

EXEGETING PSALMS
Seminar - Psalm 113
Poprad, 27th March 2015

OUTLINE

0. INTRODUCTION:
 1. GOALS OF EVANGELICAL EXEGESIS
 2. PSALM 113
 3. “MUSICAL EXEGESIS”
 4. SELECTED EXEGETICAL METHODS
 5. EXEGETICAL MATRIX
 6. ELEMENTS OF GRAMMATICO-HISTORICAL EXEGESIS
 7. ELEMENTS OF LITERARY EXEGESIS
 - 7.1. PSALM GENRES:
 - 7.2. HEBREW “VERSE”
 8. ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS
 9. ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EXEGESIS
 - 9.1. AUTHOR’S MIND
 - 9.2. AUTHOR’S FEELINGS
 - 9.3. AUTHOR’S ATTITUDES
 10. FINAL REMARKS
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0. INTRODUCTION:

The Significance & Appeal of the Psalms:¹

- The book of Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament.
- The Psalms are poetry, and they appeal to the whole person in a way that prose does not
- At the heart of the psalms is the divine-human encounter
- The conversation between God and His people in the Psalms is direct, intense, intimate, and above all, honest.
- “The book of Psalms is the literary sanctuary. Like the physical sanctuary structures of the Old Testament, it offers a textual holy place where humans share their joys and struggles with brutal honesty in God’s presence.”²

¹ lfchapel.org/resources/biblestudy/Psalms%20Lesson%2020SE.pdf (23-Mar-15)

² GOLDINGAY, J. *Psalms 1-41*, Grand Rapids : Baker, 2006, p. 7.

1. GOALS OF EVANGELICAL EXEGESIS

- “I believe that the Bible is God’s Word. Therefore I must define the ultimate goal of exegesis so as to embrace the heart as well as the head. The Scriptures aim to affect our hearts and change the way we feel about God and his will. The exegete, who believes that this aim is the aim of the living God for our day, cannot be content with merely uncovering what the Scriptures originally meant.”³
- **Basic characteristics of Psalms:**
 - Name in Hebrew: praises (plural)
 - Poetry = theology poetically expressed, beauty of language, emotionality = requires emotional submission/willingness to be moved (as opposite to stoic attitude)
 - Direct communication with God = the textual holy of holies = we desire and can meet with God
 - Music = *to listen to what the original music sounded like, go to minute 14 of the Slovak MP3 at http://www.pavelhanes.sk/?page_id=281 “Ako vykladať hebrejskú poéziu“*

2. PSALM 113

[ESV] Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!

² Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore!

³ From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!

⁴ The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!

⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high,

⁶ who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

⁷ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap,

⁸ to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.

⁹ He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the LORD!

- “Psalms 113-118 constitute the Hallel (Praise) of the Jewish festivals. It appears that during the Jewish Passover meal of the first century, Psalms 113-114 were sung before the final meal blessing and Psalms 115-118 were sung after the final blessing. These were most probably the hymns that Jesus and his disciples sang in the context of their Passover (cf. Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26). The theology of these songs is directly related to the theology of both the Passover and the Lord’s Supper.”⁴
- “Ismar Elbogen traces the liturgical use of the Egyptian Hallel on Passover to a time before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. He notes that the recitation of the Hallel was common to all the pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). The order of Book V of the p. Psalms is significant. The Egyptian Hallel is followed immediately by Psalm 119. Psalm 119, the great Torah Psalm, is reflective of the Feast of Pentecost, where remembrance of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai is a key feature. Following Psalm 119 are the Songs of Ascent, which are recited at the Feast of Tabernacles.”⁵

3. “MUSICAL EXEGESIS”

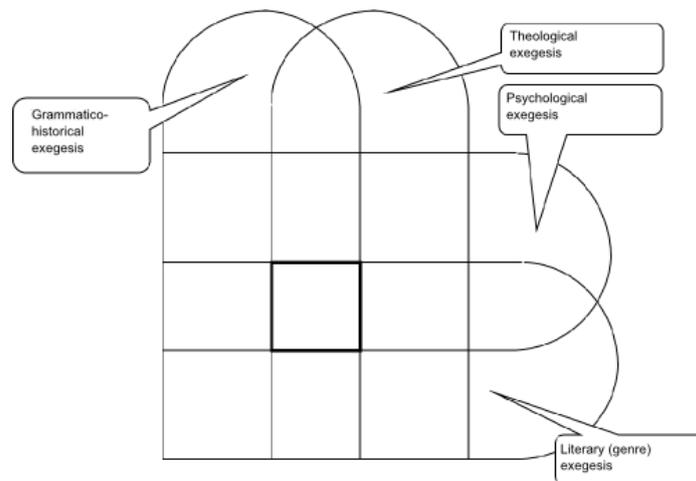
- BENZINGER – Orientals hear our harmonies as ugly din... (HAUCK Realencyclopädie)
 - You are encouraged to choose the type of music which “speaks” to your heart = what “tunes you in” (e.g. Mozart’s interpretation – the speaker’s choice/preference)

³ PIPER, J. *Biblical Exegesis*, p. 4. (www.wtsbooks.com/common/pdf_links/9780830839636.pdf 23-Mar-15)

⁴ <http://johnmarkhicks.com/2010/03/14/the-egyptian-hallel-and-the-lords-supper-psalm-113-118/> (23-Mar-15)

⁵ HAYES E. *The Unity of the Egyptian Hallel*, (www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1999_08_Hayes_Ps113_118.pdf)

4. SELECTED EXEGETICAL METHODS



- Original languages/grammar & historical context
 - Literature? /genre
- Theological questions = does the exegesis correspond? (the whole Bible in view)
- Psychological view: what the author was feeling/empathize with the author, look into his heart... carefully (NOT: implementing the science of psychology)

5. EXEGETICAL MATRIX

	AUTHOR	RECIPIENTS	ME
THINKING	1.1	1.2	1.3
FEELING	2.1	2.2	2.3
DOING	3.1	3.2	3.3

What is the author thinking, feeling and doing in the specific verse/whole Psalm?
 What are the recipients encouraged to think, feel and do?
 What does what I read do with/encourage me to think, feel and do?

