

Psalms

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.*

The Psalms are often called “the hymnbook of the Bible.” They are a combination of a variety of songs, probably used to accompany worship in the temple.

There are several different types of songs:

- Hymns – songs of praise suitable for any occasion. These can be subdivided into “Enthronement Hymns,” which celebrate the Lord’s kingship and “Songs of Zion,” expressing devotion to the Holy City.
- Laments – either individual laments in which someone is asking for deliverance from illness or false accusations or national laments in which the whole nation is asking God for help in times of distress
- Songs of trust – expressions of confidence in God’s readiness to help
- Thanksgivings – songs in which individuals express their gratitude for deliverance.
- Sacred history – songs in which the nation recounts the story of God’s dealings with them
- Royal psalms – designed to be used for coronations or royal weddings
- Wisdom psalms – meditations on life and the ways of God
- Liturgies – songs composed for some special religious or historical occasion

Some of the Psalms are introduced by musical directions, some of which we do not understand today.

The Psalms have traditionally been attributed to King David. However, it is far more likely that they were written by many individuals over many centuries.

The most famous of the Psalms is the one that begins “The Lord is my shepherd.” But there are many others that can be read in almost any situation—gratitude, fear, anger, thanksgiving, sorrow. They can lead one through feelings of distress and anger to an ultimate trust in God, showing their value as a source of both public and private devotion in both Judaism and Christianity.