

The Wisdom Literature

Lesson #8

Psalms Of The Word Of God

Introduction

- God created the Universe and all things within it over a period of six days (Genesis 1). Earth was created as a perfect environment in which man could live, love, work and glorify God. It is only reasonable to think that such an Almighty, Benevolent Creator would wish to communicate with His creation. Hence, some form of personal communication between the intelligent Creator and His intelligent creation is to be expected. Without such, man could never come to know or appreciate certain aspects of God, nor could man understand what God might require of him.
- It is therefore not surprising that the word of God would be a topic of great interest to psalmists. There are three psalms that relate to this topic (12, 19, 119). Psalm 12 contrasts the word of men with the word of God. While men lie, flatter one another and put forward empty promises, the words of the Lord are pure. He keeps His commitments. Psalms 19 and 119 are very different yet very similar. Both extol the virtue, power and benefits of the word of God. It is to these two psalms that we devote our attention in this lesson.

Psalm 19

- Psalm 19 addresses the fact that God reveals Himself to man by virtue of a general and a special revelation. General revelation comes to man through nature. Psalm 19:1 declares that, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." At no time in history has God left Himself without a witness of Himself (Acts 14:17). So compelling and convincing is this evidence of His "eternal power and Godhead" that men who refuse to believe in Him or acknowledge the revelation of God in nature are "without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20). Psalm 19:1-6 is devoted to general revelation.
- Special revelation, on the other hand, is God's revelation of Himself and His will for man in the 66 books of the Bible. Written over a period of 1,600 years and penned by about 40 different men, the Bible reveals a history of God's communication with man culminating in Jesus (John 1:1-4; cf. Hebrews 1:1-2). In addition to revealing the character of God and the origin of evil, the Bible offers the only logical explanation for man's origin, purpose and destiny. Its central message deals with the redemption of man through Jesus of Nazareth and can be summed up in three statements: 1) someone is coming; 2) someone has come; and 3) someone is coming again. Psalm 19:7-14 provides the student with a

description of the word of God, testifies to its character and the effect of that word upon those who hear it and explains to us the surpassing value of the word to those who obey its commands. Let's take a closer look at both what the Bible is and what it does.

- What the Bible is.
 - The perfect law (vs. 7). There is no error in the Bible, either in historical fact or in spiritual truth. Of course, the Bible records the lies of men and Satan, but the message of the Bible is the revelation of truth (cf. Psalm 119:128, 160).
 - The sure testimony (vs. 7). The word of God does not change; it is sure and steadfast (cf. Psalm 119:89). It is God's testimony to man of what is true, right and dependable; something to which one can anchor his life.
 - The right precepts (vs. 8). Precepts are "statutes, rules for right living." Some rules are wrong rules but God's word is right. The result of obedience to God's rules is a blessed life.
 - The pure commandment (vs. 8). The demands that some religions make upon their adherents are anything but pure, but God's word is pure, even when dealing with sin (Psalm 12:6; 119:140; Proverbs 30:5). Nothing in the Bible, rightly understood, could lead a person to sin.
 - The clean fear of the Lord (vs. 9). The word of God, properly studied, produces a healthy fear of God (cf. Deuteronomy 4:10; 31:12; Psalm 111:10) and cleanses the soul. A life of sin is pictured as unclean and filthy (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Peter 2:20-22).
 - True, righteous judgments (vs. 9). God's evaluations of men are true; He knows everything completely. It pays for the Christian to believe what God says and not depend upon his own evaluation or the evaluation of those in the world. Lot made this mistake and lost everything.
 - Better than gold (vs. 10). The most valuable possessions in life are not material in nature (Luke 12:15; 1 Timothy 6:17-18; Psalm 119:72; Proverbs 8:10; 16:16). Spiritual values are far more rare, more precious and lead to greater blessings (Matthew 6:19-21, 33).
 - Sweeter than honey (vs. 10). The spiritually minded individual does not need the artificial devices of this world for satisfaction; the word satisfies the spiritual appetite (Psalm 119:10; Matthew 5:6).

