



DIGGING DEEPER

Introduction to the Book of Psalms

Lesson 2: The Structure of the Books of Psalms

How is the book of Psalms structured?

- The Book of Psalms is divided into 5 sections or books:
 - Book 1: Psalms 1-41.
 - Book 2: Psalms 42-72.
 - Book 3: Psalms 73-89.
 - Book 4: Psalms 90-106.
 - Book 5: Psalms 107-150
- Each book ends with a doxology; a hymn or praise to God. For example:
“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
Amen and Amen” *Psalms 41:13 (ESV)*.

Why is the book of Psalms divided into five books?

- There is no way to know for sure why the Psalms are arranged in the order they are in or why the books are divided the way they are.
- Parallel to the Pentateuch (the 5 books of Moses).
 - Advanced by ancient Jewish scholars who said Moses gave them the first five books of the Law and David gave them the 5 books of Psalms.
 - Book 1 = Genesis. The focus is on man.
 - Book 2 – Exodus. The focus is on redemption.
 - Book 3 = Leviticus. The focus is on worship.
 - Book 4 – Numbers. The focus is on wandering.
 - Book 5 = Deuteronomy. The focus is on thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness.
- Primary authorship (Davidic verses non-Davidic)

- Book 1: 38 of 41 are Davidic
- Book 2: 18 of 31 are Davidic, 8 of 31 are Sons of Korah
- Book 3: 8 of 17 are of Asaph
- Book 4: 2 of 17 are Davidic
- Book 5: 8 of 44 are Davidic
- Use of “Yahweh” versus “Elohim”
 - Book 1: Yahweh dominates
 - Book 2: Elohim dominates
 - Book 3: Elohim dominates
 - Book 4: Yahweh only is used
 - Book 5: Yahweh dominates
- Functional Themes
 - The Psalms were assigned to be read during various holy days.
 - Book 1: Passover – the redemption of the people of Israel from Egypt.
 - Book 2: Pentecost – the beginning of the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai.
 - Book 3: 10th of Ab (anniversary of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar). The focus of the psalms of Book 3 is on the Temple.
 - Book 4: Feast of Tabernacles. The focus of the psalms in Book 4 is on the Millennial Kingdom.
 - Book 5: Feast of Purim – the redemption of the nation of Judah. The focus of the psalms in Book 5 is on the salvation of the people of Israel.