

Survey of the Book of Psalms and Psalm 1

David Rountree

Name and Authors

1. The Hebrew title for the Psalter is "book of praises." The Psalms were primarily used as a book of prayer and praise to God by the people of God in the tabernacle, temple, and synagogues.
2. Of the 150 Psalms, King David is credited with writing at least 73 of them (cf. Acts 2:25-32; 13:34-37), anonymous authorship is attached to 50 of them, and the rest were written by one of the following: Asaph, sons of Korah, Heman, Ethan, Moses (90), and Solomon (72, 127).

The Arrangement of Psalms

1. It is not clear why the 150 Psalms have been arranged into five 'books' (probably with the intention of matching the five books of the Law with five of praise.)
2. Some people try to outline the five books of Psalms into descriptive categories of praise, thanksgiving, lament, deliverance, etc. At times, however, all of this is in one psalm. Descriptive categories aren't consistent.
3. Herman Gunkel, working between 1900 and 1926 established five main categories of psalms commonly used today:

H = Hymns: Psalms dwelling on attributes of God in often referred to as 'descriptive praise.'

CL = Community Lament: A call or complaint to God by the assembled congregation.

IL = Individual Lament: The largest group of psalms which give expression to individual grief.

IP = Individual Praise: An individual praise revealing how God has worked for "my benefit."

R = Royal Psalms: Psalms used by the reigning Davidic monarch as part of his public worship.

Exclusive Psalmody

Some believe the church should only sing the Psalter in corporate worship services. What reasons could we give for using more than the Psalter in corporate worship?

Good reasons **not** to be an a cappella Psalms-only church:

1. Psalm 150.
2. Paul uses new hymns in his epistles (Phil 2:5-11, Col 1:15-20).
3. Sing "new songs" (Ps.33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa.42:10; Rev.5:9; 14:3).
4. Most songs to God are prayers.
5. Eph. 5:19 and Col.3:16 would become, "Let us sing psalms, psalms and psalms."
6. Not consistent to use new tunes with old psalms.
7. We have no "inspired, inerrant tunes" to connect with our old psalms.
8. A Psalter-only church alters the wording of the psalms (scripture) for rhyme.

Outline

Book 1 (Ps.1-41):

1. **Mostly Davidic Psalms:** 3-41; Wisdom Psalms: 1, 19, 37; Creation Psalms: 8, 19A
2. H: 8, 19A, 29, 33
3. IL: 3-7, 10-17, 22, 23, 25-28, 31, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41
4. IP: 9, 18, 30, 31:7-24, 32, 34, 40:1-12
5. R: 2, 18, 20, 21, 24

Book 2 (Ps.42-72):

1. **Mostly Historical Psalms**, full of historical detail
2. Psalms of Korah: 42-49; **of David: 51-77**; and of Solomon: 72
3. Elohistic Psalter (Yahweh is replaced by Elohim): 42- 83 (cf. 14 with 53)
4. Psalm of Blessing: 67; and of Wisdom Psalm: 49
5. Psalms of Mixed Genre: 61-64
6. H: 57:7-11, 65, 66, 68

- 7. CL: 44,60
- 8. IL: 42, 43, 51-59, 61-64, 69, 71
- 9. IP: 66: 13-20
- 10. R: 45,72

Book 3 (Ps.73-89):

- 1. **Mostly liturgical Psalms**—for worship (The sanctuary is referred to in almost every Psalm).
- 2. Authorship ascribed to Asaph or to the guild of singers primarily.
- 3. Psalms of Korah: 84,87
- 4. Wisdom Psalm: 73
- 5. H: 89:5-18
- 6. CL: 74, 79, 80, 83, 89
- 7. IL: 73, 77, 86, 88
- 8. R: 82, 89

Book 4 (Ps.90-106):

- 1. **Mostly known for their reflection of Pre-captivity history.**
- 2. Creation Psalm: 104; Enthronement Psalms ("The Lord Is King"): 93, 95-99
- 3. H: 100, 103-106
- 4. CL: 90 (by Moses)
- 5. IL: 94, 102
- 6. IP: 91, 92
- 7. R: 101

Book 5 (Ps.107-150):

- 1. **Hallelujah Psalms:** 111-118, 135-136, 146-150
- 2. H: 111, 113, 117, 134-136, 139, 145-150
- 3. IL: 109, 120, 130, 140-143
- 4. IP: 107, 116,118, 138
- 5. R: 110, 132, 144:1-11
- 6. Pilgrimage Psalms (Return from Captivity, Psalms of Accent): 120-134
- 7. Individual Folk Song: 137
- 8. Psalms of David: **138-145**; Creation Psalms: 113, 139, 148; Wisdom Psalms: 112, 127, 133, 139

A Psalm of Blessing: Psalm 1

THE PATH TO SPECIAL BLESSING FROM GOD (v.1-3)

- A. Don't Step in a Sinner's Counsel (v.1a)
- B. Don't Stand on a Sinner's Course (v.1b)
- C. Don't Sit in a Sinner's Chair (v.1c)
- D. Devour Scripture to Saturate Your Conscience (v.2)
- E. Desire Special Grace from the Sovereign Christ (v.3)

THE PATH TO SUSTAINED BANISHMENT FROM GOD (v.4-6)

- A. Dwelling in Wickedness (v.4)
- B. Driven by Wind (v.4)
- C. Destruction for Wickedness (v.5-6)

CONCLUSION: Deut. 30:15-18