

Church of God Sunday School

THE BIBLE — POETRY



DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Job did not sin when faced with great losses (Job 1:12-22).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Read a psalm of praise (Psalm 146:1-10).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Read wise sayings for everyday living (Proverbs 22:1, 7, 15, 24-29).
- ❑ **Thursday:** The preacher taught knowledge and proverbs (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 9-14).
- ❑ **Friday:** Christ's bride is the Church (Song of Solomon 6:3; Ephesians 5:25).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Wisdom comes from God (James 1:5; James 3:17).

MEMORY VERSE: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*
—Proverbs 1:7

Books of Wisdom

The five books of poetry are also called "Books of Wisdom" or "Books of Literature." In the Hebrew language the word *wisdom* means "skill for living." These books tell us how to live our everyday life. Like the Hebrews, other nations had their own "wisdom literature," but the Hebrew writings were unique because they centered on God (Proverbs 1:7). The authors of these books understood the importance of God-given wisdom. One author (Solomon), when asked of God what he wished above all else, chose wisdom.

Hebrew poetry is not found only in these five books. Several examples are found throughout the Old Testament. The first example is Lamech's psalm of lament (Genesis 4:23-24). A lament is a song or poem expressing deep grief or mourning. Sometimes poetry takes the form of a beautiful song (song of Moses; Exodus 15:1-18, 21), a prayer (Hannah's prayer; 1 Samuel 2:1-10), a riddle (Samson's riddle; Judges 14:12-14), or a lament (Jeremiah's lament; Book of Lamentations). Often in Bible poetry we read of the Jewish people's strong desire for a relationship with God.

**Hebrews were
descendants of Abraham.
They are also called
"Jews" and "Israelites."**

**Parallelism is thought
rhyme, not word rhyme.**

Poetry Types and Styles

In these Old Testament poetry books, we find songs (psalms), teaching poetry (proverbs about life and morals), and dramatic poetry (discussions of life's problems). Unlike much of today's poetry, these psalms and proverbs do not rhyme or have rhythm. Hebrew poems and psalms are divided into lines that are about the same length. The first line expresses a thought, then the second line repeats the thought with different words. This is called *parallelism*. Psalm 119:105 is a good example of this: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* Compare the words *lamp* & *light* and the words *feet* & *path*. The second line further explains the first line. Sometimes the second line describes consequences (Psalm 23:1), and sometimes the second line is a contrast to the first line (Psalm 30:5).

The Five Books of Poetry

JOB: the name Job means "persecuted one." It is believed that Job lived during the time of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). This book tells the story of Job's great losses (property and children) and personal

affliction. It also shows us the suffering Job felt in his soul. We read many questions in this book whose answers are only found in Jesus Christ. This book has been called a "masterpiece of literature." The famous poet Lord Tennyson described this book as the "greatest poem of ancient or modern times." Two lessons that can be learned from this book are: (1) suffering can help you to become a better Christian, and (2) suffering is a good way to witness to others of God's grace.

PSALMS: the Hebrew title for this book was "songs of praise," and the Greek title was "songs set to music." This Hebrew hymnbook was used for praise and to worship God. Psalms were sung by the Israelites during worship, while traveling to Jerusalem, and when returning from Babylonian captivity. The many authors wrote psalms about the nation of Israel, nature, the coming Messiah, and sorrow for one's sins. There are also psalms about trusting God and about God's blessings.

Reading the psalms helps us to see how important it is to have a personal relationship with God. In the New Testament we are commanded to use psalms (Ephesians 5:19; James 5:13). Many times at the end of a psalm you will see the word *Selah*. What does that mean? The Amplified Bible says it means "pause and calmly think about that."

PROVERBS: this book is a collection of "words of the wise" (22:17). In the time of King Solomon (and also later), there were writers and teachers who were called "the wise men" or "the wise." Along with the priests and prophets, "the wise" helped guide the people of Israel (Jeremiah 18:18). They collected proverbs and taught them to the people. A common manner of teaching was to use parables or proverbs when delivering an unpleasant message. Many years later Jesus also used the method of speaking in parables (Matthew 13:34). Although the Hebrews called this book the "Parables of Solomon," not all of Solomon's songs and proverbs were preserved (1 Kings 4:32). The wise sayings of this book cover every area of our lives—good manners, morals, discipline, relationships with others, and most importantly, our relationship with God.

