

# INTRODUCTION TO THE 19<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## PSALMS (compiled before 400 B.C.)

A. The book of Psalms is a part of biblical poetry	1
B. The characteristics of the book of Psalms	2
C. The origin of the book of Psalms	3
D. The division of the book of Psalms	4
E. The poetic nature of the book of Psalms	4
F. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, in the book of Psalms	5
G. The practical use of the book of Psalms	6

### A. THE BOOK OF PSALMS IS A PART OF BIBLICAL POETRY.

Biblical poetry is found in the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, but also in parts of the Prophets and even in the sayings of Jesus Christ.

#### **1. In the Psalms man speaks to God.**

The Psalms are a means of expressing some of the deepest and highest thoughts and feelings of the human mind and heart. The source of the Psalms is the believing poet's heart, which is moved by the Holy Spirit to seek God and to fellowship with God. The poets do this through worship, praise and prayer in the midst of a great variety of emotional experiences. Their emotional experiences may be fear or confidence, anxiety or peace, despair or hope, sorrow or joy, doubt or faith and hate or love in the face of opposition from God's enemies or in view of the various circumstances that God controls in a sovereign way. The Psalms are the responses of the believing poets to God's goodness and grace or to God's discipline and judgement. Whether the psalmist is occupied by a mournful or joyous theme, *in the Psalms he always expresses himself as being in the presence of the living God. Their subjective emotional experiences and responses must always be evaluated in the light of the objective revelation of God (the commands, prohibitions and teachings) in the Bible.*

- Some Psalms contain a personal as well as a historical element.

In the Psalms, the poets sing of their own historical circumstances and of their own personal experiences. This is evident from the titles and the contents of some of the Psalms. In these Psalms, the personal experiences of the poets are most prominent.

- Some Psalms also have a representative as well as a universal element.

The experiences of the poets are not only personal and historical, but also representative and universal in character. Deep in their hearts, the poets are conscious of their solidarity with mankind in general and with the people of God in particular. They feel the pulse of the communal life of man in general and of the people of God in particular. The songs that are born of this consciousness of solidarity with other people, are songs that interpret the deep thoughts and feelings, not only of the poets themselves, but of people in general. But more specifically, the Psalms interpret the deep thoughts and feelings of God's people everywhere in the world and at all times in history. That is why the Psalms have become the embodiment of the worship, praises, prayers, petitions and lamentations of God's people in both the Old and New Testaments. In these Psalms, the communal life of Israel and of the Christian Church are most prominent.

- Some Psalms have a Messianic element.

The believing poets feel that they are united to their glorious Head, the Messiah, who suffers for them and suffers with them. They also regard the Messiah as the source of their salvation and joy. Therefore, we can sometimes hear the Messiah, Jesus Christ, speak through the Psalms. For example, in Psalm 22, the Messiah sings a plaintive song. He feels forsaken by God and despised by people. And in Psalm 110, the God of the Bible sings a song of victory about the Messiah. The Messiah will sit at God's right hand until he has subjected all his enemies under his feet. In these Psalms, the humiliated and exalted Christ is most prominent. In Luke 24:44 Jesus said, "*Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.*"

#### **2. In the Psalms God speaks to man.**

In Matthew 22:43 Jesus says that the psalmist David spoke by the Spirit. The apostles prayed saying, "Sovereign Lord, You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David."<sup>1</sup> And in 1 Peter 1:10-12 the prophets (and poets) searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out what the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing to when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

The Psalms, as it were, originate with God, because God is the Creator of the poets as well as the One who inspires and controls their thoughts and emotions. All the Psalms have their fountain in God, because the believing poets are living in union with God and their songs are the songs of the community of God's people. The source of the Psalms is the heart of *believing* poets, who are moved by the Holy Spirit to seek God and to fellowship with God.

