



DIGGING DEEPER

Introduction to the Book of Psalms

Lesson 3: Types of Psalms

What are the various types of psalms?

- Tremper Longman III established seven primary types (genres) of psalms in his book *How to Read the Psalms*.
 - Hymn.
 - Lament.
 - Thanksgiving.
 - Confidence.
 - Remembrance.
 - Wisdom.
 - Kingship.
- Hymn.
 - Recognized by their exuberant praise of the Lord (example 103:1-2).

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” *Psalms 103:1-2 (ESV)*.
 - Structure. A hymn has two primary elements in its structure.
 - Call to worship (example 113:1)

“Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!” *Psalms 113:1 (ESV)*
 - Reasons for praise (example 92:1, 4)

“It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High” *Psalms 92:1 (ESV)*.

“For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy” *Psalm 92:4 (ESV)*.

○ Lament.

- A lament portrays the psalmist in great distress who can only turn to God (example 22:1-2).

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest” *Psalm 22:1-2 (ESV)*.

- Three types of laments: 1) the psalmist is troubled by his own thoughts or actions, 2) the psalmist may be concerned about actions of others (enemies) against him, or 3) he may express frustration with God himself.

- Structure. A lament has some (but often not all) of the following seven elements.

- **Invocation** (example 12:1): “Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man” *Psalm 12:1 (ESV)*.
- **Plea to God to help** (example 17:1): “Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! *Psalm 17:1 (ESV)*.
- **Complaints** (example 22:6-7): “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads” *Psalm 22:6-7 (ESV)*.
- **Confession of sin** (example 69:5): “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you” *Psalm 69:5 (ESV)*.
- **or assertion of innocence** (example 26:5): “I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked” *Psalm 26:5 (ESV)*.
- **Curse of enemies** (example 109:8-9): “Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter. Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; over Philistia I shout in triumph” *Psalm 108:8-9 (ESV)*.
- **Confidence in God’s response** (example 54:4): “Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life” *Psalm 54:4 (ESV)*.

- **Rock** (example 62:2): “He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken” *Psalms 62:2 (ESV)*
 - **Help** (example 121:2): “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” *Psalms 121:2 (ESV)*.
 - Remembrance.
 - Remembrance Psalms recall God’s past acts of redemption on behalf of the people of Israel (example 136:10-11).

“to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his steadfast love endures forever; and brought Israel out from among them, for his steadfast love endures forever” *Psalms 136:10-11 (ESV)*.
 - Structure
 - A remembrance psalm refers to acts of God in Israel’s history (example 78:5-7).

“He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” *Psalms 78:5-7 (ESV)*.
 - Wisdom.
 - Wisdom psalms extol the virtues of following God’s Law (example 19:7), and sometimes the consequences of not following God’s Law.

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” *Psalms 19:7 (ESV)*.
 - Structure
 - The Wisdom Psalms reflect some benefit of following God’s Law (example 1:1, 6)

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers” *Psalms 1:1 (ESV)*.

“for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. *Psalms 1:6 (ESV)*.

- Kingship.

- There are two types of Kingship Psalms: human and divine.

- The human kingship psalms focus on the king of Israel (example 20:9).

- O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call.
Psalms 20:9 (ESV).

- The divine kingship psalms focus on God as king (example 47:7).

- “For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!” *Psalms 47:7 (ESV).*