

The Book of Psalms

Four Old Testament poetical books (for the most part) were written during the United Kingdom Stage. These are: the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

The Psalms. There are three basic ways to study the Psalms:

- (1) by book division,
- (2) by authorship, and
- (3) by subject matter.

I. BY BOOK DIVISION (EACH ENDS WITH A DOXOLOGY).

There are five of these divisions: 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150. Note the doxology at the end of each division.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen" (41:13).

"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen" (72:18-19).

"Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen" (89:51-52).

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord" (106:48).

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord" (150:6).

Some believe these five divisions in a general way reflect the main thought expressed in the Pentateuch (first five books in the Bible). Note some examples from each of these stages.

A. 1-41 (corresponds to Genesis) Key word is man.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly..." (1:1).

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (8:4).

"What man is he that feareth the Lord?" (25:12).

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (34:8).

B. 42-72 (corresponds to Exodus) Key word is deliverance.

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (50:15).

"For he hath delivered me out of all trouble..." (54:7).

"For thou hast delivered my soul from death..." (56:13).

"For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth..." (72:12).

C. 73-89 (corresponds to Leviticus) Key word is sanctuary.

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (73:17).

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary..." (77:13).

"And he built his sanctuary like high palaces..." (78:69).

D. 90-106 (corresponds to Numbers) Key words are unrest, wanderings. (See chapters 90 and 106.)

E. 107-150 (corresponds to Deuteronomy) Key phrase is Word of God. (See chapter 119.)

II. BY AUTHORSHIP.

A. David

1. The Shepherd Psalms: 8, 19, 23, 29, 144

2. The Sinner Psalms: 32, 38, 51

3. The Suffering Psalms: 3-7, 11-14, 17, 22, 25-28, 31, 34-35, 39-41, 53-59, 61-64, 69-70, 86, 109, 140-143

4. The Satisfied Psalms: 2, 9, 15-16, 18, 20-21, 24, 30, 36-37, 52, 60, 65, 68, 72, 95, 101, 103, 105, 108, 110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-139, 145

B. Korah: 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87

C. Asaph: 50, 73-83

D. Heman: 86

E. Ethan: 89

F. Solomon: 127

G. Moses: 90

H. Hezekiah: 120-121, 123, 125-126, 128-130, 132, 134

I. Anonymous: 1, 10, 33, 43, 66-67, 71, 91-94, 96-100, 102, 104, 106-107, 111-119, 135-137, 146-150

III. BY SUBJECT MATTER.

- A. The Penitential Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. These are Psalms where the author confesses his sins to God.
- B. The Imprecatory Psalms: 35, 55, 58-59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 140. To imprecate is to call down judgment upon God's enemies.
- C. The Degree or Ascent Psalms: 120-134. There are several theories to explain the meaning of the name for these Psalms.
 - 1. That Hezekiah, who wrote ten of them, introduced this title as a reminder of his supernatural healing (2 Ki. 20:9-11).
 - 2. That they were sung as the Levite choir ascended the fifteen stairs in the Temple court.
 - 3. That they were sung by Jewish pilgrims en route to the Temple on various annual feast days.
- D. The Hallel (Hallelujah) Psalms: 113-118. These Psalms were sung on the night of the Passover. Our Lord and his disciples doubtless sang them during the close of the Passover meal in the upper room.
- E. The Historical Psalms: 78, 105, 106. These three Psalms, which depict the history of Israel, may be summarized as follows:
 - 1. The sins of Israel
 - a. They refused to walk in God's law (78:10).
 - b. They forgot his works (78:11, 42; 106:13).
 - c. They spoke against him (78:19).
 - d. They didn't trust his salvation (78:22).
 - e. They lied to him (78:36).
 - f. They grieved him (78:40).
 - g. They limited him (78:41).
 - h. They worshiped graven images (78:58; 106:19).
 - i. They envied his leader Moses (106:16).
 - j. They despised the Promised Land (106:24).
 - k. They murmured in their tents (106:25).
 - l. They ate the sacrifices of the dead (106:28).
 - m. They mingled among the heathen (106:35).
 - n. They sacrificed their sons and daughters to devils (106:37).
 - o. They shed innocent blood (106:38).
 - 2. The grace of God.
 - a. He remembered his covenant when they cried unto him (105:8-11).
 - b. He divided the sea (78:13).
 - c. He led them with a cloud by day (78:14).
 - d. He led them with a fire by night (78:14).
 - e. He provided water for them out of rocks (78:15).
 - f. He rained down manna for them (78:24).
 - g. He was full of compassion and forgave their iniquity (78:38).
 - h. He wrought signs for them in Egypt (78:43; 105:27-36).
 - i. He brought them to the border of the Promised Land (78:54).
 - j. He cast out the heathen before them (78:55).
 - k. He chose David to lead them (78:70-71).
 - l. He allowed no man to hurt them (105:14).
 - m. He fed them (78:72).
 - n. He reproved kings for their sake (105:14).
 - o. He elevated them through Joseph (105:17).
 - p. He gave them the riches of Egypt (105:37).
 - q. He kept them all strong (105:37).
 - r. He continually forgave them (106:43).
 - s. He continually heard their cry (106:44).
- F. The Acrostic Psalms: 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145. These nine Psalms are also called the alphabetical Psalms. This is so because each line of these Psalms begins with a successive letter of the twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is of course the most famous of the acrostic Psalms. It has twenty-two stanzas. Each stanza has eight verses, for a total of 176. Each of these stanzas begins with one of the twenty-two Hebrew letters. Not all of these Psalms are complete in this arrangement; that is, some are missing a letter or more. Thus we find:
 - 1. Psalms 9, 10, 25 are missing several letters.
 - 2. Psalms 34, 45 have all but one letter.
 - 3. Psalms 37, 111, 112, 119 have all the letters.It is reasonable to suppose that the acrostic device was designed to assist the memory.
- G. The Messianic Psalms.
 - 1. His obedience (40:6-10). (Compare Heb. 10:5-7.)
 - 2. His zeal (69:9). (See Jn. 2:17.)

