

Types of Psalms

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Thank you for bearing with me on this brief written study of the Psalms. The last article on “Psalms of National Lament” introduced various categories or “Types of Psalms.” Defining what each of these categories mean may assist in drawing attention to their content in a useful and edifying way. To review, the eleven categories already mentioned were: Thanksgiving and Adoration, Individual Praise, Individual Lament, National Lament, Royal, Enthronement, Songs of Zion, Penitential, Imprecatory, Messianic, and Wisdom.

Thanksgiving and Adoration

The Psalms of Thanksgiving and Adoration express gratitude for God’s blessings as well as express adoration or great love, devotion, or respect. These Psalms pay homage or show the attitude of worship to God. Psalms of Thanksgiving and Adoration are Psalm 8, 19, 29, 33, 65, 67, 68, 81, 91, 95, 96, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 113, 114, 115, 117, 123, 124, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, and 150. Is the best known of these Psalm 100 which begins, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands”? Can you say the remaining four verses from memory? Many are taught this Psalm in early childhood.

Individual Praise

The 23rd Psalm is in this category. Perhaps this category is distinguished from the others because instead of involving a group dynamic they express personal admiration and approval of the worthiness of God and laud or extol His glory. Psalms of Individual Praise are Psalm 11, 18, 23, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 46, 48, 66, 75, 84, 85, 92, 106, 108, 116, 118, 138, and 139.

Individual Lament

In times of personal trouble these Psalms particularly are comforting. Among the reasons they are is the observation that others who have gone before have suffered too and looked to God for strength and assurance of acceptability in God’s sight. Another thought from some of these Psalms is that those who are causing the trouble are not going unnoticed by God even though they may seem to be by everyone else. The content of these Psalms urge honesty in personal examination as, for example, Psalm 51 where David expresses repentance regarding his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Psalms of Individual Lament are Psalm 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 39, 42, 43, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 76, 77, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140, 141, 142, and 143.

National Lament

The nation that is lamenting its position before God is the nation of Israel. A study of these six Psalms (44, 74, 79, 80, 83, and 90) will point out what a nation that is wanting the favor of God should be thinking about on a national level. Take, for example, Psalm 90 which was discussed in the previous article.

Royal

The commonality within these Psalms is the kingly sovereignty of God and of Christ. The Royal Psalms are Psalm 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144. (Psalm 18 is duplicated in 2 Samuel 22 where it appears in its historical context).

Enthronement

Enthronement Psalms emphasize the fact and benefit of God’s rule over all things. The Enthronement Psalms are Psalm 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, and 99.

Songs of Zion

Zion is the place where God is. The Songs of Zion express a desire to be where God is. They emanate the hope of deliverance from all evil by being with God. Think of what it would mean for the cause of Christ today if every Christian really wanted what the Psalmist wanted when he penned the words of Psalm 42:1-2, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God: when shall I come and appear before God?" and Psalm 122:1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." The Psalms representing the Songs of Zion are Psalm 42, 43, 87, 121, 122, 125, 126, and 129.

Penitential

The word "penitential" means being "sorry or ashamed for having done wrong" and being "willing to atone" or repent. Think of how being educated in these Psalms can aid a Christian in this virtue. The Penitential Psalms are Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.

Imprecatory

The Imprecatory Psalms serve as a reminder that vengeance belongs to the Lord, and He will repay the evil to which His people sometimes are subjected (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30). In the Imprecatory Psalms the victim or victims cry out for God to exercise His vengeance upon their oppressors. A New Testament example of this type of sentiment is found in Revelation 6:9-11. The Imprecatory Psalms are Psalm 35, 58, 69, 83, 109, and 137.

Messianic

The expected Deliverer is anticipated in the Psalms in this category. The Messianic Psalms are Psalm 2, 16, 22, 24, 45, 72, 110, and 118.

Wisdom

Five books of the Old Testament are called "wisdom literature" (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon). The Psalms in this category are obviously the chief reason why the Book of Psalms is one of the books of wisdom literature. The Wisdom Psalms are Psalm 1, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 19, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 53, 73, 78, 82, 94, 112, 119, 127, and 128.

Conclusion

Perhaps the best way to fully appreciate the meaning of each of the eleven categories into which the Book of Psalms may be divided is to read all of the Psalms in a particular category.