

# THE BOOK OF PSALMS

## Student Edition

### Introduction:

What words can adequately introduce this book?

Who can say what it has meant to the godly person down through the years?

It is a book of \_\_\_\_\_ - of downright reality.

It is a book of \_\_\_\_\_.

It is a book of \_\_\_\_\_ - to old and young.

It is a book of \_\_\_\_\_.

It is a book of prayer and \_\_\_\_\_.

It inspires, encourages, challenges, teaches and guides.

It brings peace, rest, contentment, conviction, and repentance.

It is a lake which reflects every mood of man's changeful life.

It contains rivers of consolation, flowers of beauty, notes of praise, triumph, trouble, gladness, sadness, hope and fear.

Theologian John Calvin described the Psalms as "an anatomy of all the parts of the soul". He believed that the Psalms represent the full range of human emotions and experiences, and that they draw people to examine themselves. Calvin believed that the Psalms were one of the richest books in the Bible, and that they taught people how to praise God and perform religious exercises.

Here are some other things Calvin said about the Psalms:

- The Psalms are a mirror that reflects every human emotion, including grief, sorrow, fear, doubt, hope, care, and perplexity.
- The Psalms are a way for people to examine themselves and recognize their infirmities and vices.
- The Psalms are a way to learn how to love God with all your mind.
- The Psalms are a way to see how Christ is the focus of all Scripture.
- The Psalms are a way to learn how to perform religious exercises and praise God.

### I. The Word "Psalms"

A. Psalms - Gr. - \_\_\_\_\_ = a poem to be sung to a stringed instrument

1. 3rd century B.C. that this title was 1st used
2. Psalms - derived from psallo = to touch or pluck a string, causing it to vibrate
3. Verb used in New Testament - Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19 (making melody); James 5:13

4. Noun used in New Testament - 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 1:16.

B. Tehillim - usual Hebrew name = Praises

C. Tephiloth - another Hebrew name = Prayers

D. New Testament support for "Psalms" – Luke 20:42; Acts 1:20; Acts 13:33).

## II. Collection & Formation

A. Obviously a collection. According to superscriptions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ written by David

2. \_\_\_\_\_ written by Asaph

a. one of David's choir leaders

b. 1 Chronicles 15:17-19 - cymbal player

c. 1 Chronicles 16:5 - chief

3. \_\_\_\_\_ by the sons of Korah

4. 1 by **Heman** the Ezrahite

5. 1 by **Ethan** the Ezrahite

6. 1 by **Moses**

**Totals 100. The other 50 are anonymous.**

## B. Divisions

1. General

a. Psalms are mostly lyrical poetry (adapted to harp or lyre) to be sung, not read.

b. For most part, an expression of deep feeling

c. They fall into the following classes according to intended use

1. Hymns of Praise to God

2. Psalms pertaining to the Hebrew nation

3. Temple psalms or songs of Zion

4. Psalms relating to trial, calamity & distress

5. Religious or moral psalms

2. Specific - Five Books of Psalms

a. Our Bible begins with Pentateuch - 5 books of law

1. Genesis - book of life, God's grace

2. Exodus - book of redemption
  3. Leviticus - book of sanctification
  4. Numbers - book of testing & experience
  5. Deuteronomy - book of divine government
- b. Book of Psalms is divided into 5 books:
1. **THE GENESIS BOOK:** CONCERNING MAN. 1-41
  2. **THE EXODUS BOOK:** CONCERNING ISRAEL AS A NATION. 42-72
  3. **THE LEVITICUS BOOK:** CONCERNING THE SANCTUARY. 73-89
  4. **THE NUMBERS BOOK:** CONCERNING ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH. 90-106
  5. **THE DEUTERONOMY BOOK:** CONCERNING GOD AND HIS WORD. 107-150
- c. First 2 groups are mainly Davidic.
1. 3rd Asaphian
  2. 4th Anonymous called "orphan"
  3. 5th partly Davidic, partly anonymous
- d. Each division ends in a doxology or special ascription of praise to God with a double Amen. ("Amen and amen")
- I. Psalm 41:13 - "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting." Amen & Amen.
  - II. Psalm 72:18-20
  - III. Psalm 89:52
  - IV. 106:48
  - V. 150:6
- These doxologies are not found anywhere else in the Psalms.**
- e. These 5 books make a "poetical Pentateuch." Outstanding themes are:
- I. Divine Life and Grace - God's provision for grace
  - II. Redemption
  - III. Sanctification, communion with God, the way into the Sanctuary
  - IV. Book of testing, trial, bitter experiences
  - V. God as overruling in all trials and perplexities - everything honors & glorifies God

