

Psalms and Parables

Mr. Pogreba, Helena High

The Psalms

- The Book of Psalms contains 150 poems ranging from feelings of bitter anger to joyous exultation. They include: laments, battle songs, personal meditations, and stories of love.
- Were originally set to music.
- Psalms are unique in the Old Testament because they are less the history of the Hebrew people and God than the personal interaction between them.

Thematic Concerns

- The Psalms offer a retelling of the Creation story in Psalms 104. Instead of the power of the Creation story in Genesis, the reader is shown the grace of God. God is no longer depicted as an **anthropocentric** figure, but a force of the universe.

“Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created:
And thou renewest the face of the Earth.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, thou art very great;
thou art clothed with honor and majesty:
2 who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:
who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

- Consider the contrast between the God of Genesis with the God of Psalms, in both a physical and spiritual sense.

Literary Devices used in Psalms

- **Parallelism** is the repetition of words, phrases, sentences that have the same grammatical structure or that restate a similar idea. Parallelism is frequently used in literature that is read aloud, to aid in memorization and impact.

- **Antithesis** is connecting ideas that are opposite, rather than similar.

Weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning.

- **Restatement** is repetition of an entire idea in different words

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty:
neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
or in things too high for me. (Psalms 131:5)

- **Structural Parallelism** is the repetition of a word or entire sentence pattern.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; (Psalms 137:5-6)

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The New Testament

- There are 27 books in the New Testament, divided into four categories:
 - The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
 - Focused on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ
 - The Acts
 - The history of the early Christian church after the death of Christ
 - The Epistles
 - Various letters written either to individuals or to early Christian congregations. Many of these epistles expound important theological points and give insight into the developing Christian church
 - Revelation
 - The end of the Bible, associated with the final battle between Good and Evil
 - Thematically links back to Genesis and the Creation story
 - Serves to strengthen tie between Old and New Testaments
 - Visionary text, associated with John the Apostle
- Thematic Concerns
 - The New Testament focuses more on the power of redemption and forgiveness than the focus on judgment (The Law) from the Old Testament.
 - Offers a more hopeful vision for believers, focused on the power of redemption through personal action/faith
 - Establishes belief in a new **covenant** between God and his people in the form of Christ, who is fully God and fully human.
 - Connection to Hindu avatars?

The Parables

- **Literary Terms and Devices**
 - **Parables** are brief and often simple narratives that illustrates a moral or religious lesson.
 - **Allegories** are narratives that serve as an extended metaphor. Allegories are written in the form of fables, parables, poems, stories, and almost any other style or genre. The main purpose of an allegory is to tell a story that has characters, a setting, as well as other types of symbols that have both literal and figurative meanings. The difference between an allegory and a symbol is that an allegory is a complete narrative that conveys abstract ideas to get a point across, while a symbol is a representation of an idea or concept that can have a different meaning throughout a literary work ([A Handbook to Literature](#))

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- **The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)**
 - Focuses on one of the major themes of Luke, the unconditional love of God
 - The father's joy at the return of his wasteful son is symbolically linked to the love God has for his people, no matter how bad their actions may have been.
- **The Sower (Mark 4:1-20)**
 - Christ's argument to his apostles to spread the word of God.
 - He connects the idea of spreading seed across the world to the idea of spreading his message. While some of the seeds may be lost, or never come to life, sowing may lead to unexpected success and the message taking root.
- **The Talents (Matthew 25:14-31)**
 - Talents refer to a significant sum of money, and the story addresses the failure of one servant to make the most of the talents given to him.
 - Thematically, the parable advises readers to make the most of their gifts—physical, spiritual, etc. Instead of storing away their abilities and fortunes, each person should do something with them.