

Psalms

"The Songbook of Israel"

Background Information

Hebrew texts title this book "The praises"

Of the 150 psalms, 116 have titles or "superscriptions"

While David is usually given credit for the psalms, he wrote only about 75 of the poems. The "sons of Korah" wrote 10, Asaph wrote 12, and many others penned some of the poems. 48 psalms are anonymous.

Time Covered and Outlines

Since the book of Psalms does not contain narrative, it does not cover a period of time. Instead, it reflects what was going on at various times in Jewish history, when the poems were penned.

Also, since the Psalms are varied in subject matter, outlining the book is futile. Each of the poems stands alone, though some can be grouped together and studied.

Major Themes

Personal and national relationship with God

Sinfulness of man

God's law

Types of Psalms	
Individual/Communal Lament	Psalms 3-7, 12, 13, 22, 25-28, 35, 38-40, 42-44, 51, 54-57, 59-61, 63-64, 69-71, 74, 79-80, 83, 85-86, 88, 90, 102, 109, 120, 123, 130, 140-143
Thanksgiving and Praise	Psalms 8, 18-19, 29-30, 32-34, 36, 40-41, 66, 103-106, 111, 113, 116-117, 124, 129, 135-136, 138-139, 146-148, 150
Enthronement	Psalms 47, 93, 96-99
Pilgrimage	Psalms 43, 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 120-134
Royal Poems	Psalms 2, 18, 20-21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144
Wisdom	Psalms 1, 37, 119
Imprecatory (invoking wrath)	Psalms 7, 35, 40, 55, 58-59, 69, 79, 109, 137, 139, 144

God's Character in Psalms

Accessible (15:1)	Just (9:4)
Deliverer (106:43-45)	Kind (17:7)
Eternal (90:2)	Long-Suffering (78:38)
Glorious (8:1)	Merciful (6:2)
Good (23:6)	Everywhere (139:7)
Gracious (116:5)	Powerful (8:3)
Great (86:10)	Keeping Promises (89:3)
Holy (22:3)	Providence (16:8)
Unchanging (102:26-27)	Righteous (5:8)
Sovereign (2:4-5)	Unsearchable (145:3)
Wise (1:6)	Wrathful (2:2-5)

Jesus in Psalms

The coming of Jesus is anticipated in many poems (2, 18, 20, 21, 24, 47, 110, 132).

Since David wrote so many of the poems, we see his character that would be later reflected and perfected in the Lord.

Key Words in Deuteronomy

"Selah" ; found many times in the psalms, it is thought to be a musical term, most likely meant to give a break.

"Hope" (Hebrew *yachal*, "To wait with expectation") 31:24; 42:11; 71:14; 131:3

"Truth" (Hebrew *'emet*, "true by God's standards") 15:2; 25:10; 30:9; 43:3; 71:22; 108:4

Elsewhere in the World...

About the same time the 150 Psalms were collected and put together, the Chinese were compiling their first dictionary, which contained about 40,000 characters.

Elsewhere in Scripture...

Psalms "fit" within the time in which they were written. The superscriptions help us understand the timeframe of many of the poems, either by author's name (Moses) or by event (see Psalm 51, for example). Since such a wide variety of poets penned these words, the book gives us emotional insight into much of the history of the Old Testament.