

# Psalms

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Praise and Lament



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“It is good to give  
thanks to the  
LORD And to sing  
praises to Your name,  
O Most High”

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**Psalms 92:1**

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- Praise is primarily a reciting of the attributes of God and of the acts of God, and then praising God for both.
  - The first is descriptive praise, the second declarative praise. The worshipper rejoices because God is the kind of God he is and because he does the things he does.
  - This, in turn, promotes greater trust in God, as well as a thankful heart.
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## **Two Types of Praise**



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- Originally, psalms of descriptive praise were intended to be used either as a choral response or perhaps as a solo in the normal round of public or national worship.
  - The most common Hebrew verb used for this kind of praise is hillel. English readers are familiar with it in its imperative form: Hallelu-Yah, “Praise Yah!”
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## **Descriptive Praise**

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- Hymns (e.g., Ps 24; 29; 33; 100; 103; 105; 111; 113-14; 117; 135-36; 145-150)
  - Enthronement Psalms (e.g., Ps 47; 93; 95-99)
  - Songs of Zion, including pilgrim psalms (e.g., Ps 48; 84; 87; 120-34)
  - Royal Psalms (e.g., Ps 2; 20-21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144)
  - Creation psalms (e.g., Ps 8, 19:1-6; 104)
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## **Five Types of Descriptive Praise**



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- The expression “the Lord reigns” is characteristic of the enthronement psalms.
  - All passages that speak of a future coming of the Lord to his people or to the earth, or that speak of a future rule of the Lord over Israel or the whole earth, are enthronement psalms.
  - These future oriented psalms are ultimately messianic, for to be fully realized, they require a future, Messianic Kingdom on the earth.
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## **Enthronement Psalms**

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- Of the Songs of Zion, Psalms 120-134 are noteworthy, for they are also known as Songs of Ascent. Such psalms were probably sung by the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem (and on their arrival there) to celebrate the three annual festivals (see Deut 16:16; Ps 132:7-8).
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## **Songs of Zion**



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- In royal psalms praise is given to the heavenly King from an earthly king.
  - In the period of the monarchy, the reigning king was considered to be in close relationship with the Lord and thus played a leading role in Israel's worship. Outstanding events in the life of a king are possible settings for psalms clearly concerned with a royal figure.
  - Royal psalms may be messianic psalms, either directly (e.g., Psalm 110), or typically/prophetically (e.g., Psalm 2
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## Royal Psalms



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- Introduction: contains a call to praise or sometimes a reflection on praise
  - Main section: the cause for praise and often introduced by “for”
  - Recapitulation: the conclusion to praise and frequently is a renewed call to praise
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## **Three Main Parts of Descriptive Psalms**

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- When the psalmist had experienced dire need and had prayed to God for deliverance, and God had intervened by granting the psalmist for an answer – a specific act of deliverance – the psalmist broke forth in praise.

- In front of the entire assembly, thanksgiving was voiced to God by declaring what God had done, usually accompanied by a public thank offering to God.

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## **Declarative Praise**



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- The most frequently used Hebrew verb for this kind of praise is *hodah*. This has morphed into *todah*, a modern Hebrew way of saying “thank you.”

- Occasionally, descriptive praise and declarative praise are found in the same psalm, suggesting that praise can be both descriptive and declarative.

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## **Declarative Praise**

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- Psalms of individual thanksgiving (e.g., Ps 18; 30; 34; 40:1-10 [mixed type]; 66:13-20 [mixed type]; 92; 116; 118; 121; 138)
  - Psalms of community thanksgiving (e.g., Ps 46; 65; 66:1-12 [mixed type]; 67; 107; 124)
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## **Two Types of Declarative Praise**



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- Introduction: the worshipper announces his intention to give thanks to God or simply announces what God has done
  - Main section: the psalmist tells of the distress he was in and his cry to God for help followed by his deliverance
  - Conclusion: the worshipper again testifies to the Lord's gracious acts of deliverance and prays for future help or confesses that the Lord is gracious.
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## **Three Main Parts of Declarative Psalms**

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- Notice parallelism

Psalm 19:1 - The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Psalm 1:6 - For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 3:4 - I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.

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**Paying  
Attention to  
Praise**



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- Notice figurative language

Psalm 1:3 – “He is like a tree” (simile)

Psalm 84:11 – “For the Lord God is a sun and a shield” (metaphor)

Psalm 18:42 – “Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind; I emptied them out as the mire of the streets.” (hyperbole)

Psalm 77:16 – “The waters saw you, O God” (personification)

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**Paying  
Attention to  
Praise**

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- All Christians are encouraged to praise God for who he is and what he has done (e.g., Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:15-17)
  - God is to be praised by recalling and meditating on his marvelous attributes (such as love, grace, faithfulness, holiness, righteousness, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, etc.).
  - God is also to be praised by reporting divine interventions and answers to prayer through his specific acts of deliverance.
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## **Putting Praise into Practice**



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- We are called specifically to meditate on God's character and actions, and the psalms help us do this, as they are timeless expressions of the true worshipper's heart for God

Psalm 77:12 – “I will meditate on all Your work and muse on Your deeds.”

Psalm 119:48 – “And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.”

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## **Putting Praise into Practice**