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Bible Study

“Almost Everything You Need to Know About ...”



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6:30 p.m. Online

Rev. Dr. Ho-Shing-Scott
Ministerial Chief of Staff

I. KEY FACTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF PSALMS

- a. **Name of the book:** Psalms also known as the “Book of Praises.” The Psalms are composed of sacred songs, or of sacred poems meant to be sung.
- b. **Position in the Bible:** 19th Book in the Bible • 19th Book in the Old Testament • 2nd of 5 Poetical books (Job - Song of Solomon) • 47 Books to follow it. Chapters: 150. Verses: 2,461. Words: 43,743.
- c. **Author:** Several authors. • Almost half (73 Psalms) are attributed to David. • 12 were by Asaph. • 10 were by the sons of Korah. • 2 by Solomon. (2 & 127) • 1 each by Moses (90), Herman, Ethan, and Ezra. • 49 are anonymous. • Some of the anonymous Psalms are attributed to Ezra.
- d. **When written:** The Psalms were written over a period of about 1,000 years, from Moses (1410 B.C.) to the time under Ezra and Nehemiah (400 B.C.). However, most of them were written during the 300 years from David to Hezekiah (1000-700 B.C.).
- e. **Recipient:** To the Israelites but also for everyone.
- f. **Purpose:** To help us worship God. It teaches us to meditate upon God’s Word (Ps. 1:2) and it provides a lot of information to use in that time of private worship and reflection. Regardless of any life situation, whether it be betrayal or victory, deep loss or joyful gain, a time of confusion or a time of celebration, there is an appropriate psalm for that season.

“I may truly call this this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul, for no one can feel a movement of the spirit which is not reflected in this mirror. All the sorrows, troubles, fear, doubts, hopes, pains, perplexities, and stormy outbreaks by which the hearts of men are tossed have been depicted here to the very life.”

John Calvin

[How to Read the Bible: Psalms](#)

II. Five Books make up the Book of Psalms

The Psalms are divided into 5 books and each book closes with a doxology. They correspond to the first five books of the Bible (also known as the *Pentateuch*)

- a. Book 1 - Psalms 1-41 (corresponds to *Genesis*): Christ is the counsel of God, the source of all blessings for his people Israel.
- b. Book 2 - Psalms 43-72 (corresponds to *Exodus*): Their ruin, but redemption in the latter days.
- c. Book 3 - Psalms 73-89 (corresponds to *Leviticus*): The holiness of God in his dealings with them.
- d. Book 4 - Psalms 90-106 (corresponds to *Numbers*): The failed first man replaced by the second.

- e. Book 5 - Psalms 107-150 (corresponds to *Deuteronomy*): The moral conclusion as to the divine ways in which God and man are found to last together. The doxology for book 5 is Psalm 150.

III. Five Classifications

- a. **Historical:** Connected with some definite event in Israel's history or in the life of the Psalmist
- b. **Penitential:** Recording the psalmist's deep confession of sins, and his brokenhearted cries for forgiveness. Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.
- c. **Imprecatory:** Imploring God to take vengeance on the enemies of his people.
- d. **Prophetic/Millennial:** Pointing forward to Israel's future tribulation, and the subsequent era of peace and Prosperity.
- e. **Messianic:** Dealing with the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.

IV. Five Key Words Summarize the Book of Psalms

- a. **Praise:** The Psalmist worships, extols, and with heart-felt gratitude, thanks the sovereign God of Israel for His Person, His Word, and His mighty works regarding both creation and redemption
- b. **Prophecy:** The Psalmist often writes of the coming Messiah, foretelling His zeal, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, high priestly work, and coming millennial reign.
- c. **Pain:** The Psalmist describes in graphic fashion his personal doubts, fears, pain, and problems.
- d. **Petition:** The Psalmist offers up many requests, crying out for relief, forgiveness, reassurance, direction, protection, and strength.
- e. **Poetry:** The Psalmist pens his words in poetic fashion meant to be sung.

The key word in the Psalms is "praise" which appears 211 times. The word "Selah" appears 71 times throughout the Psalms. The most recognized meaning of the Hebrew word Selah is "forever." It is often interpreted as an instruction calling for a break in the singing of the Psalm, or to pause and calmly think about what you have read.

