

Introduction to the psalms

Introduction

- The songs were written some 3000 years ago in the days of ancient Israel. Psalms is basically the hymnbook of Israel. They were used in worship and cover the full range of human emotions. The Psalms can also be seen as prayers.
- Musical instruments are mentioned: stringed instruments, cymbals, flutes, trumpets, drums, and tambourines.
- These songs have many authors including David, Asaph, sons of Korah, Solomon, Moses, Ethan, and others.
- They were written over a period of approximately 1000 years, from 1400 to 400 BC. Most were written during the reigns kings David and Solomon.
- This is the most quoted old testament work in the New Testament.
- Psalms contains more messianic prophecy than any other Old Testament book, other than possibly Isaiah.

Understanding the Psalms

- Superscriptions. More than 3/4 of the songs have a superscription added to the beginning of the song that provides information about the author, historical context, and how it should be sung.
- Selah has been added 71 times to indicate a brief interlude. This Interlude could be for a change of musical accompaniment or a pause to reflect on the truth just stated.
- Literary Types
 - Wisdom. Provides practical guidelines for godly living.
 - Royal. Describe the coming messianic rule of Christ.
 - Lament. Record the writers heart cry to God for divine deliverance from trouble and pain.
 - Imprecatory. These provocative, often controversial, Psalms invoke God's wrath and judgment on adversaries who are God's enemies.
 - Thanksgiving. Expressed a profound awareness of and deep gratitude for God's abundant blessings.
 - Pilgrimage psalms. These were festive songs to promote a celebrative mood of praise as the Israelites travel to Jerusalem for their annual feasts.
 - Enthronement. Describe the majesty of God's rule over all his creation and the providential care by which he sustains, controls, and directs all he has made.
- Literary Style
 - Parallelisms. Synonymous, antithetical, synthetic.
 - Figures of speech: simile, metaphor, allegory, hyperbole, personification, anthropomorphism, alphabetic acrostic.