

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adults Sunday School

THE BOOK OF PSALMS – THE BOOK OF PRAISES

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Title: The Hebrew title of this book is “Praise” or “The Book of Praises”, which indicates that the main contents of the book are praise, prayer and worship. The name “Psalm” came from the Greek word, *psalmos* which translates the Hebrew word *mizmor*. This was the technical term for a song sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The early church fathers called it the Psalter.

The Psalm is the National Hymn Book of Israel. It contains 150 poems set to music for worship. Worship is the key idea. The Psalm praises the Lord, exalt His attributes, magnify His names, proclaim His Word, and extol His goodness. Every human experience is related to Him. In the Psalms, we see the life of the believer pictured in all of the experiences of joy and sorrow; victory and failure.

- B. Authorship: Often the titles of the psalm include the Hebrew preposition “le” prefixed to a name of a person. This preposition may mean “of,” “to,” or “for.” Therefore in some cases it may mean authorship and in others it may mean “for the use of” or “dedicated to.” However, those psalms that bear the name of David in their titles (75) were probably composed by him (25% of all the psalms). 34 psalms have no title and therefore their author is unknown. Some of the other authors named in the titles are:

1. Jeduthun: (Psalms 39,62,77) He was a Levite whom David appointed to be the director of music at the temple together with Heman and Asaph (1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 25:1,6; 2 Chronicles 5:12).
2. The Sons of Korah: (Psalms 42; 45-49; 84-85; 87-88) They were descendants of Kohath, son of Levi, who served in the temple as musicians (1 Chronicles 6:22). Their psalms are also known as the Korahite psalms.
3. Asaph: (Psalms 50; 73-83) He was one of David’s choirmasters and a descendant of Gershon, son of Levi (1 Chronicles 6:39; 15:17; 2 Chronicles 5:12). His psalms are also known as the Asaphite psalms.
4. Solomon: Psalm 72 and 127 are attributed to Solomon.
5. Heman the Ezrahite: (Psalm 88) He was a sage (1 Kings 4:31) or a leading singer of the family of Kohath, son of Levi (1 Chronicles 6:16,33,39,43-44; 15:17,19; 16:41-42; 25:1,4-6; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 35:15).
6. Ethan the Ezrahite: (Psalm 89) He was a counselor of Solomon (1 Kings 4:31).
7. Moses: (Psalm 90) He was the great law-giver and the servant of God.

- C. Recipients: Some psalms were written to praise God; others were written to encourage Israel. And there were also psalms that address to mankind in general.

- D. Date of Writing: In identifying the authors, it is obvious that the majority of the Psalms were written during the time of David. Technically, the Psalms cover a thousand years of history from Moses (1500 BC) to the post-exilic times (500 BC). But the great majority were written between 1030 – 930 BC.

E. Values: To individual and the church:

1. Prayer: In the cries that are uttered to God here, every emotion is represented – all the grief and sorrows, doubts and fears, hopes, cares, perplexities. John Calvin called the Book of Psalms, “An Anatomy of all Parts of the Soul.”
2. Praise: Praise is the expression of man’s appreciation for God and a longing for others to be moved to express the same appreciation. Israel praised God for His acts in the past: Creation, Exodus, Conquest, victories, and restoration from exile. Israel praised the perfections of the Lord, His kingship, His revelation and His covenant.
3. Worship: The Psalms can serve as a useful manual of prayer and praise for public worship. They were used liturgically in the Temple, synagogue and throughout the history of the church.
4. Inspiration: The Psalms inspire the believer with the hope of the kingdom of God. They have brought comfort, encouragement, peace and assurance to many troubled hearts. The book of Psalms is a most valuable tool for personal counseling. The psalms speak to the heart and transform it.
5. Doctrine: There are more New Testament (NT) quotations from the Book of Psalms than from any other book in the OT. Our Lord Jesus and the Apostles loved this book. The NT therefore becomes a major source of help for the interpretation of the Psalms, especially the messianic psalms. The book of Psalms can be used to explain Christ’s ministry, resurrection, exaltation and kingdom rule of present and future.

II. UNDERSTANDING PSALMS

To appreciate the Psalms, we need to understand the structure of the book. Unlike English poetry, which emphasizes rhyme and meter, Hebrew poetry relies on other characteristics for its impact. These include parallelism, rhythm, and figures of speech.

