

LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALMS

I. WHAT ARE THE PSALMS?

- A. They are a collection of songs of praise and petitions unto God.
 - 1. Hebrew Title: “Praises,” or “Book of Praises,” and “Prayers” – Psm. 72:20
 - 2. Greek (LXX): Psalmos – Poem set to music (Psalms)

II. DIVISIONS:

- A. Book I (1-41)
- B. Book II (42-72)
- C. Book III (73-89)
- D. Book IV (90-106)
- E. Book V (107-150)

POSSIBLE COMPILERS

- Solomon
- Korahite Levites
- Hezekiah
- Ezra and Nehemiah
- Ezra and Nehemiah

III. COMPILING THE PSALMS

- A. Possible time for compiling: 400-500 years.

IV. INTERESTING CHARACTERISTICS

- A. Each division ends with a doxology or special praise unto God (41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48; 150:1-6)
- B. Principle titles of God highlighted in each division or collection:
 - 1. JEHOVAH – 275 times in Book I; 103 times in Book IV; 236 times in Book V; - “One Who Becomes” or “The Becoming One.”
 - 2. ELOHIM – 234 times in Book II; 80 times in Book III; - “Strength” or “Might;” (plural form)
- C. Psalms duplicated: Psm. 14 & 53; Psm. 40:13-17 & 70. Each duplication part of different compiling.

V. PRINCIPLE AUTHORS OF THE PSALMS:

- A. David – 73 Psalms ascribed to him
- B. Asaph – 12 Psalms (cf. I Chron. 6:31, 39; 15:17; 16:4-5; Neh. 11:22).
- C. Korahites – 11 Psalms (2 Chron. 20:19)
- D. Solomon – 2 Psalms (cf. I Kings 4:32)
- E. Moses – 1 Psalm (Psm. 90)
- F. Heman – 1 Psalm (Psm. 88); (cf. I Chron. 6:31,33)
- G. Ethan – 1 Psalm (Psm. 89)

VI. TIME PERIOD:

- A. From Moses (Psm. 90)
- B. to return from Babylon (Psm. 126)

VII. TITLES IN THE PSALMS

- A. The titles were in the text that the Alexandrian scholars translated into Greek (LXX – Septuagint).
- B. Some of the titles were left untranslated.
- C. 101 of the Psalms contain titles; the other 49 are called “Orphan Psalms”.

VIII. HEBREW POETRY

- A. Two types:
 - 1. DIDACTIC (teaching) – Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
 - 2. LYRICAL (strong emotion – set to music) – Psalms, Song of Solomon; Lamentations
- B. Parallelism in thought, not in meter or rhyme
 - 1. Synonymous – Psalm 36:5,
 - 2. Antithetic – Psm. 20:8
 - 3. Synthetic (adding something new but related) Psm. 19:8
 - 4. Paleological (echo) – Psm. 72:17
 - 5. Climatic – Psm. 29:1

IX. GROUPS OF PSALMS

- A. SONGS OF ASCENTS OR DEGREES (Psalms 120-134)
 - 1. Possibly sung in yearly journeys to festivals at Jerusalem.
 - 2. Possibly compiled by Hezekiah to celebrate his 15 years of life (Isa. 38:20).
- B. HALLELUJAH PSALMS (Psm. 106; 111-113; 135; 146-150) – all begin with the phrase, “Praise ye the Lord.”
- C. IMPRECATORY (VINDICTIVE) PSALMS
 - 1. Many are national in application, not personal (Psm. 83; 137; 129:5-8; 149:6-9).
 - 2. Plea for God’s vengeance (Psm. 109:10-12; cf. Exodus 20:5; Psm. 69:21)
 - 3. Vindicating God’s righteous servant was the same as vindicating God’s own name (Psm. 35:23, 27)
- D. ALPHABETIC PSALMS (Psm. 9; part of 10; 25; 34; 37 111; 112; 119; 145)
Each line begins with a letter from the twenty-two letter Hebrew alphabet.

X. HELPS FOR TITLES

- A. Aiieth-shahar (the hind of the morning – the day dawning)
- B. Aladmot (the singing maidens, maidens choir)
- C. Al-Tashchith (destroy not)
- D. Gittith (Winepresses)
- E. Jeduthun (Praise – giver; name of the directors (I Chron. 16:41; 42; 2 Chronicles 5:12)
- F. Jonath-Elem-Rechokim (the dove of distant woods)

- G. Mahalath (the great dancing)
- H. Mahalath-Leannoth (Dancings with shouting)
- I. Maschi (instructions, understanding)
- J. Michtam (engraven; indicating emphasis and permanence)
- K. Muth-labben (death of the Champion)
- L. Neginoth (stringed instruments)
- M. Nehiloth (inheritance)
- N. Sheminith (eighth group or division)
- O. Shiggaion (crying aloud in grief or joy)
- P. Shoshannim (lilies)
- Q. Shoshannim-Eduth (lilies of testimony)

XI. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

- A. To allow the Psalms to enrich our prayers and praise unto God
- B. Objectives:
 - 1. Read the 150 Psalms giving time for meditation on the Psalms each day during the week.
 - 2. Participate in detailed study of some of the Psalms
 - 3. Learn more from the Psalms about the characteristics of God, the Word, man, the heart and sin.