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 4:25

The Psalms consists of both didactic and lyric poetry of the believing poets. In *the didactic Psalms* like Psalm 1, 2, 19, 106 and 119, God gives objective instruction through the poets and addresses himself to their understanding. In *the lyric Psalms* like Psalm 22, 40, 51, 62 and 139, God reveals himself through the subjective emotions and spiritual experiences of the poets and directs himself to their hearts.

Thus, *in the Psalms, God speak to the mind as well as to the heart of people. All speaking of God in the Bible must be evaluated in the light of 'the whole will of God'<sup>2</sup> expressed in his commands, prohibitions and teachings in the Bible, correctly interpreted.* No one should add to or take away from what is written in the Bible<sup>3</sup>.

## **B. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.**

### **1. The combination and repetition of Psalms.**

#### Combination of Psalms in the book of Psalms.

Although the Hebrew text and its translations in Greek and Latin show that there are 150 Psalms, there are differences how they are counted. On the one hand, Psalm 9 and 10 in the Hebrew text is Psalm 9 in the translations. Also Psalm 114 and 115 in the Hebrew text is Psalm 113 in the translations. On the other hand, Psalm 116 in the Hebrew text is Psalm 114 and 115 in the translations. And Psalm 147 in the Hebrew text is Psalm 146 and 147 in the translations. Psalm 42 and 43 in 36 Hebrew manuscripts correctly form one Psalm, as is shown by the identical situation and the closing verse.

#### Repetitions of Psalms in the book of Psalms.

Some Psalms or parts of Psalms are repeated twice in the book of Psalms. Psalm 14 is identical with Psalm 53. Psalm 40:13-17 is identical to Psalm 70. Psalm 57:7-11 and Psalm 60:5-12 is identical with Psalm 108. Psalm 115:4-11 is identical with Psalm 135:15-20. And there is also much identity between Psalm 31:1-4 and Psalm 71:1-3.

This shows that the book of *the Psalms was a liturgical book, which combined songs to be used in the worship services.* Other clear combinations can be seen in Psalm 19 verse 1-6 with verse 7-14, Psalm 24 verse 1-6 with verse 7-10, and Psalm 27 verse 1-6 with verse 7-14. The way in which songs were combined to be used in the worship service is illustrated in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36, which is a combination of Psalm 105, 96 and 106.

### **2. The additional notes to the Psalms.**

Most Psalms have additional notes. These additional notes are most often found at the beginning of a Psalm, partly in the middle of a Psalm and sometimes at the end of a Psalm. These additional notes are most probably the work of the compilers of the Psalms. These additional notes served various purposes:

- Some additional notes describe the character of a Psalm.
  - 57 Psalms have the title: 'mizmor', which means 'a psalm or song of praise' accompanied by stringed instruments (Psalm 24).
  - 27 Psalms have the title: 'shir', which means 'a song or vocal music' (Psalm 45).
  - 15 Psalms have the title: 'shir ha-maaloth', which means 'a song of ascents' and which were liturgical songs sung during the stages of pilgrimage to the annual feasts at Jerusalem (Psalm 120).
  - 5 Psalms have the title: 'tephillah', which means 'a prayer' (Psalm 90).
  - 13 Psalms have the title: 'maskil', which were probably didactic or contemplative poems (Psalm 32).
  - 6 Psalms have the title: 'miktam' (Psalm 16), probably 'an epigram' or 'pointed saying'.
  - 5 Psalms have the title: 'shiggaion' (Psalm 7), probably 'a choric hymn'.

The last two titles are no longer understood today.
- Some additional notes describe the presentation of a Psalm.
  - Psalm 4 says that the Psalm is to be sung accompanied with stringed instruments.
  - Psalm 5 says that it is to be accompanied by flutes.
  - Psalm 22 says that it must be sung to the tune of 'The doe of the morning'.
  - Psalm 45 says that it must be sung to the tune of 'Lilies'.
  - 55 Psalms have the title 'for the director of music' (Psalm 4), but we do not know what his responsibility was.
  - 71 times the word 'Selah' is found in the book of Psalms. Like so many other terms in the book of Psalms, we do not know anymore what it originally meant. It could have been some literary or musical term. We should not speculate about the meaning of these terms.
- Some additional notes describe the religious occasion at which a Psalm was sung.
  - Psalm 45 was 'a wedding song'
  - Psalm 92 was 'a song for the Sabbath day'.
- Some additional notes describe the author of the Psalm and sometimes add the historical occasion which led to the writing of the song (Isaiah 38:9).

