



Wednesday Bible Education  
*Biblical Theology*  
Lesson 20: Psalms

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## REVIEW

*Questions from last week's lesson:*

1. What is Job about?
2. How does Job speak to us today?

*Answers:*

1. Job is about suffering and patience. Job loses his wealth, servants, children, and his own health. Satan is the one at work afflicting Job, while his friends attempt to comfort him. Finally, God answers Job and restores him.

### ***Summary Statement***

The book of Job is about the suffering of the righteous, the limits of human understanding, and God's sovereign administration of the universe he created.

2. Understanding Job will help us understand that we do not know or understand everything that happens in our lives, or the lives of those we know around us.

Understanding Job will help us keep life on this earth in proper perspective. Life is short and fleeting. Suffering is painful, but the life to come is eternal and eternally more important and rewarding to those who trust in Jesus Christ.

Understanding Job will help us understand something about Satan and his work. It should keep us from attributing too much power to him.

Understanding Job will teach us patience. We shouldn't jump to quick conclusions about our own lives, or the lives of others.

## INTRODUCTION

**W**hat is in the book of Psalms? The book is a collection of songs, poetry, history, prayers, and prophecy. Though written by different authors at different times and occasions, the psalms unify around the hope for the Davidic Messiah who is

the Anointed Son King of Yahweh whose coming and kingdom will bring judgment, peace, righteousness, and restoration to the earth.

### **Book Summary**

The book of Psalms teaches us how to worship, trust, and hope in Yahweh, the God of covenant faithfulness, and his Son, the Anointed Davidic King.

### **Lesson Objective**

This lesson covers the book of Psalms. The lesson considers the structure and content of the book, along with major themes and practical applications to modern readers. We will also consider what Psalms reveals about Christ and his kingdom as it fits into the Bible's main story.

## **OBSERVATION**

Psalms is the second book of the wisdom books in our Bibles coming after Job. The title in Greek comes from words that refer to singing songs with the accompaniment of stringed instruments. The title in the Hebrew collection meant praises.

Psalms are biblical poetry, and more specifically, Hebrew poetry. The content of the Bible can be divided into three main types. 1) Narrative/story that makes up about 43% of the Bible. Narrative includes history, biography, and parable. 2) Poetry makes up about 33% of the Bible and includes lyrical poetry like in the Psalms and wisdom writing like in Proverbs. 3) The rest of the content, about 24%, is prose. Prose includes lectures, essays, or letters on various subjects, like what is found in the Sermon on the Mount, Hebrews, and Romans.

Poetry has to do with the form of the expression, and we might say the beauty of the form of expression. Though distinct from lecture or story, poetry speaks to human experience and uses accessible figures and images. Poetry typically has layered meaning within a compact form and has intricate structure beneath the surface, such as acrostics, chiasms, number schemes, etc. Biblical poetry is aesthetically artistic, but is not for pleasing effect only, but also communicates truth.

Poetry uses various rhetorical devices such as images, metaphors, similes, idioms, figures of speech, hyperbole, personification, paradox, and parallelism, which can be comparison or contrast. Hebrew poetry doesn't rely on rhyme and meter like English poetry, but rather uses the above mentioned devices to deliver the desired effect and communicate the desired truth.

The Psalms is a collection of 150 individual psalms and most of the psalms have superscriptions, or headings, that contain information about the author, occasion, purpose, and musical direction for the psalm. The superscriptions are not considered part of the inspired text, but are considered accurate and reliable. Most of them contain musical directions, tunes for singing, instruments to be used for accompaniment, and some ancient words we don't

know the meaning of, such as *shiggaion*, *miktam*, *maskil*, and *selah*.

The psalms were written by several different authors. The most, 75 of them, are attributed to David. 10 are by the Sons of Korah, and 12 by Asaph. 2 are attributed to Solomon and 1 each to Moses, Heman, and Ethan. The rest of the psalms are anonymous, which is 48 of them. The psalms were written over about a 900 year span, with the oldest written by Moses and the most recent written after the exile.

Reading the psalms and comparing them with each other, we can identify different types of psalms and categorize them. The major categories are thanksgiving, praise, lament, royal/messianic, wisdom, kingship, creation, and imprecatory. Imprecatory psalms are often controversial as they call for God's wrath and judgment against his enemies in stark terms. The key to understanding imprecations is to understand them as covenantal prayers asking God to do what he has already said he will do. Many psalms have a major type and have minor elements of the other types. For instance, a major lament psalm may have minor elements of wisdom, imprecations, etc.