A. Parallelism: English verse manipulates sound, and emphasizes rhyme and meter. Hebrew poetry repeats and rearranges thoughts rather than sounds. It is important to be aware of parallelism. Our understanding and interpretation of the text hinges on sensing this thought pattern. There are several types of parallel arrangement of thoughts. The three basic ones are as follow:

1. Synonymous Parallelism: It indicates verses in which the same thought is repeated in different words. Eg. Psalm 2:4, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”
2. Antithetical Parallelism: It indicates verses in which a thought is emphasized by a following contrasting thought. Eg. Psalm 34:10, “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”
3. Synthetic Parallelism: It indicates a pattern of adding thoughts to explain or develop an original expression. Eg. Psalm 1:3, “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his lead also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

B. Rhythm: In the original Hebrew text, there are accent marks, which indicate stress to be placed on words and phrases. But this rhythm is not metrical, and it cannot be distinguished in English translations.

- C. Figures of Speech: Hebrew poetry uses vivid image, similes, and metaphors to communicate thoughts and feelings. These, like parallelism, are easily translated into other languages, even though at times, idiomatic uses may be obscure.

III. TYPES OF PSALMS

- A. Psalms of Lament – praise in times of distress. They make up 58% of all the psalms and 74% of David’s psalms. (Psalms 3,5,12,13,25,27,28,31,36,44,52-60,64,69-71,74,79-80,83,85-86,88-89,108,120,140-142)
- B. Psalms of Thanksgiving – praise when God has delivered. These are often called psalms of declarative praise or psalms of narrative praise. They declare what God has done, narrating the story of deliverance. They make up about 13 psalms. However, thanksgivings also occur within laments (cf. Psalm 40:1-11) and many laments end on a note of gratitude for trusting what God will do. Unlike the laments and hymns, thanksgivings are uniformly distributed in the Psalms. (Psalms 30,65,66,75,107,116,124)
- C. Hymns – praise as intimacy develops. These psalms build on the lessons learned during times of distress and deliverance. They celebrate intimacy with God as He reigns over all and delivers those whom He loves. They praise God for who He is – therefore they are also called psalms of descriptive praise. Their association with musical instruments in a setting of worship, sets them apart as hymns. (Psalms 19,24,33,68,100,113,117,134,145-148,150)
- D. Psalms of Enthronement – praise which describes God’s sovereign rule. It is the acknowledgement of God as the powerful Creator and sovereign Lord over all His creation. (Psalms 47,93,96-99)
- E. Psalms of Pilgrimage – praise by worshippers as they traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish festivals. These psalms help to establish a mood of relevant worship. (Psalms 43,46,48,76,84,87,120-134).
- F. Psalms of Royalty – praise to exalt the reign of the earthly king, as well as the heavenly King of Israel. These psalms remind of man’s daily need to make Christ the sovereign ruler of his life. (Psalms 2,18,20,21,45,72,89,101,110,132,144)
- G. Didactic/ Wisdom Psalms – praise that instructs the worshipper in the way of wisdom and righteousness especially in search of God’s will and direction in life. (Psalms 1,37,119)
- H. Historical Psalms – praise that reminds the Israelites of God’s goodness in the past in reference to historical events of the nation of Israel. (Psalms 78,105,106,136)
- I. Hallelujah Psalms – praise the Lord’s blessings and goodness. The climax of this praise for the Lord is found right at the end – Psalm 150. (Psalms 106,111-113,115-117,135,146-150)
- J. Penitential Psalms – expresses the feelings of a repentant heart and longings for forgiveness, cleansing and restoration. (Psalms 6,32,38,51,102,130,143)
- K. Imprecatory Psalms – praise that highlights how the worshipper invokes God’s wrath and judgment against His enemies. It expresses the honest and true feelings of God’s people towards their enemies who have done them wrong, and help to work their way through these negative feelings to a point of forgiveness. (Psalms 7,35,40,55,48,59,69,79,109,137,144)

- L. Messianic Psalms – prophecies concerning the Messiah using the Psalmist’s life experience that ultimate point to the life and ministry of the Messiah. These psalms serve as previews of the person and ministry of the coming Messiah as well as the Second Coming of Christ. (Psalms 2,8,16,22,41,45,69,72,89,102,109-110,118,132)

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE PSALMS

Book	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
Psalms	1-41	42-72	73-89	90-106	107-150
Author	David	Mainly David and Sons of Korah	Mainly Asaph	Mainly Anonymous	Mainly by David
Closing Doxology	41:13	72:18-20	89:52	106:48	150:1-6
Basic Content	Songs of Worship	Hymns of National Interest		Anthems of Praise and Worship	
Topical Likeness to Pentateuch	Genesis: Man and Creation	Exodus: Israel and Redemption	Leviticus: Worship and Sanctuary	Numbers: Man’s sojourn on earth	Deuteronomy: Word of God and praise