<sup>2</sup> Acts 20:27

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18-19

- Psalm 18 is a Psalm of David, which he sang to the Lord when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.
- Psalm 51 is a Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.
- Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses.

### **C. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.**

#### **1. The name of the book.**

Not a single title can describe all the poetry found in the book of the Psalms. It contains teaching, prayers and songs. In the Hebrew Bible the name is 'praise songs/psalms' (Hebrew: *tehilim*). The Bible in 2 Chronicles 5:12-13 relates that songs of praise and thanks were sung by singers accompanied by musicians playing cymbals, harps and lyres and the sounding of trumpets. The title of Psalm 145 is 'A Psalm of David' (Hebrew: *tehilah le-david*).

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament the name is 'Psalms' (Greek: *Psalmoi*). Psalms are songs sung accompanied by stringed instruments. 57 Psalms has this title (Psalm 3). This is the name the New Testament uses for the book of Psalms in Luke 20:42 and Acts 1:20. However, the oldest name was probably 'Prayers' as the subscription of Psalm 72 proves. Book I and II of the Psalms closes with the subscription, "This concludes the prayers of David, son of Jesse."

#### **2. The writers and dates of the individual Psalms.**

Many of the writers of the individual Psalms are mentioned by name. According to 1 Chronicles 16:7, we know that certain anonymous Psalms like Psalm 96, 105 and 106 were most probably composed or arranged by David. Psalm 2 is anonymous, but is ascribed to David in Acts 4:25. We know when people like Moses, David and Solomon lived, Korah, Asaph and Ethan were temple musicians and lived in the time of David, that is about 1000 B.C.<sup>4</sup>.

#### **3. The gathering of Psalms into volumes.**

How was the book of the Psalms compiled? Because the book of the Psalms contain Psalms written as early as Moses (1527 - 1407 B.C.)(Psalm 90) and probably as late as the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.)(Psalm 137), the book must have been gradually compiled into a book of 150 Psalms. Earlier smaller volumes of collections of the Psalms existed, which were assimilated into our present book of the Psalms. We can distinguish three different periods of compilation:

- During the first period, five smaller volumes of Psalms were compiled:

The first four volumes all ended with similar doxologies.

*The first volume* consisted of the Psalms of David (3-41) and ended with the doxology of Psalm 41:13. Psalm 10 originally formed one Psalm with Psalm 9. Psalm 33 is ascribed to David in the Greek translation.

*The second volume* probably consisted only of Psalms of David (51-71) and ended with the doxology of Psalm 72:18-19. Psalm 72 was by Solomon and Psalm 72:20 was written by the compiler of this volume of the Psalms.

*The third volume* probably consisted only of Psalms of the sons of Korah (42,44-49, 84,85, 87,88), the Psalms of Asaph (50,73-83), one Psalm of Ethan (89) and ended with the doxology of Psalm 89:52. In many Hebrew manuscripts Psalm 42 and 43 constitute one Psalm.

*The fourth volume* consisted mainly of 'the songs of ascents', which were probably sung during the pilgrimages to Jerusalem (Psalm 120-134) and ended with the doxology of Psalm 106:48.

*The fifth volume* consisted of Psalms beginning or ending with the word 'Hallelujah', which means 'Praise the Lord!' Because the word Hallelujah does not form a part of the actual contents of the songs, it points to the existence of a 'Hallelujah volume of songs' (Psalm 104-106,111-113,115-117,135,146-150). The Greek translation proves that there existed uncertainty during the translation whether a particular 'Hallelujah' belonged to the previous or the next Psalm. For example, the Hallelujahs *at the end* of Ps 106, 117 and 135 in the Hebrew text are put *at the beginning* of Psalm 107,118 and 136 in the Greek text.

