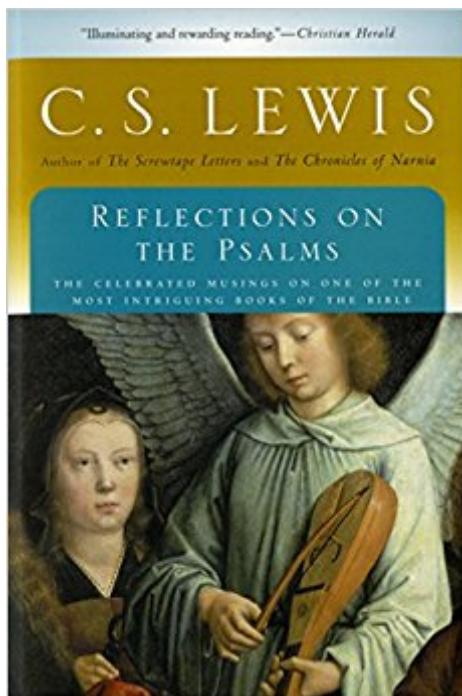


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# Reflections On The Psalms (Harvest Book)



## Synopsis

Lewis writes here about the difficulties he has met or the joys he has gained in reading the Psalms. He points out that the Psalms are poems, intended to be sung, not doctrinal treatises or sermons. Proceeding with his characteristic grace, he guides readers through both the form and the meaning of these beloved passages in the Bible.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Internationally renowned because of his earlier books, among them *Letters, Surprised by Joy*, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis - making religion provoking, memorable and delightful is still more - latest *Reflections on the Psalms*. Though he protests that he writes - learned about things in which he is unlearned himself, the reader is likely- thank God for his wise ignorance. Here especially he throws a clear lightly or not, on many of the difficult psalms, such as those which abound with and cursing, and a self-centeredness which seems to assume' that God must be side of the psalmist. These things, which make some psalm singers pre- not there, have a right and proper place, as Mr. Lewis shows us. They - of Psalms more precious still. Many readers owe it to themselves to read - flections if only to learn this hard but simple lesson. Urge everyone to - this book. (Kirkus Reviews)

" We delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the

enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. " The Psalms were written as songs; we should read them as poetry, in the spirit of lyric, not as sermons or instructions. But they are also shrouded in mystery, and in this careful reading from one of our most trusted fellow travelers, C.S. Lewis helps us begin to reveal their meaning in our daily lives and in the world. Reflecting again and anew on these beloved passages, we can find both joy and difficulty, but also, always, real enlightenment and moments of transcendent grace. "This book may not tell the reader all he would like to know about the Psalms, but it will tell him a good deal he will not like to know about himself." "Times Literary Supplement" "[Lewis] . . . displays in this volume the same keen insight and gifted tongue that have made him one of the most highly respected essayists using the English language." "Chicago Sunday Tribune" "Full of illuminating observations." "New York Times" C. S. (Clive Staples) Lewis (1898 1963), one of the great writers of the twentieth century, also continues to be one of our most influential Christian thinkers. He wrote more than thirty books, both popular and scholarly, including The Chronicles of Narnia series, "The Screwtape Letters," "The Four Loves," "Mere Christianity," and "Surprised by Joy." "

This is a very different way of introducing yourself to the Psalms. It is also a very delightful experience to expand your understanding of the Psalms, Scripture, and Life. It does not attempt to be a "study of the Psalms." It is not definitive. But it does offer so very much more than any study I have read. This (the Harvest Book) is the version of this booklet you want. Avoid, like the plague, the versions where this is reprinted as part of a larger volume, these larger volumes may look nice and have leather bindings, but they are nearly useless. That is because the page numbering must be as the original booklet. At the back is Appendix 2, "Psalms Discussed or Mentioned", and it is critical to opening up the full appreciation of this booklet. Also there is Appendix 1, "Selected Psalms", which has the text of the Coverdale translation of seven Psalms. This is the original translation of the Psalms to English, it is very poetic, and it is the version said and sung in Anglican churches for about 500 years. Why does this matter? C. S. Lewis was Anglican, and that Church has worshiped using the Psalms for 500 years. One Psalm is said or sung in every service. C. S. Lewis begins this booklet, "This is not a work of Scholarship. I am no Hebraist, no higher critic, no ancient historian, no archeologist. I write for the unlearned about things in which I am unlearned myself." He then likens his book to two students solving problems together rather than consulting the expert teacher who was very likely to "explain what you understood already, to add a great deal of information that you didn't want, and to say nothing at all about the problem that was puzzling you." I must say that it was impossible for me not to grow in appreciation for the Psalms as I read this booklet. I also grew

