

# LESSON 1

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## INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The 150 psalms that compose the Book of Psalms were songs, supplications, wisdom pieces, or devotional thoughts for the Israelite or Jew. Numerous internal references are given to praise, prayer, walking with God, and worshiping God. Therefore, as one reads the Psalms, he is actually looking into the songs, guidelines for living, and prayers that were sung, meditated upon, and prayed by the devout believers in the Old Testament Age.

As we study this wonderful book together, we will be inspired to walk closer to our God, be more prayerful in times of trial, and to trust God when we do not know the answers to our problems. Although the entire book was written during and for the Old Testament period, much of the book can be applied to our lives in the Christian Age.

### INTRODUCTION:

#### A BOOK OF JEWISH SONGS AND PRAYERS

1. What does the fact that the Psalms are quoted often in the New Testament tell us?
2. Who wrote the Psalms?
3. Were the Psalms written at the same time or over a period of time?
4. When was the Book of Psalms completed?
5. What information do we find in the subtitles?
6. How should we use the subtitles?
7. What is the purpose of this book?
8. What kind of literary structures do we find in the Psalms?

9. What kind of literary imagery do we find in the Psalms?
10. What would you suggest for the basic rules of interpreting the Psalms?

### **BOOK I: PSALMS 1—41**

11. Who is the only writer alluded to in the superscriptions in Book I?
12. Are the psalms of Book I placed in any chronological order?
13. What special characteristic do these psalms of Book I have?

### **PSALM 1: THE BLESSED LIFE**

This beginning psalm provides an introduction to the entire Book of Psalms. Perhaps it was selected from existing psalms as a prologue to the Book of Psalms, or maybe it was written purposefully as an introduction to the book.

Because of its connection with the psalms that follow in Book I, David is thought to be the author. Clearly a psalm of wisdom, with similarities to sections of the Book of Proverbs, its main purpose is to instruct the reader about the good life. It was not necessarily written to be sung in the assembly.

As a psalm of wisdom, it first extols the virtues of the righteous life by presenting in express statements the superlative nature of that life; then, in the second half of the psalm, the God-fearing life is contrasted with the wicked life. It concludes by picturing—by implication—two roads from which the people of the earth must choose: the path to blessedness or the road to cursedness.

14. What is the theme of this psalm?
15. How is the good person described in the first section (vv.1–3)?
16. To what is the wicked man compared in the second section (vv. 4, 5)?
17. Why will the righteous man prosper according to the third section (v. 6)?
18. How would you apply this psalm to your life?

## PSALM 2: OPPOSING GOD AND HIS ANOINTED

The Davidic authorship of this psalm has been divinely attested. In Acts 4:25 Peter stressed that the Holy Spirit spoke the psalm by the mouth of David. The first psalm in the Book of Psalms appealed to each individual to choose the righteous life; this psalm calls upon each nation to recognize God as the true God and to trust in Him. Together, these two psalms form a fitting introduction to the entire Book of Psalms—one addresses the individual and the other beseeches the nation.

Even though an earthly king is the principal topic of this royal psalm, the earthly king prefigures a greater King, the antitype Jesus Christ. This gives the psalm a messianic character. This view of the psalm is confirmed by the New Testament's application of the psalm to the Messiah in five places (Acts 4:25, 26; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5).

When a new king came to the throne, the surrounding nations were likely to take advantage of his inexperience in leadership and to try to take over his nation. Land-hungry national powers watched for opportune times—like the changing of the power of the throne—to subjugate other nations and bring them under their domain.

A similar event probably prompted the writing of this psalm. A new king had been or was being placed upon the throne of Israel. This man was God's choice; consequently, he had God's protection. Ignorantly, the other nations were plotting against him.

19. Who wrote this psalm?
20. What is the background of this psalm?
21. What is happening in the first section (vv. 1–3)?
22. How does God respond to the nations in the second section (vv. 4–6)?
23. Who is prefigured with the words “You are My Son”?
24. What are the nations told to do in the third section (vv. 10–12)?
25. What beatitude is mentioned in the final verse of this psalm?
26. How would you apply this psalm to your life, to the church, and to the nation?