



Bible Readers Club

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Week

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Psalms 1-150

Dear Friends,

When we come to the Book of Psalms, we are entering into what may be the most beautiful and important songbook ever assembled. The word "Psalm" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (called the Septuagint) where the Greek word "*psalmos*" is used to translate the Hebrew "*mizmor*" which is found in the titles of 57 Psalms and means "song." Each Psalm can be read in a number of profitable ways. Each offers a wonderful expression of human art, wonderful literary works that presents deep human emotion in a rich historical context rivaling any other poetry from any other time and place. Each is a divine revelation where God-inspired words speak the truth about God Himself and His acts in human history. And each explores and manifests the Divine-Human relationship in one of a variety of useful forms—faithful songs of praise, deeply personal prayers, triumphant affirmations for use in corporate worship...

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This great collection is divided into five "Books" as follows:

Book I = Psalms 1-41

Book II = Psalms 42-72

Book III = Psalms 73-89

Book IV = Psalms 90-106

Book V = Psalms 107-150

There is no distinctive theme to be found consistently in any of these sections, but each ends with a concluding Doxology (special "Word of Glory" to God). It is thought that this song collection was purposefully organized in this way so it would model the organization of the first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch and also called the Books of Moses or the Books of the Law.

Many of the Psalms are identified as the work of King David, and some are attached to certain episodes in his life. Other identified song writers include Solomon (Psalms 72 & 127), Moses (90), Asaph (12 times), the Sons of Korah (11 times), and "the musical director" (over 50 times).

Scholars have analyzed the Psalms and determined certain identifiable types that reoccur in these ancient songs throughout the Book. The major difference is that some are *Individual* ("I") Psalms and others are *Communal* ("We") Psalms. Other suggested types include *Psalms of*

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Praise/Hymns (ex. Psalms 8, 29, 33, 104, 111 & 113), *Individual Songs of Thanksgiving* (ex. 30, 34, 66, 116, 138), *Individual Laments* (the most common type – ex. 6, 13, 31 & 39), *Communal Laments* (ex. 12, 44, 74, 79), *Royal Psalms* (ex. 2, 18, 20, 35, 40, 45), and *Wisdom Psalms* (1, 32, 37, 49 & 119).

One reality that you will appreciate as you read through several Psalms each day is how brutally honest and deeply personal these songs are. What is expressed is not some sort of sanitized version of human communication with the Good Lord Above but human adoration and cries of distress and vented anger as passionate and unguarded as anything you'd hear in a football stadium, or a prison yard, or your living room today. It seems that the Lord is willing and able to receive our loudest hands-raised joyful exultations and our deepest fear-laden bent-low sobs and even our most dangerous teeth-clenching anger-fueled cries, and there is wisdom in bringing all of this to the One who is Lord over all.

Martin Luther in his 1528 preface to the German translation of the Psalms said this: *"In the Psalms one looks into the hearts of the saints."* May your reading of the Psalms this month give you such a glimpse, and may it help you to know that because of Jesus Christ and His completed work for you one of the most important hearts you are glimpsing is your own.

- Pastor Jay