

The Psalms Webinar / Face to Face Conversations with God

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The book of Psalms begins with the Hebrew word, “Blessed” and ends with the Hebrew word, “Yahweh.” These are 150 keys to the life that Yahweh blesses.

You can’t really understand and appreciate fully the Psalms without a study of the life of David. He wrote ½ of the book from the overflow of his story, the life of a passionate lover of God.

David, one of the most fascinating figures in the Bible! A teenage shepherd was anointed by the prophet Samuel to rule Israel as king. Overlooked by his father and ridiculed by his brothers, David had to receive a new identity.

It was easier for him to defeat Goliath than it was to take the throne of Israel. Defeating Goliath required great faith, but to take the throne as king required identity, a new identity. It is actually easier to believe what God can do than it is to believe what God can do **through us!** You have to become a people who believe that God CAN and WILL do marvels through you.

Faith peaks in a moment. But identity grows through a sustained vision.

Every time God calls someone to do a work for Him, he always tells us WHO we are. Gideon was a mighty warrior, long before he did anything. David was told he was a king, long before the crown could fit him. Moses had to have his identity shifted from being a fugitive to being a fighter, a deliverer for a nation. Even Jesus was declared to be the beloved Son of God in whom the Father delights.

God is famous for taking the least expected and turning them into the most successful! It is possible that David was not even JESSE’s true son, but the son he fathered with his handmaiden. An illegitimate son.

2 Sam. 5:10b, 12a “David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him... David **then perceived** that the LORD had established him king over Israel. David then perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel! He had conquered Goliath, destroyed enemies, was anointed three times, and conquered the Jebusite stronghold and ONLY THEN PERCEIVED THAT HE WAS A KING.

David’s name means “**Passionate.**” Only passion for Jesus can reform the nations. More than clever strategies. It will take fire from heaven. God PROMISES in the last days we will be strengthened with might in our inner man and become like David – his name can be translated beloved, but it comes from the root word “to BOIL.”

Zechariah 12:8 The weakest, most feeble, the one who stumbles will be like David!

Introduction to the Psalms

I have loved the Psalms for over 46 years. They have been my comfort and joy, leading me to the place where worship flows. When discouraged or downcast, I have never failed to take new strength from reading the Psalms. They charge my batteries and fill my sails... They seem to grow even more powerful as I grow older. Their thunder stirs me; their sweet

melodies move me into the sacred emotions of a heart on fire... The dark rain clouds of grief turn to bright rainbows of hope, just from meditating on David's soul-subduing songs.

The Psalms are the "Hallmark Cards" section of the Bible. Here we find the words that express our deepest and strongest emotions, no matter what the circumstances. Every emotion of your heart is reflected in the Psalms. Reading the Psalms will turn sighing into singing and trouble into triumph. 189 times the word PRAISE is found in this book. There is simply nothing that touches my heart like the Psalms.

All of Scripture speaks to us, but the Psalms speak *for* us. David knew me. Asaph sang my song. The sons of Korah felt what I feel. Thousands of years ago my deepest feelings were put to music... this is what we delightfully discover when reading the Psalms!

Poetry on Fire

The Psalms are clearly poetic. They are praises placed inside of poetry. Everyone who reads the Psalms realizes how filled with emotion they are! You will never be bored in reading the poetry that spills out of a fiery passionate heart. These verses containing both poetry and music which touch the heart deeply. Much of Christianity has become so intellectualized that our emotions and artistic creativity are often set aside as unimportant in the worship of God. The Psalms free us to become emotional, passionate, sincere worshippers. It is time to sing the Psalms!¹ For this reason, I believe a contemporary name for the book of Psalms could be— Poetry on Fire!

WORSHIP is the central theme of the Psalms. It is a book of worship designed to lift the human spirit to the throne of God. These 150 poetic masterpieces give us an expression of faith and worship. They become a mirror to the heart of God's people in our quest to experience God's presence.

The Psalms are Pure Praise

True praise elevates God, not the speaker. True praise will magnify God in the community of the saints, not just in the private thoughts of the one speaking. Praise is a matter of life and breath. As long as we have breath we are told to praise the Lord. The one commandment repeated most frequently in the Bible is this: Praise the Lord!

The Psalms release an anointing of PRAISE that will lift heaviness off the human heart. When the believer wears the "garment of praise" we make a joyous confidence in God our covering. This replaces the "spirit of despair"² that many experience (Isaiah 61:3). Defeat and failure are broken off of us as we praise the One who created us and delights

¹ Psalmody is the singing of the Psalms in worship. The Tabernacle of David incorporated spiritual worship through the chanting and singing of the Psalms. This antiphonal singing (singing back and forth) accompanied gifted musicians as they played their instruments under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This form of worship will be restored to the Bride of Christ as the Tabernacle of David continues to be restored by God. (Eph.5:19, Col.3:16, I Cor.14:26.

² The word for "despair" in Hebrew can also be translated, 'failure' or 'defeat.'

in us. Praising the Lord will cause us to expect victory and deliverance. The Psalms are meant to do to you what they did to David... they will bring you from your cave of despair into the glad presence of the King who likes you the way you are.

