

1 **The Psalms**

An Introduction

2 **Introduction to the Psalms**

3 **WHAT**

◇ GENRE

- ◇ Poetry
- ◇ Hymnody

◇ THEMES

- ◇ Major: Joy/Thanksgiving; Lament
- ◇ Minor: Confidence/Trust; Remembrance; Wisdom; Kingship

4 **WHAT (continued)**

◇ STRUCTURE: Anthology

- ◇ 150-ish Separate Compositions
 - ◇ Some Psalms have been separated that were originally together (9-10, 42-43)
 - ◇ Nonnarrative, Nonsequential
- ◇ 5 Books
 - ◇ 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150
 - ◇ Possibly meant to mirror the Pentateuch
 - ◇ Progression from predominantly laments to hymns

5 **WHAT (continued)**

◇ HISTORICALLY ROOTED

- ◇ Situated in ancient Israel
 - ◇ Immediate, contemporary context (writing, not reading)
- ◇ Written for wide-ranging use
 - ◇ Truths, similarities, resonances, etc.
 - ◇ Tie into the wider Scriptural narrative
 - ◇ God and humanity
 - ◇ Fall into sin and call to repentance
- ◇

6 **WHO**

◇ BOOK AS A WHOLE

- ◇ Anthology
- ◇ Collected, composed, edited over the generations

◇ INDIVIDUAL PSALMS

- ◇ Titles or Superscriptions (*Not included in the Book of Common Prayer*)

7 **WHO (continued)**

- ◇ Psalm 90 (NRSV) – “A Prayer of Moses, the man of God”
- ◇ Psalm 42 (NRSV) – “To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites” (Sons of Korah-RSV)
- ◇ Psalm 50 (NRSV) – “A Psalm of Asaph”
- ◇ Psalm 72 (NRSV) – “Prayer for Guidance and Support for the King: Of Solomon”
- ◇ Psalm 62 (NRSV) – “To the leader: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David”

- ◇ Psalm 23 (NRSV) – “A Psalm of David”

8 WHO (*continued*)

◇ INDIVIDUAL PSALMS

- ◇ Titles or Superscriptions (*Not included in the Book of Common Prayer*)
 - ◇ David – 73
 - ◇ Asaph – 12
 - ◇ Sons of Korah – 11
 - ◇ Jeduthun – 4
 - ◇ Solomon – 2
 - ◇ Hemen, Etan, Moses – 1
- ◇ “*le*” (Hebrew) = Of
- ◇ By? For? About? In the style of?

9 WHEN

◇ NO SINGULAR DATE

- ◇ As a Collection/Anthology, not a singular composition
- ◇ Psalms often historically non-specific, i.e. intended for continued use in worship of Israel

◇ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PSALMS = HISTORY OF ISRAEL

- ◇ Moses (Ps. 90), ~1525-1405 BC
- ◇ David (Ps. 23), ~ 1010-970 BC
- ◇ Post-Exile (Ps. 126), ~ 516 BC – 70 AD

◇ OPEN COLLECTION THROUGHOUT ISRAEL’S HISTORY

◇

10 WHEN (*continued*)

- ◇ Possibly open to adaption or rearrangement
 - ◇ Additions and edits by author, topic, compilers over time to fit current context
 - ◇ Ps. 69 is likely Davidic in origin
 - ◇ Verses 34-36 likely added later: 34 Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. 35 For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah; and his servants shall live there and possess it; 36 the children of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall live in it.
 - ◇ More at home in the post-exilic era
 - ◇ Ps 72:20 – “The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.”
 - ◇ Likely end of one version or section of the Psalms at some point in Israel’s history
 - ◇ BUT, there are Davidic Psalms after Psalm 72

11 WHERE

- ◇ WILDERNESS BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE LAND OF CANAAN
- ◇ CANAAN, Pre- and Post-Conquest
- ◇ KINGDOM(S)
 - ◇ United: Israel
 - ◇ Divided: Judah and Israel
- ◇ EXILE: Babylon, Judah, Israel
- ◇ POST-EXILE: Judah, Israel, Diaspora(?)

12 **WHY**

- ◇ PRAYERS: Prayerbook/Hymnal of Israel
 - ◇ Words addressed to God rather than the word of God addressed to Israel
 - ◇ Privately by Individuals and Corporately in Public Worship
 - ◇ Utilized in the various times of life: Joy, Sadness, Anger, Thanksgiving, Meditation, etc.
 - ◇ Pilgrimage (Songs of Ascent): Ps. 120-134
 - ◇ Great Doxology: Ps. 146-150
 - ◇ Specific events spur on the writing of hymns, songs, poetry without the specifics necessarily known to those who find use/connection in using/singing them
 - ◇ It is well with my soul
- ◇

13 **WHY (continued)**

- ◇ ISRAEL'S THEOLOGY
 - ◇ Not explicitly a Systematic/Dogmatic Theology; Not a Catechism
 - ◇ Yet so extensive that it is a microcosm of the whole of the Old Testament
 - ◇ Expression through Hymn and Poetry
 - ◇ Illustrates the divine-human encounter, with emphasis on the human response
 - ◇ Imagery: Shepherd, Warrior, Father, Mother, King, Husband, etc.
 - ◇ Covenant: Abraham, Moses, David
 - ◇ Topics Addressed (include, but not limited to): Zion, History, Law, Kingship, War

14 **WHY (continued)**

- ◇ APPLICATION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE CHURCH
 - ◇ Luke 24:44 – “Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”
 - ◇ Most quoted book of the Old Testament, alongside Isaiah
 - ◇ Prophetic, broadly speaking
 - ◇ Humanity: Son of Man; Son of David; Davidic/Kingship Psalms
 - ◇ Jesus in the line of David
 - ◇ In Israel the king is to reflect the kingship of God, ruling by divine decree, particularly David
 - ◇ Divinity: Psalms offered to God include the 2nd Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, and thereby are rightly ascribed to Jesus