

# An Introduction to the Psalms

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If there was ever a time when we needed something certain, stable, true and trustworthy to settle our souls, the time we are in would qualify. If there was a biblical book, the pages of which shout, “The Lord is True and Trustworthy,” the Psalms qualify.

Welcome to a study in the Psalms, where we will learn how to live what is written in Psalm 62:8,

*“Trust in the Lord at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”*

Digging in to this theme of “trust” will make this class quite relevant to life today. And applying the truths of the psalms will give you a renewed hope and a restful spirit.

The 150 Psalms collected in the canon of the OT were written by at least 8 **gifted writers**: David, “the Sweet Psalmist of Israel” (73+), Asaph (12), Sons of Korah (11), Moses (1), Solomon (2), Ethan (1), Heman (1), “anonymous” (50) All of them employ a **poetic** style of writing to express their hearts.

The OT is laced with poetic outbursts, but the Psalms are special because they are set to music. The Psalms became **Israel’s hymnbook**, and were written to be sung with stringed instruments (Psalm 150). They provided Israel with expressions of faith to sing on the journey of life. They also defined their faith, and helped them understand and enact their belief. They have also found their way into the NT church’s hymnbook (Eph. 5:18-20). And though the music has changed, we still sing the lyrics of the psalms in many of our songs today.

The Psalms are more than inspiring lyrics. **They are Scripture!** Though the poets exercised stylistic liberties, the words of these 150 psalms originated with the Spirit of God. For example,

*2 Sam. 23:1-2, “Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; Thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: <sup>2</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.”*

David as an author of half of the psalms is one who Peter would have been speaking of when he wrote in 2 Pet. 1:21, “...holy men of God spoke as they were born along by the Spirit.”

While walking alongside two disciples, the risen Christ Himself gave authenticity to the Psalms as Scripture,

*Luke 24:44, Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”*

The Hebrew Bible as Jesus knew it was categorized into these three main sections: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms -- the Psalms heading up the last section known as “the Writings.” Jesus considered them Scripture, and so did the other NT writers. There are approximately 360 quotations from the OT found in the NT. Nearly 1/3 of them are from the Psalms! And Jesus quotes from them more than any other book, especially during the last eight days.

Perhaps noteworthy is that even the devil quoted the Psalms when He tempted Jesus to jump from the roof of the temple,

*“For it is written,”* he said from Ps. 91:11-12, *“He shall give his angels charge over you...in their hands they shall bear you up...”*

The Father of lies misused God’s word with Jesus as he did in the garden, and he would be happy to discredit God’s trustworthiness in our eyes today as well. “Look at this pandemic. Does God really care about us? Or maybe he’s not powerful enough to stop it?”

Satan didn’t budge Jesus with his misquotes and hate. And he won’t budge us if we heed the psalms as the word of God. Paul encouraged the church to use the psalms to edify one another in Christ, calling upon their promise-filled, trust-filled words to strengthen the body of Christ,

*Ephesians 5:17-19, “...understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...”*

*Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

James said if anyone among you is suffering, “Let him sing psalms,” 5:13.

Not only are the Psalms considered Scripture, but they are **prophetic, introducing the Messiah** to Israel and to the world! Listen carefully again to the risen Christ in Luke 24,

*“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”*

Did you catch that? The Psalms are about HIM! The psalms reveal the incarnation, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus! It is true that the gospel of Jesus is revealed in the Psalms, beginning with His very identity!

When he questioned his enemies about his identity as both the Son of David and yet the Son of God, he used Psalm 110:1,

*Luke 20:42, Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.*

Jesus was born of the lineage of David as promised in 2 Samuel 7, and was David’s son, but quotes David calling the Christ his Lord. Even David would worship the Christ, his own grandson.

Luke applied the words of the Psalms to the aftermath of the betrayal of Judas.

*Acts 1:20, “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’*

The Psalms go one step further than just revealing facts about the coming Christ. They reveal the inner struggles and feelings he would experience.

*Psalm 22, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?... All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him. ... They pierced My hands and My feet; They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots. It will be recounted ... that He has done this."*

Wow. How'd David know those details? Marvelous to think that men were writing and speaking of Jesus nearly a millennium before His arrival, and didn't fully understand the magnitude of what they were about to write or put into song. How fitting that Jesus would be celebrated through song, because he gives us something to sing about to this day! Just read Psalm 148!

I didn't want this introduction to just be syllabus day, I wanted to give you a taste of what we will find in the Psalms. We will follow the Messianic messages of the psalmists as we work through these studies, as well as learn trust in the Lord, to worship, and to pray.

The study will require something of you. It will require your heart to be penetrable, your will to be bendable, your prayers to be vulnerable, and your worship reverential. Let's work together to learn how to trust in a trustworthy God.