Many today wish to worship God privately and in their own way. But the Psalms were compiled primarily for public and corporate worship, not private. They were the responsive readings of the Old Testament, usually sung antiphonally in Temple worship among God's people. In the Benedictine monasteries, portions of the psalms were assigned to the various hours and watches throughout the day. In many instances the entire book of Psalms were chanted regularly in the course of every week. There was even a time that for admission to the priesthood the candidate was required to recite the entire book!

Singing the psalms in Christian community will be restored to the Bride of Christ. Within community we have access to God in worship as we join with one another in singing and responding through praise to God. The Lord participates with His people in this way. Corporate worship will take on a new importance in the days to come as the Lord has promised, "In the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises (Heb.2:12)."

The Psalms contain the lyrics for the high praises. As the church moves into partnership with God, our songs of high praise will dislodge demonic strongholds over nations. The songs of the Lord sung by passionate hearts will one day release the judgments of God to the earth, just like Moses' rod released the plagues of Egypt (See Psalm 149). The highest praises lift up the highest themes of spiritual worship and unlock revelation to the hearts of God's people.

The Psalms are prayers. The doxology of Book II of the Psalms (72:20) concludes with the words, "the prayers of David, son of Jesse." The author of each Psalm was writing His poem as prayer to God. The Psalms have been called the 'little brother' of prayer. Mixed with intercession the Psalms become the fuel for our devotional life. Each psalm is a prayer. So many worship songs have been inspired by this book of prayer-poetry!

The Psalms will unlock mysteries and parables, for in the purest praise is the cryptic language of a prophet. The wisdom of God is contained in these 150 keys. You have a key chain with master keys to unlock God's storehouse of wisdom and revelation. It is the "harp" (anointed worship) that releases divine secrets. Read carefully Psalm 49:4 "I will turn my ear to a proverb; with the harp I will expound my riddle."

The prophetic anointing rests upon the Psalms. David's harp will bring revelation and understanding to the people. Singers who tap into the anointing of the Psalms will bring forth truths in their songs that will break the hearts of people and release

understanding to the church. The prophets must become musicians³ and the musicians must become prophets for the Key of David to be given to the church.

The Psalms provide for the church today a model of worship and prayer that must be restored as the Tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11, Acts 15:16-17). The Psalms are meant to bring joy to the hearts of the saints (James 5:13) and praise to the heart of the Father. There are other Psalms included in the Bible:

- ✓ The Psalm of Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-18).
- ✓ The Psalm of Moses declaring the faithfulness of God (Deut.32).
- ✓ Deborah's Psalm of praise after God rescued His people (Judges 5:1-31).
- ✓ Hannah sang a Psalm of praise for the gift of her son, Samuel (I Sam.2:1-10).
- ✓ Jeremiah 20:7-18 contains two of the prophet's prayers of lament.
- ✓ Lamentations Chapters 3 & 5 are also known as Psalms of Lament.
- ✓ Jonah 2:2-9 expresses thanksgiving for his deliverance in a Psalm.
- ✓ The Hymns of the book of Revelation include the worship songs of men and angels.

Title of the Book:

In the Hebrew, the Book of Psalms is titled, *Sepher Tehillim* (Book of Praises). The word *Psalms* means 'songs or poems sung with musical accompaniment.' It comes from a root word that means 'to pluck a stringed instrument.' Another Hebrew title calls it Tephilloth or 'prayers.' By bringing these two thoughts together the Psalms become the Book of Praises and Prayers. Worship and intercession are meant to mingle before the throne of God (Rev.5:8).

The book of Psalms has six different Hebrew titles in various manuscripts, including:

- Song of Praise
- Songs of Adoration
- Hymns
- Song Collection
- Hymnal of the Jewish Community
- Prayers

³ According to Josephus, each man in the school of the prophets had to be able to play a musical instrument. They would prepare themselves for prophetic ministry by playing songs unto the Lord. See I Samuel 10:5.

The current term, Psalter, has its origin in the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The position of the Psalter in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) is at the head of the Kethubim (“writings”), the third and final section of the Jewish Scriptures.

Author:

When we think of the Book of Psalms we think of David, the worshipping Shepherd-King. There are 73 Psalms designated in their inscription as written by David. Acts 4:25 and Hebrews 4:7 indicate that Psalms 2 and 95 were David’s; making a grand total of 75! He was a true poet (II Sam.1:17) and musician (I Sam.16:18). David testified on his deathbed that God had spoken through him...“The man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs: *‘The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; His word was on my tongue.’*” 2 Samuel 23:1-2

There were at least ten other human authors of the Psalms. They include:

- ❖ Asaph – 12 Asaph was David’s Levitical choir director.
- ❖ Korahites – 12 (also known as the “sons of Korah,” a Levitical family of singers)
- ❖ Solomon – 2 (Psalm 72 & 127)
- ❖ Moses – 1 (Psalm 90 and perhaps Psalm 91)
- ❖ Ethan – 1 (Psalm 89) Ethan was a court musician (I Chron.15:16-17)
- ❖ Heman – 1 (Psalm 88) A wise and anointed musician (I Kings 4:31)
- ❖ Ezra – 1 (Psalm 119 is believed to have been written by Ezra the scribe)
- ❖ Isaiah – possibly the author of 3
- ❖ Jeremiah – possibly the author of 2
- ❖ Haggai & Zechariah – The Greek Septuagint ascribes 3 Psalms to these prophets.

