

## PSALM ANALYSIS

### 1) WHAT STRIKES YOU FIRST UPON THE INITIAL READING OF THE WORK

- a) First impressions
  - i) Resonates with your current situation
  - ii) Does anything seem strange
  - iii) Does it evoke a specific feeling – sadness, joy, peace, etc

### 2) IDENTIFY IT GENRE

- a) These according to Gunkel
  - i) Within the composition, find out which aspects of the psalm suit that genre
- b) Not all psalms are instantly recognizable
  - i) Some may not even properly fall into a specific genre
  - ii) Use a comparison of commentaries to find varying opinions
- c) Some psalms have a mixed Genres (identifying the mixed Genres means you are reading the psalm well)

### 3) IDENTIFY PARALLELISM/POETICS

- a) Synonymous
- b) Antithetical
- c) Chiasmus
  - i) What position in Psalm/stanza
- d) Merismus
  - i) What image is it conveying
- e) Rhetorical questions
  - i) Position in Psalm
- f) Word plays
  - i) Do they emphasise an important point
- g) Alliteration (with the help of commentators)
- h) Repetition – make a note of it
  - i) Especially the name of the Lord
    - (1) Is it concentrated in certain places
- i) How does the psalm use “loaded terms”
  - i) Grace, Peace, Righteousness, Justice
    - (1) Not just to recognize their presence
    - (2) Heseb in Psalm 136 must be further defined
      - (a) Not individual
      - (b) Only to Israel, one nation
      - (c) A long term

### 4) DIVIDE THE WORK INTO SECTIONS

- a) Between three and seven sections
  - b) This is partially subjective
  - c) Problems
    - i) Not all verses accounted for
    - ii) Orphan verses
    - iii) Imbalance – two tiny sections and two enormous ones
  - d) Markers for divisions
    - (1) Subject
    - (2) Person
    - (3) Speaker
    - (4) Structural markers
      - (a) Acrostics – Pss 112, 119
      - (b) Chiasmus
    - ii) Start with obvious breaks
    - iii) Summarize the main idea of each section
  - e) How do the sections relate to each other
    - i) Contrast
    - ii) Develop
    - iii) Explain
    - iv) Unrelated
- ### 5) MEANING
- a) Try to identify why the psalm was written by the author
    - i) This is not fixed in stone, you may change your mind as you get to know the psalm
  - b) Be as specific as possible in your final assessment of the psalm, making your definition unique to that psalm – 2-3 sentences
  - c) Problems
    - i) If you end up saying it is a lament, that could apply to any situation
    - ii) Writing too much in your definition
    - iii) Not everybody’s view is the same
  - d) Think in terms of the whole composition, not the part you may like the most
    - i) This sense of the whole must be addressed in preaching
  - e) Can you find a critical verse in the psalm
- ### 6) IDENTIFY IMAGES
- a) Recognize them
    - i) Anthropomorphism

- ii) Metaphor
  - iii) Simile
  - iv) Hyperbole
  - b) Explain them, what feeling was the author attempting to convey
  - c) Where else do they occur in biblical literature
    - i) Here you can check the centre portion of certain Bibles for a cross-reference
  - d) How does the image illuminate your text
- ### 7) HOW WOULD IT BE USED IN ITS CONTEXT
- a) Think of a context in which the psalm may have been written
  - b) How you might use the psalm today
    - i) What lesson might you bring out of it in a sermon
    - ii) To what occasion might it be well suited
- ### 8) NOTE RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBOURS
- a) Are there any connections that you can see between the psalm and those around it
    - i) Similar themes
    - ii) Degrees of continuation, logical progression
    - iii) Conflict, or contrast
    - iv) Request and answer
    - v) Theme development
    - vi) Principle and practical example
  - b) Think – why did the arranger place the psalms together like this
    - i) What was he trying to show, or teach?
- ### 9) IDENTIFY ANY KEY WORDS
- a) How do they contribute to the overall meaning of the psalm
- ### 10) DOES IT SPECIFICALLY GIVE YOU AS THE MODERN LISTENER, INSTRUCTION
- a) Write down what this instruction might be
    - i) Ps 32 – do not be like the horse and mule
  - b) You may not find anything, but do look for it
- ### 11) TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD(HEAD)
- a) Does it speak of his character
  - b) Does it speak of his accomplishments

- c) Does the picture of God conflict with other biblical ideas of God, or resonate with them?

### d) MOVEMENT/DEVELOPMENT

- e) Is it fast moving and telling a story
    - i) Here there would be a lot of subject changes, and less in the way of parallelism between the verses
  - f) Does it build to a climax, not revealing an important point until the end (Ps 105)
  - g) Does it begin joyously and end in sadness (or the opposite)
    - i) Laments often start in despair and end in hope or praise
  - h) Does it dwell continuously on a single idea or topic (Ps 119)
  - i) Is there statement made and developed throughout the psalm (Ps 23)
- ### 12) ARE THERE ANY ALLUSIONS TO OTHER PARTS OF SCRIPTURE
- a) What is inner-biblical allusion
    - i) An author calls upon another text
      - (1) Explicitly
        - (a) Using phrases such as “As the prophet says”
        - (b) Implicitly-via repetition of word(s)
    - ii) Confirm direction of borrowing
    - iii) Deepen imagery
      - (1) Using the reader’s background knowledge to enrich and provide more meaning to his text
    - iv) Re-interpret the original
      - (1) Changing the way the original texts is viewed
  - b) What is the same, what links you to the passage
    - i) To the point that you might think one author knew of the other’s work
  - c) What does it allude to
  - d) What are the differences
  - e) Does it change your perspective of the source