

# The Message of the Old Testament

## A Book-by-Book Study

### Psalms

#### Psalms: Background and Introduction

##### Why Psalms now?

We are following Hebrew \_\_\_\_\_ order or the order of the Hebrew canon. The Hebrew canon is divided in three sections: law, prophets, writings. In our study, we have covered the law and prophets sections and are beginning the writings section. Sometimes the writings are referred to as the psalms since it comes first and is so comprehensive.

The Psalms, sometimes called The \_\_\_\_\_, consist of 5 books.

Book One = 1-41 (41)

Book Two = 42-72 (31)

Book Three = 73-89 (17)

Book Four = 90-106 (17)

Book Five = 107-150 (44)

The Psalms were written by a number of different persons over a long span of time apparently from the days of king David to as late as after the return from exile.

David is credited with 73. Solomon with 2. Asaph with 12. The sons of Korah with 10. The sons of Korah and Heman with 1. Ethan with 1. Moses with 1. The authors of fifty are not indicated.

##### The Scope of the Psalms

Martin Luther said of the Psalms, "You might rightly call the Psalter a \_\_\_\_\_ in miniature."

Paul House states, "No other Old Testament book has the theological and historical \_\_\_\_\_ that the Psalms displays." (Old Testament Theology, 402)

The title of the book is transliterated from the Greek Psalmoi, meaning "\_\_\_\_\_ to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument." The Hebrew title is T<sup>h</sup>illim, or praise songs. (Gleason Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, 447)

#### The Message of the book of Psalms

Trying to condense all the psalms down to a single message is not easy since the book contains many important themes. Paul House notes that God is presented as "Creator, sustainer, protector, Savior, judge, covenant maker, and restorer." He writes, "Here the whole range of divine actions that give content to those names unfold, and here the historical settings that provide the context for theological reality and reflection are stated as well. All the major events of Israelite history—creation, the life of Abraham, the exodus, the conquest, the monarchy, the exile, the return to the land—are mentioned to anchor the books confessions to daily human life." (House, 402)

You might legitimately say that the message of the Psalms is that \_\_\_\_\_. The psalms sweep over biblical history through which we have passed, having gone through the law and the prophets. God is displayed as \_\_\_\_\_ over history. The psalms also sweep through the personal lives and thoughts of individual persons who in the midst of this history are experiencing life one day at a time with both challenges and rewards, with both joys and pains. And whether in joy or pain, in the greater sweep of history or the personal path of one's own life, the psalmists worship and trust the God who rules over all.

## The Message Unfolds

Psalms 1 and 2 are seen by many to be \_\_\_\_\_ to the rest of the collection. Here is where we will start.

Psalm 1 ---

The message of Psalm 1 is of two \_\_\_\_\_: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The way of the righteous is the way of delighting in the Lord and walking in His counsel. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. He loves it and he causes those who walk in that way to flourish forever.

The way of the wicked listens not to the Lord but to other sinners. He walks in their path, stands in their way, and sits with them in their scoffing. The way of the wicked does not prosper but leads to judgment.

The unfolding message of Psalms is of how the life of the righteous \_\_\_\_\_ under the rule of God.

Psalm 2 ---

Again in Psalm 2, two ways are set forth. There are those who foolishly plot against God and His Son and those who kiss the Son. Those who plot will experience His wrath through the Son against whom they plot. But those who kiss the Son, those who \_\_\_\_\_ to him, who take refuge in him, are blessed. This is the gospel!

The book of Psalms is about the experience of those who take refuge in the Lord who reigns.

1. Those who take refuge in the God who rules love and heed His \_\_\_\_\_.

1:2 --- his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.

19:7-11--- The law of the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_, reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;  
the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.  
Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

33:4 --- For the word of the Lord is upright,  
and all his work is done in faithfulness.

40:8 --- I delight to do your will, O my God;  
your law is within my heart.

56:3-4 --- When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.  
In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

56:10-11 ---

94:12 --- Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law,

103:20-21 ---

119:1-16 ---

119:105-112 ---

2. Those who take refuge in the God who rules \_\_\_\_\_ Him enthusiastically.

7:17 --- (a psalm of God's judgment)

I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness,  
and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High.

18:1-3 ---

18:46-49 --- The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—  
the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me,  
who delivered me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me;  
you rescued me from the man of violence.  
For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name.

22:22-25 ---

34:1-3 --- I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.  
Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!

95:1-7 ---

135 ---

3. Those who take refuge in the God who rules may experience the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.

3:2 ---

O Lord, how many are my \_\_\_\_\_!  
Many are rising against me;  
many are saying of my soul,  
there is no salvation for him in God.

9:9-10, 13 --- The Lord is a stronghold for the \_\_\_\_\_, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who  
know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.  
Be gracious to me, O Lord! See my affliction from those who \_\_\_\_\_ me, O you who lift me up from the  
gates of death,

38:19-22 ---

41:5-9 ---

69:4 ---

More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause;  
mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies.  
What I did not steal must I now restore?