- During the second period, three bigger volumes of Psalms were compiled:

*The first volume* consisted of the first volume of the first period, that is, the Psalms of David to which the anonymous Psalms 1 and 2 were added (Ps 1-41).

*The second volume.* The second and third volumes of the first period seem to have existed as one volume for some time, to which Psalm 72 of Solomon, and Psalm 86 of David were added (Ps 42-89). This volume was distinguished by the fact that Psalms 53, 57, 60 and 70 were also found in one of the other volumes and that instead of the name 'Lord', it generally used the name 'God' in its Psalms.

*The third volume.* The fourth and fifth volumes of the first period also seem to have existed as one volume for some time. This is evident from the fact that Psalms 105-107 begin with the same words, "Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord." To this volume other Psalms of David (Psalm 101,103,108-110,138-145), one of Moses (Psalm 90) and certain anonymous Psalms were added (Psalm 91,100,102,114,119,137).

---

<sup>4</sup> 1 Chronicles 6:31-47; 16:7

This volume distinguished itself by the fact that like the first volume of this period, it also used the name ‘Lord’ instead of ‘God’ in the Psalms, but unlike the first volume of this period, it lacked the musical superscriptions.

- During the third period, one large volume of Psalms was compiled.  
This is our present volume of 150 Psalms.

#### **4. The compiler and date of compilation of the book of Psalms.**

Our present book of the Psalms is a compilation of other smaller volumes of Psalms. We have no evidence when these separate volumes of Psalms were compiled. It is possible that this happened during the religious reform of king Hezekiah from 727-685 B.C., or during the religious reform of king Josiah from 639-608 B.C., or even after the return from exile in 537 B.C. during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah from 458-432 B.C. Psalm 126 and 137 were written during and after the exile, between 586-537 B.C. Because 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 is most probably a compilation of several Psalms of our present book of Psalms, we conclude that our present book of Psalms was compiled earlier than the books of Chronicles, that is, compiled before 400 B.C. The doxology of Psalm 106:47-48, which was written by the compiler of the fourth book of Psalms, was taken over by the writer of Chronicles in 1 Chronicles 16:35-36. 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches us that the writers of the individual Psalms as well as the compilers of the various volumes of the Psalms were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They stood in the service of the divine Author, the Holy Spirit, and wrote and compiled exactly those things which God wanted the people of the world to know.

### **D. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.**

**1. The theme of the book of Psalms** is: *prayers and songs of praise.*

**2. The book of Psalms is divided into 5 volumes:**

- The first volume consists of Psalms 1-41. Psalms of David.
- The second volume consists of Psalms 42-72. Psalms of David, Korah and Asaph.
- The third volume consists of Psalms 73-89. More Psalms of David, Korah and Asaph.
- The fourth volume consists of Psalms 90-106. More Psalms of David and other anonymous poets.
- The fifth volume consists of Psalms 107-150. More Psalms of David and other anonymous poets.

An ancient Jewish statement said, “Moses gave the Israelites the 5 books of the law, and corresponding to these, David gave them the 5 volumes of the Psalms.”

- The first volume is said to correspond to Genesis and has as subject “man”. For example, man’s blessedness in Psalm 1, his fall in Psalm 2-14 and his restoration in Psalm 15-41.
- The second volume is said to correspond to Exodus and has as subject ‘Israel’. For example, Israel’s ruin in Psalm 42-49, her Redeemer in Psalm 50-60 and her redemption in Psalm 61-72.
- The third volume is said to correspond to Leviticus and has as subject ‘the sanctuary and its worship service’.
- The fourth volume is said to correspond to Numbers and has as subject ‘the earth’. For example, the blessings needed in Psalm 90-94, the blessings anticipated in Psalm 95-100 and the blessings enjoyed in Psalm 101-106.
- The fifth volume is said to correspond to Deuteronomy and has as subject ‘the word of God’. For example, Psalm 119, Psalm 139:17-18, Psalm 143:5-10 and Psalm 147:15-20.