## THE BOOK OF PSALMS (Chart #1)

### PRAISE THROUGH PRAYER

Group I	1-41	Mainly Davidic	Genesis	Life, God's grace
Group II	42-72	Mainly Davidic	Exodus	Redemption
Group III	73-89	Mainly Asaphian	Leviticus	Sanctification, communion
Group IV	90-106	Orphan	Numbers	Testing & Experience
Group V	107-150	Davidic & Annon	Deuteronomy	Divine Government Everything at last honors and glorifies God

### III. Psalm Inscriptions

- A. Psalm inscriptions have interested and puzzled probably everyone who has read or studied in this book.
1. Where were these inscriptions fixed?
  2. What do the strange sounding Hebrew words mean?
  3. In order to appreciate fully the force and beauty in some of the psalms we must have an understanding of the inscriptions that go with them.
- B. Complexity reduced to simplicity.
1. Of 150 Psalms, 34 are without title: 1, 2, 10, 33, 43, 71, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 135, 136, 137, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
  2. 52 have only meager titles such as:
    - a. A Psalm of David
    - b. A Psalm of Asaph
    - c. A Prayer of David
    - d. A Psalm of Solomon
    - e. A Psalm for the Sons of Korah
  3. 14 Psalms with inscriptions explaining historical connection:
    - a. these are 3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142
    - b. We will examine these in class.
  4. 39 which have "special word" inscriptions such as "A song upon Alamath"; and "To the chief musician, on Neginoth upon Sheminith"

5. 4 Psalms which express purpose
6. 15 Psalms called the songs of degrees, each following consecutively the other. Psalm 120-134

#### C. Date of Inscriptions

1. Undoubtedly antique--before 3rd century B.C.
2. Meaning of the "special word" were lost by them
3. Probably a part of the original text
4. Some say Ezra added them. (I doubt so.)

#### D. The Question

1. What is the significance?
2. Key seems to have been lost
  - a. Dr. Bullinger: "No subject of Biblical study has appeared to be more incapable of solution."
  - b. Bishop Jebb - 1846 - Monumental work on Psalms - "so great are the difficulties attending this inquiry, that in many instances little more than conjecture can be offered."

#### E. A Possible Solution

1. In ancient Hebrew manuscripts we find there are no breaks or spaces separating the Psalms from each other.
2. Inscriptions have always been assumed to be titles of Psalms that follow them.
3. However, it might be just as true that they be footnotes to the psalms preceding them.
  - a. Subscriptions instead of superscriptions.
4. Evidence outside the Book of Psalms?
  - a. Yes!· Habakkuk 3:1-19
    - 1) Superscriptions "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigioroth."
    - 2) 2-19 - the Prayer or "Psalm"
    - 3) 19c. the subscription
  - b. Isaiah 38:9-20
    - 1) vs. 9 - superscription
    - 2) The Song or Psalm 10-19
    - 3) vs. 20 - Subscription