V. Ten Types of Psalms

- a. Individual Lament Psalms (E.g. Ps. 3)
- b. Communal Lament Psalms (E.g. Ps. 44)
- c. Individual Thanksgiving Psalms (E.g. Ps. 30)

- d. Communal Thanksgiving Psalms. (E.g. Ps. 65)
- e. General Praise Psalms
- f. Descriptive Praise Psalms
- g. Enthronement Psalms (E.g. Ps.47)
- h. Pilgrimage Psalms (E.g. Ps. 120)
- i. Royal Psalms (E.g. Ps. 2 & 110)
- j. Wisdom and Didactic Psalms (E.g. Ps. 1, 37, 119)

VI. Attributes of God

- a. Eternality — (90, 102)
- b. Glory — (96, 113)
- c. Goodness — (27, 107)
- d. Holiness — (99)
- e. Justice — (75, 82, 94)
- f. Majesty — (18, 93, 97)
- g. Mercy — (86, 136)
- h. Omnipotence — (18, 33, 76, 146)
- i. Omnipresence — (139)
- j. Omniscience — (139, 147)
- k. Providential care — (65, 104)
- l. Unfailing Love — (36)
- m. Uniqueness — (115, 135)

VII. *Diverse Subjects in the Psalms:*

War
 Peace
 Worship
 Praise
 Jubilation
 Judgment
 Lament
 Messianic Prophecy

VIII. Nice to Know Information

- a. Almost every one of the 150 Psalms contains some note of praise to God. Psalm 88 is the only Psalm that ends without some kind of praise or hope in God.
- b. Psalms is the longest, and perhaps the most widely used, book in all the Bible.
- c. According the Jewish tradition, King David wrote 88 of the Psalms. Moses wrote (Psalm 90-100), Jeremiah wrote Psalm 137 (during

Babylonian captivity), Haggai wrote Psalm 146 and Zechariah wrote Psalm 147.

- d. Fifteen of the Psalms (120-134) are designated “A Song of Ascents,” and were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts.
- e. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint) includes an extra Psalm (151) said to be written by David after he slew Goliath.
*David may have also written Psalm 18 and 144 after this historic event.
- f. During the Passover celebration, it became customary to recite Psalm 136 and Psalms 113-118. It is believed Jesus may well have recited these at the Last Supper.
- g. Psalm 90 may be the oldest Psalm, written by Moses (around 1450 B.C.) before God’s call to liberate the Hebrew people from Egypt. *About 1,000 years later, the last of the Psalms (including 137) were written and added to the biblical canon.
- h. Psalm 117 is the shortest psalm with only 2 verses, and Psalm 119 is the longest with 176!
- i. Depending on which Bible you are reading, either Psalm 117 or 118 (Protestant Bible), or 120 and 121 (Catholic Bible) mark the very center of the Holy Bible.
- j. The Psalm most famous for the Lord’s protection is Psalm 91. One of the most recited and known passages from Scripture comes from this chapter: “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty” (v 1).
- k. The Psalm most people know of (often by heart) is Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd.

IX. Key Verses

- a. Psalm 23:1-4
- b. Psalm 37:3-4
- c. Psalm 103:11-12
- d. Psalm 139:23-24

X. Outline

a. Book 1 (Psalms 1-41): The Book of the Messiah

All but four are attributed to David (1, 2, 10, 33) and no other named writers are included in this group. This book is the most Messianic of the books, with Psalms 2, 8, 16, 20-24, 31, 34, 35, 40, 41 all mentioning the Messiah, clearly about the Messiah, or quoted in the New Testament as referencing the Messiah. Some see Psalm 1 as also Messianic. After the introductory Psalm 1, the book opens with the Messiah (Psalm 2) and closes with the Messiah (Psalm 41:9 see John 13:18). In

the very center of the book are five Messianic Psalms, two describing His prayer (20-21) and three describing His past, present, and future work (22-24). The eighth Psalm from the beginning and the eighth Psalm from the end (34) are also both Messianic. The end of the middle Psalm (21) assures us of God's judgment. The bookends of this first book are: "Blessed is the man . . . Blessed is the LORD, the God of Israel."

