

Studying the Psalms

Why study the Psalms? The Psalms are “theological poetry” with many Psalms containing praises to God for His creation and sovereign works among His covenant people. The Psalms describe how God is sufficient for all of life’s challenges, sufferings and setbacks. Through a careful study of the Psalms, believers will be encouraged to trust God for their present circumstances and for their future. Also, the Psalms point to the coming Messiah, who is the hope of all who call upon God for salvation and with whom believers will live with forever.

The title of the Psalms in the Hebrew Bible is called “praises.” The Septuagint, the old Greek translation of the Old Testament gave the name “Psalmoi” to these collections of praises. From this Greek word, the English versions have derived the name “Psalms.” The Psalms are divided into five books, 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106 and 107-150. Each of these “books” end with a significant doxology of praise to God. Ancient Jewish tradition, relate these five books to the five books of the Torah, Genesis to Deuteronomy. However, there is no consensus among Bible scholars as to the acceptance of this relationship.

The book of Psalms contains a complex of many types or categories. These include (1) lament (expressing disappointment, sorrow and sadness over life’s difficulties but also expressing trust in God to overcome these issues). Lament Psalms are the largest category of Psalms. (2) Praise and Thanksgiving (expressing joyful thankfulness to God for His wondrous works). (3) Songs and Hymns (Psalms to be sung with musical accompaniment). (4) Royal and enthronement (expressing joy for the crowning of a king either earthly or heavenly). (5) Imprecatory (expressing the desire for God to harm or destroy enemies). (6) Other Psalms expressing prayers for wisdom and expressions of worship. See the detailed introduction to the Psalms by Allen Ross, Volume 1, Psalms 1-41, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Exegetical Library (3 Volumes). See also, the Introduction to the Psalms in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, Moody Publishers, 2014.

Another important category of the Psalms are those called “Messianic.” These comprise both complete Psalms and also portions of a Psalm. They are called Messianic because they are prophecies of the first and second advents of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Examples include the second Psalm, (the reign of the Son); the twenty-second Psalm (the suffering of the Messiah on the cross); the Seventy-second Psalm (the reign of the righteous king); and Psalm One Hundred and Ten (The rule of the Messiah as King and Priest). See the listing of articles on the Messianic Psalms, below, in the book, *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*. Moody Publishers.

Many Psalms include inscriptions at the beginning of the Psalm. These often indicate the author, the musical instructions and sometimes historical details. They are numbered as the first verse of the Psalm that contain these inscriptions in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). They have always been included with the Psalms and should be considered as authentic and inspired by God. These inscriptions reveal that David was the author of 73 Psalms; Asaph authored 12 Psalms; the sons of Korah wrote 11 Psalms; King Solomon wrote two Psalms, 72 and 127; Ethan wrote Psalm 89; Heman was named a co-author of Psalm 89; and Moses wrote Psalm 90. The New Testament states that David also wrote Psalms 1, 2 and 95.

Psalms Quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm	Quoted in N.T.	Psalm	Quoted in N.T.
2:1-2	Acts 4:25-26	53:1-3	Rom. 3:10-12
2:7	Acts 13:33 Heb. 1:5; 5:5	62:12	Rom. 2:6
2:9	Rev. 2:27; 19:15	68:18	Eph. 4:8
4:4	Eph. 4:26	69:4	John 15:25
5:9	Rom. 3:13	69:9	John 2:17 Rom. 15:3
8:2	Matt. 21:16	69:22-23	Rom. 11:9-10

