

## The Book of Psalms

### Introduction – Part II(b)

#### Opening Prayer

We are finishing up the introduction to the Book of Psalms. We covered the first three literary categories in the last lesson and we will cover the remaining three in this lesson. As a reminder, here is the list of literary categories.

1. Hymns/Songs of Praise
2. Complaint of the people as a community
3. Complaint of the individual
4. Thanksgiving songs
5. Royal Psalms
6. Wisdom Psalms

#### Thanksgiving songs of the individual – (Example Psalm 116)

The thanksgiving psalms are quite often a response to a previous complaint psalm. God has heard the cry of his people/person and answered. The result is a song of thanksgiving. Songs of thanksgiving are found throughout scripture. In *1 Samuel 2:1-10* Hannah offers a song of thanksgiving to God for the birth of Samuel. In *Jonah 2:1-9* Jonah offers a song of thanksgiving that God rescued him from drowning. This song is offered from the belly of a fish!

Thanksgiving songs follow a loose structure as well:

1. Proclamation of love – *Psalm 116:1*
2. Summary of reason for thanksgiving – *Psalm 116:1-2*
3. Poetic reflection on the time of need – *Psalm 116:3*
4. Recalling of petition and rescue – *Psalm 116:4*
5. Renewal of the vow of praise – *Psalm 116:14*
6. Expression of praise – *Psalm 116:5, 19*

## Royal Psalms – (Example – Psalm 45, 72, 21)

This isn't really a literary genre in the same way as the others, but it is a useful category for psalms that deal with Israel's king. These royal psalms are easier to root into history because they are more easily tied to historical people and circumstances. There are particular occasions when the royal psalms were written and used:

1. Weddings – *Psalm 45:6-9, 13-15*
2. Coronation – *Psalm 72:1-4, 8-11*
3. Prayers before or after battle – *Psalm 21:7-13*

The Royal Psalms carry significance because there is a special relationship between God and the king. The kings were divinely appointed and set apart and that makes them special. Yet the real uniqueness of the king of God's people was that he prefigured the true king, Jesus! This is highlighted in Peter's Pentecost Sermon in *Acts 2:24-36*.

## Wisdom Psalms – (Example – Psalm 1)

The last category of psalms that we are using for this study are the wisdom psalms. To be a wisdom psalm the psalm must have the following characteristics:

1. Literary technique of wisdom – proverb, acrostic, comparative, numerical sequence, etc.
2. Be didactic, that is it must deliberately seek to teach
3. Contain typical themes of wisdom teaching – Contrast between righteousness and wickedness, use of wealth, obedience to elders, etc.

\*\*\*\*\* Looking Ahead \*\*\*\*\*

In the next lesson we study Psalm 1 and then we will begin to look at each Psalm as an individual lesson.

Closing Prayer