

An Introduction to the Old Testament
Class 12
Wisdom 1: The Psalms
2025-2026
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I. Books of the Bible Quiz

II. The Wisdom Literature in the Scheme of Salvation History

- A. Almost all centered around David and the monarchy
- B. David developed the kingdom but also the worship of Israel (1 Chronicles).

III. BASIC FACTS ABOUT PSALMS

A. Psalms are part of the Wisdom Literature of the Bible, books that teach true wisdom, which is skill in godly living. Not “tips for success” but what the life looks like of someone who fears the Lord. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 9:10).

B. The Psalms are the Bible’s songbook and prayerbook—Jesus’ songbook and prayerbook, the songbook and prayerbook of the apostles and early church.

The word “psalm” means song.

C. There is great variety in the Psalter, often great variety within a single Psalm.

D. Multiple authors but David wrote the most (about half); Sons of Asaph and sons of Korah another 10-20; Solomon has two; Moses one; a third or so anonymous.

E. 5 Books, first four ending with a doxology (“Blessed be the LORD...”), showing some sign of organization and editorial work (72:20).

1. 1-41

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
Amen and Amen. (Ps 41:13)

2. 42-72

18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,

who alone does wondrous things.
19 Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!
20 The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. (Ps 72:18–20)

3. 73-89

Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen. (Ps 89:52)

4. 90-106

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD! (Ps 106:48)

5. 107-150

F. Psalm 1 as an introduction, Psalm 150 as a conclusion

G. Psalms 1-2 as extended prologue, Psalms 146-150 as rousing conclusion
("Hallelujah" = "Praise the LORD")

H. Approaching the Psalms

Our sinful tendency is to meet a crisis with human wisdom ("*This is only evil!*") and human resources ("*There is no way out!*"), but the Psalms call us to a different path. They show us what happens when theology—rich, deep, complete, *biblical* theology!—meets the crisis. The Psalmist lives in the same world that we live in, filled as it is with enemies, suffering, and sin, but he never loses his grip on the reality that this world is also governed absolutely by the Lord his gracious King. God might feel distant, but the psalmist stands on the truth that he is forever near. The situation looks bleak to human eyes, but God is the omnipotent Deliverer. Our hearts are shattered into a million forgotten pieces, but God "restores my soul" (Ps. 23:3).

This rootedness in a world riddled with sin means that we can imitate their prayers to great benefit. It also means that we can sing their songs with full emotion and confidence because they are not shallow choruses by those ignorant of real suffering. They are instead the deliberate praises of a people who know "our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Ps. 115:3). No matter how dark is our night, there is reason to pray and reason to sing. The Psalms are the unbridled cries of a heart that never loses its grip on the unchanging truths of theology. Psalm 61:1 begins with, "Hear my cry," but it does

so, “For you have been my refuge” (v. 3). God is our refuge and *therefore* we cry to him!⁴

- I. The power of the Psalms is the way they dwell in *reality* but they do so *Coram Deo* (“Before the face of God”).

IV. **Nine Aspects of the Psalms**

A *little* helpful to identify “*types*” of Psalms (praise, lament, thanksgiving, wisdom, etc.).

But it’s much *more* helpful to identify the “aspects” we find in all the Psalms and then note how they appear in a given Psalm.

The 9 Aspects...

V. **#1 - The Psalms are a Witness to Jesus Christ**

- A. Some prophesy Jesus (Messianic Psalms)

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27)

- B. Jesus is *the* Psalmist

Sometimes a Psalm is easiest to understand if we imagine Jesus singing or praying it.

Remember, many are written by David the King, and because Jesus is the greater David, it’s easy to hear Jesus’ voice in it.

- C. Psalms present the gospel of Christ, Gospel categories.

Sometimes describing our *need* for Christ, the righteousness we need, the reality of sin, the promise of forgiveness, the holiness of God, etc.

A Psalm of David. O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?² He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart. (Ps. 15:1-2)

Ps 15 is a description of our need for a righteousness that is beyond us.

⁴ Baker, *A User’s Guide*, 188–189.

VI. #2 – The Psalms Contain Devotion to Inspire Affections (Ps. 73:25)

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. (Ps. 73:25)

VII. #3 – The Psalms Command Us (Ps. 34:13-17 and 1 Pet. 3:10-12)

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. (Ps. 34:13-17)

This passage is cited in 1 Peter 3:10–12 as something Christians must *do*.

VIII. #4 – The Psalms Guide Us with Wisdom (Ps. 1)—They show us the *wise path*.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Ps. 1:1-3)

IX. #5 – The Psalms Model and Command Worship (Ps. 150)

Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! ² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! ³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵ Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! (Ps. 150:1-6)

Psalm 150 gives us both worship commands and a worship model. It is both.

X. #6 – The Psalms Model and Provoke Prayer (Ps. 23)

A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Ps. 23:1-3)

XI. #7 – The Psalms Teach and Inspire with History (Ps. 106)

Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. (Ps. 106:7)

The Psalmist here uses history to teach us how to live.

XII. #8 – The Psalms Highlight Evil and Anticipate Final Judgment

O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us!⁹ Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock! (Ps. 137:8-9)

- A. “Imprecatory Psalms” like 137 challenge our sensibilities.
- B. These remind us that sin is horrible and offensive.
- C. These remind us that sin brings judgment—sometimes in this life, absolutely in the next.
- D. These remind us that God’s people have real enemies, both the world-flesh-devil triad, and also people who persecute us for our faith in God. We pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44), but we also recognize that if they fail to repent, they will suffer horribly for their opposition to God and his people.
- E. This same kind of cry for judgment appears at the end of all things:

“They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10)

XIII. #9 – The Psalms Teach Theology

- A. The Doctrine of Revelation (God revealing himself and his truth)

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Ps. 19:1)

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; (Ps. 19:7)

B. The Doctrine of God

Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.¹⁰ The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. (Ps. 33:8-10)

C. The Doctrine of Creation

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. (Ps 33:6–7)

He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. 9 He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. (Ps 147:8–9)

D. The Doctrine of Christ

I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. (Ps. 2:7)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? (Ps 22:1)

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” (Ps 110:1)

E. The Doctrine of Salvation

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity. (Ps 32:1-2, cited in Romans 4:7–8)

F. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps. 51:11)

G. The Doctrine of the Church

He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,⁶ that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,⁷ so

that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Ps. 78:5-7)

XIV. Therefore? Read, Love, Meditate On, Pray, and Study the Psalms.