8:4-6	Heb. 2:6-8	69:25	Acts 1:20
8:6	1 Cor. 15:27 Eph. 1:22	78:2	Matt. 23:35
10:7	Rom. 3:14	78:24-25	John 6:31
14:1-3	Rom. 3:10-12	82:6	John 10:34
16:8-11	Acts 2:25-28, 31 Acts 13:35	91:11-12	Matt. 4:6 Luke 4:10-11
18:49	Rom. 15:9	94:11	1 Cor. 3:20
19:4	Rom. 10:18	95:7-11	Heb. 3:7-11, 15 Heb. 4:3, 5, 7
22:1	Matt. 27:46 Mark 15:34	102:25-27	Heb. 1:10-12
22:18	Matt. 27:35 John 19:24	104:4	Heb. 1:7
22:22	Heb. 2:12	109:8	Acts 1:20
24:1	1 Cor. 10:26	110:1	Matt. 22:44 Mark 12:36 Luke 20:42-43 Acts 2:34-35 Heb. 1:3
31:5	Luke 23:46	110:4	Heb. 5:6 Heb. 7:17, 21
32:1-2	Rom. 4:7-8	112:9	2 Cor. 9:9
34:12-16	1 Pet. 3:10-12	116:10	2 Cor. 4:13
34:20	John 19:36	117:1	Rom. 15:11
35:19	John 15:25	118:6-7	Heb. 13:6
36:1	Rom. 3:18	118:22-23	Matt. 21:42 Mark 12:10-11 Luke 20:17 Acts 4:11 1 Pet. 2:7
40:6-8	Heb. 10:5-9	118:26	Matt. 21:9 Matt. 23:39 Mark 11:9 Luke 13:35 Luke 19:38 John 12:13
41:9	John 13:18	135:14	Heb. 10:30
44:22	Rom. 8:36	140:3	Rom. 3:13
45:6-7	Heb. 1:8	146:6	Acts 4:24 Acts 14:15
51:4	Rom. 3:4		

Themes of Psalms: (1) Praising God for His Salvation and wondrous works; (2) Pleading to God for safety and freedom from enemies; (3) Proclaiming the coming of the Messiah.

Individual Psalms to memorize (ESV).

The following are just a few of the many other Psalms that could be added to this listing.

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,

nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 8

1 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
9 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 19

1 The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
2 Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
3 There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!

Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
3 He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
4 Even 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.
5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 42:1-2

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 48:1-2

1 Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!
His holy mountain, 2 beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.

Psalm 84:1-2

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longs, yes, faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

Psalm 89:1

I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 90:1-2

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Psalm 96:1-3

1 Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!
2 Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
2 Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
3 Know that the Lord, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!
5 For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 103:1

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!

Psalm 110

The Lord says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”
2 The Lord sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!

- 3 Your people will offer themselves freely
on the day of your power,
in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.
- 4 The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.”
- 5 The Lord is at your right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.
- 6 He will execute judgment among the nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs
over the wide earth.
- 7 He will drink from the brook by the way;
therefore he will lift up his head.

Psalm 118:1

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 119:11

I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Psalm 121:1-2

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 127

- Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.
- 2 It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives to his beloved sleep.
- 3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
- 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
- 5 Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame

when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Psalms 136:1

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalms 150

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens!

2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;

praise him according to his excellent greatness!

3 Praise him with trumpet sound;

praise him with lute and harp!

4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;

praise him with strings and pipe!

5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;

praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

Resources for studying the Psalms.

See the article on how to study the Bible for suggestions on the method of Bible study and recommended resources to obtain. Suggested commentaries and studies are listed below for a more extensive study. Some are available on-line in a pdf format.

One Hour – One Book

Scroll down to video on Psalms.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSrCJNW5eUWQMyVw_2VqW_w

Commentaries

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Note: Journal articles are available online in .pdf format.

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 - Cole, Robert L. *Psalm 3; The Victory of the Messiah*. Pages 491-502.
 - Mathews, Josh. *Psalm 8: The Messianic Son of Adam*. Pages 503-512.
 - Postell, Seth D. *Psalm 16: The Resurrected Messiah*. Pages 513-527.
 - Cole, Robert L. *Psalm 22: The Suffering of the Messianic King*. Pages 529-542.
 - Cole, Robert L. *Psalm 23: The Lord is Messiah's Shepherd*. Pages 543-558.
 - Green, Daniel D. *Psalm 40: A Body Prepared for Death*. Pages 559-571.
 - Postell, Seth D. *Psalm 45: The Messiah as Bridegroom*. Pages 573-589.
 - McKinion, Randall L. *Psalm 69: The Lament of the Messiah*. Pages 591-603.
 - Spencer, James. *Psalm 72: The Messiah as Ideal King*. Pages 605-615.
 - Cole, Robert L. *Psalms 86-88: The Suffering, Death and Resurrection of the Messianic King*. Pages 617-630.
 - Merrill, Eugene H. *Psalm 89: God's Faithful Promise of Messiah*. Pages 631-643.
 - Cole, Robert L. *Psalm 90: The Fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant*. Pages 645-661.
 - Cook, Ryan J. *Psalm 109: The Betrayal of the Messiah*. Pages 663-671.
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