### **E. THE POETIC NATURE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.**

**1. Parallelism.**

The main feature of Hebrew poetry is called *parallelism*. It consists of a correspondence of thought between the first and the second line of a verse. Hebrew poetry is written in couplets, usually consisting of two lines that are related to each other in some way. There are four kinds of parallelism:

- There is the repetition kind of parallelism in which the two lines express the same or a similar thought, but in different words. The second line may help to determine the writer’s intended meaning. For example, Psalm 32:2 says, “Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.” Here *praise* means to make music. Psalm 96:3 says, “Declare his glory among the nations; his marvellous deeds among all peoples.” Here the Lord’s *glory* is his marvellous deeds. Sometimes the first line is a *literal statement* and the second line is a *figurative statement*. For example, Psalm 42:1 says, “As the deer pants for the streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God”. This is a simile. Or Psalm 46:11 says, “From the East I summon a bird of prey; from the far-off land, a man to fulfil my purpose”. This is a metaphor<sup>5</sup>.
- There is the progressive kind of parallelism in which the second line adds an additional thought. Sometimes it may *express the reason* and begins with the word ‘for’. For example, Psalm 9:10 says, “Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.” And sometimes it may *express the purpose*, and begins with the word ‘so that’. For example, Psalm 55:6 says, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, so that (in Hebrew) I would fly away and be at rest.”

---

<sup>5</sup> Also Proverbs 1:22,30,31.

- There is the *antithetical* kind of parallelism in which the second line expresses a contrasting or even contradicting thought and begins with the word ‘but’. For example, Psalm 1:6 says, “The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, *but* the way of the wicked will perish.”<sup>6</sup>
- There is the *climatic* kind of parallelism in which the second line expands the effect of the first line. For example, Psalm 1:1-3 is a climatic statement consisting of three other climatic statements. In verse 1, the wicked action rises to a climax from ‘walking’ to ‘standing’ to ‘sitting’.  
It says, “Blessed is the man who does not *walk* in the counsel of the wicked, or *stand* in the way of sinners or *sit* in the seat of mockers.” In verse 2, the good action is expanded from ‘delighting in’ to ‘meditating on’ God’s law. It says, “His *delight is in the law* of the Lord, and *on his law he meditates* day and night.” In verse 3, the results are expanded from ‘fruit in season’ to ‘everything he does’.  
It says, “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its *fruit in season* and whose leaf does not wither. *Whatever he does* prospers.” The three verses together also form a climatic statement: Verse 1 says what you *should not do*. Verse 2 says what you *should do*. And verse 3 says what will be *the result*.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Hyperbolic language.

*Hyperbolic language consists of exaggerated statements, which are not always meant to be taken literally.* Poetry often expresses strong emotion in which the writers seem to use extravagant language to express their intense feeling.

In the Psalms we have so-called ‘Imprecatory Psalms’. They are *prayers that call down God’s judgement*. For example, in Psalm 28:4-5, the writer saw that evil people showed no regard for the works of the Lord, that they secretly made evil plans against their neighbour and that they did evil. So he prayed, “*Repay* them for ... their evil work; *repay* them for what their hands have done and *bring back upon them* what they deserve.” When the writer of the Psalms saw gross injustice done to the weak and oppressed, he expressed his indignation at the injustice of the wicked people, at the immorality of the perverse people and at the oppression of people in authority. When he saw how wicked people used violence and strife to further their selfish plans, he prayed in Psalm 55:9, “Lord, *confuse* the wicked.” When he heard how wicked people told lies, he prayed, “*Confound* their speech.”

