

Uses of the Psalms

The Use of the Psalms in Ancient Israel

- The psalms were functional songs composed for use in worship by the ancient Israelites
 - They served the crucial function of making connection between the worshiper and God
- Some were intended for use by individual worshipers (ex. Ps. 63)
 - Many were intended for corporate use (ex. Ps. 74; 147-150)
- Some were used when sacrifices were offered in the Temple
- Based on their titles, some were possibly sung by professional singers in corporate settings (ex. Ps. 80, 81)
 - But they were also sung in everyday settings by common people
- The psalms were collected into 5 books:
 - Book 1: Ps. 1-41
 - Book 2: Ps. 42-72
 - Book 3: Ps. 73-89
 - Book 4: 90-106
 - Book 5: 107-150
- It is not possible to date most of the psalms with certainty
 - However, this is not all that problematic since the psalms generally are applicable to all times and settings

Psalm Titles

- The titles of the Psalms are not original
 - And thus, are not considered inspired
- However, they give insight into who was associated with some of the psalms
 - David (73 times)
 - Moses (Ps. 90)
 - Solomon (Ps. 72 & 117)
 - The 'sons' of Korah (11)
 - 'Sons' = school of musicians trained in certain styles
 - Asaph (12)

The Psalms as a Collection

- The psalms were collected in the post-Babylonian exile period
- Ps. 1 & 2 act as an introduction to the collection as a whole
 - While Ps. 150 acts as a conclusion
- It acted as a sort of "Temple hymnal"
- By the 1st century AD, the psalms were widely known by Jewish people
 - Including Jesus and His disciples
- Paul refers to their use by the early Church in Eph. 5:19 & Col. 3:16