

19 – Psalms: The Hymnal

- Psalms (Tehillim, Hebrew, *psalmoi*, “a poem to be sung to a stringed instrument”). Musical, odes or poems to be set to music, and lyrics intended for the lyre or harp. **They are the Song book of Israel.**
- The most quoted book in the NT. It is poetry crafted with strong theology
- History instructs, the Law teaches; Prophecy announces, rebukes, chastens; Morality persuades. **The Psalms comfort and encourage.** They are a gift of grace to all of us. We identify readily with Biblical characters. They were real, with real feelings and emotions, struggles and heartbreaks, joys and triumphs, just like us.
- Our poetry is based on rhyme, which is the “parallelism” of sound (similar sounds) and rhythm, the “parallelism” of time (meter, cadence, timing). **Hebrew poetry is different. It is based on the concepts, or a parallelism of ideas.** Hebrew poetry COMPARES ideas in order to enlighten and illuminate, and it CONTRASTS ideas to set them apart and at odds. It also brings ideas together to make whole concepts.
- **SELAH** is found several times in the Psalms, and has been left untranslated. Some have thought it was a musical direction, but we have discovered it is a pause used to connect ideas, not sounds. It connects the end of one chorus with the beginning of the next; it is the connecting of the two subjects together. Derived from *salah*, "to pause," it is not the instruments of music which are to pause but it is our hearts which are to pause and to note the connection of precious truths. It is a tool used by the song writers of Israel to highlight and underscore the truths presented in the Psalms.



- **Who wrote the Psalms?** Sources include:

73	David	1	Heman, the Ezrahite	50	Anonymous
12	Asaph, Head of David’s choir	1	Ethan, the Ezrahite	150	TOTAL
12	Sons of Korah	1	Moses		

- **A “Pentateuch”** Some scholars have divided the Psalms into 5 parts, which very interestingly correspond to the 5 books of the Pentateuch, or the Torah.

1-41	About man	Genesis
42-72	About deliverance	Exodus
73-89	About sanctuary	Leviticus
90-106	About unrest and wandering	Numbers
107-150	About the Word of the Lord	Deuteronomy

- There are many ways to organize the Psalms. Some have classified other categories like **creation** psalms (8, 19), the **Exodus** psalm (78), **penitence** psalm (6) **pilgrimage** psalms (120-134) and **messianic** psalms (2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 87, 89, 102, 110, 118, et al). There are even 9 **acrostic** psalms where the first verse or line begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and so on (9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145). There are **imprecatory** psalms (pleading to God to curse the enemy) (35, 57, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, et al), **penitential** psalms (seeking forgiveness, sorry) (6, 32, 38, 39, 51, 102, 143), and Hallelujah psalms (106, 111, 112, 113, 135, 146-150). Some simply categorize them as **thanksgiving**, **lament**, and **praise** songs. However they are categorized, there is a psalm for just about any human need.

- **Inscriptions: Psalms with instructional notes**

Without inscriptions	34	
Simple inscriptions	52	“A Psalm of David”; “A psalm of Asaph,” etc.
Historical inscriptions	14	“A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son” etc
Purpose inscription	4	“for the Sabbath day” etc
“Songs of Degrees”	15	could be 15 “Steps” of Temple OR could be reference to King Hezekiah
Special inscriptions	31	Musical instructions, inc.

- There are **psalms, or songs, in other places in scripture besides the book of Psalms**. One is in the little book of Habakkuk. Also, Isaiah 38 is a song (psalm) written by King Hezekiah to celebrate his healing. There are several others.

Highlights

The Messianic Psalms: Jesus’ birth, betrayal, agony, death, resurrection, ascension, coming again in glory, and His worldwide reign—all pictured in advance. Here’s just a sampling:

Son of God	2:7; 45:6,7; 102:25,27	No bones broken	34:21
Son of Man	8:4-6; etc	To rise from the dead	16:10
Son of David	139:3,4,27,29	To Ascend to heaven	68:19
Prophet	22:22, 25; 40:9,10	At right hand of God	110:1; 80:17
Priest	110:4	Is the High Priest	110:4
King	2; 24; 72; etc	Will judge the nations	89:3-5
To speak in parables	78:2	Reign to be eternal	89:35-37
Will calm the storm	89:10	People sing Hosanna	118:25-26
To be despised	2:6; 69:19-22	Blessed forever	45:1-4, 8, 18
To be rejected	118:22	Come in glory last days	102:16-23
To be mocked	22:7-8; 89:51-52	Coming of Kingdom	46
To be whipped	129:3	Range of the Kingdom	47
To be derided	69:8, 20	Center of the Kingdom	48
Impaled on a cross	22:1-2, 14-17	The Suffering Savior	Psalms 22
Thirsty	22:16	The Living Shepherd	Psalms 23
Given wine with gall	69:20-22	The Exalted Sovereign	Psalms 24
Lots cast for garments	22:18-19		

7 Compound Titles for God in the Old Testament: All referenced in Psalm 23

YHWH-jireh	<i>The Lord will provide</i>	Genesis 22	I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; (1,2) You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. (5) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. (6)
YHWH-rapha	<i>The Lord that heals</i>	Exodus 15	He restores my soul...(3)
YHWH-shalom	<i>The Lord our peace</i>	Jude 6	He leads me beside the still waters. (2)
YHWH-tsidkenu	<i>The Lord our righteousness</i>	Jeremiah 23	He leads me in the paths of righteousness...(3)
YHWH-shammah	<i>The Lord ever-present</i>	Ezekiel 48	Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (4)
YHWH-nissi	<i>The Lord our banner (protection)</i>	Exodus 17	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; (5)
YHWH-raah	<i>The Lord our Shepherd</i>	Psalms 23	The LORD is my Shepherd...(1)

- One of the most interesting psalms is right in the front, **Psalm 2**. This is the first of the “royal” or Messianic psalms, and it is also a conversation between the triune Godhead, the Holy Spirit (who opens the conversation), the Father, and the Son.
- Psalm 119 is the longest psalm**. It has 22 sections, one for each of the 22 Hebrew letters. Each section is in 16 lines of 8 couplets, each couplet begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

This was just a very quick overview of this incredible book, set in the middle of God’s Word as an act of grace and mercy. Not only are they rich in prophetic importance, historical information and amazing little treasures of knowledge, but they are a beautiful way for us to identify with others of God’s children throughout the ages. They are just as relevant today as they were when they were written.

Many of these songs are written from joyful or hurting hearts. Have you thought of writing your own Psalm?