 65 psalms classified as praise/thanksgiving psalms. There are 38 praise psalms out of the 61 psalms in the 4th and 5th Psalters. Moreover, The last seven psalms of the whole book are all praise psalms.**

**EXCELLENT ESSAYS, DENNIS!**

**TOTAL: 96.5/100**