



Psalms

The Hymnbook of the Bible

Lesson Two

Collection and Organization of the Psalms

Although most of the Psalms were written during or near David's lifetime, the final collection and assembly of the book of Psalms did not take place until later. There are a few Psalms included that come from after the Babylonian exile, so the final collection was *probably* by Ezra around 440 B.C. The Psalms were used in worship during the time of Hezekiah as we see in 2 Chronicles 29:30 (Hezekiah lived after David and before the Babylonian exile and Ezra).

The Psalms are arranged into five "Books." The various books are loosely connected based on authorship or theme.

Book 1 — Psalms 1-41	Written by David
Book 2 — Psalms 42-72	Psalms of David and others who were close to David; perhaps these Psalms were used for worship in the newly constructed Temple.
Book 3 — Psalms 73-89	Written by Asaph and the sons of Korah.
Book 4 — Psalms 90-106	This book focuses on the theme of praise and thanksgiving.
Book 5 — Psalms 107-150	This book also focuses on the theme of praise; included in this book are the "Songs of Ascent."



Psalm 1 — *Introduction to the Psalms: A Believer's Attitude Toward God's Word*

From vs. 1-3, what are three characteristics of a believer?

Note the progression of thought in v. 1. A believer does not want to:

- Walk in the counsel of the wicked.
- Stand in the way of sinners.
- Sit in the seat of mockers.

We don't meditate like a Buddhist who repeats something over and over. So how does a believer "meditate day and night" in a God-pleasing way?

In view of our sinful world, explain, "whatever he does prospers."

What does this Psalm say about getting advice or seeking wisdom from unbelievers?



Psalm 2 — *Introduction to the Psalms: A Believer's Attitude God's Messiah*

Although not listed in the Psalm heading, Peter tells us in Acts 4:24-26 that David wrote this Psalm.

Why are the nations, peoples, and kings hostile toward the Lord? What are some of the various ways that people *take their stand against the Lord*?

How does God view this rebellion and how will he treat the rebels? Apply this to our view of those who hate or persecute Christians.

This Psalm is Messianic, that is, it points ahead to Jesus, the Messiah. (Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 quote this Psalm as referring to Jesus.) What are some of the words and phrases in the Psalm that make reference to the Messiah?

What is the only way to avoid the wrath of God's Messiah?

Psalm 3

The inspired heading tells us that this Psalm was written when David fled from Absalom. This account is recorded in 2 Samuel 15.

From 2 Samuel we learn that David's friends and foes alike were deserting him. But in the midst of this stress, from what did David derive peace?

Verse 7 is an example of an "imprecatory" Psalm. These Psalms (or verses in a Psalm) contain curses and pray for punishment against enemies. David was not a blood-thirsty man. Numerous examples, including his reaction to news of Absalom's death, show that he was quite lenient toward his enemies. How do we reconcile the desire for punishment with Jesus' words "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"?

Psalm 3 also gives us the first example of the term "Selah." The meaning of this term is uncertain. It is usually thought to be a music direction (a pause, musical interlude, or increase in volume) or as an emphatic word, similar to "Amen." Although the meaning is unclear, most Bible translations include the word in the English text because "Selah" is part of the inspired Hebrew text.