6. ELEMENTS OF GRAMMATICO-HISTORICAL EXEGESIS

- **Background** = historical, geographical, religious, cultural etc.
- **Words/terms** (e.g. “Hallelujah”)
- **Syntax** = try to compare different translation for a different focus/stress (word order)
- “...the Grammatico-Historical in- method which most fully commends itself to the judgment and conscience of Christian scholars. Its fundamental principle is to gather from the Scriptures themselves the precise meaning which the writers intended to convey.”⁶
- “Because God meant to communicate truth, and because Scripture is internally consistent, the words of Scripture have only one meaning in context. There may be multiple legitimate applications of a passage of Scripture, but a passage has only one meaning in context.”⁷
- (1) the [original] words in context, (2) the worldview of the recipients

⁶ TERRY, M. *Biblical Hermeneutics*, New York : Eaton & Mains, 1890, p. 70.

⁷ ELLIOTT, P. *What Is Grammatical-Historical Interpretation & Why Is It Important?*, www.ttw2.org/articles_pdf/tq0141.pdf (24-Mar-15)

7. ELEMENTS OF LITERARY EXEGESIS

7.1. PSALM GENRES:

- various classifications
- (1) praise, (2) lament, (3) wisdom, (4) kingship...
- thefieldschurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Psalms-Genres-Chart.pdf
- abideinme.net/howtoread/psalms.pdf

Lament Psalms	
Community	12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89*, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
Individual	3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27*, 28, 31, 36*, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52*, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89*, 120, 139, 141, 142
Specialized Lament Psalms	
Penitential	6, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
Imprecatory	35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140
Thanksgiving (<i>Todah</i>) Psalms	
Community	65*, 67*, 75, 107, 124, 136*
Individual	18, 21, 30, 32*, 34, 40:1-11, 66:13-20, 92, 108*, 116, 118, 138
Specialized Thanksgiving (<i>Todah</i>) Psalms	
Salvation History	8*, 105-106, 135, 136
Songs of Trust	11, 16, 23, 27*, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131
Hymnic Psalms	
Hymn and Doxology	8*, 19:1-6, 33, 66:1-12, 67*, 95, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
Liturgical Psalms (for Public Worship)	
Covenant Songs	50, 78, 81, 89*, 132
Royal/Enthronement	2, 18, 20, 21, 29, 45, 47, 72, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 110, 144
Songs of Zion	46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
Temple Liturgies	15, 24, 68*, 82, 115, 134
Specialized Types	
Wisdom Psalms	1*, 36*, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133
Torah Poems	1*, 19:7-14, 119

*These Psalms are difficult to classify because they could fit into more than one group or are mixed types.

For the literary exegesis:

- define the genre
- divide the psalm into parts according to main ideas (e.g. first praise, then lament etc.)
- name the parts
- think about the reasons (theological and spiritual) for individual parts and their succession
- compare your thinking and emotional process with the author's

7.2. HEBREW "VERSE"

- basics of parallelism exposition – a "thought rhyme"

8. ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS

- Wisdom → Abraham → Moses → Kingdom (Messianic psalms) → "spiritual exegesis"
- parallel scriptures (*scriptura sui ipsius interpres*)
- doctrines of systematic theology ("dogmatic")
- Hannah: **1 Samuel 2:4-8** The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. ⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ⁶ The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. ⁸ He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.
- Mary: **Luke 1:51** "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵² "He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.
 - We need to keep in mind difference between the OT and the NT = what made the OT people excited; the fact they didn't know Jesus yet etc. (see the following table)

Old T FOCUS/FOCI	COMMON	New T FOCUS/FOCI
Israel (People of God)	Election, Sovereignty	Jesus (Messiah)
Temple	Grace, Covenant	Church
Land	Salvation, Victory	Gospel
Law	Life with God	The Holy Spirit

For the theological exegesis:

- Choose the key theological terms and explain their meaning
- Define the theological focus of the psalm (wisdom, Abraham – the promise, Moses – the law, Messianic psalm)
- Find parallel biblical passages (Bible interpreting itself)
- Find and choose the New testament doctrines corresponding with the psalm

9. ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EXEGESIS

- warning before “fortune-telling”

9.1. AUTHOR’S MIND

- his/her personality, background, situation, theology, momentary disposition...

9.2. AUTHOR’S FEELINGS

- see EDWARDS *Religious Affections* – find there a “catalogue” of religious feelings and use the appropriate ones in your “psychological” exegesis

9.3. AUTHOR’S ATTITUDES

- "attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor"⁸

For the psychological exegesis:

- Choose the poetically most powerful words/terms and define their emotional content; name the emotions included in the psalm and match them with the words/sentences/verses.
- Examine the “points of friction” = where you don’t harmonize with author’s attitudes or emotions/you can’t find a way to identify with his feelings
- Spend time meditating and communicating with the LORD about what you experience emotionally in your relationship with Him.

10.FINAL REMARKS

- Begin with entering the “climate” of the Psalm – genre, poetry, music...
- Decide whether it can be used under the New Covenant directly, or indirectly.
- Work on you mind/attitudes/feelings to adjust them to those of the psalmist (viewed through the NT).

⁸ ALBARRACIN, D. – JOHNSON, B.T. – ZANNA, M. P. *Handbook of Attitudes*, London : Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005, p. 4.