



WISDOM OR DIDACTIC PSALMS

Introduction:

Designed or intended to teach people something— usually intended to have life or moral lesson as an agenda.

I. Wisdom Psalms

Wisdom Psalms are identified as such because of their similarity to the genre of wisdom literature found in Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes.

- A. This identification includes similarity in literary devices as well as similarity in content.
- B. Wisdom literature in general tends to contrast the life choices made by those who reject God, (e.g. the foolish or the wicked) with those who embrace God's rule (the wise or righteous).
- C. God curses those who reject him, while he blesses those who obey.
- D. Examples include: 1, 10, 12, 15, 19, 32, 34, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 53, 73, 78, 82, 91, 92, 94, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 139.

II. General format

- A. There is no general format for these kinds of psalms.
- B. They may extol God's attributes, creation or his law. They may express skepticism.
- C. Regardless of the content, the goal of the psalmist is to argue for the superiority of God and his ways.

III. Types of Wisdom Psalms include:

- A. Wisdom (general)
- B. Psalms of the Law
- C. Some psalms have elements of more than one genre.

IV. The importance of getting wisdom

- A. "Hakam", and related terms, appear over 300 times in the OT.
- B. "Hakam" means to live life skillfully.
- C. Wisdom has to do with living life consistent with God's covenants.
- D. Wisdom literature is very focused on the 'here and now'
- E. The completeness and beauty of a life lived under the covenant obligations, in dependence upon God.

V. A key concept in wisdom literature is ‘the fear of the Lord.’

- A. This concept doesn't first appear in wisdom literature.
 - 1. Earlier scripture makes it clear that 'fear of the Lord' is the appropriate response to trust in the Lord (Genesis 22:12; 42:18; Job 1:1, 8-9; 2:3; Exodus 1:15-21; 14:31; 20:20; Leviticus 19:14,32; 25:17; Deuteronomy 4:10).
 - 2. The fear of the Lord has to be learned (Deuteronomy 4:10; 14:23; 17:19; 31:12-13; Psalm 34:11)
- B. To fear the Lord is to:
 - 1. Turn from evil (Ecclesiastes 3:11,14; 5:7; 8:12; 12:13; Psalm 34:11,14; Job 1:1,8; 2:3; 28:28).
 - 2. Even to hate evil (Proverbs 3:7; 16:16).
 - 3. Obey through trust in God's promises (Genesis 22).
 - 4. To hear, learn and respond to God's word (Deuteronomy 4:10; 8:6; Psalm 19:7-14; 112:1; 119:33-38, 57-64).
 - 5. To love, cleave to, serve & praise God (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 13:5; 10:20; 13:4-5; Psalm 22:22- 23; 34:7,9; 25:12,14; 33:18).
- C. The outcome of having the fear of the Lord is to:
 - 1. Get wisdom (Proverbs 1:7,29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10 15:33) from the God who created in wisdom (Proverbs 3:19-20; 8:22-31).
 - 2. Get God's favor (Proverbs 10:27; 22:4; 14:26; 19:23; Psalm 33:18; 103:13; 147:11)
 - 3. Get life (Proverbs 13:14; 14:27; 19:23; Ecclesiastes 12:13 “*kol ha adam*” the wholeness of man).

VI. Wisdom Psalms

- A. Example – Psalm 37
 - 1. Situation of the psalmist
 - 2. Written by David
 - 3. How to succeed against evil without resorting to evil.
- B. Structure of the psalm
 - 1. The structure is less obvious than some psalms; it appears to be a collection of proverbs organized around the problem of evil and God's retributive justice.
 - 2. It is organized as an alphabetic acrostic of 22 strophes.
 - 3. It begins (vv. 1-6) and ends (vv. 34-40) with the encouragement to hope in Yahweh's deliverance.
 - 4. The middle section reminds us of God's eventual retributive justice (vv. 7-11 & 27-33) and the contrast between the wicked and righteous (vv. 12- 26).

VII. How to succeed among ungodly people (Psalm 73)

- A. The ungodly can knock us for a loop.
 - 1. They do pretty well for themselves (v. 1, 7, 16, 35)
 - 2. They scheme against the weak (v. 14)
 - 3. They try to destroy the godly (v. 12, 14, 32)
- B. Don't:
 - 1. Envy (v. 1, 16) because they will pass (v.2)
 - 2. Fret (v. 1, 8)
 - 3. Be persistently angry (v. 8)
- C. Do:
 - 1. Place yourself in God's hands (v. 3, 5, 7, 23, 28, 33, 34)
 - 2. Delight yourself in God (v. 4)
 - 3. Do good where you are (v. 3, 21, 27)
 - 4. Absorb yourself in God's truth and let it guide your words & deeds (vv. 30-31)

VIII. Psalm 139

- A. God's Omniscience.
 - 1. Verses 1-6. HE KNOWS ALL THINGS.
 - a) David knows that there is nowhere to escape from God.
- B. His Omnipresence.
 - 1. Verses 7-12. HE CAN BE FOUND EVERYWHERE.
 - 2. David was aware of the Almightyness of God.
- C. His Omnipotence.
 - 1. Verses 13-18. HE CAN DO ALL THINGS.
 - 2. This led to his prayer of openness to God, that he might become the person God wanted him to be.
- D. THE PRAYER OF THE PERSON WHO WANTS TO BE IN GOD'S WILL
- E. Verses 23-24