Its general theme concerns man – God's counsels from the beginning to the end in relation to man. It begins, like Genesis, with God's blessing upon man (Genesis 1-2 with psalm 1), showing him that his blessedness consists in obedience to and occupation with God's word. It continues with man's fall and rebellion (Genesis 3-11 with Psalms 2-15). It ends with hope of redemption through Christ (Genesis 12-50 with Psalms 16-41), concluding with a benediction and a double "Amen" (Psalm 41:13).

b. Book 2 (Psalms 42-72): The Book of Desire

- i. Psalms 42—49: Israel's ruin
- ii. Psalms 50—60: Israel's Redeemer
- iii. Psalms 61—72: Israel's redemption

This book is the most personal of the five books (Psalms 42-43, 51, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70, 71). Of the 13 Psalms that provide us historical background for their origins, eight of them are in this book (51, 52, 54, 56-57, 59-60, 63). This book begins with despondency and a deep longing for God (Psalm 42) and ends with the reign of the King (Psalm 72). Psalm 45 contains the beautiful marriage song of the King. Psalm 46 sets forth the most beautiful song of trust. Psalm 51 powerfully displays confession and forgiveness. The end of the middle Psalm (58) presents God as judge. The bookends of this second book are: "My soul pants for You, O God . . . Let the whole earth be filled with His glory."

Its general theme concerns Israel as a nation – Israel's ruin, Redeemer, and redemption. It begins, like Exodus, with a cry from the depth of ruin and despair (Exodus 1-3 with psalm 41-42). It continues with God's mighty works of deliverances (Exodus 4-15 with psalm 44-50) and with backslidings, defeats by enemies, and hardships (Exodus 16-27 with Psalms 51-55). It ends with God's redemptive work for Israel and His reign over them (Exodus 19-40 with psalm 56-72). It concludes with a benediction and a double "Amen" (Psalm 72:19).

c. Book 3 (Psalm 73-89): The Book of Israel

- i. Psalms 73—83: "Asaph psalms" (2 Chronicles 29:30)
- ii. Psalms 84—89: Looking to the future

This book deals mostly with God's relationship with His covenant people, Israel (74, 77-81, 83, 85, 87, 89). Psalm 73 is a great song about the folly of envying the wicked. Psalm 84 describes a heart longing to be with God. The end of the middle Psalm (82) is a cry for judgment. The bookends of this third book are: "Truly, God

is good to Israel . . . Remember, Lord, the reproach of your servants . . . Your Messiah.”

Its general theme concerns the Sanctuary and its purpose concerning God and man. The book begins with the Sanctuary as related to man, revealing the basis of fellowship with God, (Leviticus 1-7 with psalms 73-83). It continues with the Sanctuary as related to God, showing the walk and relationship of the redeemed before God (Leviticus 8-27 with Psalms 84-89). In nearly every psalm of this book the Sanctuary, and man’s relation to it are mentioned. It concludes with a benediction and a double “Amen” (Psalm 89:52).

d. Book 4 (Psalms 90-106): The Book of the Rule of God

- i. Psalms 94—100: Kingdom songs (celebrating the Messiah’s reign)
- ii. Psalms 101—106: Praise to the King

This book contains the great enthronement Psalms, those songs devoted to the establishing of God as King. The book deals mostly with God’s rule and should be read in that light. Psalm 90 is His rule over our lives. Psalms 93, 95-99 are the enthronement Psalms. Psalm 94 is His rule over the wicked. Psalm 102 is the enduring rule of God. Psalm 103 is His kind rule over our frailty. Psalm 104 is His rule over nature. Psalms 105 and 106 is His rule in delivering Israel. Psalm 100 is a call to give thanks. The book opens with Moses’ great prayer (90) about life. The end of the middle Psalm (98) assures us that the LORD is coming to judge. The bookends of this fourth book are: “LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations . . . Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles.”

