



# DIGGING DEEPER

## Introduction to the Book of Psalms

### Lesson 1: Introduction

#### **What are Psalms?**

- The word “Psalm” means a sacred song or hymn.
- The original Hebrew word means "praise."
- So the Psalms in our Bible are lyrical songs of praise.

#### **How is the book of Psalms different than the rest of the Bible?**

- The book of Psalms is Hebrew Poetry
  - There is poetry scattered through much of the Old Testament. Five Old Testament books are all (nearly all) poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes.
  - Several other Old Testament books have significant portions written in poetry including Lamentations, and Isaiah.
  - There are significant differences between Hebrew and English poetry. Enough of a difference that Lesson 5 is devoted to examining the structure of Hebrew poetry in more detail.
- Psalms are poetry that are designed to be sung or recited.

#### **How many Psalms are there?**

- Thousands of psalms were written but only 150 are included in the Bible.

#### **Who wrote the Psalms included in the Bible?**

- 99 of the Psalms identify their author in the superscription (after the title and before verse 1).
  - David is credited with 73 Psalms.
  - Asaph is credited with 12 Psalms.

- Sons of Korah are credited with 9 Psalms.
- Solomon is credited with 2 Psalms.
- Heman the Ezrahite is credited with 1 Psalm.
- Ethan the Ezrahite is credited with 1 Psalm.
- Moses is credited with 1 Psalm.
- 51 of the Psalms do not identify their author and are labeled as “anonymous.”
  - 2 Psalms labeled as anonymous are identified as David’s (Psalm 2 in Acts 4:25 and Psalm 95 in Hebrews 4:7).

### **When were the Psalms written?**

- The Psalms were written over a 900-year period of time.
  - The earliest psalm is Psalm 90 written by Moses sometime before 1406 B.C.
  - David’s psalms which reflect his time as a fugitive from King Saul and David’s own reign were written between 1020-970 B.C.
  - Asaph was David’s choir director so he wrote his psalms during that time of David’s reign.
  - Solomon wrote his two psalms between 970-930 B.C.
  - The psalms of the Sons of Korah and the two Ezrahites were probably written after the Israelites returned from their exile in Babylon (539 B.C.).
- Thus, the Psalms were written between 1400 B.C. and 500 B.C. with over half (85) written during David’s lifetime.