5. With this evidence before us, we will find some cases where the titles before the psalms actually belong to the preceding psalm and need to be divided. (e.g. - "A psalm of David" stays as a superscription.)
6. The "Special Words"
  - a. With this light before us these "special words" take on new significance.
    1. Shoshannim, Gittith
      - a) Shoshannim = "lilies" - belongs to 44 & 68 (not 45 & 69)
        - Lilies speak of springtime
        - 1st annual sacred feast is Passover - comes in Spring
        - Passover commemorates "redemption" & "deliverance"
        - Read now 44 & 68

(NOTE: 44 could have been written during Babylon Captivity which would account for the last half.)
      - b) Gittith = "wine-presses" – belongs to 7,80 & 83 (not 8,81,84)
        - wine-presses speaks of autumn
        - last frost - Tabernacles - autumn
        - commemorates the divine preservation of Israel when God made the Israelites to dwell safely in booths (Leviticus 23:43)
        - Read 7, 80, 83

**IV. Groups of Psalms** - distinctive classes or groups into which the psalms seem to fall either by subject matter or by some other distinguishing characteristic.

A. The Songs of Degrees - Psalms 120-134

1. Unlike other groups, these run consecutively
2. Each is entitled "a Song of degree"
3. What is the meaning of these titles?
  - a. Old Jewish tradition - called so because they were sung in order of the 15 steps of the Temple. (\*No real proof there were ever 15 steps.)
  - b. Luther "A Song in the higher choir"
  - c. Calvin "Sung in a higher key"
  - d. Bishop Jebb - sung in connection with the "going up" of the Ark to Mt. Zion.
  - e. Scholars - "ascents" instead of "degrees" supposing that a series of ascents in the poetic parallelism is indicated. (each line of a parallel carries the meaning of its predecessor a degree further.) \* Not all 15 have this feature.

f. Suggests these associated with Israel's going up to the three annual feasts at Jerusalem.

1. None seem to have "pilgrimage" themes.

4. A Song of "Degrees"- Any other "degrees" in the Bible?

a. "Hezekiah & The Song of Degrees"

### SPECIAL SECTION: Songs of Degrees

#### Isaiah 38:1-8

Hezekiah - remarkable man

1. Soldier, statesman, architect, poet, godly king
2. Only man who knew exactly how long he would live.

Chapter 26 - we read of Assyria.

- 14th year of Hezekiah reign, Assyria attacks
- Hezekiah's godly behavior, shining example to people in faith & trust (2 Kings 18:5-6; 2 Chronicles 29:25-30 restored temple worship)
- At the same time, Isaiah comes - "Set thine house in order"
  - sick unto death - vs. 1
  - turned to wall, prayed - vs. 3
  - Lord gave a lease on life of 15 yrs.

**QUESTION:** Why? Was Hezekiah someone special? Special job for him?

**What did he do during those 15 yrs.?**

I. Proverbs 25:1

A. "Men of Hezekiah" - guild (or group) of men used for devout literary work, up God's Word.

1. Copied God's Word perhaps

II. Psalm 120 - 134 Songs of Degrees????

A. Jewish nation - song in order on the 15 steps of temple

B. Luther - A song in a higher choir

C. Calvin - Sung in a higher key

D. Associated with Israel's three trips (pilgrimages) a year to Jerusalem

None are true

E. Song of Degrees - refers to well known degrees

1. Ahaz's sun dial - only degrees in Bible (2 Kings 28:8-11)
2. Explain sun dial - God turns it back 10
3. Hezekiah int. in songs (Isaiah 38:8,9) Isaiah 38:20 - wrote songs
4. 15 songs of degrees
  - a. 15 years added to his life
  - b. 10 degrees
  - c. 10 of song left anonymous
5. Special order
  - a. 5 groups, 3 in each: 2 Hezekiah's, 1 of another. (David or Solomon.)
  - b. First one of trouble  
 Second one of trust  
 Third one of triumph

Hezekiah - Godly man - Walked before the Lord in truth & perfect heart.

