



Understanding and Applying the Bible

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Schedule

- Jan 22nd Understanding God's Law
- Jan 29th Understanding Historical Narrative
- Feb 5th Understanding the Psalms**
- Feb 12th Understanding Wisdom Books
- Feb 19th Understanding the Prophets
- Feb 26th Understanding the Gospels
- Mar 5th Understanding Parables
- Mar 12th Understanding Acts
- Mar 19th Understanding the Epistles
- Mar 26th Understanding Revelation (Apocalyptic)



Psalms



1. Psalms are inspired music and prayer.

You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.
(Ps 32:7)

2. As music, the Psalms use poetic features to bring emphasis to things the inspired author wants us to reflect on.

Natural features of Hebrew poetry:

- Repetition
- Parallelism
- Imagery (metaphors and similes)

Repetition

Psalm 136

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

² Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

⁴ to him who alone does great wonders,

His love endures forever.

⁵ who by his understanding made the heavens,

His love endures forever.

⁶ who spread out the earth upon the waters,

His love endures forever.

⁷ who made the great lights—

His love endures forever.

⁸ the sun to govern the day,

His love endures forever.

⁹ the moon and stars to govern the night;

His love endures forever.

¹⁰ to him who struck down the firstborn of
Egypt

His love endures forever.

¹¹ and brought Israel out from among them

His love endures forever.

¹² with a mighty hand and outstretched arm;

His love endures forever.

¹³ to him who divided the Red Sea asunder

His love endures forever.

¹⁴ and brought Israel through the midst of it,

His love endures forever.

Parallelism

Synonymous parallelism: The second line expresses the same thing as the first line but using different words:

Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered. (Ps 32:1)

Antithetical parallelism: The second line expresses the exact opposite of the first line as a point of intense contrast.

Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him. (Ps 32:10)



Parallelism

Synthetic parallelism: The second line develops or completes the first line.

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them. (Ps 32:6)

Specifying parallelism: The second line makes the first line more specific.

Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (Ps 29:1)

...but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night. (Ps 1:2)



Parallelism

Intensifying parallelism: The second line restates the idea of the first line but in a more intense way:

For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer. (Ps 32:4)



Imagery (metaphors & similes)

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers. (Ps 1:3)

The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Ps 18:2)



Psalms



3. The Psalms connect human emotion to inspired theology. The amount of theology we get from the text is, however, conditional, because it's not the primary factor driving the composition.
4. In engaging emotion, the prayers and petitions in the Psalms are sometimes imprecatory. In other words, they sometimes include the author's honest but angry feelings about those who wronged him.

Arise, LORD!

Deliver me, my God!

Strike all my enemies on the jaw;

break the teeth of the wicked. (Ps 3:7)

5. As poetry and prayers, it's important to read the Psalm as a literary whole and not hyperfocus on individual verses.

Types of Psalms

LAMENT	Lament Psalms	Individual	3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 36?, 38, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42, 43, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63?, 64, 69, 70, 71, 77, 86, 88, 102, 108, 109, 120, 130, 139?, 140, 141, 142, 143
		Community	44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 106, 115?, 123, 126, 129?, 137
	Song of Trust	Individual	4, 11, 16, 23, 27?, 40:1-11, 62, 63?, 131
		Community	46?, 115?, 125, 129?

A **Lament** is a song that expresses sadness to the Lord and asks for His help. (Largest category = 60 psalms). A **song of trust** emphasizes that God is trustworthy, even when the situation is bleak.

Typical Structure: Introductory Petition, Lament, Confession of Trust, Petition, (Confidence of being heard), Vow of Praise.

Types of Psalms

DECLARATIVE PRAISE	Individual	18, 21, 22, 30, 32, 34, 66:13-20, 92, 107, 116, 118, 121, 138
	Community	46?, 65, 66:1-12, 67, 68?, 75?, 124, 129?

Declarative Praise is a song that praises God for His **specific** deliverance in a situation. Exodus is most common.

Typical Structure: (Intention to praise), Introduction, Reflection on past need, Report of Deliverance, (Renewed Vow of Praise), (Praise or Instruction)

Types of Psalms

DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE	Hymns	8, 19:1-6, 24, 29, 33, 36?, 66, 78?, 95, 100, 103, 104, 105, 111, 113, 114, 117, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
	Songs of God's Kingship	47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99
	Songs of Zion	46?, 48, 76?, 84, 87, 122
	Royal Psalms	2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144

Descriptive Praise praises God for His great (**general**) attributes and mighty deeds.

Typical Structure: Call to Praise, Cause for Praise, Renewed Call to Praise

Types of Psalms

DIDACTIC	Wisdom Psalms	1, 36?, 37, 49, 73, 78?, 91, 112, 127, 128, 133, 139?
	Torah Psalms	15?, 19:7-14, 119, 134?
	Other Topics	50, 52, 68?, 81

Didactic psalms teach about wisdom, Torah, or other topics. Since their teaching varies, they don't follow a typical structure.

Applicative insight for Psalms:

The human spirit (our emotional and spiritual needs) and the character of God haven't changed. Songs and prayers are not as rooted in historical context and are intended to draw us into worship without as much concern over the historical context (like we saw in law and historical narrative). We keep the old covenant and law in mind when we draw principles from the Psalms but otherwise can apply them to our lives devotionally.

Psalms: From text to application

Old Covenant
Does the law influence the essential message?

New Covenant
Does the work of Christ and the indwelling Spirit influence application of the message?

Principle: The faithfulness of God and the needs of the human heart

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Psalm

Specific application



Example: Psalm 8

¹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory
in the heavens.

² Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.

Example: Psalm 8

- ³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.

Example: Psalm 8

⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:

⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,

⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalms: Interpretation to application, step by step

Old Covenant

Does the law influence the essential message?

Principle: *Despite his power as creator, God cares for human beings.*

Psalm 8

New Covenant

Does the work of Christ and the indwelling Spirit influence application of the message?

Principle: *I am important to God. He has not forgotten about me.*

Application: *I am going to praise God today, knowing he loves me and that the small things I do matter to him.*



Songs: From our hearts to the Lord

...speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 5:19-20)