

Echoes of Jesus in Psalm 119

Psalm 119

Theme: The word of God reveals the person and work of God – and the desperate need for God.

Thinking Through the Text:

Consider reading through Psalm 119 as if you are looking at the most impressive diamond you have ever laid eyes on. At the first read, simply take in the overall beauty and brilliance of this psalm – just be in awe. Then, as you re-read the text consider taking some of the approaches below to examine the “color, clarity, and cut” of the text. As you gaze upon this rare gem from several different “angles” and under different types of “lighting,” you will quickly begin to see that this text shines its light on you. Rather than being caught up in mere academic exercise, you will no doubt be captivated by the Author and begin seeing echoes of Jesus through this entire psalm – enjoy!

The Simeon Trust Method – an exercise to help us understand how the literary style and structure of the text will reveal the author’s emphasis, thus equipping us to first hear God’s word to the original audience before we filter it through the gospel and make any corporate or personal application to our own lives.

- 1) What did the text mean to the original audience? How would they have read or sung this psalm? How would they have heard it? How would they have responded to it?
- 2) How does the gospel shape our reading and understanding of this psalm? How does our theological framework under the New Covenant help us navigate this psalm?
- 3) What if we bypassed the original audience’s understanding and application of the text and ran straight to the gospel? How might we spiritualize this psalm?
- 4) What if we hear what the text meant to the original audience, but bypassed the gospel? How might we moralize the text or create a legalistic application from this psalm?

A Devotional Study Method – an exercise to help us engage with what the human author is expressing in this psalm and understand how the original audience may have connected with it corporately and personally. As you read the psalm in one sitting, consider the following in each of the 22 stanzas:

- 1) **God’s Word:** What words (working synonyms) does the psalmist use to identify God’s word? How does the psalmist describe God’s word and his feelings toward it?
- 2) **God:** In what ways does the psalmist describe the nature, character, or attributes of God? How does this understanding of God shape his view of God’s word?

- 3) **Psalmist:** What is the psalmist feeling and expressing throughout this poem-prayer? How does he view himself in relation to God and his word? How does he view himself in relation to his enemies?

The “Top and Tail” Method - an exercise of reading the beginning and ending of a work in order to see what connection, complement, contrast, or conclusion the author uses to reinforce his emphasis to the audience.

- 1) Read “ALEPH” (v.1-8) - How does this stanza set the stage for the entire psalm? What stands out?
- 2) Read “TAW” (v.169-176) - How does this stanza connect, complement, contrast, or bring conclusion to what the author began in the first stanza?