- What the Bible does.
 - Restores (vs. 7). The word “converting” means “returning” or “turning back.” The word of God has the power to redirect our lives. It refreshes. It heals.
 - Makes wise (vs. 7). Jeremiah 8:9 says, “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” (cf. Psalm 119:97-104; Colossians 1:9; James 1:5).
 - Rejoices (vs. 8). The spiritually-minded finds joy in the word of God (Jeremiah 15:16; Philippians 4:4).
 - Enlightens (vs. 8). “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130).
 - Endures (vs. 9). Other books fade and are forgotten, but God’s word remains. Many a hammer has been worn out on the anvil of God’s word.
 - Enriches (vs. 10). The word of God is better than gold or silver (Proverbs 3:13-15).
 - Satisfies (vs. 10). Honey satisfies the body; the word of God satisfies the soul.
 - Warns (vs. 11). It is better to prevent sin and avoid trouble than to confess sin and try to remedy mistakes. Knowing the word of God and obeying it guides the believer on the safe path (cf. Proverbs 2:1-22).
 - Rewards (vs. 11). Money cannot buy the rewards of a godly life: a clean conscience, a pure heart, joy, peace and answered prayer. Note that there is a reward *in* keeping the word, not *for* keeping it. The reward comes in the doing, “this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:25).

Psalm 119

- Psalm 119 is special in several ways. First, it is the longest psalm containing 176 verses. It is also an acrostic psalm, following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In most editions of the Bible, the 22 sections of this psalm are headed by the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (Aleph, Beth, Gimel, etc.). Although not readily apparent in our English translations, in the Hebrew Bible each verse in a section begins with that Hebrew letter. The Jews are thought to have written in this fashion to aid their memorizing and meditation upon the scriptures.
- We do not know who wrote this psalm, although the writer refers to himself many times. He was suffering for his love for God’s law (vss. 22, 50-53, 95, 98, 115), yet he had determined to obey the word regardless of the cost. All but five verses mention the word of God in one way or another (vss. 84, 90, 121, 122, 132). God is referred to in every verse.

The number eight is stamped all over this psalm. Each section has eight verses; there are eight special names for God's word listed; there are eight symbols of the word given; the believer has eight responsibilities to the word. The word "eight" in Hebrew literally means "abundance, more than enough;" it is the number of new beginnings. It is as though the writer is saying, "God's word is enough. If you have the scriptures, that is all you need for life and godliness."

- In one sense, Psalm 119 is an expansion of Psalm 19:7-11. Note the eight basic titles of the Bible in the first nine verses of the psalm: law of the Lord, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments and word. These are repeated many times throughout the psalm. Again, let's take a closer look and both what the Bible is and what it does. We will then consider what we do with the Bible.

- What the Bible is.

- Water for cleansing (vs. 9). This whole section (vss. 9-16) deals with victory over sin. Young people in particular need to learn to heed and hide the word that they might overcome temptation. As you read the word and meditate on it, it cleanses your inner being, just as water cleanses the body (cf. John 15:3; Ephesians 5:25-27).
- Wealth and treasure (vss. 14, 72, 127, 162). We live in a day and time when people know the price of many objects and the value of little. Your Bible may cost a few dollars, but it is a tremendous treasure. How would you feel if you lost God's word and could not replace it?
- A companion and friend (vs. 24). The writer was a stranger (vs. 19), rejected by the proud (vs. 21) and princes (vs. 23), but he always had the word to be his counselor (Proverbs 6:20-22).
- A song to sing (vs. 54). Imagine making a song out of statutes or laws! Life is a pilgrimage; we are tourists and not residents. The songs of the world mean nothing to us, but God's word is a song to our hearts.
- Honey (vs. 103). The sweetness of the word is like honey to the taste. It is sad when the Christian must have the "honey" of this world to be satisfied (Psalm 34:8; Job 23:12).
- A lamp (vss. 105, 130). This is a dark world and the only dependable light is the word of God (2 Peter 1:19-21). It leads us one step at a time as we walk in obedience. We walk in the light as we obey His word (1 John 1:5-10).
- Great spoil (vs. 162). Poor soldiers were made rich from the spoil left by the defeated enemy. The riches of the word do not come easy; there must first be that spiritual battle against Satan and the flesh, but it is worth it.

