

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

Psalms

Nineteenth of 39 Old Testament books, between Job and Proverbs, Psalms is the most-read and best-loved portion of the Hebrew Scriptures. It has served as a book of poetry and prayer for lovers of Jehovah God for 3,000 years and still provides comfort and counsel to the many Christians who regularly soak in its words. Many of these songs and poems were written by David; but Asaph, the sons of Korah, Moses, and Solomon are also mentioned as authors.

The psalmists were men of like passions as we. They wrote, sang, and prayed over a wide range of human emotion and experience: anger, depression, guilt, fear, desire for revenge, gratitude, praise/worship, melancholy, sickness, loneliness, etc. Without denial, the Psalms present a realism consistent with life but are saturated with a robust faith where God is the answer — immediately or eventually — to all life's problems, as well as the source of all its blessings.

Psalms rewards regular contact and can be read twice yearly in a few minutes per day. Read Psalm 1 on January 1 and July 1, and keep the last digit of the date matched with the psalm (January 2 and July 2 — Psalm 2; February 1 and August 1 — Psalm 31, etc.). This completes Psalms in five months, leaving June and December for Proverbs.

The length, location, and content of this book are all noteworthy:

- Psalms has 150 “chapters” (each more correctly called a psalm), more than twice as many as Isaiah, which is next longest with 66.
- One-third as long as the entire New Testament, Psalms takes more pages than any other book (30 percent more than Isaiah).
- With the Bible's middle chapter (117), middle verse (118:8), and middle page, Psalms is at the center of Scripture.
- It contains the Bible's shortest (117) and longest (119) chapters.

Five sections, or books: Psalms 1—41 compose the first book; 42-72, the second; 73-89, the third; 90-106, the fourth; and 107-150, the fifth. All but the last section end with a benediction: “Blessed be the LORD God . . .” (41:13; 72:18ff; 89:52; 106:48).

Top 10 beloved psalms

- 1 - “Blessed is the man . . .”
- 19 - “The heavens declare . . .”
- 23 - “The Lord is my shepherd . . .”
- 27 - “The Lord is my light . . .”
- 46 - “God is our refuge and strength . . .”
- 51 - “Have mercy upon me, O God . . .”
- 91 - “He who dwells in the secret place . . .”
- 100 - “Make a joyful noise . . .”
- 103 - “Bless the LORD, O my soul . . .”
- 121 - “I will lift up my eyes . . .”

More great psalms

- 8 - God and man
- 15 - living close to God
- 34 - goodness of the LORD
- 37 - fate of the wicked and righteous
- 48 - in praise of Mount Zion (Jerusalem)
- 63 - cry from the wilderness
- 67 - for all the world
- 71 - prayer in old age
- 84 - in praise of the temple
- 90 - on the length and meaning of life

- 133 - in praise of unity
- 136 - “His mercy endures forever” in every verse
- 139 - God's omniscience, omnipresence
- 150 - symphony of praise

Similar psalms

- 14 and 53 - nearly identical wording
- 32 and 51 - confession of sin; plea for mercy
- 37 and 73 - attitude toward evildoers
- 42 and 43 - resisting melancholy
- 127 and 128 - on home and family
- 22, 23, 24 - justification, sanctification, glorification
- 92-100 - worship of the reigning Lord

Categories (with psalm samples)

- wisdom for life (1, 15, 101)
- imprecatory, against enemies (52, 58, 59, 109, 140)
- royal, to the king (18, 72, 89)
- nature (8, 19, 104, 148)
- messianic (2, 22, 72, 110)
- ascent to the temple (120-134)
- historical (78, 105, 106, 136)
- hallelujah, or “Praise Jehovah” (111-117, 146-150)

The 119th

This remarkable psalm sings the praises of God's law. Divided into 22 stanzas (one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet) of eight verses each, nearly all its 176 verses mention *law* or a synonym: *word, statutes, judgments, commandments, testimonies*, etc. How ironic that the Bible's longest chapter, conceived and penned from a heart aflame with God, is wholly positive about what is now denounced or discarded by many Christians.

Selah was likely a signal to musicians who accompanied these songs in ancient Israel, and it may have introduced a pause for reflection.

Psalms in a sentence: In all times, places, and circumstances of life, the man/woman with a trusting heart can come before God and be blest: Praise the Lord!