ECCLESIASTES: this book is also called "the Preacher," which is defined as "one who addresses (speaks to) an assembly." This is a collection of several styles of literature: poetry, proverbs, and a narrative (a story). Many questions and observations about the meaning of life and why we are here can be read in this book. The author finished this book by writing, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments . . ." (12:13). There are many things in life that we might not understand. We must put our faith and trust in the One who has all the answers to our questions—God!

SONG OF SOLOMON: another name for this book is the "Song of songs" (or the best song). Compare this to the "God of gods" (Deuteronomy 10:17), "Lord of lords" (Psalm 136:3), and "King of kings" (Revelation 17:14). This book is a collection of love songs that are considered an allegory (a spiritual lesson taught by using people, things, or events). These love songs show the love God had for Israel and also the great love Christ has for each one of us. Just as a husband and wife should have a close, personal, loving relationship, Christ also wants a close, personal, loving relationship with His bride (the Church).

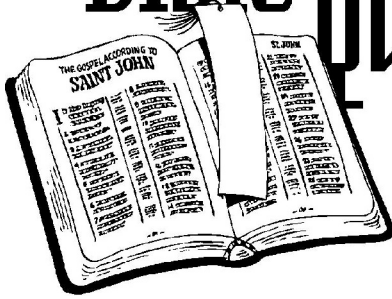
Wisdom for Everyday Living

These books of poetry have been preserved to comfort, help, and challenge us. History tells us that psalms have been a great encouragement to God's people. Christian martyrs have recited psalms while burning at the stake. We can read stories of soldiers who sang psalms while marching and even while fighting on the battlefield. Many afflicted Christians have found comfort and hope while reading the Book of Job. In these books parents have found wisdom for raising their children, and the youth have found guidance for their future. God-given wisdom for every situation of life has been written down in these books. Have you found a verse in one of these five books that helped you through a difficult time in your life? Ask God to direct you to the verse or verses that will help you today.

Several psalms are acrostics. Each line or group of lines is in alphabetical order (Hebrew alphabet). Psalm 119 is a good example of this. Psalms may have been written like this to help memorization.



Bible Quiz



1. Read Psalm 1:6, Psalm 3:1, and Psalm 18:27.

Which kinds of parallelism would each psalm be an example of?

Synonymous (same thought repeated): _____

Contrasting (two contrasting thoughts): _____

Consequences (cause and effects): _____

2. How were Hebrew wisdom writings different than the wisdom writings of other nations? _____

3. Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem. The first Hebrew letter is ALEPH, and the last Hebrew letter is TAU. What is the second Hebrew letter? _____

4. The Book of Psalms is thought to have at least seven different authors. How many can you name? (Look at the heading under the individual psalms in your Bible.) _____

5. First Kings 4:32 tells us King Solomon spoke _____ proverbs & _____ songs.

6. The word *vanity* is used 29 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes. This word means "empty or useless." What do you think the author meant when he said "all is vanity"? _____

7. What is an allegory? _____

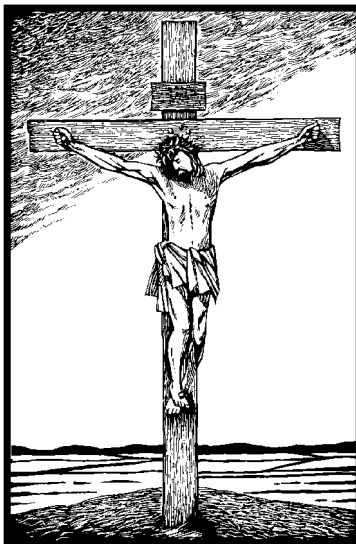
In Galatians 4:22-24 the story of Abraham's two sons was an allegory of the two _____ .

8. Song of Solomon is a collection of _____ .

9. What is one of the lessons about suffering we can learn from reading the Book of Job? _____

10. What does the word *Selah* mean? _____

Psalms About Christ's Crucifixion & Resurrection



FORSAKEN BY GOD

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Psalm 22:1a

HANDS & FEET PIERCED

". . . they pierced my hands and my feet."

Psalm 22:16

BETRAYED BY A FRIEND

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

Psalm 41:9

RISES FROM DEATH

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

Psalm 16:10

BONES UNBROKEN

"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

Psalm 34:20

LOTS CAST FOR CLOTHES

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

Psalm 22:18



Write These Scripture References on the Line Below the Matching Psalm

**John 20:25-27
Luke 22:47**

**John 19:32-36
Matthew 27:35-36**

**Matthew 27:46
Matthew 28:7**