- A heritage (vs. 111). The Bible is a precious inheritance. Think of those who had to suffer and die that we might have this inheritance!
- What the Bible does.
 - It blesses (vss. 1-2). It is a book with a blessing (Psalm 1:1-3). We are blessed in reading the word, understanding the word and obeying the word. We are blessed when we share the word with others.
 - It gives life (vss. 25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 93). The word "revive," translated as "quicken" in the KJV, means "to live, have life, remain alive, sustain life, live prosperously, live forever ... be restored to life or health" (Strongs). The word gives us eternal life when we believe (1 Peter 1:23). It is the living word (Hebrews 4:12). The word also restores us when we are weak, discouraged and defeated. Revival comes when we yield to God's word.
 - It gives strength (v. 28). Trusting the word encourages us (Matthew 4:4). God's word has power and can empower us when we believe and obey (Hebrews 4:12; 5:8-9).
 - It gives liberty (vs. 45). A law that gives liberty -- what a paradox! Sin would have dominion over us (vs. 133), but the word sets us free (John 8:32). True liberty comes in obeying God's will. His word is the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25).
 - It imparts wisdom (vss. 66, 97-104). We may get knowledge and facts in other books, but true spiritual wisdom is found in the Bible. Note that in vss. 97-104 there are various ways to discover truth -- from your enemies, from your teachers, from your older friends -- and all of these are good. Above them all, however, is a knowledge of the Bible. Teachers may know from books, and elders may know from experience (both deserving respect), but these without the Bible are not sufficient.
 - It creates friends (v. 63). Knowing and obeying the Bible will bring into your life the very finest friends. Those who love God's word are friends indeed. There are false friends who may dazzle you with their worldly wisdom and wealth, but their friendship will lead you astray. Stick with those who "stick" with the Bible (vs. 31).
 - It gives comfort (vss. 50, 76, 82, 92). More than 60 verses in this psalm mention trial and persecution (vss. 22, 50-53, 95, 98, 115, etc.). The believer who obeys the word will have trials in this world, but the Bible gives him lasting comfort.
 - It gives direction (vs. 133). The Christian life is a "walk," a day at a time and a step at a time (vss. 1, 3, 45). The word directs our steps, both for walking and for running (vs. 32). When we pray for guidance, the Lord answers through His word.

- What we must do with the Bible.
 - Love it (vss. 97, 159). The way you treat the word of God is the way you treat Jesus, the Son of God. To love Him is to love His word. The word is a delight (vss. 16, 24, 35, 47, 70) and not a disappointment; we rejoice to read it (vss. 14, 162).
 - Prize it (vss. 72, 128). To hold the Bible in high esteem is the mark of a true saint. It should be more precious to us than any earthly treasure.
 - Study it (vss. 7, 12, 18, 26-27). At least 12 times the psalmist prays, "Teach me." The Christian who studies his Bible daily will be blessed of God. Bible study is not always easy, for it takes the "whole heart" (vss. 2, 10, 34, 69, 145).
 - Memorize it (vs. 11). "The best Book, in the best place, for the best purpose!" is the way G. Campbell Morgan explained this verse. All ages need to memorize the word, not just children and young people. Joshua was not a youth when God commanded him to memorize the Law (Joshua 1:8). Jesus was able to quote scripture when He faced Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).
 - Meditate on it (vss. 15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148). Meditation is to the soul what digestion is to the body. To meditate means to "turn over" God's word in the mind and heart, to examine it, to compare scripture with scripture and to "feed on" its wonderful truths. In this day of noise and confusion, such meditation is rare but so needful. Meditation is impossible without memorization.
 - Trust it (vs. 42). We trust the Bible about everything, because it is right about everything (vs. 128). It is true and can be trusted wholly. To argue with the Bible is to argue with God. We test every other book by what God says.
 - Obey it (vss. 1-8). To keep the word is to obey it, to walk in its commandments. Satan knows the word, but he will not obey it. If we know God's truth and fail to obey it, we are only fooling ourselves.
 - Declare it (vss. 13-26). As we obey, we should share. Mark 16:15 commands us to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (cf. Acts 8:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Conclusion

- Most every civilization known to man, especially our own, values education. Literacy, the ability to read and understand, is recognized by all to be of paramount importance. Paul wrote, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ..." (Ephesians 3:3-4).

- No education in worldly matters is as important as an education in God's word. No class in world history, philosophy, government or mathematics tells of God's plan to redeem man. Worldly wisdom cannot sufficiently answer the questions, "Where did I come from?", "Why am I here?" or "Where am I going?" Only a solid education in the word of God can provide the information we need to prepare for eternity.