my appreciation of Mr. Lewis, of course, and in my appreciation of art. Art in the largest sense, where one sees the art in counting, dance, music, language, the universe, chaos, ...Mr. Lewis composed this as essays on themes is the Psalms, like Judgement, Cursings, Death, "The Fair Beauty of the Lord", "Sweeter than Honey", Connivance, Nature, Praising, Second Meanings, Scripture, and, curiously, "Second Meanings In the Psalms." These are arranged and progress as chapters, but I have found that randomly opening and re-reading an essay is profoundly satisfying and enlightening. Unlike so many studies where one can always predict what comes next, in Lewis' work there is always a delightful surprise coming in the next paragraph or page. The ninth chapter, "A Word About Praising," is a great example. I just re-read it. He starts, "It is possible (and this is to be hoped) that this chapter will be unnecessary for most people. Those who were never thick-headed enough to get into the difficulty it deals with may find it funny." I suppose some may find it funny, but I am notoriously thick-headed, and I wonder, each time I read it, if I will actually understand the joke this time. When I finish, I know I do understand, but the joy I learned about praising has yet to translate into any laughter from me, though I can imagine an angel or two -- or Lewis -- snickering at me behind a folded wing or hand. Read this for a love of language, art, history, or God. There is gold at the end of each chapter.

There are some flaws in the Kindle edition. Among them:p. 38 - "who has 110 belief": 110 = nop. 120 - "referred to in Psalm no": no = 110p. 123 - "the hero of Psalm no": no = 110p. 124 - "Psalm no, with three other Christmas Psalms": no = 110p. 137 - "In Psalm go (4)": go = 90It's always illuminating to follow Lewis' thinking. Added to that is he's such a good writer and adds humor to his treatment of the subject. ("I don't want my dog to bark approval of my books.") But, there are some topics he doesn't address two of which are very important. The first consequential topic is: how does the Old Testament (with its vengeance and cursings) fit with the New Testament (love your enemy). The problem goes back to Marcion whose cure was to say the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New Testament. Lewis rightly assumes the superiority of the New Testament as a guide to Christian thinking and action, but does not deal with Old Testament passages where God commands Israel and individuals (King Saul) to wipe out entire populations including infants and domestic animals. Nor does Lewis deal with the Christian martyrs in Revelation 6 asking for avenging their blood "on those who dwell on the earth" or that rulers are servants of God who are supposed to punish the wicked. Lewis' basic answer is the Christian basic answer: forgiveness. But, other than noting that the Psalms often deal in the context of civil justice rather than criminal justice, Lewis does not deal with the difficult points on the issue of how punishment fits with forgiveness,

and that is unusual for him. A second important topic regards his view that scripture is written in different literary forms, and those forms control how the writings are interpreted. Well, yes. But, he skips over some inconveniences. He makes a distinction between books/passages he believes are mythical (i.e., not factual but carry truth). Among these are the Creation story (actually Genesis up through the Flood) and Job. But, nowhere does Lewis try to explain if the historical/prophetic writers knew when they were speaking about myth and when about fact. Did Ezekiel know (Ezekiel 14: Noah, Daniel and Job are bundled together)? Did Jesus know (Luke 11: Abel and Zechariah are the beginning and end of prophets murdered; Luke 17: His own coming will be in days like the mythical days of Noah)? Did Luke know (Luke 3 genealogy with lots of mythical people and historical people linked up)? Did the writer of Hebrews know (Hebrews 11: Abel, Cain, Enoch and Noah come before Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses)? If it doesn't matter, why not? Lewis rightly reminds that the psalms are poetry. Poetry is not meant to be utterly factual. But at least once the Lord Jesus used poetic lines ("the Lord said to my Lord" in Psalm 110) as utterly factual and decisive and not just poetic license. Lewis deals specifically with that phrase and the Lord's use of it in Matthew 22, but skips over its implications in interpreting scriptural poetry or other scriptural literary genres. All in all, *Reflections on the Psalms*, like most any Lewis book, is very good and will get you thinking.

I had not expected to find such analytical commentary, and that 'bothers' me just a little, however, I realize that there are those who will truly benefit from such analytical writing, and I am satisfied with it.

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