



↻ *Week 1* ↻

PSALMS: A (very) basic introduction

Note- The Psalms are incredibly expansive! The outline below is a very high ‘flyover’, and there is much in the Psalms that I don’t cover here. The following are taken from my message “What do I see”, on July 28th 2019, and from a collection of commentaries and study materials.

Pastor Ethan

First, just what are the Psalms?

- A collection of 150 ancient Hebrew songs of Praise. The Hebrew title is “Book of Praises.”
- Consists of 5 ‘books’, loosely thematically correlating to the five books of the Torah (Pentateuch, the first five books of OT).
- The Psalms are sometimes referred to as “Israel’s Hymnal”
- Vivid expressions of individual faith in God
- The inspired (Holy Spirit) responses of human hearts to God’s revelation of Himself, in the dynamics of real life.
- Our word ‘Psalms’ comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Mizmor”, which occurs in 57 of the psalms. This word connotes musical poetry set to stringed instruments.

The Nature of the Psalms

- Religious lyrical poetry
- Largest collection of ancient lyric poetry in the world
- The Psalms can be very evocative and artistic. They employ significant use of imagery, symbolic language, emotion, and metaphor.
 - “Tree planted by water”.. faithful person
 - “Melting wax”.. fainthearted person
- The Psalms often express both intellectual and emotional content at the same time.
 - Something to KNOW ABOUT GOD
 - Reality of emotions AS WE KNOW GOD
- The Psalms employ poetic form, including parallelism, acrostics (such as Psalm 119), and at times ‘chiastic’ structure.
- The Psalms employ headings, often giving indicators of music, tune, event, authorship, and purpose.
- The Psalms are almost always rooted in specific and actual events. Key! The Psalms are not abstract generalities, but very ‘earthy’, and at times shockingly honest expressions of the human heart crying out to God in the realities of life.

The Content of the Psalms

- The Psalms express the full range of human experience and emotion, including anger, confusion, frustration, fear, courage, repentance, hope, joy, thanksgiving, and more.
- The Psalms are prayers. They express both statements about God, and to God.
 - *The Lord is my Rock* (Psalm 18)
 - *I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint* (Psalm 61)
- The Psalms are often prayers asking God to do something in the present, such as prayers for protection and deliverance.
- Primary examples are *laments* and psalms of *thanksgiving*.

The Heart/Essence of the Psalms

- In their essence, the Psalms express the belief that God is sovereign, that he will establish justice and his rule, his kingdom, in and through his people, here on the earth.
- When faced with opposition, we see prayers for vindication, and a confidence that God will do this.
- When righteousness and justice triumph, we see praise to God thanking Him for what HE HAS DONE.
- Even given the prevalence of laments, it is striking that the Psalms always include, and resolve, with an expression of trust in God/ statements of praise and worship to God
- In Psalms we see a theme that suffering is part of redemption, part of coming to truly know God, his presence, who he is.
- The Psalms recognize that God has created us for righteousness, to reflect His goodness, His nature, in how we actually live, now!
- The Psalms call us to quiet our hearts before God