

**BIBLE STUDY
THE PSALMS**

September 17, 2018

1. The Psalms are considered one of the wisdom books of the Bible. The Wisdom Books include: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus.
2. There are 150 Psalms. Some editions of the Bible have different numbering of the psalms because of versions of some psalms in the Greek and Hebrew editions of the Old Testament. The Greek is usually one digit behind the Hebrew. Contemporary Bibles now use the numbering in the Hebrew edition.
3. The Psalms have been called a "school of prayer." They not only provide us with models to follow, but inspire us to voice our own deepest feelings and aspirations.
4. Christians have always heard the voice of Christ praying in the psalms. He prays for himself during his life and passion. Today he prays in us as we experience all the emotions in the psalms. We pray for all the people of the world who experience the feelings of the psalms.
5. The Psalms are used at Mass in the response to the first reading. In the Liturgy of the Hours, the entire 150 psalms are prayed in a four week cycle.
6. The Psalms are divided into five "books" or sections.
 - I Psalms 1-41
 - II Psalms 42-72
 - III Psalms 73-89
 - IV Psalms 90-106
 - V Psalms 107-150
7. There are also other sub-divisions that cut across the five divisions
 - Psalms 3-41: Psalms of David (for individuals)
 - Psalms 42-83 Elohists Psalms (Elohim=name for God)
 - Psalms 93-99: God's Kingship
 - Psalms 120-134: Song of Ascents (pilgrimage songs for going up to Jerusalem)
8. Psalm Headings
 - Psalms contain headings which include (1) musical terms and instructions for performance, (2) personal names with which the psalm is associated, (3) historical headings.

“selah” thought to be a direction for the cantor or musicians. Its exact meaning has been lost.

9. Literary Types

Hymns of Praise Psalm 100 135

Songs of Zion Psalm 46

Enthronement Psalms Psalm 47

Thanksgiving Psalm 30

Laments Psalm 22

Largest category, 40

1. Invocation to God
2. Description of present need
3. Prayer for help and deliverance
4. Reasons why God should help the one praying
5. Vow to offer praise or sacrifice when the petition is heard
6. Grateful praise to God

There is usually an abrupt shift from the lament to the praise for deliverance

Trust and thanksgiving are prominent themes

The person is transformed from sadness to joy

Royal Psalms

The King is the speaker (Psalm 18) or is the focus of attention (Psalm 2)

Wisdom Psalms Psalms 1, 119

Liturgical Psalms Psalm 15 118

Historical Psalms Psalm 78

Themes of the Psalms

God is Savior and Creator

Titles: Lord, King, Rock, Shepherd

The Temple as God's dwelling, palace, holy mountain of the Lord, the tent, the shadow of his wings, where a supplicant seeks the face of the Lord

Netherworld: no clear view of an afterlife until later, but a belief in a

shadowy existence after death, sometimes called sheol or the netherworld. It was a pale reflection of life on earth. It was a forbidding place, a place of shadows.

Netherworld also referred to serious illness as opposed to a healthy and vivacious life.

To go to the netherworld meant not only an end of life but also an end to the experience of God's presence.

Enemies: personal foes, or national enemies

God's attributes: justice and righteousness

Righteousness: acting in accordance with the obligations that flow from certain relationships, e.g. the covenant. God is righteous when he is faithful by maintaining world order and saving people from harm. He shows righteousness when he punishes the wicked and defeats Israel's enemies. Justice is a manifestation of righteousness.

A human being shows righteousness when he/she is faithful to the covenant by keeping divine commands and dealing uprightly with neighbor.

God's righteousness is shown in his faithful love—steadfast love

Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd

A song of trust. Maybe a prayer of the king concerning the return from the exile.

God is the good shepherd and the host. (Isaiah 40:11 Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, leading the ewes with care.)

Reminders of the Exodus and the Return from Exile.

Shepherd: universal image of king. Overlapping images of the king and God. The king should represent the care and hospitality of God.

There is nothing I lack. Dt 2: 7 Surely the Lord your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; he has been concerned about your journey through the vast wilderness. I tis now forty years that the Lord your God has been with you and you have lacked nothing.

He guides me along right paths Proverbs 4:11 On the way of wisdom I direct you I lead you on straight paths.

Right paths: the right way, way of righteousness

The valley of the shadow of death: Job 10: 21-22 Before I go whence I shall not return to the land of darkness and gloom, the dark disordered land where darkness is the only light.

Is 50:10 Who among you fears the Lord heeds his servant's voice? Whoever walks in darkness, without any light, yet trusts in the name of the Lord and rely upon their God.

You set the table before me in front of my enemies: the King's victory banquet after a battle in plain of view of enemies

Ps 78: 18 They spoke against God and said, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?"

You anoint my head with oil: commissioning as king and prophet; messiah: the anointed one—Christ

Oil: used especially at banquets Mt 26: 7, Lk 7:37, Jn 12:2

My cup overflows: Psalm 16: 5 Lord, my allotted portion and my cup you have made my destiny secure

Goodness and mercy: the blessings of God's covenant with Israel

Will pursue me: actively seek me out, the Good Shepherd leaves the 99 behind and goes in search of the one lost sheep.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord for endless days: Psalm 27: 4 One thing I ask of the Lord this I seek, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.