As long as the wicked continued to triumph and their prosperity seemed to refute the justice of God, the writer of the Psalms suffered deep affliction of his soul<sup>8</sup>. The writer then identified himself with God and God’s cause in this world, and therefore he could only regard God’s enemies as his enemies too. He expressed his love for God as well as his deep concern for God’s holiness, righteousness, truth and glory, by imploring God to uphold his holiness, righteousness, truth and glory by inflicting a crushing blow upon people who are unholy, unjust, liars and arrogant against God. The intense feelings in his prayers are expressed in violent language, like for example, that he “*hates* his enemies”<sup>9</sup>. Behind these prayers, which call down the judgement of God, is the writer’s believe that God is the sovereign and moral ruler of the world. ‘Right’ and ‘wrong’ are very meaningful to God and therefore, besides ‘God’s grace’, ‘God’s judgement’ must operate in the moral world. Therefore he *prayed for evil people*, that they may turn from their evil to God and receive God’s grace. However, if they refused to repent and continued with their evil, then he *prayed against evil people*, that God would intervene and stop them with his judgements.

## 3. Imagery.

*Imagery* are figurative illustrations embellished with flowery language with the purpose to create a particular effect. For example, Psalm 104:2-4 describes the Lord’s creation in beautiful language, saying, “The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants.”<sup>10</sup>

## F. THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

### 1. The book of Psalms prophesies about the life of Christ.

In Luke 24:44, Jesus Christ himself gave us the warrant for looking for him in the book of the Psalms. He said, “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” We find much about the life of Jesus in the Psalms:

- The *divine nature* of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 102:25-27 (Hebrews 1:10-12), Psalm 8:5-6 (Hebrews 2:7-8) and Psalm 97:7 (Hebrews 1:6).
- The *human nature* of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 8:2-5 (Matthew 21:15-16; Hebrews 2:6-7).
- The office of Jesus Christ as *Prophet* is prophesied in Psalm 22:22 (Hebrews 2:12).
- The office of Jesus Christ as *Priest* is prophesied in Psalm 40:6-8 (Hebrews 10:5-7), Psalm 49:7-8 (Matthew 16:26), Psalm 22, Psalm 23 and Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:44, Acts 2:34; Hebrews 1:13).
- The office of Jesus Christ as *King* is prophesied in Psalm 2:7 (Matthew 3:17, Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; 7:28;

<sup>6</sup> Also Proverbs 15:1; Ecclesiastes 4:10; John 3:20-21; Philippians 3:7-8

<sup>7</sup> Also Isaiah 55:6-7

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 73:2-16

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 28:4-5; 83:1-3,15-18; 139:19-22

<sup>10</sup> Also Job 38:31-35

2 Peter 1:17), Psalm 24:7-10 (1 Corinthians 2:8), Psalm 45:6-7 (Hebrews 1:8-9) and Psalm 72:10-11 (Revelation 21:24).

- The *rejection* of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 118:22-23 (Matthew 21:42).
- The *betrayal* of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 41:9 (Matthew 26:23).
- The *sufferings* of Jesus Christ are prophesied in Psalm 8:5 (Hebrews 2:9), Psalm 22, Psalm 31:5 (Luke 23:46), Psalm 69:4 (John 15:25), Psalm 69:9 (John 2:17) and Psalm 109:25 (Matthew 27:39).
- The *resurrection* of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 16:10 (Acts 2:25-28; 13:55).
- The *ascension* of Jesus Christ is prophesied in Psalm 68:18 (Ephesians 4:8).

## **2. Psalm 22 prophesied in detail about the sufferings of Christ.**

Psalm 22 is a prophetic picture of what happened at Calvary when Jesus Christ died for our sins.

- Verse 1 says that Jesus Christ experienced being forsaken by God, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>11</sup>.
- Verse 6-7 says that he was despised and insulted by people<sup>12</sup>.
- Verse 8 says that the people challenged him to save himself<sup>13</sup>.
- Verse 12-13 says that he was surrounded by mocking soldiers and insulting robbers<sup>14</sup>.
- Verse 14 says that the intense agony of his sufferings broke his heart<sup>15</sup>.
- Verse 15 says that he suffered intense thirst<sup>16</sup>.
- Verse 16 says that he was crucified. His hands and his feet were pierced by nails<sup>17</sup>.
- Verse 18 says that soldiers divided his clothes by casting lots<sup>18</sup>.

