

“An Invitation to the Psalms”
(Introduction and Overview of Psalms)

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1. Where are the Psalms? Why are they there?

The Psalms are Wisdom Literature, one of three types of literature in the Old Testament:

- History (Genesis – Esther)
- Wisdom Literature (Job – Song of Solomon)
- Prophets (Isaiah – Malachi)

2. What are the Psalms?

Definition: The Psalms are songs or poems about the history, theology, and experience of communion with the covenant-keeping God who reigns and rules.

3. What’s unique about the Psalms?

- It’s a book about *worship*
- It’s a book about *songs/singing*
- It’s a book of *prayers*
- It’s a book about *experience*
- It’s a book about *God and us*
- It’s a book which *mingles doctrine and delight*.
- It’s a book useful for *all occasions*

4. What themes are in the Psalms?

Themes within the Psalms:

- Doubt, fear, desertion
- Enemies, threat, help, protect
- Exuberant joy and worship, worship description and instruction
- Unity, hope of global praise
- Theodicy, God’s character, historical recounting
- Repentance, grace/mercy
- God’s Word
- The anticipation of the coming of final King, the Christ

Kinds of Psalms:

- Psalms of praise – Psalm 33
- Psalms of thanksgiving – Psalm 136

- Psalms of distress/deliverance – Psalm 61
- Psalms of repentance – Psalm 38
- Psalms of complaint or lament – Psalm 13
- Psalms of confidence – Psalm 23 or Psalm 27
- Psalms of judgment – Psalm 69
- Psalms of historical remembrance – Psalm 78
- Psalms of instruction – Psalm 1
- Psalms about a king (“Royal Psalms”) – Psalm 2

[\(Click here for an exhaustive list of kinds of Psalms\)](#)

5. What is the layout or structure of the Psalms?

- Book 1-2: Psalms 1-41, 42-72 – Many of these Psalms are by David before he is king.
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89 – These are some of the darkest Psalms.
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106 – These Psalms seem to emphasize God as king reigning in the world.
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150 – Many of these Psalms are during or after the exile. Towards the end of book 5 we find the most exultant praise Psalms.

6. How should we use the Psalms today?

- Read them methodically and repeatedly
- Go hunting for help
- Come to develop favorites, old friends, dependable helps
- Memorizing specific Psalms
- Make the Psalms the fuel for dozens of necessary fires in the Christian life
- Sing the Psalms
- Pray the Psalms