3. His rejection (118:22-23). (See Mt. 21:42.)
4. His betrayal (41:9; 55:12-14). (See Mt. 26:14-16, 21-25.)
5. His sufferings (22:1, 6-8, 16, 18; 31:5; 34:20; 69:21; 129:3). (See Mt. 27:34, 48; Lk. 23:46; Jn. 19:33-36; Psa. 129:3.)
6. His false witnesses (109:2-3). (See Mt. 26:59-61; 27:39-44.)
7. His prayer for his enemies (109:4). (See Lk. 23:34.)
8. His resurrection (16:10). (Compare with Acts 13:35.)
9. His ascension (68:18). (Compare with Eph. 4:8.)
10. His triumphal entry (24:7-8). (See Rev. 20:1-6.)
11. His high priestly work (110:4). (See Heb. 5-7; 7:1-3.)
12. His marriage (45:2, 6, 8, 13, 15). (See Rev. 19:6-9.)
13. His destruction of the heathen (21:1-12; 110:1, 6). (See also Ps. 2; Rev. 6-19; 18:1-8.)
14. His millennial reign (89:27; 102:16-21; 72:17). (See Mt. 23:39; Rev. 11:15)

IV. SUGGESTED NAMES AND TITLES FOR SOME OF THE PSALMS.

- A. Psalm of the Godly Man (1).
- B. Psalms of Creation (8, 104).
- C. The Good Shepherd Psalm (22).
- D. The Great Shepherd Psalm (23).
- E. The Chief Shepherd Psalm (24).
- F. The Unity Psalm (133).
- G. Psalms of Jerusalem (48, 122, 126, 132, 137).
- H. Family Psalms (127, 128).
- I. The Security Psalm (121).
- J. Psalm of the Only True God (115).
- K. Psalm of the Exodus (114).
- L. Psalm of the Tribulation (46).
- M. The Ladder of Faith Psalm (37).
- N. Psalms of Supreme Praise (103, 148, 150).
- O. The Psalm of Old Age (71).
- P. The Old One Hundredth Psalm (100).
- Q. The Psalm of Death (90).
- R. The Psalm of Life (91).
- S. The Deliverance Psalms (31, 116).
- T. The House of God Psalm (84).
- U. The Wealth of God Psalm (50).
- V. The Word of God Psalms (19, 119).
- W. The Voice of God Psalm (29).
- X. The Mercy of God Psalm (136).
- Y. The Goodness of God Psalms (27, 107).
- Z. The Omniscience and Omnipresence of God Psalm (139) .
- AA. The Omnipotence of God Psalm (147).
- BB. The Psalm of the Davidic Covenant (89).
- CC. The History of Israel Psalms (78, 105, 106).
- DD. The Psalms of the "Why?" (42, 73).
- EE. Psalms of Deepest Despair (69, 88).