

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE



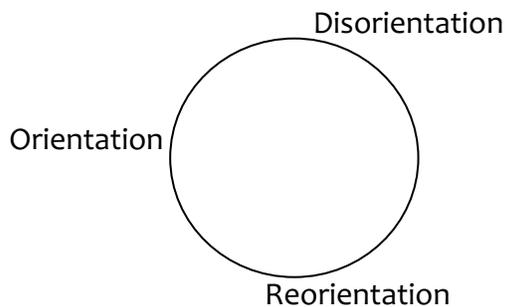
Presented by
Dr. Jon Korkidakis MDiv, DMin.

The Book of Psalms – Study #8

The Psalms are unique because they are the *expression of people to God*.

Contrast: Prophecy
 Law
 Gospels
 Epistles

They are the expression of prayer and praise in the *realities and issues of life*.



1. The Book of Psalms is a collection

- It is not a single composition.
- It has been collected over time.
- It has a number of different authors (cf. psalm titles).

It contains 150 poems divided into 5 books:

Book 1 (Psalms 1–41)

Book 2 (Psalms 42–72)

Book 3 (Psalms 73–89)

Book 4 (Psalms 90–106)

Book 5 (Psalms 107–150)

As noted in a previous lesson, the five-fold division of the Psalms reflects the five-fold books of the Pentateuch. Psalms 1 & 2 serve as the introduction to the collection. A doxology occurs at the end of each book, with the last 5 Psalms serving as a doxology of the entire collection.

2. The Psalms are poetry

- This means that they come from an intensely emotional base.
- As poetry, they are words of songs.
- They use lots of figurative language in order to bring the abstract into the concrete.

1. Simile – Psalm 1:4 (a figure of speech comparing one thing to another, common with *like* or *as*)

*But not the wicked!
They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.*

2. Metaphor – Psalm 23:1 (a figure of speech applied to action/object in place of another)

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.*

3. Personification – Psalm 98:8 (a figure of speech in which something is given human attributes)

*Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!
Let the hills sing out their songs of joy*

- As Hebrew poetry, they often are constructed in parallelism.

1. Synonymous – Psalm 1:5

*They will be condemned at the time of judgment.
Sinners will have no place among the godly.*

The second line basically repeats the first.

2. Antithetical – Psalm 1:6

*For the LORD watches over the path of the godly,
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.*

The second line says the opposite of the first.

3. Emblematic – Psalm 42:1

As the deer longs for streams of water,

so I long for you, O God.

Of the two lines, one contains a metaphor or simile.

4. Climactic – Psalm 29:1-2

*Honor the LORD, you heavenly beings;
honor the LORD for his glory and strength.
Honor the LORD for the glory of his name.
Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.*

Identical statements that build with intensity with every phrase.

5. Synthetic – Psalm 25:10

*The LORD leads with unfailing love and faithfulness
all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.*

Line A states one thing, line B another, yet both are related in some way.

What are the values of understanding parallelism?

- Mnemonic - Psalms were written with the intent to be memorized or recited.
- Meditation device – Focuses attention through repetition and elaboration.
- Interpretive value – Helps to clarify terms and phrases.

Psa. 111:10 *Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true wisdom.
All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom.*

3. There are various types of Psalms

This subject can be very detailed and intense, but we will look at the larger categories.

- Praise Psalms – 100, 113
 - Composed of three parts: Call to Praise
Causes for Praise
Conclusion to Praise
(Often bracketed by ‘Hallelujah’)
- Thanksgiving Psalms – 136

- Lament Psalms – 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 77
 - Largest group in the collection.
- Pilgrim Psalms – 120-134
 - Used for liturgical purposes.
 - Sung in pilgrimages to Jerusalem or for various feasts and Temple celebrations.
- Royal Psalms – 2, 110
 - Often viewed as “messianic” psalms. They speak in terms of “king” and have in view the Davidic covenant and the ultimate king, Jesus Christ.
- Enthronement Psalms – 93, 95-99
 - God is enthroned as King.
- Wisdom Psalms – 1, 19, 73, 119
- Psalms of Trust – 11

4. Benefits of the Psalms for personal Bible study

- They are a guide to worship. They are instructive on how to come to God in prayer and worship.
- *They instruct us on how to relate honestly to God.* They express the gamut of emotion to God. However, the book of Psalms moves inevitably to praise. The book is called the *seper tehillim* – meaning the Book of Praises! The end point of this collection is praise.
- They demonstrate the *importance of reflection and meditation on God, His person and mighty acts.*

5. Practical Steps for Studying the Psalms

- Identify the type of Psalm. This is important so that you can know the spirit and direction of the psalm, and not look for the wrong things
- Be sure to look for parallelisms and poetic devices as you read and study it. This will help in interpretation, as well as enhance your perception of its beauty and craftsmanship.
- The titles do help when they are present. Use them as a guide to the psalm’s setting and nature.

- It is helpful to use a Bible that puts the poetry into poetic lines and shows the stanzas of the psalm. This will help you understand what the psalmist had in mind when he wrote it.
- Be consistently mindful that the psalm is an expression of the heart of the psalmist to God. He may be in the depths of despair, or in the heights of ecstasy. Thus, we need to read them as such.
- Further, we need to learn to bring the story of our lives into interface with God. The psalms are “answering God.” Reading, studying, and praying the psalms allows our prayer and worship to become an integrated activity of life rather than a disconnected or peripheral activity in a set time and place.
- Also, understand that the fundamental idea of God in the psalms is *King*. He is shepherd, judge, and warrior, but these were all functions of the ANE king. Thus, when we use the psalms in our approach to God, we are entering the throne room of the King.
- Read, pray and sing with emotion and fervour.