



PSALMS

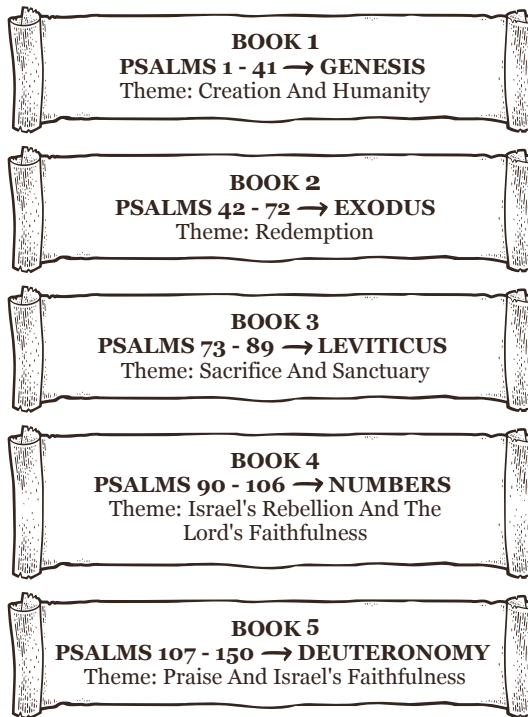
THE FIVE-BOOK STRUCTURE

The Psalms, a unique collection of 150 poems, songs and prayers, span approximately 1000 years in Israel's history and are arranged into five parts or books. Furthermore, the "seams" between each book end the same way - some variation of "Blessed be the LORD" (Psalms 41:13, 72:18-19, 89:52, 106:48) - with the last five Psalms in Book Five beginning and ending the same way: "praise the Lord!"

This five-fold structure of the Psalms is a point of interest. Many speculate that it references the first five Old Testament books, the Torah, which served as the foundational document for God's people. This connection to the Torah is evident in the theme of Psalm 1, which is about finding joy in the law/Torah (Psalm 1:2). Additionally, the repetition at the end of each book and the last five psalms of Book 5 underscores a major theme within the Psalms - the worship of the LORD God.

LIVING FOR THE KINGDOM, LOOKING FORWARD TO THE KING

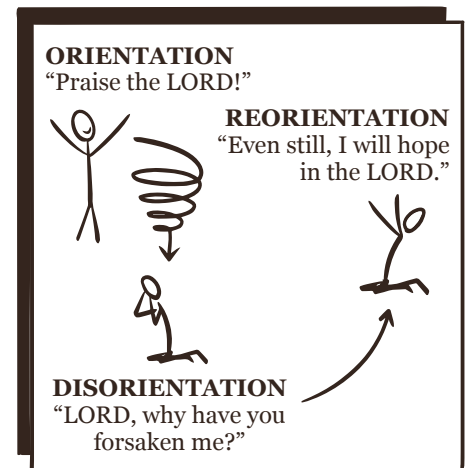
Psalms 1 and 2 introduce the book, often read together in Jewish communities. This intro contains the main themes that will echo throughout the Psalter. In particular, Psalm 1 speaks of delighting and meditating in God's wisdom/law. Psalm 2, on the other hand, looks ahead to Israel's king, who will one day rule the nations. These two themes of king and kingdom permeate the Psalms and are arguably the entire theme of the Psalms and the Old (and New) Testament.



ORIENTATION, DISORIENTATION, AND REORIENTATION

Scholars describe the different psalms with labels such as thanksgiving, lament, imprecatory (cursing), and more. For the sake of simplicity, one Old Testament scholar, Walter Bruegemann, says the Psalms can be broken down into three broad categories, or "three seasons of human experience." They are:

- Praising God for who He is and what He's done
- Crying out to God amidst pain, suffering, and injustice
- Centering oneself on who God is and what He's done despite the pain, suffering, and injustice



WHO WROTE THE PSALMS?

DAVID

- Israel's greatest king
- "Psalms of David" may be written for David, or in his style

73 PSALMS
(maybe 12 more)

ASAPH

David's worship leader
12 PSALMS

KORAH

Major Levite family
11 PSALMS

UNKNOWN

No designated psalmist
50 PSALMS

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS:

Solomon (2), Moses (1), Ethan the Ezrahite (1) & Heman the Ezrahite (1)

From OverviewBible.com

OBSERVATION - WHAT DOES THIS SAY?



Read the entire chapter rather than pull a verse out of its context.