Its general theme concerns Israel and the Gentiles on earth – the counsels of God revealing no hope for man in the earth apart from God. It records the walk of man in his earthly pilgrimage to a better world and a better life. It begins with Israel in the wilderness taking account of themselves (Numbers 1-8 with Psalms 91). It continues with proper order, and instructions for the future (Numbers 9-14 with Psalms 91-94), rest anticipated (Numbers 15-26 with psalms 95-100), and the basis for entering into rest (Numbers 27:36 with Psalms 101-106). It concludes with a benediction, one “Amen,” and one “Hallelujah” (Psalm 106:48).

e. Book 5 (Psalms 107-150): The Book of Praise

- i. Psalms 113—118: Hallel psalms
- ii. Psalms 120—134: Pilgrim psalms
- iii. Psalms 146—150: Hallelujah psalms

Though each of the other four books address praise, this book triumphs praise. Two Hebrew words are used to describe praise: “hallel” meaning to boast and “yadah” meaning to throw or cast our gratitude to God. Psalms 107-109, 111-113, 115-119, 122, 135-136, 138-140, 142, 145-150 speak of the praise of the LORD. Psalms 113-118 are known as the Hillel Psalms (“Praise Psalms”) that were sung at

Passover. This section is followed by Psalm 119, the great acrostic Psalm focused on the role of God's Word. Psalms 120-134 are known as the Songs of Ascent (120-134) which were sung as the pilgrims ascended to Jerusalem. Psalm 135 calls for people to stand in the courts of the temple and bless the LORD. Psalm 136 recounts the history of God's deliverance using the temple worship refrain (see 2 Chronicles 5:13). Psalm 137 makes this joyous time a sad memory in Babylon. This book then closes with seven Psalms of David (Psalms 138-145) and four Psalms calling us to Praise the LORD (146-150). Two Psalms are quoted by Christ about Himself (110 in Matthew 22:44 and 118 in Matthew 21:42). Psalms 128 and 129 form the middle of this last book. Psalm 128 begins: "Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD" and Psalm 129 ends with a call for judgment on those who hate Zion. The bookends of this fifth book are: "Oh, give thanks (yadah) to the LORD . . . Let everything that has breath praise (hallel) the LORD."

It concerns God and His Word, showing that all blessings of man (Book 1), of Israel (Book 2), of the Sanctuary (Book 3), and of the earth and all men (Book 5), are based upon obedience to the Word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). Disobedience brought man's sorrows, Israel's dispersion, the Sanctuary's ruin, and earth's miseries; and it is only by obedience to God's Word that these curses will be removed. While several divisions distinguish the other books, this book is, like God's Word itself, a perfect whole. It is the only one of the 5 books with an even number of Psalms.

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9phNEaPrv8>

In Conclusion

- The Book of Psalms, generally believed to be the most widely read and most highly treasured of all the Books of the Old Testament, is a fascinating collection of poems, hymns, and prayers that express not only the religious feelings of the Jews throughout various periods of their national history. The Psalms form the expression of the soul of man in relationship with God. In every emotion of life, the Psalms give expressions to that relationship. When in despair and our cries seem lost, we learn to count on a God who will see, hear, and respond. When in celebration, we find a God who informs and enriches our celebration. The Psalms teach us to let God's Word live in us richly (Colossians 3:16). The Psalms are for us to enjoy, contemplate, learn about God, and grow our relationship with Him. God is for the righteous. He is our God (Psalm 63).

How do we apply this?

Many of the Bible's main ideas are echoed in the Psalms: praise, thankfulness, faith, hope, sorrow for sin, worship of God's loyalty, love and unwavering help, etc. The writers of the

Psalms always express their true feelings, whether they are praising God for His blessings or complaining in times of trouble. And they teach us that, no matter what we are going through, we, can also praise Him while we await the victory.

Read Psalm 1, then Psalm 150. Thank God for allowing you to express your deepest emotions to Him. If you are hurting, use Psalm 13 as a guide and write your own lament to God. If you are rejoicing, meditate on Psalm 30 and echo the praise found there. No matter your circumstance, the psalms contain a corresponding word that will help you share your heart with the Lord.

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