



Introducing the Psalms

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S USE OF THE PSALMS

- Songs
- Prayers of every kind
- Practical wisdom
- Expression of emotion
- Messianic prophecy



2. CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY

- Lack of word rhyme and clearly defined poetic rhythm
- Strong use of figurative speech (Psalm 18:31; Psalm 23:4; Psalm 51:4)
- Uses Thought Rhyme or Parallelism (arranging thoughts in relation to each other)
- Kinds of Parallelism

Synonymous Parallelism: Thought of first line repeated in second (Psalm 24:2).

Antithetical parallelism: Thought of first line contrasted in second line (Psalm 1:6).

Synthetic parallelism: First and second line have relationship to each other of cause and effect or proposition and conclusion (Psalm 119:11).

Progressive Parallelism

Staircase: Each line adds an element to complete a thought (Psalm 1:1).

Climactic: First line is repeated and expanded to complete the thought (Psalm 29:1).

Introverted Parallelism: The first line is closely related to the fourth and the second to the third (Psalm 91:14).

3. ORIGIN OF THE WORD "PSALMS"

"Psalms" is related to the Greek word, psallontes, a word translated "making melody," which literally means "plucking the strings of." It shows that the psalms were sung, likely to the accompaniment of stringed instruments like the lyre. See Ephesians 5:19; also Amos 5:23.

4. HISTORY AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE PSALMS

- Written from the time of the exodus (1400 BC) to the time of the exile and return (450 BC). Psalm 90 is written by Moses; Psalm 102 during the exile; Psalm 85/125 post-exile.
- Authors include the following:
 - David (wrote 73 psalms, mostly in Books 1-2); see Ps 51
 - Asaph (12) [See 1 Chronicles 16:1-7]; see Ps 73-83
 - Sons of Korah (11) [Levites serving in temple; see 1 Chronicles 26:1-19; Ps 87]
 - Solomon (2: see 1 Kgs. 4:29-32; Ps 72, 127]
 - Moses (1, the earliest, Psalm 90)
 - Heman (1, "the singer, " 1 Chronicles 6:33; see Ps 88)
 - Ethan (1, see 1 Chron. 15:19; Ps 89)
 - Anonymous (48 psalms)

5. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE PSALMS

- Book 1: Ps 1-41; Book 2: Ps 42-72; Book 3: Ps 73-89; Book 4: Ps 90-106; Book 5: Ps 107-150
- Each book ends with a doxology.

6. KINDS OF PSALMS

Wisdom	Royal Messianic
Torah	Pilgrim Songs or Songs of Ascent
Hymns of Zion	Hymns of Praise
Individual and National Lament	Songs of Trust
Individual and National Thanksgiving	Enthronement
Imprecatory	Mixed
9 Psalms are acrostic or alphabetical (9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145)	Antiphonal (Ps 20-21; 24; and 118)

7. TITLES, SUPERSCRPTIONS, and NOTATIONS

- Most scholars see the titles as very reliable.
- They may reference the author or the situation behind the psalm or provide musical direction.
- Here are some examples:
 - Psalm 22, "Doe of the Morning:" likely a tune to which the psalm was sung or spoken.
 - Psalm 46, "Alamoth," which means maidens, probably denotes female voices.
 - Psalm 39, "Jeduthun," was probably a chief musician.
 - Psalms 120-134, "Songs of Ascent," were holiday pilgrimage psalms
 - 55 psalms have "To the chief musician."
 - Psalm 30, "Dedication of the House," was set aside for dedicating the temple.
 - Psalm 53, "According to mahalath," was probably a term referring to dance.
 - Psalms 32; 42-45; 52-55; 74; 88; 89; 142, "maskil:" perhaps a psalm of instruction.
 - Psalm 5, "Nechiloth," probably refers to wind instruments.
 - Psalms 4; 6; 54-55; 67; 76, "Neghinoth," refers to stringed instruments.
 - "Selah" occurs 71 times and relates to the Hebrew word for "raise." It could mean to raise one's voice, to increase volume or to raise one's hands. It could also denote an instrumental interlude.
 - 13 Psalms refer to the situation in which David wrote them (Psalms 7; 34; 52; 54; 56-57; 59; and 142 during the period of Saul; Psalms 3, 18; 51; 60; and 63 during his reign over all Israel).

LIVING THE PSALMS

1. God welcomes every need and every emotion in prayer.
2. Psalms are teaching prayers.
3. Our faith is both individual and corporate.
4. The Christian life of prayer and praise is rooted in the character, attributes, and actions of God.
5. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs "pluck at the heart."