Superscriptions:

These are the brief titles or notations given before the actually text of the Psalm. Although scholars are divided we believe they are inspired of God and should be included in the actual psalm. Of the 150 Psalms, 116 have superscriptions. They all vary, but generally include three elements:

1. The author. Many superscriptions include a phrase such as, “A psalm of David” or “A psalm of the sons of Korah.
2. Musical terms. This would include names of instruments, tunes or melodies, how it should be sung/played and even a poetical flair (i.e. “Miktam” means ‘a golden poem’ – Ps.57). Psalm 59 includes all three elements. [See Musical Terms below]
3. Historical notes. Several psalms give a historical setting in the superscription that gives us a clue as to what the author was going through when the psalm was penned.

Divisions of the Psalms:

The Psalms are really five books in one. Moses gave the five books of the Law called the Pentateuch; David gives us the five books of the Psalms. Each division ends with a doxology that includes the words, “**Amen and Amen.**” The last division ends with Psalm 150 as the doxology, forming an appropriate conclusion to this ‘Pentateuch of David. These five divisions have been compared to the first five books of the Bible.

Five Books of Psalms

Book I Psalms 1 – 41

Book II Psalms 42 – 72

Book III Psalms 73 – 89

Book IV Psalms 90 – 106

Book V Psalms 107 – 150

- ✓ Psalms about man and creation (1-41); corresponding to GENESIS.
- ✓ Psalms about suffering and redemption (42-72); corresponding to EXODUS.
- ✓ Psalms about worship and the House of God (73-89); corresponding to LEVITICUS.
- ✓ Psalms about our sojourn on the earth (90-106); corresponding to NUMBERS.
- ✓ Psalms about praise and the Word (107-150); corresponding to DEUTERONOMY.

The theme of each Book could easily be found in its first verse... (1:1, 42:1, 73:1, 90:1, & 107:1).

Categories or Types of Psalms:

- **Lament** or **Petition**. These Psalms give voice to the cry of God's people. They are intercessory in nature, pleading with God to intervene (Psalm 3 & 44).
- **Thanksgiving** or **Praise**. Although the theme of praise and thanksgiving run throughout the entire book of Psalms, some are filled with the higher notes of celebration (30, 44, 103, 145, 148-150).
- **Trust in God**. (Psalm 4, 37)
- **Wisdom** or **Didactic Psalms**. (1, 37, 119).
- **Royal Psalms**. (2, 21, 45, 72, 110, 132)
- **Michtam Psalms**. (16, 56-60) The word 'michtam' means 'engraved in gold' or 'precious secret.'
- **Enthronement Hymns of Yahweh**. These often are concerning Jerusalem. (2, 48, 110)
- **Acrostic** or **Alphabet Psalms**. (Psalm 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145, 9-10 form one acrostic).
- **Psalms of Ascent** or **Psalms of Degrees**. These are a unique cluster of Psalms that were sung as worshippers went up the 15 steps of the Temple (Psalm 120 – 134).
- **Hallelujah Psalms**. Psalms of 'Praise Jah.' (106, 111-113, 115-117, 135, 146-150).
- **Theme Psalms**. Many of the Psalms can be classified by special themes like creation and nature (8, 19, and 104), the exodus (78), repentance and forgiveness (6, 32, and 51).

Date

The Psalms were written over a period of almost 1,000 years between 1400 B.C. (Moses) and 500 B.C. It is generally believed that the vast majority of the Psalms was composed around 1000 B.C. and was placed in our Book of Psalms by Ezra around 500 B.C. Some believe that **Book I** (Ps. 1-41) was compiled by Solomon, **Books II & III** by the men of Hezekiah (Ps. 42-89, see also Prov.25:1 & II Chron.29:30), **Books IV & V** by the scribe Ezra (Psalms 90-150).

Musical Terms

In addition to the titles used for numerous Psalms, there is also given in the inscription various musical terms that indicate the Psalms were meant to be sung.

- “Psalm” is used 57 times and means ‘a song sung to musical accompaniment.’
- “Song” is found in the headings of 30 psalms.
- “Choir director” is mentioned in 55 psalms.
- Various musical instruments are referred to such as, “stringed instruments,” wind instruments such as the flute (Ps.5), the harp (Ps.8, 81, 84).
- Well-known tunes are also given, such as the tune of “the Lilies” (Ps.45, 69).

God has kept men from preserving the original composition of the music so that each culture down through the ages would be free to compose its own music for the Psalms. The inspired words have been given to us, but the music is ours to compose. Poetical creativity is released when the inspiration of the Psalms touches the human spirit.