Take note of any key themes or ideas - if you spot any repetition of words, phrases or ideas, this can be a good clue as to the overall message.

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

What type of Psalms is this?

Is it a psalm of thanksgiving, lament or praise? How does this impact the overall message of the Psalm?

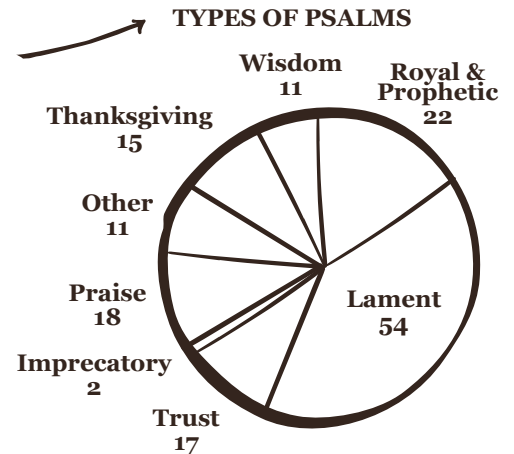


Who wrote this?

How might knowing who the author is impact the message of the Psalm?

When was this written?

Some of the Psalms echo back to key moments recorded previously in the Old Testament. This can shed further light on the Psalm you are reading. A study Bible with cross-references can help with this.



APPLICATION - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?



Does this passage prompt me to pray a certain way?

Is there hope offered in the text to cling to?

Is there any sin to confess?

Is there anything I'm wrestling with that I should bring before God?

HOW DO THESE BOOKS...

Point back to the Old Testament?*

For more, see the chart on p.1 on how the Psalms' 5-book structure mimics the Torah's five-book structure. Overall the Psalms reference back to the Torah hundreds of times.

• 2 Samuel 7

This passage in the Old Testament is known as the "Davidic covenant," in which the LORD promises to King David that someone will come from his line who will rule forever and be to God like a son. This Davidic king and son of God is featured in Psalm 2.

• Isaiah 11, 45, 60 and Zechariah 9

Psalm 72 echoes the themes in the passages mentioned above in which a future Messiah (Messiah comes from the Hebrew word *mesach*, meaning "anointed") will rule the nations.

• 1 Chronicles 25, Nehemiah 11:22-23

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel arranges musicians to sing in the house of God, including the "sons of Asaph," featured in the Psalms.

Point forward to the New Testament?*

While all Scripture in the Old Testament points to Jesus (see Luke 24:27), the following verses in the Psalms specifically refer to Him and are cited in the New Testament.

• Psalm 110:1

This was an oft-used Psalm by Jesus to refer to himself as the son of God (c.f. Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42-Luke 20:43)

• Psalm 22:1

During Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1. This Psalm initially begins with lament but ends in praise. (c.f. Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)

• Psalm 69

Another psalm used during Jesus' crucifixion (c.f. John 2:17, Romans 15:3, Matthew 27:3, Matthew 27:48; Luke 23:36; John 19:29, Mark 15:23)

• Psalm 118:22

This verse is used regularly by the New Testament authors to show how the Messiah will be rejected by his own people. (c.f. Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4-7)

• Colossians 3:16

The apostle Paul expects the Church to continue using the Psalms when they gather together

SEE ALSO

Psalm 2:7 → Romans 1:4, Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5

Psalm 8:6 → 1 Corinthians 15:27

Psalm 16:10 → Acts 13:35

Psalm 34:20 → John 19:36

Psalm 35:11, 19 → John 15:25

Psalm 40:7-8 → Luke 24:44, John 4:34

Psalm 41:9 → John 13:18

Psalm 45:6 → Hebrews 1:8, 9

Psalm 68:18 → Ephesians 4:8, Acts 1:9,

Acts 2:4, 33, Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy

1:13, John 14:23

Psalm 109:4, 8 → Acts 1:20

Psalm 110:4 → Matthew 26:64, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, 1:13, 2:8, 5:6, 6:20, 7:17-28, 8:1, 10:12-13, 12:2, 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:22, 1 Peter 3:22, John 12:34

Psalm 118:26 → Matthew 21:9, 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38

*For more Old Testament connections within the Old Testament, check out *Old Testament Use of the Old Testament* by Gary Schnittjer

**For more New Testament connections referencing the New Testament, check out *Dictionary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* by G.K. Beale, D.A. Carson, Benjamin Gladd, and Andrew Naselli