109:1-5 ---

4. Those who take refuge in the God who rules will be \_\_\_\_\_ in the world.

73:1-3 ---Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.  
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.  
For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

73:16-22—

5. Those who take refuge in the God who rules are bolstered by Him and His \_\_\_\_\_.

3 ---

18:30 ---This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

105:8 ---

119:69---Forever, O Lord, your word  
is firmly fixed in the heavens.

119:114---

119:38---Confirm to your servant your promise,  
that you may be feared.

119:50---

119:116---Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,  
and let me not be put to shame in my hope!

6. Those who take refuge in the God who rules \_\_\_\_\_ their sin.

25:6-11---

38:1-8---

51—

7. Those who take refuge in the God who rules rejoice in His forgiveness.

32:1-5---

103:1-5---

103:8-12---

130---

8. Those who take refuge in the God who rules \_\_\_\_\_ Him and hope in Him.

39:7---“And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

42:1-2---As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?

42:5---Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

42:11---

61:1-3---Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer;  
from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I,  
for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

62:5-7---For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
for my hope is from him.  
He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.  
On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

63:1-4—

63:5-9

73:25-28—

## 9. Those who take refuge in the God who rules call on Him to destroy the wicked.

5:9-10---For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction;  
their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.  
Make them bear their guilt, O God; \_\_\_\_\_ by their own counsels;  
because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

58:3-11---The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.  
They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear,  
so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.  
O God, \_\_\_\_\_ in their mouths; \_\_\_\_\_ the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!  
Let them vanish like water that runs away; when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted.  
Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun.  
Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away!  
The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.  
Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."

139:19-23---

There are MANY more Psalms like the ones listed. (For example, 6; 7; 9; 10; 17; 28; 31; 35; 40; 52; 54; 55; 56;  
59; 69; 70; 71; 94; 129; 137)  
These types of psalms are called \_\_\_\_\_ Psalms. They express a longing for the judgment of the  
enemies of God.

The imprecatory Psalms seem puzzling in light of the clear NT command to love one's enemies.  
The perplexity is diminished somewhat when we consider how Jesus taught us to pray:  
Our Father which is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as  
it is in heaven . . . Deliver us from evil.

The disciple's prayer for the hallowing of God's name, the coming of His kingdom, and the deliverance from

evil necessarily requests the complete overflow of Satan's kingdom and all his followers. Martin Luther wrote that when you pray the disciples prayer, you "must put all the opposition to [his kingdom] in one pile and say: curses, malediction, and disgrace upon every other name and every other kingdom. May they be ruined and torn apart and may all their schemes and wisdom and plans run aground."

When we pray the disciples' prayer, we cry out to God for His blessings on His church and for His curse upon the kingdom of the evil one.

Harry Mennega writes, "Advance and victory for the church means \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for the kingdom of darkness."

To keep things in balance, God's people must never pray out of a personal spirit of vengeance against their enemies. To pray imprecations is to surrender all rights for vengeance to God. (above comments from James E. Adams)

"It is the peculiarly balanced prayer life that the Christian must foster. He is obligated to pray for the conversion of sinners, of those who are now identified with the kingdom of darkness; this he must do in the interest of God's glory. At the same time and in the same interest he must pray for the coming of God's kingdom which involves necessarily praying for the \_\_\_\_\_ of the kingdom of \_\_\_\_\_ and those who are identified with it. It is in this tension that the Christian must live. Since he does not know who are permanently identified with the kingdom of evil he cannot pray for the doom of known individuals in the way the psalmists did and rather must show love to all people, even his enemies. Yet this prayer for their conversion is accompanied by a prayer for the overthrow of Satan's kingdom, a kingdom which cannot be conceived of apart from its concrete embodiment in actual persons in history."  
(from "May We Pray the Imprecatory Psalms?" by James E. Adams)

## 10. Those who take refuge in the God who rules extol Him for . . .

a-His creation

8-

b--His mighty works

66:5-12-

c--what He has done for my soul

66:16-20-

d-his omniscience and omnipresence --- 139

e-his justice --- 9, 37, 99

f-his sovereignty --- 9, 10, 29, 45, 47, 96, 103:19

g-his messiah --- 2, 16, 22, 24, 40, 41, 68, 69, 91, 110, 118

## The Message Summarized

As far as movement through the psalms themselves, you start with two ways to live: under the reign of God or according to the ways of men. The psalms bear out that God watches over those who live under His reign and he fills them with Himself. They may not have a life envied by the world, but they have God Himself. And in the end, the wicked receive the justice of God and the righteous receive mercy.

The wicked appear to flourish, but as the enemies of God they will perish. The righteous may stumble but they will not be cast headlong. They praise God at all times in all circumstances. And everything redounds to the praise of God. The final 5 psalms are pure praise to the God who reigns.