

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

# The Psalms

Read by **Alex Jennings**

THE  
COMPLETE  
TEXT

UNABRIDGED

NON-  
FICTION

RELIGION



NA435212D

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1	Psalm 1 : Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel...	1:33
2	Psalm 2 : Why do the heathen rage...	1:25
3	Psalm 3 : Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!	1:07
4	Psalm 4 : Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness...	1:16
5	Psalm 5 : Give ear to my words...	1:48
6	Psalm 6 : O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger...	1:24
7	Psalm 7 : O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust...	2:16
8	Psalm 8 : O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name...	1:50
9	Psalm 9 : I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart...	2:33
10	Psalm 10 : Why standest thou afar off...	2:23
11	Psalm 11 : In the Lord I put my trust...	1:04
12	Psalm 12 : Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth...	1:14
13	Psalm 13 : How long wilt thou forget me...	1:02
14	Psalm 14 : The fool hath said in his heart...	1:12
15	Psalm 15 : Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?	0:48
16	Psalm 16 : Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust...	1:32
17	Psalm 17 : Hear the right, O Lord...	2:13
18	Psalm 18 : I will love thee, O Lord, my strength...	6:47
19	Psalm 19 : The heavens declare the glory of God...	1:57
20	Psalm 20 : The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble...	1:08
21	Psalm 21 : The king shall joy in thy strength...	1:39
22	Psalm 22 : My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?	4:01
23	Psalm 23 : The Lord is my shepherd...	1:42
24	Psalm 24 : The earth is the Lord's...	1:22
25	Psalm 25 : Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul...	2:34

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26	Psalm 26 : Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity...	1:25
27	Psalm 27 : The Lord is my light and my salvation...	2:12
28	Psalm 28 : Unto thee will I cry...	1:22
29	Psalm 29 : Give unto the Lord...	1:16
30	Psalm 30 : I will extol thee, O Lord...	1:38
31	Psalm 31 : In thee O Lord do I put my trust...	3:21
32	Psalm 32 : Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven...	1:41
33	Psalm 33 : Rejoice in the Lord...	2:45
34	Psalm 34 : I will bless the Lord at all times...	2:23
35	Psalm 35 : Plead my cause, O Lord...	3:46
36	Psalm 36 : The transgression of the wicked...	1:42
37	Psalm 37 : Fret not thyself because of evildoers...	4:34
38	Psalm 38 : O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath...	3:18
39	Psalm 39 : I said, I will take heed to my ways...	2:40
40	Psalm 40 : I waited patiently for the Lord...	2:50
41	Psalm 41 : Blessed is he that considereth the poor...	1:44
42	Psalm 42 : As the hart panteth after the water brooks...	2:01
43	Psalm 43 : Judge me, O God, and plead my cause...	1:00
44	Psalm 44 : We have heard with our ears...	3:08
45	Psalm 45 : My heart is inditing a good matter...	2:24
46	Psalm 46 : God is our refuge and strength...	1:41
47	Psalm 47 : O clap your hands, all ye people...	1:44
48	Psalm 48 : Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised...	1:33
49	Psalm 49 : Hear this, all ye people...	2:17
50	Psalm 50 : The mighty God, even the Lord...	2:49

