

Types of Psalms

Psalms is a collection of Hebrew poetry and songs of praise. Just as there are different types and styles of contemporary poetry, there are different types of Psalms. It can be helpful to know the various forms of Psalms as you read. Review the types below, and as you read this week, try to determine the type of each Psalm you read.

Praise Psalms: Probably the greatest portion of psalms are “praise psalms” or “hymnal psalms.” These focus on praising the various attributes of God. They speak of God’s power, knowledge, holiness, and love. These Psalms can help us learn how to praise God better ourselves.

Lament Psalms: These are psalms written during times of trouble, trial, and suffering. They tend to have a common pattern: (1) Explanation of trouble, (2) Statement of trust in God, and (3) Praise towards God for deliverance, whether immediate or in the future. These Psalms can help us cope with difficult times.

Penitential Psalms: These are written by individuals who have sinned, and are turning to God for forgiveness. The psalmist typically confesses his sin and guilt, recognizes God’s holiness, and seeks God’s forgiveness. Psalm 51 is an excellent example—a Psalm written by David after his confrontation with Nathan concerning Bathsheba. These types of Psalms help teach us the appropriate attitude we should have when we find sin in our own lives.

Psalms of Ascent: These are Psalms 120-134. Many believe these were sung by Jews as they travelled to Jerusalem for annual feasts, or by temple singers as they ascended the stairs of the temple. These Psalms contain a great deal of wisdom in growing in God’s care and love.

Wisdom Psalms: Also known as ‘teaching’ or ‘didactic’ psalms. These Psalms speak to the importance of obeying, serving, and fearing God, and they often touch on the consequences of disobedience. They can be spotted fairly easily, because they often tell how one can be blessed or what makes one a fool. These Psalms provide a great deal of practical wisdom for us today.

Imprecatory Psalms: These are difficult for many people. They call to God to fight and punish the Psalmist’s enemies. They seem vindictive, but they aren’t. They are written by men who wish to see God honored, and wish to see His enemies defeated. These Psalms teach a great and frightening lesson about the end of those who oppose God and His people. They are a great reminder of why we do not want to be God’s enemies.

Messianic Psalms: These, of course, are Psalms that point to Christ in either type or prophecy. Sometimes the events of a Psalm might be the experience of the psalmist, but they foreshadowed the experience of Christ. Other times the words are clearly a prophetic foretelling about Jesus. These Psalms describe Christ in vivid portrayal, and are an excellent way for us to learn more about our Savior!

“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Psalms 42-72

The Psalms: Book 2

Overview

This week our reading plan takes us through the second book or collection of Psalms, which covers Psalms 42-72. This section contains 18 of David’s Psalms, one Psalm by Asaph, seven Psalms by the Sons of Korah, Solomon’s only Psalm, and four that are unattributed. More of David’s Psalms will be found in the remaining books, but the majority of David’s Psalms are found in the first two books. Thus, at the end of Psalm 72 we read, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.”

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Psalms 42-47

Tuesday: Psalms 48-53

Wednesday: Psalms 54-59

Thursday: Psalms 60-65

Friday: Psalms 66-72



The Books of Psalms: Perhaps you noticed as you finished up Psalm 41 that before Psalm 42 is the title, “Book Two.” Psalms is divided up into five books or collections. Each of the books ends with a doxology—an ascription of praise to God.

Different theories exist about how and why the books are compiled. Some believe it could be primarily by author, or perhaps by time-period. One interesting theory holds that Psalms was compiled to correlate with the five books of the Pentateuch.

Book 1 (Psalms 1-41) ~ Genesis:

The first book of Psalms has a great deal to say about man.

Book 2 (Psalms 42-72) ~ Exodus:

The second book speaks at length about deliverance.

Book 3 (Psalms 73-89) ~ Leviticus:

The third book says much about the sanctuary of God.

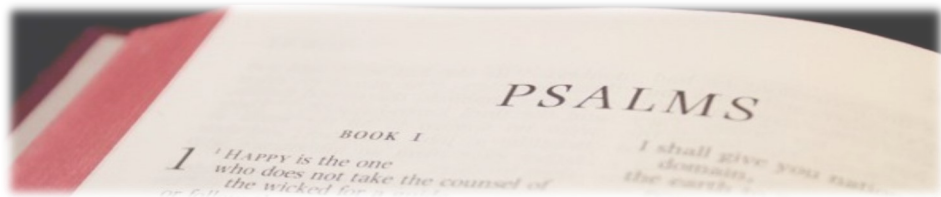
Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) ~ Numbers:

Often called “the dark book of Psalms” because it deals with testing.

Book 5 (Psalms 107-150) ~ Deuteronomy:

A heavy focus and emphasis on God’s Word.

How did you do with memorizing a Psalm last week? How about trying another? Pick out a Psalm from this week’s reading, and try to memorize it in its entirety!



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