All these prophecies were literally fulfilled.

## **3. The Messianic Psalms 2, 22, 45, 72 and 110 prophesy the reign of the Messiah as King in his Kingdom.**

- Psalm 2 says that the Messiah will inherit all the nations on earth (vs 8) and he will rule as King in God’s kingdom with great authority (vs 9-12).
- Psalm 22 says that he will rule over all the nations and all the families of the nations will bow down before him (vs 27-28)<sup>19</sup>.
- Psalm 45 says that he will rule with justice. He will love righteousness and hate wickedness. And his kingdom will last for ever and ever (vs 6-7).
- Psalm 110 says that he will sit at God’s right hand (vs 1) and crush all the rulers on earth who remain enemies of God (vs 6).
- Psalm 72 says that he will judge all people in righteousness (vs 2), he will defend the afflicted, save the needy, crush the oppressor (vs 4) and he will rule over the whole earth (vs 8). All the kings will bow down before him and all the nations will serve him (vs 11). But also all the nations will be blessed through him (vs 17), because people in every nation of the world will believe in him and be saved! These Psalms not only point to the reign of Jesus Christ as King before his second coming, but also to his reign in the new heaven and on the new earth after his second coming.

## **G. THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.**

### **1. The book of Psalms occupied a very important place in the lives of Jesus and the apostles.**

The book of Psalms was the book of prayers that Jesus would have used when he attended the services in the synagogue and the book of songs he would have sung during the festivals at Jerusalem. Jesus Christ used the book of Psalms in his teachings<sup>20</sup> and he used the Psalms when he suffered on the cross<sup>21</sup>. The book of Psalms was also an inspiration for the apostles when they were persecuted<sup>22</sup>. They too used the Psalms in their teaching and preaching<sup>23</sup> and used it to set forth their profoundest beliefs concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup>

### **2. The book of Psalms is a rich source of knowledge concerning God.**

- Psalm 1 teaches that the God of the Bible watches over the way of the righteous (vs 6).
- Psalm 2 teaches that the God of the Bible laughs at the kings and rulers of the earth who oppose him (vs 2).

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 27:46

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 27:39; Luke 23:35-36

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 27:39,41,43

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 27:27-31,36,44

<sup>15</sup> John 19:34-35

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 69:21; John 19:28-29

<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 27:35

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 27:35

<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:23-25; Philippians 2:9-11

<sup>20</sup> Luke 20:42; 24:44

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 22

<sup>22</sup> Acts 4:25-26

<sup>23</sup> Acts 2:25-28; 13:33

<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 1:6,10-13; 2:6-8; 5:6; 10:5-7

- Psalm 3 teaches that God is a shield around us (vs 3).
- Psalm 4 teaches that God has set the righteous people apart for himself and that he will hear when they call to him (vs 3).
- Psalm 5 teaches that God does not allow the wicked people to dwell with him, nor the arrogant people to stand in his presence. He hates all people who do wrong and he will destroy all who tell lies (vs 4-6).
- Psalm 9 teaches that the God of the Bible will never forsake those who seek him and he will not ignore the cry of people who are afflicted (vs 10,12).
- Psalm 10 teaches that God helps the fatherless and defends the oppressed (vs 14,18).
- Psalm 14 teaches that God is present in the company of the righteous people (vs 5).

### **3. The book of Psalms is a rich source for prayers.**

In the Psalms, the biblical poets gave expression to their deepest feelings, emotions and experiences. They expressed sorrow or joy, fear or hope, bitter disappointment or glowing expectation and their puzzling questions or childlike trust in the Psalms. In the Psalms, they expressed their innermost thoughts, convictions and dedication, as they lifted up their hearts to God. Therefore, because we can identify ourselves with them, the Psalms can become the means by which we pray, worship, meditate or teach.