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51	Psalm 51 : Have mercy upon me, O God...	2:39
52	Psalm 52 : Why boastest thou thyself in mischief...	1:28
53	Psalm 53 : The fool hath said in his heart...	1:13
54	Psalm 54 : Save me, O God, by thy name...	1:02
55	Psalm 55 : Give ear to my prayer...	2:54
56	Psalm 56 : Be merciful unto me, O God, for man would swallow...	2:18
57	Psalm 57 : Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful...	1:49
58	Psalm 58 : Do ye indeed speak righteousness...	1:30
59	Psalm 59 : Deliver me from mine enemies...	2:14
60	Psalm 60 : O God, thou hast cast us off...	1:50
61	Psalm 61 : Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer...	1:06
62	Psalm 62 : Truly my soul waiteth upon God...	1:48
63	Psalm 63 : O God, thou art my God...	1:29
64	Psalm 64 : Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer...	1:18
65	Psalm 65 : Praise waiteth for thee...	1:57
66	Psalm 66 : Make a joyful noise unto God...	2:14
67	Psalm 67 : God be merciful unto us, and bless us...	0:54
68	Psalm 68 : Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered...	5:18
69	Psalm 69 : Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul...	4:33
70	Psalm 70 : Make haste, O God, to deliver me...	0:51
71	Psalm 71 : In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust...	3:04
72	Psalm 72 : Give the king thy judgments...	2:30
73	Psalm 73 : Truly God is good to Israel...	2:58
74	Psalm 74 : O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?	3:47
75	Psalm 75 : Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks...	1:29

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<b>76</b>	Psalm 76 : In Judah is God known...	1:25
<b>77</b>	Psalm 77 : I cried unto God with my voice...	2:32
<b>78</b>	Psalm 78 : Give ear, O my people, to my law...	7:53
<b>79</b>	Psalm 79 : O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance...	1:51
<b>80</b>	Psalm 80 : Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel...	2:27
<b>81</b>	Psalm 81 : Sing aloud unto God our strength...	2:00
<b>82</b>	Psalm 82 : God standeth in the congregation of the mighty...	0:57
<b>83</b>	Psalm 83 : Keep not thou silence...	1:56
<b>84</b>	Psalm 84 : How amiable are thy tabernacles...	2:12
<b>85</b>	Psalm 85 : Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land...	1:33
<b>86</b>	Psalm 86 : Bow down thine ear, O Lord...	2:13
<b>87</b>	Psalm 87 : His foundation is in the holy mountains...	0:53
<b>88</b>	Psalm 88 : O Lord God of my salvation...	2:24
<b>89</b>	Psalm 89 : I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever...	5:43
<b>90</b>	Psalm 90 : Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place...	2:24
<b>91</b>	Psalm 91 : He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High...	1:52
<b>92</b>	Psalm 92 : It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord...	2:15
<b>93</b>	Psalm 93 : The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty...	0:44
<b>94</b>	Psalm 94 : O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth...	2:23
<b>95</b>	Psalm 95 : O come, let us sing unto the Lord...	1:11
<b>96</b>	Psalm 96 : O sing unto the Lord a new song...	1:28
<b>97</b>	Psalm 97 : The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice...	1:23
<b>98</b>	Psalm 98 : O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done...	1:06
<b>99</b>	Psalm 99 : The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble...	1:05
<b>100</b>	Psalm 100 : Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands...	0:41

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101	Psalm 101 : I will sing of mercy and judgement...	1:05
102	Psalm 102 : Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee...	3:02
103	Psalm 103 : Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me...	2:50
104	Psalm 104 : Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God...	3:51
105	Psalm 105 : O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name...	3:57
106	Psalm 106 : Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord...	5:03
107	Psalm 107 : O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good...	5:27
108	Psalm 108 : O God, my heart is fixed...	2:00
109	Psalm 109 : Hold not thy peace...	3:25
110	Psalm 110 : The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand...	0:53
111	Psalm 111 : Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord...	1:14
112	Psalm 112 : Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord...	1:14
113	Psalm 113 : Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord...	0:53
114	Psalm 114 : When Israel went out of Egypt...	0:49
115	Psalm 115 : Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us...	1:44
116	Psalm 116 : I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice...	1:53
117	Psalm 117 : O praise the Lord, all ye nations...	0:18
118	Psalm 118 : O give thanks unto the Lord...	3:29
119	Psalm 119 : Blessed are the undefiled in the way...	17:08
120	Psalm 120 : In my distress I cried unto the Lord...	0:43
121	Psalm 121 : I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills...	1:25
122	Psalm 122 : I was glad when they said unto me...	0:59
123	Psalm 123 : Unto thee lift I up mine eyes...	0:43
124	Psalm 124 : If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...	0:53
125	Psalm 125 : They that trust in the Lord...	0:48