Psalms are interconnected by authors, themes, words/phrases, types, imagery, and more. This interconnectedness also extends outside the Psalms to other Bible books, like the law, the prophets, and wisdom writings. The interconnectedness of the psalms helps us understand the meaning of individual psalms and the flow of the Psalms as a book.

The order of the Psalms in our English Bibles is what is referred to as the canonical order. This order is the arrangement of the psalms of the Masoretic Text most likely in place by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in the 5th century BC. This is the authoritative canonical form of the Psalms because the New Testament recognizes it as such. In the upper room in Jerusalem, Peter spoke to the church concerning the replacement of Judas and referred to what was written in the book of Psalms (en biblō Psalmōn), meaning the Masoretic Text collection of the Psalms. Peter then quoted from two different psalms, Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. Further, Paul in Antioch in Pisidia referred to what was "written in the second psalm" (Acts 13:3), and the Masoretic Text is only collection of the Psalms that has what we know as Psalm 2 as the second psalm.

The canonical book of Psalms is divided into five collections, or books. It's obvious the psalms of these books are not arranged chronologically or by author. For example, the oldest psalm is written by Moses and it is not the first psalm but Psalm 90. The named authors of the psalms are spread out through the five books of the Psalms. The arrangement is not random, but rather is thematic. The interconnectedness of the psalms reveals the arrangement and placement of the psalms in canonical order to develop thematically and flow toward a conclusion. So Psalms is a book with beginning, middle, and end. The entire book is held together by the unifying theme of the coming of God's Anointed Son King to Zion to bring salvation, restoration, and the kingdom to Israel.

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**A brief outline of Psalms:**

1. Book 1 — Psalms 1-41 Many psalms of lament and distress related to David's ascendance to the throne as God's anointed king
2. Book 2 — Psalms 42-72 Psalms of lament and distress over the afflictions of Israel and persecutions at the hands of their enemies
3. Book 3 — Psalms 73-89 Psalms of despair and devastation as the Davidic dynasty has failed, the temple is destroyed, Jerusalem is destroyed, and Israel is exiled from the promised land
4. Book 4 — Psalms 90-106 Responds to the despair of Israel in exile with no Davidic King beginning with Moses and the generation of Israel in wilderness exile between Egypt and the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to remind them of the eternality of Yahweh and his universal reign that will not fail to fulfill all the promises Israel
5. Book 5 — Psalms 107-150 Psalms of praise for God's faithfulness and his Anointed Son King who will come to earth to reign and restore Israel to her inheritance resulting in universal praise from the nations

**INTERPRETATION**

What does Psalms teach?

***Psalms 1, 2 & 150 as Introduction and Conclusion***

The first two canonical psalms serve as an introduction to the whole book and Psalm 150 ends the book as the climactic conclusion. Psalm 1 contrasts the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous and is a wisdom psalm reminiscent of wisdom in Proverbs. The righteous refuse the counsel of the wicked and choose rather the sure word of God that provides the only security in this life and the life to come. The wicked do not have security or stability, but will be blown away like chaff in the wind of God's judgment. Beyond showing us "how to live," Psalm 1 also shows us the ideal King.

Psalm 2 shows how the wicked refuse the sovereign rule of God and set themselves against God and his Messiah and people. God, of course, sits high above enthroned in the heavens and laughs at the rebellion of the rulers of the earth as though they think they can vacate the everlasting throne and rule over themselves. God clearly rules over all his creation, including the earth, and has established David's throne in Zion forever where David's Son will reign over all the nations of the earth. Therefore, all nations should bow to him to escape his angry wrath when he comes with a rod of iron.

Psalm 150 concludes with direction for everyone and everything to praise the Lord. This is the praise of the kingdom age as shown throughout the preceding psalms. This condition of universal praise is demonstrated to be contingent on the coming of God's Anointed Son King to earth. This psalm gives us the resolution of the themes of the Psalms from beginning to end.

