

Introduction to the Psalms

Modern versions divide the Psalms into five books. Each book concludes with a doxology: a statement of praise or glory to God (*doxologia*, “giving glory”)

Book 1: **Psalms 1-41** (see 41:13)

Book 2: **Psalms 42-72** (see 72:18-19)

Book 3: **Psalms 73-89** (see 89:52)

Book 4: **Psalms 90-106** (see 106:48)

Book 5: **Psalms 107-150** (see 150: 6)

I. God Is Sovereign – Psalm 97

As you read the Psalms, pray that you will grow in your knowledge of Him. In each Psalm you read, what do you learn about God and His greatness?

See also Psalms 100, 103, 113, 117, 135, 147, 148, 149 & 150

II. We Live Before the Face of the Sovereign God

Psalm 90 – God is eternal, man is ephemeral. (see also Ps.8)

Psalm 139 – He is omnipresent and omniscient. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Psalm 84 – Desire a close and intimate relationship with Him.

Psalm 19 – His word is true and desirable: “more to be desired than gold...sweeter also than honey” (19:10). His Word guides us (see also Psalm 1 and 119), so that we may walk rightly before the face of God.

III. Repentance and Forgiveness

Psalm 51 – Read 2 Samuel 11-12. David’s story adds power to the words of this psalm. True repentance is evident – “a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart” (51:17). May we exhibit the same attitude toward sin. See also Psalms 6, 32, 38 and 130

IV. Pleas, Complaints and Demands

These are cries from real-life experience and struggle, not ivory tower or a well-controlled laboratory.

Pleas – Psalm 56

Complaints – See Psalm 13 as an example

Demands (for justice and even vengeance) - See Psalm 69

V. Comfort and Assurance

Even in the Psalms that we might think of as pleas or complaints often end in expressions of trust or hope (go back and read Psalm 56, also Psalms like 42-43). In the midst of adversity there is confidence in the sovereign God.

Psalm 23 – Resting in the arms of the Good Shepherd

See also Psalm 91 – we “dwell in the shelter of the Most High.”

VI. Pointing Us to Christ (Messianic Psalms)

Psalm 110

See also Psalm 2, 45, 72

Psalm 22 and 69 are considered the Passion Psalms.

New Testament writers (including Jesus Himself) cite the psalms and relate them to Messiah. Those references to the psalms help us understand the psalms through the lens of the Gospel.

VII. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

Psalm 150

A number of Hebrew words are translated “praise,” but the word most often used in the Old Testament for praise is the word *hallal*. A very special word derived from *hallal* is *hallelujah*.

Hallal, “to boast, to brag on, to laud, to make a show, even to the point of looking foolish.”

Jah, a shortened name for God.

Hallal + Jah = Hallelujah

Used 24 times in the Psalms, occurring in Psalm 104-150.

“A special response of extreme excitement, exuberance, and exultation.” (Taylor, Jack, *The Hallelujah Factor*, p. 72)

See also Psalms 146-150, which begin and end with Hallelujah.