

Hymns in New Testament Letters

The New Testament often mentions Christians singing hymns and spiritual songs (Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:15, 26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13). Still, it does not contain a song-book or hymnal comparable to the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. Instead we find liturgical materials woven into other books. Notable examples are found in the Gospel of Luke (1:46–55, 67–79; 2:14, 29–32) and the book of Revelation (1:5–6; 4:8, 11; 5:9–14; 7:10–12, 15–17; 11:15–18; 12:10–12; 15:3–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–8; 22:13). Some of the letters attributed to Paul also appear to draw on hymns from the early church. Here are some often-cited examples:

- Rom. 11:33–36: a doxology on the inscrutability of God
- 1 Cor. 13: an exposition on the superiority of love
- Eph. 1:3–14: a doxology on the redemptive work of God in Christ
- Eph. 5:14: a verse promising the life and light of Christ to believers
- Phil. 2:6–11: a doxology on the self-abasement and the ensuing exaltation of Christ
- Col. 1:15–20: an exposition on the person of Christ and God's work through him
- 1 Tim. 3:16: a short litany on the coming of Christ to earth and his return to heaven
- 2 Tim. 2:11–13: a promise that suffering for Christ leads to glory