



Basic Reading of the Psalms

Listed below are key elements to help you understand Psalms as you spend time studying God's Word.

1. *The Psalms are poetry. This means the writers utilized emotive language to convey their message. Taking them literally can obscure the truth they are expressing. We gain better understanding when we examine the intended message more than the exact wording.*
2. *The Psalms use parallelism heavily. Parallelism is a literary form that repeats or contracts thoughts to express something. Catching what the repetition or contradiction is highlighting will help you understand the writer's message. Below are the basic types of parallelism along with some example verses.*
 - a. *Synonymous parallelism – second line repeats the thought from the first line (Psalms 114:1)*
 - b. *Antithetical parallelism – second line states the opposite thought from the first line (Psalm 1:6)*
 - c. *Synthetic parallelism – there is a cause and effect relationship between the two lines (Psalm 2:12)*
3. *Each Psalm should be read as a whole. Focusing on one verse out of a psalm, can easily lead you to a wrong understanding of what the writer was communicating.*
4. *The Psalms were written pre-Jesus and often express thoughts and feelings that reflect that point in God's redemptive work in the world. They are not necessarily meant to teach us doctrine or a Christ-like worldview. Instead, their value lies in helping us to express ourselves to God and to consider His ways.*