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126	Psalm 126 : When the Lord turneth again the captivity of Zion...	0:44
127	Psalm 127 : Except the Lord build the house...	0:47
128	Psalm 128 : Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord...	0:45
129	Psalm 129 : Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth...	0:50
130	Psalm 130 : Out of the depths have I cried unto thee...	1:59
131	Psalm 131 : Lord, my heart is not haughty...	0:32
132	Psalm 132 : Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions...	1:51
133	Psalm 133 : Behold, how good and how pleasant it is...	0:34
134	Psalm 134 : Behold, bless ye the Lord...	0:23
135	Psalm 135 : Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord...	2:15
136	Psalm 136 : O give thanks unto the Lord...	2:33
137	Psalm 137 : By the rivers of Babylon...	1:14
138	Psalm 138 : I will praise thee with my whole heart...	1:13
139	Psalm 139 : O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.	3:33
140	Psalm 140 : Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man...	1:38
141	Psalm 141 : Lord, I cry unto thee...	1:24
142	Psalm 142 : I cried unto the Lord with my voice...	1:08
143	Psalm 143 : Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications...	1:45
144	Psalm 144 : Blessed be the Lord my strength which teacheth my hands...	2:03
145	Psalm 145 : I will extol thee, my God...	2:11
146	Psalm 146 : Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord...	1:13
147	Psalm 147 : Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises...	2:12
148	Psalm 148 : Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens...	2:06
149	Psalm 149 : Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord...	0:58
150	Psalm 150 : Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary...	2:06

**Total time: 5:15:35**

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# The Psalms

The Psalms represent in poetic form one of the most profound expressions of faith and spirituality. They cover a wide range of human emotions and experiences, from joy and celebration to anger and despair.

The Book of Psalms, originally written in Hebrew, is found in the Jewish Scriptures. However, this recording of the Psalms refers to their use in the Christian tradition, within the classic English translation of the Bible known as the King James or Authorized Version.

The Psalms are traditionally associated with King David, who is introduced in the first book of Samuel as a talented musician. The story is told of how David used to calm the temper of King Saul by playing the harp. David went on to succeed Saul as King of Israel, and many of the Psalms are given the title 'Psalm of David'. Whilst some of the Psalms may indeed be compositions of King David, many appear to have their origin in the worship of the people of Israel and in later periods of Israelite history.

The final collection that we know as the Book of Psalms probably emerged by the end of the third century BCE, which means that the Psalms were written and collected

over a period of six or seven hundred years.

For the people of Israel, worship was centred for much of this period on the Temple in Jerusalem and seems to have focussed on a number of festivals. It is likely that many of the Psalms originated and were used in this cultic setting: as people came to the Temple to pray and offer sacrifice, the Psalms gave them a vehicle for expressing their praises and their prayers to God.

An illustration of this occurs in Psalm 24, which seems to represent part of a processional liturgy accompanying the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem and to the Temple. As the Ark approaches, the cry goes up:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
and be lifted up ye everlasting doors;  
and the King of glory shall come in.

The response then comes in the form of a question:

Who is this King of glory?

And all reply in the great affirmation of faith:

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord  
mighty in battle.



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This is essentially a Psalm of praise to God, but others focus much more on lamentation and the expression of sorrow or despair. Psalm 137, for example, comes from a later period, after the destruction of the Temple in 587 BCE and the exile of many Israelites to Babylon. This Psalm laments the plight of the exiles, and the difficulty of singing praise to God in such an alien setting:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,  
yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.  
We hanged our harps upon the willows...  
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a  
strange land?

One of the best-known Psalms, 121, is thought to be a pilgrim's Psalm. It begins with a statement expressing fear at what a journey, most probably to the Temple, might involve:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills...

