

Lecture 4 – How to Read and Apply Biblical Poetry, II

*The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn,
Shining ever brighter till the full light of day.
But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
They do not know what makes them stumble. Proverbs 4:18-19*

Key Terms

Poetry, rhyme, meter, parallelism

Lecture Objectives

*Describe the role and function of poetry in the inspired Word for the Christian’s “faith and practice.”

Preliminary Questions

- *In what ways is Old Testament poetry similar to twentieth century poetry you have read? In what ways is it different?
- *How does a comparison of Old Testament poetry and twentieth century poetry help you listen more closely to Old Testament poetry?

How to Read and Apply Biblical Poetry, II

I. How to Read and Apply Biblical Poetry

A. “Literary Competence” and Interpretation

*B. What is the Essence of Biblical Poetry?

1. What is poetry?
 - ex. Roses are Red.....
2. Terminology
 - Roses are Red / Violets are blue
3. What is OT poetry?
 - a. Rhyme?
 - 1) Not end-rhyme, but concerned with sounds. I.e. alliteration (Isaiah 24:16)
 - b. Rhythm / Meter?
 - 1) Not like English poetry
 - c. Parallelism
 - 1) Semantic (sense)
 - 2) Grammatical (syntactical)

C. The Debate over Parallelism

See Long handout on parallelism, Appendix 1

1. Lowth’s three types of semantic parallelism
 - a. Synonymous - repetition of same thought in different ways
 - b. Antithetic - using opposite terms to say the same thought
 - c. Synthetic - second member advances in some way the thought of the first
2. Reaction to Lowth’s scheme
 - a. Criticisms
 - 1) “Garbage can parallelism”
 - 2) Synonymous & antithetic about the same
 - b. Proposals
3. Kugel’s redefinition of parallelism: a “seconding sequence”
 - a. Parallelism not really paralleling but seconding

- b. An example: Isa. 1:3
- c. Kugel's thesis
 - 1) "A," what's more, "B"
- d. Evaluation of Kugel's theory
 - 1) Helpful as an idea
 - 2) Beware pushing it to extreme/absolute

How might Kugel's theory of parallelism be helpful for reading the Psalms? How might it be abused?