

Introduction to the Psalms

The Use of Psalms in Israel

The psalms served the crucial function of CONNECTING the worshiper to God. They were commonly used as WORSHIP AIDS by Israelites when they brought sacrifices to the temple in Jerusalem. They gave the Israelites words to express their EMOTIONS.

Types of Psalms

Laments – These help worshipers express STRUGGLES, SUFFERING, and DISAPPOINTMENT to the Lord. (eg., 31, 88, 120)

Thanksgiving – These help worshipers express JOY and GRATITUDE. (eg., 67, 116, 138)

Praise – These center on the praise of God for WHO HE IS (eg., 19, 103, 114)

Salvation-History – These REVIEW the history of God’s saving works among the people of Israel, especially his deliverance of them from bondage. (eg., 78, 105, 135)

Wisdom – These praise the merits of WISDOM and the wise life. (eg., 36, 49, 127)

Songs of Trust – These proclaim that God can be TRUSTED. (eg., 11, 23, 121)

Celebration and Affirmation - *Covenant renewal psalms*, which are used to lead God’s people to a RENEWAL of the covenant he first gave them on Mt. Sinai (eg., 50, 81). *Davidic covenant psalms*, which praise the importance of God’s choice of the lineage of DAVID (eg., 89, 132). *Royal psalms*, which deal with human and divine KINGSHIP (eg., 2, 18). *Songs of Zion* focus on the place where the TEMPLE was built, which was a visible expression of God’s presence and the place from which the king exercised his authority (eg., 48, 87).

Imprecatory – These express ANGER and HATRED toward enemies (eg., 58, 137)

Psalms for the NT believer

“...but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart...” (Ephesians 5:18-19)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)

Their importance to us:

1. The psalms serve as a GUIDE to worship.
2. The psalms demonstrate how we can RELATE HONESTLY to God.
3. The psalms demonstrate the importance of REFLECTION and MEDITATION on the things that God has done for us.