

## 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" (89:52).

"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, 36, 51

3. The Suffering Psalms: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 86, 109, 140, 141, 142, 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, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87

C. Asaph: 50, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83

D. Heman: 86

E. Ethan: 89

F. Solomon: 127

G. Moses: 90

H. Hezekiah: 120, 121, 123, 125, 126, 128, 129, 130, 132, 134

- I. Anonymous: 1, 10, 33, 43, 66, 67, 71, 91,92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 135, 136, 137, 146, 147, 148, 149, 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: t 20-134. 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 tot 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).

"Sacrifice and offerings thou didst not desire..., then said I, Lo, I come: In the volume of the book it is written of me."  
(Compare Heb. 10:5-7.)

2. His zeal (69:9). "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (See Jn. 2:17.)

3. His rejection (118:22-23)

"The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner." (See Mt. 21:42.)

4. His betrayal (41:9; 55:12-14).

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (41:9).

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me... but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (55:12-14). (See Mt. 26:14-16, 21-25.)

5. His sufferings (22:1, 6, 7, 8, 16, 18; 31:5; 34:20; 69:21; 129:3).

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (69:21). (See Mt. 27:34, 48.)

"Into thine hand I commit my spirit" (31:5). (See Lk. 23:46.)

"He keepeth all his bones: Not one of them is broken" (34:20) (See Jn. 19:33-36; also 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).

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Compare with Acts 13:35.)

9. His ascension (68:18).

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men." (Compare with Eph. 4:8.)

10. His triumphal entry.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (24:7, 8). (See Acts 1.)

11. His high priestly work (110:4). (See Heb. 5-7.)

12. His marriage (45:2, 6, 8, 13, 15). (See Rev. 19.)

13. His destruction of the heathen (21:1-12; 110:1, 6).

"The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1). (See also Ps. 2.)

"He shall judge among the heathen..." (110:6). (See Rev. 6-19.)

14. His millennial reign (89:27; 102:16-21; 72:17).

"His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him. All nations shall call him blessed" (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)