

## Psalms Introduction

Background:

The Title of the book comes from the Greek translation. The Hebrew title could more closely be translated in English as "Songs of Praise."

There are 150 Psalms divided into 5 books. (1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150) Some suggest this was done to match the five books of Moses. As worship became liturgical and the OT was divided and assigned to be read on certain days this kind of division would make sense.

The Psalms were apparently sung. Some of the headings indicate "stringed instruments" and "sung to the tune of". Much of this was likely put into place under David. No one as yet has been able to identify exactly what the musical accompaniment might have been.

Attempts have been made to try to classify, or divide psalms into groups. The most ancient grouping is the seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Luther suggested 5 classes 1) Messianic, 2) Teaching, 3) Comfort, 4) Prayer/Petition, 5) Thanksgiving.

Another class of Psalms that many have trouble with is the imprecatory psalms, or psalms that call down curses or call for the punishment of the psalmist's enemies. However, Luther pointed out that we really do the same thing when we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." We too are asking that God would hinder and destroy anything that would keep his will from being carried out. (Ps 139:19-21)

Selah: We don't know for sure what this word is there for. The best guess is that it was a musical or liturgical instruction.

Hallels: Hallelujah or "Praise the Lord" psalms. Psalms 113-118 make up the Hallel of the Great Feasts. At the Passover Psalms 113-114 were sung at the beginning of the feast and 115-118 near the end of the meal. Ps 136, the Great Hallel, was usually sung at the close of the Passover. Later 119-136 were called the Great Hallel.

Messianic Psalms: As all of Scripture does, the psalms point to and find their true meaning in Christ. Psalms are Messianic if they are quoted by NT writers and applied to Christ, or if they describe someone in a way that could not possibly apply to a mere human, but could only be fulfilled by Christ. The Chief Messianic Psalms are 2, 8, 16, 22, 45, 72, 110.

Known Authors: David 73 psalms; Levites (in charge of music at the Temple) 25; Solomon 2; Moses 1.