***Human Frailty***

Psalms consistently presents the weakness and sinfulness of all the sons of Adam. Several needs for mankind are regularly shown. We need to confess and forsake our sins. We need to endure trials looking to God for help. We need to put our trust and confidence fully in the Lord. We need to share our faith with others and particularly the next generation. We need to thank and praise God always. We need to pray to God. We need to patiently and faithfully wait for redemption and the coming Messiah.

***Theology***

Psalms reveals God as Creator, who is near and accessible. He is shown to be eternal, great, holy, immutable, just, kind, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, righteous, true, good, glorious, gracious, forgiving, merciful, just, faithful, wise, and of great wrath. God is worthy to be praised and worthy to be trusted.

***The Messiah and His Kingdom***

Psalms does contribute to the expectation of the Messiah and his kingdom. Psalms is a very Israel-centric book as it recounts the nation's history at different points, giving theological commentary on the words and works of Yahweh toward the nation with the emphasis of the past predicting the future. God's covenants with Abraham and David are foundational to the Psalms and the revelation of God's character is to ensure in every possible way that he is completely faithful and will fulfill all his promises to whom those promises were made.

Psalms is a book of predictive prophecy given in lyrical compositions that combine together to give a consistent picture of Israel and the world's future. You may not at first think of Psalms as predictive prophecy, but it clearly is. Over 70 times the writers of the New Testament referred to Psalms as Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Christ in his two advents. Both Matthew and Luke record Satan's use of Psalm 91:11-12 in his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:11). Psalm 118:22-23 prophesied the rejection of Christ by the leaders of Israel (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). Psalm 118:25-26 pertains to Christ's entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13). Psalm 22:1, 18 prophesied the crucifixion of the Messiah (Matthew 27:35, 46; Mark 15:34; John 19:24), while Psalm 16:8-11 prophesied his burial and resurrection (Acts 2:25-32). Psalm 110 prophesied that God's Priest-King will sit for a time in the Father's throne in heaven at God's right hand and after that will rule on earth from Jerusalem over all nations and Peter referred to this in Acts 3:21, and Jesus confirmed this psalm spoke of him (Matthew 22:41-45). This is just a small sampling.

Further, all the named authors of psalms except one are called prophets in other places in Scripture. David was an Holy Spirit inspired prophet who spoke of Christ and the future (Matthew 22:43-45; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:25, 30-31; 4:11, 25). Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman are called seers, another term for prophets (1 Chronicles 25:5; 2 Chronicles 29:30; 35:15). Moses was called a prophet as well (Deuteronomy 18:15; 31:19-22; 34:10). The only other named writer is Solomon who is not specifically called a prophet in Scripture, but Psalm 72 is clearly predictive prophecy concerning the Davidic King and his future kingdom.

When Psalms is read as a book, the eschatological themes can be traced in development to reveal an eschatological program consistent with that of post-exilic prophets like Ezekiel and Zechariah. The book holds out the hope for Israel who was scattered to be gathered again to the land of promise, hostile nations to be gathered against them to make war, which war will be ended by the coming of the Davidic Messiah who will judge the rebel nations and bring peace to the earth under his reign from Jerusalem, where Israel will have rest from her enemies in the land and enjoy prosperity and long life while the nations then join in the praise of Israel's King.

## **APPLICATION**

How does Psalms help us as modern readers?

Understanding Psalms helps us understand what life looks like in the interim of the two advents of Christ. We must live in absolute trust in God's word and his faithfulness to keep all his promises and to be a secure shelter to all who put their trust in him. We must pursue holiness by repenting of sins and worshiping God with praise and thanksgiving. We must wait patiently and persevere through present sufferings knowing that our future hope is in Christ for salvation, redemption, resurrection, and life in his kingdom.

## **CONCLUSION**

Psalms is a book that needs to be read as a book with a unifying message set in the storyline of the Old Testament and Scripture as a whole. Psalms reveals much about God, his character and works in the past and in the future. The point of the Psalms is hope in the Messiah. Psalms was written before the first advent, while we live between the two advents, and Psalms looks to the future advent as well. The book is written to Israel in exile, which continues to this day, and prompts them to trust in God wait on his Messiah in hope.

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

This series is a study in biblical theology going book by book through the entire Bible. Each lesson typically covers one book of the Bible, though occasionally covers more than one book when the books are short. This PDF is provided for personal study, small group study, or use in a church class. Unless otherwise noted, all lessons have been prepared by Jeff Short, the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church.

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