

Psalms

Overview

- Book of Psalms was the “Jewish hymnal”
- Hebrew term for the book, *tehillim*, means “psalms of praise”
- The word “psalm” comes from the Greek *psalmos*, which was originally a song sung to the accompaniment of a lyre or other stringed instrument
- Psalms was divided into five groups or “Books” when collected (exact date unknown)

Ways to classify the Psalms

1. Classification by author (as indicated in manuscripts and/or NT references)
 - 74 (+/-) psalms are attributed to **David**
 - 12 psalms are attributed to the **Sons of Korah** (Korah died in the wilderness for rebelling against Moses; also descended from Kohath, one of the sons of Levi)
 - 12 psalms are attributed to **Asaph**, one of the three directors who led the singers in the temple (I Chron. 6:33, 39, 44)
 - Solomon wrote Psalms 72 and 127
 - Moses wrote Psalm 90
2. Classification by style or purpose
 - **Songs of ascent** (Psalms 120-134) – probably sung as processions made their way up the mount to the temple during feasts, or other times of special celebration
 - **Alphabetic psalms** (Psalms 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145) – psalms in which each line begins with the succeeding letter in the Hebrew alphabet
 - **Hallel psalms** (Psalms 113-118, 119-136, 146-150) – groups of psalms that contain the expression “hallelujah”, or “Praise Jehovah”
3. Classification by subject matter (classifications are obviously somewhat subjective)
 - **Psalms that cry to God for help** (3-7, 10, 12-13, 17, 20, 25, 27-28, 34-35, 40-43, 52, 54-61, 63-64, 69-71, 74, 79-80, 83, 86, 88, 94, 102, 109, 120, 123, 129, 132, 140-144)
 - **Psalms of thanksgiving and praise for God’s deliverance** (9, 11, 16, 18, 21, 27-28, 30-31, 34, 40, 46, 61-62, 77, 106-108, 112, 116, 118, 121, 124, 126, 138, 144)
 - **Psalms that praise God as Creator and Sustainer** (8, 19, 23, 29, 33, 65, 68, 74, 87, 103-104, 122, 127, 131, 133, 146-147)
 - **Praise for God’s mighty works for Israel** (44, 66, 68, 77-79, 81, 83, 105-106, 114, 135-136)
 - **Psalms that praise God for who He is** (24, 36, 47-48, 50, 66-67, 76, 84, 92-93, 95-100, 111, 113, 115, 117-118, 134, 139, 145, 148-150)
 - **Contrast between righteous and wicked** (1, 6, 14-15, 24-26, 32, 36-39, 49, 51-53, 72-73, 75, 82, 85, 90-91, 101, 112, 125, 128, 130, 137)
 - **Messianic psalms** (2, 8, 16, 22, 34, 40, 45, 68-69, 78, 89, 91, 102, 104, 110, 118, 132)

For class

1. Choose one of the “subject matters” addressed in Psalms (section 3 above).
2. Read the psalms that correspond to that subject.
3. Choose a few psalms that to you best illustrate the subject matter.
4. I will have one person present a summary of each subject matter to the class. Come prepared to participate in the discussion of the subject you have chosen.

OPTIONAL: Memorize a psalm that you have not previously learned.