

A A book of hymns.

- ❖ The name of the book derives from the Greek word *Psalmoi* (songs sung with musical accompaniment), which is the title of the book in the Septuagint (LXX). In Hebrew, his man is *Tehillim* (praises).
- ❖ The psalms were used as hymns to sing during the worship service in the Temple and in the synagogues.
- ❖ Reference is made to instruments, melodies, and choir leaders in the superscription of several psalms (e.g., Ps. 9; 45; 88).
- ❖ Some of them were used in special moments:
 - In the moments of worship on Saturday (Ps. 92)
 - During the pilgrimage of the annual festivals and new moons (the “ Egyptian *hallel* ” Ps. 113-118; and the “great *hallel* ” Ps. 136)
 - In the morning worship of the synagogues (“ daily *hallel* ” Ps. 145-150)
- ❖ The Christian church also adopted the book of Psalms as a worship hymnal (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

B The authors and their experiences.

- ❖ Most of the psalms were written by David (2 Sam. 23:1). Other authors were:
 - Asaph and his sons (50, 73-83)
 - The sons of Korah (42, 44-47, 49, 84-85, 88)
 - Heman Ezrahite (88, as co-author)
 - Ethan Ezrahite (89)
 - Solomon (72, 127)
 - Moses (90)
- ❖ Many of the psalms reveal the personal experience of their authors (very similar to ours):
 - Difficulties
 - Doubts and sufferings
 - Experiences of divine forgiveness
 - Joys
 - Devotion and gratitude to God for his faithfulness and love
 - Hope in god
 - Trust in divine promises
 - Testimony of redemption
 - Cry for salvation.

C Theme and style.

- ❖ Psalms encompasses a wide variety of themes that encompass the entire human experience and its relationship with God:
 - Hymns that praise God as Creator, Sovereign and Judge
 - Psalms of Thanksgiving for God's Abundant Blessings
 - Lamentations begging God to free us from problems
 - Wisdom psalms with practical guidelines for life
 - Psalms of the king, which point to Christ as King and Liberator
 - Historical psalms that review the past history of Israel and God's faithfulness to it
- ❖ They are written in the form of poetry. Hebrew poetry differs from Western poetry. Some of their styles are:
 - Parallelism: Combines words, phrases or thoughts symmetrically, repeating or contrasting an idea (Psalm 8:3)
 - Images: Use figurative language (Psalm 98:8)
 - Merism: Expresses the whole through contrasting parts (Psalm 88:1)
 - Word games: They use words with similar sounds to highlight a message. In Psalm 96:5 a play on words is created between *elohim* (gods) and *elilim* (idols)

D A prayer book.

- ❖ The psalmists address God in prayer personally (Ps. 5:2).
- ❖ In Psalms, God and man interact vividly. Through prayers and praises, man – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – manifests his hope, fear, anger, sadness and pain. Feelings that transcend the circumstances, religion, ethnicity or gender of its readers. We can all identify, at one time or another, with the content of the psalms.
- ❖ We can perceive in these prayers the direct action of the Spirit of God (2S. 23:1-2).
- ❖ We also take breath in the hope that God hears our prayer (Ps. 66:19).

E Its protagonist: God.

- ❖ As in the life of the psalmist, God must occupy a central place in our lives, and we know that we can count on Him for everything.
 - He is always in our thoughts (Psalm 16:8)
 - We glory in Him and praise Him all the time (Psalm 44:8)
 - He is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1)
 - We shout with joy (Psalm 47:1)
 - We cry out to Him seeking His favor (Psalm 57:2)
 - We pour out our hearts before Him (Psalm 62:8)
 - We claim his justice (Psalm 82:8)
 - We know that He keeps us from evil (Psalm 121:7)
- ❖ Thanks to Psalms, we know that God hears us, even though we cannot see him, and answers our prayers at the right time (Ps. 3:4; 10:1; 20:5-6).
- ❖ God is in his Holy Temple, but he is also at my side (Ps. 11:4; 23:4). We can be confident and secure in his presence (Ps. 119:58).

ORGANIZATION AND GENERAL THEME OF PSALMS

BOOK	PSALMS	CONTENT	FEATURED PSALMS
I	1-41	Personal regrets. Most of the psalms in this section mention agents who are adversaries of the psalmist, identified as “my enemies.”	1, 2, 24
II	42-72	Most were composed during the reign of David. The enemy is also mentioned in many of the psalms in this section.	45, 48, 51, 54-64
III	73-89	Compilations of the sons of Asaph and Korah	78
IV	90-106	Compilation of psalms of praise (95-100)	90, 103-105
V	107-150	Collection of hallelujahs (111-117) and pilgrimage psalms (120-134)	107, 110, 119