

Psalm Types- (Forms)- Adapted from Longman, How to Read the Psalms

Hymn- Ps 103, 113

Call to Worship

Psalm 96:1 Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

Reasons for praising- 'for', 'because'

4 For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

Conclude with further calls to praise

7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.
9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.
10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.
11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it;
12 let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;
13 they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

Lament- Ps 22,42-43

Invocation

Psalm 28:1 Of David. To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit.

Plea for God to help

2 Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.

Complaints

3 Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.

Confession of Sin/or assertion of innocence (not in this Psalm)

Curse of enemies/ imprecations

4 Repay them for their deeds and for their evil work; repay them for what their hands have done and bring back upon them what they deserve.

Confidence in God's response

5 Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again.

Hymn or blessing

6 Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy.
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.
8 The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.
9 Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Thanksgiving psalms- Ps 32,34- similar to hymn

Response to answered Lament

Begins with Thanksgiving or Blessing

Psalm 18:1 For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said: I love you, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3 I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.

Restatement of the Lament which is answered

4 The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

5 The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.

6 In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.

Sometimes calls others to join praises

An Account of God's salvation

7 The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.

...

16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.

17 He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.

18 They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support.

19 He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.

...

More praise and call to praise

46 The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!

47 He is the God who avenges me, who subdues nations under me,

48 who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes; from violent men you rescued me.

49 Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O LORD; I will sing praises to your name.

50 He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever.

Psalms of Confidence- Ps. 16, 23,121, 131

No set form, but contains

Expression of confidence, submission and trust

Description of threat or enemies

Metaphor of God as protector and refuge

Psalm 121:1 A song of ascents. I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from?

2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot slip-- he who watches over you will not slumber;

4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD watches over you-- the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life;

8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalms of Remembrance- Ps. 78, 105, 106, 135

A Rehearsal of God's acts in history

For the purpose of instruction (78:7)

For the purpose of encouragement (78:7)

For the purpose of praise (105:1)

Center on two great acts

Exodus (77:16)

Establishing of Davidic Kingdom and Dynasty (Ps 89)

Wisdom Psalms- Ps. 1, 19, 119, 73

Similar themes with wisdom literature

Contrast two ways of living

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Kingship Psalms- Ps. 21, 45, 47, 98

Celebrate God as King and Warrior

Celebrate the earthly king as God's representative

Psalm 21:1 For the director of music. A psalm of David. O LORD, the king rejoices in your strength. How great is his joy in the victories you give!

2 You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah

3 You welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.

4 He asked you for life, and you gave it to him-- length of days, for ever and ever.

5 Through the victories you gave, his glory is great; you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty.

6 Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.

7 For the king trusts in the LORD; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken.

8 Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; your right hand will seize your foes.

9 At the time of your appearing you will make them like a fiery furnace. In his wrath the LORD will swallow them up, and his fire will consume them.

10 You will destroy their descendants from the earth, their posterity from mankind.

11 Though they plot evil against you and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed;

12 for you will make them turn their backs when you aim at them with drawn bow.

13 Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might.

Forms are flexible, often overlap, and not exhaustive

Beware the Procrustean bed!

Typical Features

Hymns:

1. Call to Worship
2. Reason for praise
3. Concluding call to praise

Laments:

1. Cry for Help
2. Description of Suffering
3. (Confession of sin or innocence)
4. Confession of trust
5. Petition for rescue/punishment
6. (Appeal to God's Covenant)
7. Vow to praise
8. Assurance

Thanksgivings:

1. Proclamation of love and praise
2. Summary of reason
3. Report of the need/trouble
4. Report of the petition and rescue
5. (Testimony)
6. Renewal of the vow to praise
7. Expression of thanks and praise