On the roads leading to Jerusalem, perhaps dangers might lie in store in the hills surrounding the vulnerable traveller. And so the Psalmist asks:

...from whence cometh my help?

The Psalm goes on to speak reassuringly of the presence of God with the pilgrim: He will act as his or her keeper, a minder on this dangerous and intimidating journey.

Many of the Psalms touch at the heart of human experiences that are universal. They question the meaning and purpose of life's events, representing the desire to understand God's ways. They plead for God's help and intervention amidst the pain of illness or the suffering of persecution. They describe all manner of hardships and pull no punches in expressing their anguish and confusion before God. Perhaps most notable among these is Psalm 88 which, uniquely, contains no concluding expression of hope in God. It is an honest cry of complaint, described by some as the saddest Psalm in the whole collection.

More frequently, the cry of questioning despair gives way to hope and confidence in God, often as the Psalmist remembers better days or reflects upon the story of God's faithfulness to the people of Israel in past generations. Psalm 22, quoted by Jesus from the Cross, is one such Psalm:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken  
me? Why art thou so far from helping me,  
and from the words of my roaring?...  
But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest

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the praises of Israel.  
Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted  
and thou didst deliver them.

Psalms of penitence and bleak remorse are mixed with Psalms that soar high in praise and thanksgiving to God: the whole gamut of human emotion is contained in this wonderful collection. They are inspired by faith and their purpose is to stimulate and encourage faith. Perhaps one of the most profound is Psalm 139, which speaks of the Psalmist's sense of God's presence through every experience, from birth right through life, such that the Psalmist cannot find any place in which to escape the divine presence. Some read this as a wonderfully reassuring description of God's care and concern for the individual through all that life may bring, whilst others find it a haunting Psalm, a suffocating image. But halfway through, it contains this verse relating to God's presence even through the darkest hour, a verse that has brought hope and comfort to many:

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but  
the night shineth as the day: the darkness  
and the light are both alike to thee.

The Book of Psalms is a collection of poems that takes us through the darkest human experiences and into places where all is light: the assertion that emerges eloquently and forcefully is that God is with us, through all.

**Notes by Dr Alan Winton**

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## The music on this recording taken from the NAXOS catalogue

<b>HANDEL</b> THE MESSIAH	8.550667–8.550668
The Scholars Baroque Ensemble	
<b>WEELKES</b> ANTHEMS	8.553209
Oxford Camerata/Jeremy Summerly	
<b>GIBBONS</b> CHORAL AND ORGAN MUSIC	8.553130
Oxford Camerata/Jeremy Summerly/Laurence Cummings, Organ	
PSALMS FOR THE SOUL	8.554823
Choir of St John's, Elora/Noel Edison	
EARLY ENGLISH ORGAN MUSIC VOLUME 2	8.550719
Joseph Payne	

Illuminated manuscript, 14th century. The Letter 'D' with King David.  
Oxford Bodleian Library, courtesy of akg-images

# The Psalms

Read by **Alex Jennings**

The 150 Psalms contain some of the most inspiring lines in the Old Testament: Psalm 23 'The Lord is My Shepherd' and Psalm 121 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills'. Yet few know them as a set, and this recording, in Alex Jennings' clear performance, allows us to consider them as a whole. They are not all uplifting and comfortable. Many involve darker sentiments of revenge or punishment; many appear to be by David or about David; others are To the chief Musician upon Gittith. Their variety is part of their strength and their power, especially in the magisterial language of the King James Bible used here. They are presented with English choral music from the 16th and 17th centuries.



**Alex Jennings** trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company and has played numerous leading roles for Royal Shakespeare Company productions including *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Measure for Measure*, *Richard III*, *Peer Gynt*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

His film credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Derek Jarman's *War Requiem* and *The Wings of the Dove*. He has also read *The Sonnets* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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Total time  
5:15:35