

# ***Let Everything That Has Breath Praise The LORD***

## **BACKGROUND FACTS REGARDING THE PSALMS**

### **HISTORICAL SETTING**

The general historical setting for the singing and reciting of psalms was the temple in Jerusalem, designed by David and built by Solomon. But though most of the psalms share this general focus of temple worship, the specific historical backgrounds and settings for each of the 150 psalms are quite diverse.

### **THE TEMPLE AS THE CENTER FOR WORSHIP**

The temple of Jerusalem and the psalms were closely related. In the temple was the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the covenant that God had made with Moses. That covenant was the means through which human beings reached upward in hope of redemption while God reached downward to fulfill that hope. Although the temple was destroyed, the songs of redemption continued to be remembered and sung by the Israelites. And today in the church, which is the temple of the living God, those same songs still continue to express the pain, joy, and hope of all believers.

### **AUTHORS**

The majority of the authors represented in the book of Psalms were associated with the temple. David headed the group that included various temple musicians who contributed other psalms. A large number of the psalms are anonymous.

### **DATE**

The earliest psalm (probably Psalm 90), was probably written by Moses shortly after the Israelites left their bondage in Egypt (around 1446 B.C.). The latest psalm (probably Psalm 137) was written sometime during the Babylonian captivity (586-538 B.C.). All 150 psalms were collected into manuscripts sometime before the second century B.C.

### **PURPOSE**

The book of Psalms was designed to aid in the worship of God by supplying poetic examples of life's ups and downs. Each event or struggle represented in the psalms is punctuated with the triumph and peace that can only be found through heartfelt praise to God.

### **HOW DO THE PSALMS COMMUNICATE THEIR MEANING?**

Although the psalms are poetry, they do not deliver their message through rhyming words. They get their point across by laying out a thought one way and then immediately following it with a parallel thought that takes the first thought a step further. It is this interplay between parallel thoughts that forms the individual bricks that add up to the meaning of each psalm. In order to understand the psalms, the reader must avoid seeing the sentences of each psalm as independent wholes and recognize the relationships between parallel lines and sentences.

## **MAJOR TYPES OF HEBREW PARALLELISM**

**Synonymous:** This involves very similar concepts between two lines.

Psalms 114; 3.1; 7.16; 50.11, 19; 80.13; 22.18

**Antithetical:** The second line contrasts with the first. The function is affirmation by opposition rather than repetition.

Psalms 1.6; 30.5b; 37.21

**Synthetic:** The second line develops the concept of the first line.

Psalms 95.3; 19.7-10; 23.1

**Climactic:** The second line repeats the first with exception of the last term.

Psalms 29.1; 22.4; 93.3, 92.9, 145.18

## **PRAISE IN THE PSALMS**

Even in the psalms of lament, expressing praise to God for who he is and for what he has done is of major concern. But other psalms were designed to allow for even more emphasis on praise and less on the painful experiences of life.

**Psalms of individual declarative praise:** Psalms 18; 30; 40

**Psalms of national declarative praise:** Psalms 124; 129

**Psalms of descriptive praise:** Psalms 36; 105; 113; 117; 135; 136; 146