

The Book of Psalms

*A study guide with introductory comments,
summaries, outlines, and review questions.*

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Studying the Psalms

The purpose of this study is to provide a brief summation of each Psalm, an annotation for each chapter, to be read prior to the reading of a Psalm.

Hopefully, each synopsis will provide a deeper understanding of why a certain Psalm was written - under what circumstance was it penned - and what message it has for the church - and us, personally - today!

Background Information

The Psalms were written in Palestine and Babylon from about 1,500 - 450 B.C. 100 of the Psalms have names prefixed to them.

They are Moses (1); David (73); Solomon (2), Asaph (12); Heman (1); Ethan (1), and the sons of Korah (10).

David and Solomon wrote several of the remaining 50 without authors' names; the authorship of others cannot be determined.

Ezra is perhaps the collector and compiler of the Psalms in their present form.

Title

The Hebrew title of Psalms is “Sepher Tehillim,” meaning, “The Book of Praises.”

The English Psalms is from the Greek title “Psalmoi,” meaning, “songs.”

This word is translated “psalms” 7 times in the New Testament - (Lk. 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5: 19 and Colossians 3:16).

The word “Psalter” is from the Greek, “Psalterion,” meaning “a harp,” or other stringed instruments.

The 150 Psalms are divided into 5 books in the Hebrew Bible for some unknown reason, perhaps to correspond with the 5 books of Moses or the Pentateuch.

Psalms, as we have it today, is just like it was when Jesus Christ used the book.

Book 1. - Called the **Genesis book of Psalms (chapters 1 through 41)**

Its general theme concerns man - God 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 the hope of redemption through Christ (Genesis 12-50 with Psalms 16-41), concluding with a benediction and a double "*Amen*" (Psalms 41:13).

Book 2. - called the **Exodus book of 31 Psalms (chapter 42 through 72)**

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 the "redeemer" and deliverance (Exodus 4-15 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*).

Book 3. - called the **Leviticus book of 17 Psalms (73 through 89)**

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).

Book 4. called the **Numbers** book of 17 Psalms (90 through 106)

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 instruction 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" (Psalms 106:48).

Book 5. Called **Deuteronomy** book of 44 Psalms
(chapter 107 through 150)

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.

Keep in mind as you read through the Psalms, as I stated earlier, that the book of Psalms was what we would refer to as a "*hymn book*" for the Old Testament saints - and the early Church. Each Psalm was written to be sung!