Weighty Lessons:

- I. Unlike Hezekiah, we have no knowledge of the length of our life.
  - A. Only thing certain is that life is uncertain
  - B. Be sure our "house" is always "set in order"
    1. Not morbid, but wise

**(End of special section on Songs of Degrees – back to the various groups of Psalms)**

- B. The Messianic Psalms
  1. Running through Psalms is a remarkable prophetic element
  2. These messianic psalms have two-fold reference
    - a. to the time during which they are written
    - b. ultimate explanation and fulfillment in Christ
  3. They cover three basic themes:
    - a. humiliation and exaltation of Messiah
    - b. sorrows & eventual deliverance of Israel by the Messiah
    - c. future blessings of all nations through the reigning Messiah in the Millennium
  4. Main Messianic Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 87, 89, 91, 102, 109, 110, 118



## Deal with Christ's

Birth Ascension  
Betrayal  
Return in glory (2nd coming)  
Agony

Millennium Reign  
Death  
Resurrection

(NOTE: Perhaps more prophetic statements in Psalms on these themes than in Isaiah or any other of the so-called "prophetic books")

5. In these we find some of the Lord's prayers & some expressions by which He vented His sufferings.

### 6. Proof of Inspiration

Apart from anything else, these psalms when read in the light of New Testament constitute undeniable proof of divine inspiration of scripture.

- a. Psalm 22:1 - Very words of Jesus on the Cross - vs. 6, 7, 13, 14, 16 (Crucifixion was unknown at the time of writing), 18
- b. Psalm 72 - "A greater than Solomon is here" - describes 1000 yr reign
  1. Its character "righteousness" (vs. 2-7)
  2. Its extent "to ends of the earth" (vs. 8-11)
  3. Its prosperity - "abundance" (vs. 16)
  4. Its duration - "forever" (vs. 17)

### 7. The Messianic Psalms witness of Christ in varied forms

- a. As the Son of God - 2:7; 45:6,7; 102:25-27
- b. As the Son of Man - 8:4-6
- c. As the Son of David - 89:3, 4, 27, 29
- d. Prophet - 22:22, 25; 40:9-10
- e. Priest - 110:4
- f. King - 2:24
- g. Shepherd – Psalm 23
- h. These psalms indeed have a treasure of pure gold.
- i. Sequential order in relation to His life
- j. Psalm 2 - The Official Glory of the Eternal Son.
- k. Psalm 40 - The Incarnation
- l. Psalm 91 - The Temptation
- m. Psalm 41 - The Betrayal

- n. Psalm 22 - The Crucifixion
- o. Psalm 69 - The Trespass Offering
- p. Psalm 16 - The Resurrection
- q. Psalm 68 - The Ascensions
- r. Psalm 45 - The King-Bridegroom
- s. Psalm 24 - The King of Glory
- t. Psalm 110 - The Priest-King-Judge
- u. Psalm 8 - The Last Adam
- v. Psalm 72 - The Millennial Reign
- w. Psalm 89 - The Davidic Covenant
- x. Psalm 102 - The Unchangeable One
- y. Psalm 118 - The Headstone of the Corner

#### C. Hallelujah Psalms

- 1. 10 in number 106, 111, 112, 113, 135, 146-150
- 2. Each begin with Hallelujah = Praise ye the Lord
- 3. All but 111-112 end with the same

#### D. Penitential Psalms - repentant

- 1. 7 in number - 6, 32, 38, 39, 51, 102, 143
- 2. Most known probably 51 - written after Nathan rebuked him for his sin concerning Bathsheba

#### E. Complimentary Psalms

- 1. Psalms that compliment each other
  - a. 22, 23, 24
    - 22 Suffering Savior, Good shepherd (John 10)
    - 23 Loving Shepherd, Great shepherd (Hebrews 13:20-21)
    - 24 Exalted Sovereign, Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4)
  - b. 90 & 91 - (Note Deuteronomy 33:27 "The eternal God...arms")
    - 1) 90 from Moses - "Eternal God"
    - 2) 91 perhaps from Moses - "Everlasting Arms"