



PSALMS 1-41

JUNE 2017

Read on your own or with others,
which ever you prefer.

This leaflet is just a brief overview of the 'big picture' of the first section of the book of Psalms. If you have been reading the Bible for some time you will be aware there is much more to it than you'll find here.

If you are new to reading the Bible don't worry too much if there are details you do not quite get at the moment - focus on the 'big picture'.

PSALM 1-41 – INTRODUCTION

The book of Psalms is essentially the hymnbook of the Old Testament. The Psalms were written to be used in public and private worship and they express a wide-ranging set of sentiments from praise to despair.

The book of Psalms is itself split into five books or collections of Psalms. Many theories have been put forward as to why this is. However, the division and the content of each of the 5 collections doesn't appear to be quite as neat as these theories propose.

The Psalms were written by various people. David wrote more than anyone else, but there are also Psalms written by Asaph, the Descendants of Korah, Solomon, Ethan, Heman and Moses as well as many without a specified author.

The first collection contains Psalms 1-41. Most of these were written by King David about 1000 years before the birth of Jesus.

OUTLINE

SETTING THE SCENE – PSALMS 1 & 2

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 introduce the whole book of Psalms as well as the first collection. They contain two key biblical themes:

- **Psalm 1:** God blesses those who look to him, but will judge those who reject him.
- **Psalm 2:** If we want to know God's blessing we need to receive God's king – ultimately Jesus Christ.

CRIES FOR HELP

Many of these Psalms are songs crying out to God for help in difficulty (Psalms 3-7, 12, 13, 22, 25-28, 35, 38-40). They are a real encouragement to us because we face the same difficulties. These Psalms guide us in how to pray and approach God in these times, as well as expressing the turmoil of our hearts.

SONGS OF PRAISE

Another type of Psalms in this collection are the Psalms of praise. Psalm 8 and Psalm 19 are examples of this. In both songs, David is moved by what he sees in the creation around him to praise and worship the creator God.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Some of the Psalms ask questions seeking to understand how God is at work in people's lives and in the situations they face. Psalm 10 begins with one of these questions 'Why, Lord, do you stand far off?' (Psalm 10:1 NIVUK 2011). At other points the questions are of a more doctrinal nature such as the beginning of Psalm 15.

HOPE AND TRUST

Reading through these Psalms you'll notice that several of them are an expression of trust in God who is able keep us safe from danger. Psalm 23 is the most famous of these, but it is certainly not the only one.

SEEING JESUS

Psalms 22-24 help us to see how we can see Jesus in the book of Psalms. Psalm 22:1 is quoted by Jesus on the cross (Matthew 27:46). The pain and rejection that David knows is a picture of the pain and forsakenness that Jesus would know on the cross.

In John 10, Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd. This is a clear reference to Psalm 23. Jesus is the one who keeps, protects and helps us through life with all its difficulties.

Psalm 24 is the procession of the King to his throne in glory. Jesus is the true king, chosen and appointed by God.

GENERAL NOTES

1. Many of the psalms have headings. Some of these tell us what was happening when the Psalm was written. It can be helpful to turn to the part of the Bible that speaks about that event.
2. Some strange words appear in some psalms.
 - The word *Selah* means to pause and reflect on what you've read.
 - In some of the headings there are odd words like 'miktam' and 'shiggaion'. These are probably musical terms.

ASKING THE QUESTIONS THE BIBLE WANTS YOU TO ASK

What does this book teach you about Jesus? (Luke 24:45-47)

What does this book teach you about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you encouraged? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you corrected? (Romans 15:4)

What difference do the truths of this book make in your life? (Matthew 7:24-27)