



Summer Psalms – Psalm 96
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Summer Psalms - An Outlook of the Book

Let me start with a question...Do you have a favourite part of the Bible? Many surveys have been done where this question has been asked, and the answers are generally the same. In the New Testament, the four Gospels are consistently listed as the most popular. In the Old Testament, the book of Psalms is the clear winner.

In fact, if there is only one chapter in the Bible that most people have actually memorized, it would most likely be a Psalm, and it would probably be the 23rd Psalm.

Actually, there are 150 psalms in the book of Psalms, and all of them contain valuable information about life's most important questions. How much do you know about the other 149 psalms? What subjects do they deal with, what instructions do they give, and how can they help us in the 21st century?

It can be helpful to have some background information about the entire book. Even if we have been reading the Psalms for many years. So here are the points I'm going to make.

1. What does the word psalm mean?
2. Who wrote the Psalms?
3. What are the benefits of Psalms?
4. Why are Psalms so important?
5. Psalms are early worship songs
6. Conclusion

What does Psalm mean?

A sacred song or poem used in worship.

- From Old English - **PSEALM**,
- From Late Latin **PSALMUS**,
- From Greek **PSALMOS**, literally, twanging of a harp, from psallein to pluck, play a stringed instrument.

Who Wrote the Psalms?

The Psalms are a collection of the writings of several different authors. However, there is general consensus in conservative circles that King David of Israel was the major source and collector of the Psalms.

The Psalms are divided into five major sections:

- Psalms 1-41 (Book 1)
- Psalms 42-72 (Book 2)
- Psalms 73-89 (Book 3)
- Psalms 90-106 (Book 4)
- Psalms 107-150 (Book 5)

David's name is in 73 of the psalms. This does not necessarily mean that David wrote all of them, as the title may mean simply that the psalm is about David.

- Moses is listed as the author of Psalm 90,
- Solomon is listed as the author of Psalms 72 and 127.

Other authors listed in the psalm titles include Asaph (12 psalms), descendants of Korah (11 psalms), Heman the Ezrahite (Psalm 88) and Ethan the Ezrahite (Psalm 89).

What are the benefits of Psalms?

The 150 psalms are much more than beautiful compositions. It shows to us that the book of Psalms are not just musical foundations, but the inspiring truths it offers to all of us.

They are eternal truths written in a form that challenges the human intellect and touches our heart. The words, phrases, lines and sentences with their recurring thoughts are able to teach us and reach us in ways that few things can. This is the book of Psalms' greatest appeal.

There are certain overall themes that appear many times in the Psalms. Here are just 2 of them.

1st the Psalms show an awareness of God's presence in people's everyday lives. God was not just a doctrinal issue to people, but Someone who was interested in everything they did.

We see it continued when Jesus taught His disciples: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32).

2nd man's duty to serve and obey God is emphasised throughout the Psalms. Mankind must do more than just praise and talk about God; we must obey God's law. It's wonderful to be stirred by singing beautiful hymns about God, but what really matters is that we are moved to live a certain way—God's way.

Why are Psalms so important?

The psalms comprised the ancient hymnal of God's people. The poetry was often set to music but not always. The psalms express the emotion of the individual poet to God or about God. Different types of psalms were written to communicate different feelings and thoughts regarding a psalmist's situation.

Psalms of lament express the author's crying out to God in difficult circumstances. Psalms of praise, also called hymns, portray the author's offering of direct admiration to God. Thanksgiving psalms usually reflect the author's gratitude for a personal deliverance or provision from God. Pilgrim psalms include the title "a song of ascent" and were used on pilgrimages "going up" to Jerusalem for three annual festivals. Other types of psalms are referred to today as wisdom psalms, royal psalms (referring to Israel's king or Israel's Messiah), victory psalms, Law psalms, and songs of Zion.

The psalms include unique Hebrew terms. The word *Selah*, found seventy-one times, is most likely a musical notation added by worship leaders after the Israelites incorporated the psalm into public worship. Scholars do not know the meaning of *maskil*, found in thirteen psalms. Occasionally, a psalm appears with instructions for the song leader.

Psalms Are Early Worship Songs

There are some very interesting things to note about the construction and style of the Psalms. The root meaning of the title of the book in both Hebrew and Greek is to play instrumental music and to sing to musical accompaniment. Services at God's temple involved the singing of these hymns with the accompaniment of stringed and wind instruments. In one sense, the book of Psalms was like a hymnal for God's temple services.

Jesus would have sung the psalms at the last supper.

When the Philippian jailer fell before Paul and Silas and asked the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved", it was because these guys had responded to their persecution with praise and worship: It says in Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

This structure of the psalm is important to remember so we can understand what the words are saying.

A word or phrase on one line may be clarified and explained by what is said on the next line. The key to fully understanding the message of a particular psalm is to make sure we read the entire section or psalm. The Psalms tend to place thoughts, concepts and ideas concerning doctrine together.

So let's look at the modern day song and compare it to the psalms

Conclusion

It is my hope that you will acknowledge that worship is a feature in our lives which is of the highest priority. I'm hoping and praying that we will see that the Book of Psalms can do much to improve our worship as we study it and make it a part of our lives.

I sincerely desire that what I have shared will help you to have a sense of history as you hold the Bible (and especially the Book of Psalms) in your hands. The Psalms which you have before you greatly influenced the thinking of the apostles and the worship of the early church. The Psalms have been found to have brought comfort to those who have suffered for their faith.

Because of this, I challenge you to make a serious commitment as we study the Psalms. Don't look at them casually or quickly. I want to encourage you to ponder it - chew the cud, in other words, meditate. But in reflection, if worship is as important as the Bible says it is then I would encourage you to make a commitment before God to faithfully study the Psalms for your own personal growth. If this has encouraged you then be like David, a man (or woman) after the heart of God.