

PSALMS

1)– The word "psalms" is from a Greek word meaning "to pluck at strings." "Psalter" is a collection of psalms, from the Greek word meaning "stringed instrument." /// Collection began in David's time, completed in 400 BC, about 600 years. /// "For David" or "For Leader" means for David or Leader to recite. /// The meaning of "Selah" is unknown, possibly an instruction for the chanter. In the language of the Mizo tribe in India, the word "Shelah" means, "Say it again." This may represent the migration of the half of the tribe of Mansseh that settled east of the Jordan River. /// 40% of quotes in the New Testament from the Old Testament are from the Psalms. /// Probably the only psalms dating from the time of David are 2, 16, 18, 29, 68, 82, 108, and 110. The rest were composed in the pre-exile, exile, and post-exilic times and attributed to David. However, **Philip Yancey** says that 73 of the psalms were written by David. /// C. S. Lewis, in commenting on the "problem psalms," says, "Of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst." The "higher calling" of the Jews led to snobbery and self-righteousness that resulted in inappropriate ways such as the "cursing psalms." E. g. 109, 137, 69. He used words like "diabolical," "contemptuous," "barbaric," and others. ///

J. Clinton McCann (NIB) says that his approach to Psalms is theological, that they were "appropriated, preserved, and transmitted not only as records of human response to God, but also as God's word to humanity." /// The "historical-critical" approach falls short of doing justice to their significance as scripture.

Philip Yancey (The Bible Jesus Read): The Psalms should be read as letters **TO** God. not messages **FROM** God – They represent spiritual journeys of real men, so some are lament, others imprecation, ascent, royal, praise, thanks, etc. /// Throughout the Psalms, if you read those attributed to David, he appears "a timid, pious, neurotic soul favored by God, but never a giant of strength and valor." David viewed his exploits as fully expedited by God

2) 2:7 – Jesus began his ministry with this verse, when he was baptized by John, and a voice from heaven proclaimed that Jesus was his Son (Mark 1:11). (See Acts 13:33 and Heb 5:6.)

(Also 22:2 for the Psalm Jesus quoted to end his ministry.)

3) 6:1 – Probably referring to dropping an octave from a flute's soprano or alto to tenor or bass.

4) 14:1—So April 1 should be a special holiday for atheists.

5) 16:10 – This verse is attributed by some to Jesus coming off the cross into death of the body.

6) 22:1 – Jesus ended his ministry with this Psalm (Mark 15:34, Matt 27:46). (See Psalm 2:7 for the Psalm Jesus quoted to begin his ministry.)

7) 22:13 – Bashan was in Manasseh's territory, east of the Sea of Galilee, famous for its buffalo. Later named Batanea, part of Herod Phillip's tetrarchy.

8) 22:22 – With this verse the psalmist makes a change from whining to praise.

9) 29:3-9 – See Revelation 10:3-4 where "seven thunders raise their voices..."

10) 30:1ff – Probably to be sung at the dedication of the rebuilt Temple, under Ezra. Or in 164. during the Maccabean Revolt.

11) 32:1ff – This was David's "repentance song" after Nathan challenged him about his treatment of Uriah. See also Ps. 51.

12) 34:1 – Reference to 1 Sam 21:13 when David sought refuge from King Saul in the court of Achish. "Abimilech" may be a scribal typo, or a generic name for Philistine kings.

13) 38:15 – Lit.: It is for you, Yahweh, O Adonai, my Elohim.

- 14) 49 header – See 1 Chron 25:1-3 where there are listed the three clans of chief musicians, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun.
- 15) 41:10 – This may have been Ahithopel, Bathsheba's grandfather, who joined Absalom's rebellion, probably in response to David's conduct with Bathsheba and his disposal of Uriah. See 2 Sam 15:12 and John 13:18. But also a reference to Judas Isc., see Mark 14:21.
- 16) 42:1 – Korah, a Levite, led a rebellion against Moses in a religious schism during the exodus. (Numbers 16:1-3). But the Korahites survived to become a hereditary guild of Temple musicians (1Chron).
- 17) 48:2-3 – Zion is literally Saphon (or Sapan) – meaning simply 'north.' According to Robert Wright in "The Evolution of God" the King is Baal, and Wright tries to equate Baal with Yahweh.
- 18) 56:4, 10-11 – In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust. See 1 Samuel 21 where David feigns madness.
- 19) 78:1ff – The entire Psalm 78 is a summary of the history of the Israelites from Moses to David. See Psalm 105 for the summary from Abraham to Moses. Jesus quoted vs. 2 in Matt 13:35.
- 20) 83:11 – Oreb and Zeeb – "Raven" & "Wolf" – two towns captured by Gideon, Judges 7:25. Zeeba & Zalmunna – two kings killed by Gideon, Judges 8:5-11.
- 21) 87:4 – Egypt here is denoted by Rahab in most translations, as it is in 89:11 and Isaiah 51:9. Rahab means "storm." It is the name of the mythical monster destroyed by God at the beginning of time to create the world. Also called Leviathan and used as a symbolic representation of Egypt. A dragon was appropriate because it was the richest country in the world for thousands of years, winding like a great dragon across the land. (See Ezekiel 29:3,4). (Also the name of the prostitute who sheltered Caleb and Joshua in Jericho.)
- 22) 95:8 – Gen 17:7, where Moses strikes the rock to get water, the second miracle with water. See also Exodus 15:23 (the first miracle with water) and Heb 3:7ff.
- 23) 105:7 – See #19 above.
- 24) 105:14-15. Probably refers to Genesis when God reproves Abimelech, king of Gerar, after Abimelech had taken Sarah into his harem (Gen 20:7). This passage shielded priests in the Middle Ages from being tried by secular courts. Clerical courts did not pass the death sentence so even murder did not result in capital punishment.
- 25) 105:23 – Ham was the son of Noah from whom the peoples of NE Africa are descended according to genealogical lists in Genesis. Mizraim (Egypt) is one of the sons of Ham (Gen 10:6).
- 26) 109:6-19. A prophecy of Judas Iscariot. See Acts 1:20 and John 17:12.
- 27) 110:1 – See Matt 23:41-46 and notes, where the Jews use this vs to refute Jesus's Messiahhood.
- 28) Ps 115-118 are sung during the feast of the Passover, and therefore this certainly was the hymn sung at the Last Supper (Mark 14:26, etc.).
- 29) 119 – An elaborate acrostic. Twenty-two eight-line stanzas. First 8 lines begin with "aleph," next 8 with "beth," on up to the last eight which begin with "taw," the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The theme is the law: decrees, commandments, precepts, statutes, etc.
- 30) Psalms 120-134 were sung as the pilgrims "ascended" to Jerusalem, all the city at the top then.

- 31) 120:5 – Meshech was the son of Japheth, Kedar the son of Ishmael, both used here poetically to signify non-Jewish communities in general.
- 32) Psalm 132 was sung during the liturgical ceremony as the ark was carried in procession to the Temple.
- 33) 137:1ff – Clearly post-exilic -- the rivers of Babylon were the Tigris and Euphrates, or perhaps referring to the many irrigation canals in the area, or both.
- 34) 137:7 – The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, here getting retribution for Jacob's (Israel's) deception in Gen 25 and 27.