The Psalms may be classified into several groups of prayers:

- Psalms of repentance and forgiveness.
  - Psalm 32 is a prayer asking forgiveness. It says, “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away ... Then I acknowledged my sin to you, ... and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (vs 3,5).
  - Psalm 51 is a prayer confessing sin. It says, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. ... Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ... Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (vs 1-4).
- Psalms of praise and thanksgiving:
  - Psalm 68 praises God for daily bearing our burdens (vs 19).
  - Psalm 103 praises God for all his many benefits.
  - Psalm 145 is a prayer praising God’s divine attributes, especially his greatness which no one can fathom (vs 3).
- Psalms of worship and practising the presence of God.
  - Psalm 16 says “I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken (vs 8).”
  - Psalm 96 is a prayer worshipping and adoring God. It says, “Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth” (vs 9).
- Psalms of expressing confidence and trust.
  - Psalm 18 says, “With your help, I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall. ..He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle” (vs 29,33).
  - Psalm 23 says, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness” (vs 1-3).
- Psalms of dedication.
  - Psalm 101 says, “I will set before my eyes no vile thing. ... I will have nothing to do with evil men” (vs 3-4).
- Psalms of petition.
  - Psalm 13 is a prayer in times of distress. David prays, “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?” (vs 1-2).
  - Psalm 38 is a prayer pleading for God’s intervention and deliverance in time of sickness.
- Psalms of intercession.
  - Psalm 67 is a prayer for the nations, that they may know God’s ways and salvation (vs 2).
  - The Imprecatory Psalms ask God to vindicate his holiness and righteousness against all those who continue to live in unholiness and unrighteousness. For example, Psalm 10 says, “Break the arm of the wicked and evil man; call him to account for his wickedness that would not be found out” (vs 15).

### **4. The book of Psalms is a rich source for instruction.**

The Psalms may also be classified into several groups of instruction:

- Psalms of instruction about God’s word.
  - Psalm 19 teaches the nature of God’s law and its effect on the obedient heart. It says that the words in the Bible are “perfect, reviving the soul”. They are “trust-worthy, making wise the simple”. They are “right, giving joy to the heart”. They are “radiant, giving light to the eyes” (vs 7-8).
  - Psalm 119 is a testimony of the effects of studying and practising God’s Word. It says, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts” (vs 97-100).

- Psalms of instruction about God's wisdom.
  - Psalm 37 teaches that it is wise to be patient when you see the wicked prosper. It says, "Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger ... do not fret - it only leads to evil. For evil men will be cut off" (vs 7-8).
  - Psalm 127 teaches that whatever is done without the Lord is in vain. It says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. ... In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat - for he grants sleep to those he loves" (vs 1-2).
- Psalms of instruction about God's will.
  - Psalm 40 teaches that God does not desire animal sacrifices, but obedience to his will (vs 6-8).
  - Psalm 50 teaches that God does not desire animal sacrifices, but the bringing of thank offerings (vs 12-14).
  - Psalm 78 is a teaching about the need to pass God's truths on to the next generation. It says, "Tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done. ... Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his command" (vs 4,7).
- Psalms of instruction about God's power.
  - Psalm 33 says that the Lord foils the plans of the nations, ... but the plans of the Lord stand firm forever" (vs 10-11).
  - Psalm 47 teaches that God reigns over the nations. ... The kings of the earth belong to him" (vs 7-9).
  - Psalm 104 is a teaching about God's providential care of people on earth. It says, "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate - bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart" (vs 14-15).
- Psalms of instruction about God's promises.
  - Psalm 32 promises, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (vs 8).
  - Psalm 55 promises, "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall" (vs 22).
  - Psalm 84 promises, "No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (vs 11).
  - Psalm 138 says, "The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me" (vs 8).