

The Types of the Psalter

Mother Allison and I have looked through the notes for this class, and we're adopting a slightly different format that will hopefully help people move through the Psalms a bit easier. The first week, Mtr. Allison introduced the psalter and participants in the class talked about their favorite psalms. Then, Ben gave a lecture on the shape of the psalter, and how the book works as a whole. Last week, you all went through some more of the psalms from the first book.

This week, instead of picking a type of psalm and going through them, we are going to outline all the types so that we can make use of this concept the rest of the time we study the psalter.

Major Forms (4)

- What is form criticism? It is thinking critically and looking at the forms. Think about cars: we identify certain features such as miles per gallon or horsepower. We also have types: sports cars, compact, SUV's, etc. Certain elements of the car, like size, how fast it accelerates, what engine is in it, affect how we see the "type" of car it is. Form criticism of Psalms works the same way: by looking at features and subject matter, we can group and classify the psalms.
- However, this is just one way of interpreting the psalms. If we were to only classify, and not experience, then the car wouldn't be our own. The car becomes a family car not because of the airbags, since God willing they will never be deployed. Instead, the car becomes the family car by use: it is used by the family in road trips as the kids grow up, becomes the oldest first car in high school, gets passed down to the younger siblings until it is retired. That is what gives the car value, just as "use" gave each of the Psalms value and helped them reach inclusion in the Psalter's final form.

Hymns (think "Hallelujah!")

- Community - 33, 105
- Individual - 30, 111
- 3 features:
 - Introduction - declares intention to praise God
 - Narrative -why/what happened
 - Conclusion - praise God!

Laments (think "😞")

- Community - 12, help us
- Individual - 6, help me

- 5 Part (Debated)
 - Invocation - help, God!
 - Complaint - my knee hurts!
 - Petition - please repair it!
 - Expression of trust - you always can repair bones! Just like when you helped suzy's ankle! And jimmy's arm!
 - Expression of praise and adoration - God is the greatest!

Minor Types

- Think, "subject matter" instead of form.
1. Royal Psalms - speak of David, or an earthly king, particularly over Jerusalem (ps. 21.) debated whether all "David psalms" are royal or not. 45- royal wedding; 21,
 2. Creation - Ps. 8 - God over the world, plants and animals and moon and sun etc.
 3. Wisdom - turn back to psalm 1. Giving advice, right living and right faith. Adherence to Torah a strong theme.
 4. Enthronement - God is king, rules in the midst of the people. Ps. 99.

Appendix of all the Psalms, their attribution (Ex: "A Song of David"), and their type available online at [Google Books](#).

This Lecture is based on Chapter Two of Nancy DeClaisseé-Walford's book *Introduction to the Psalms: A Song from Ancient Israel*. Full Citation below:

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#bible/psalms