

Class 6: Poetic & Wisdom Literature

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A. What is Wisdom Literature?

Okay, so let's jump right in and ask ourselves, what is Wisdom Literature? Okay, the definition for wisdom literature in the Bible is this. I'll read it to you slowly. So, if you want a copy you can do so. Wisdom Literature is essentially instructions for successful living. Okay. Wisdom Literature is essentially or basically, instructions for successful living. So, Wisdom Literature, teachers, you and I, on a very practical basis, how to live well. Okay, as you can see, the moment we talk about living well, practical, successful living is already very different from what we normally grapple with in church, would be spiritual truths, right? You have to think about what God is saying, what is the Kingdom of God about. How to Walk in the Spirit, and you have to grapple with these truths that we don't normally deal with and think about, because we are sinners separated from God and do not naturally think the thoughts of God. So that's why God gave us a lot of truths in the Bible that are spiritual to correct our thinking. But there is this category called Wisdom Literature, that also teaches us how to live successfully on Earth. Practical wisdom. All right. So, this is a very different genre of writing, in Wisdom Literature.

i. Proverbial Wisdom

So, turn with me, for example, to Proverbs. Okay, I like you to turn to Proverbs chapter 15. And you'll see a very simple, very simple proverb that teaches you how to live successfully, how to live well. Proverbs chapter 15, verse one. It's not a story. It's a short saying that makes you think. And it says this, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Regardless of what culture, you come from. This is true, regardless of what spiritual condition you're in, that if you speak angry words, you'll get an angry response. Right? It doesn't matter whether you're talking to a Christian or not. But if you answer gently, softly, without all this emotional negativism involved, then it tends to be more peaceful in your interaction. Okay, so a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. So, this is an example of Wisdom, Literature. Proverbs, The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is filled with this short saying. Now, what happens when you come to Western Literature, and there's so many short sayings? Well, if you read a story, you want to read as fast as you can, to grasp the gist of what is happening and reach the conclusion of the matter in the story, right? Just like you watch a movie, you want to see the end and oh actually end up like this. Then you walk away, and you start to think about the story. You need to pause. If you read through Proverbs, one chapter the way, you read

a chapter in the Gospels, for example, you are going to miss almost everything it's saying. Simply because they are short sayings intended to make you stop and think. That is Proverbial Wisdom.

ii. Speculative Wisdom

Now the next thing we're going to look at under the Wisdom Literature is Speculative Wisdom. Now there are two other books in the Bible under this category. The first is Ecclesiastes. It's also classified under Wisdom Literature. Now for some of you who have read it, you will say why would that be wise? It's so bleak and sorrow, who is always saying vanity of vanities. It's like almost no hope when you read Ecclesiastes. That's true, because this particular Wisdom Literature has a purpose. I'll explain to you later. The other one that is also under Wisdom Literature is a Job. Now, if you think Ecclesiastes is bleak, Job is scary, right? Think about it, you have a man, a righteous man, a godly man. And in the very first chapter, for reasons you cannot fully understand, he lost all his properties. He lost all his children. And in the next chapter, he lost his health. And he looked like some really, really severe case of sickness, with boils and sores from the top of his head to the foot on his feet. You will be like, my! After chapter two, you want to stop and say, better don't be too righteous. Or you may say, oops, well, don't get into a battle between God and Satan. Because you know what? You are the one who will suffer. So, you will miss the whole point of it, because you're like, this is scary. How would you call that Wisdom Literature? it is so awful to think of the plight of Job, but yet it is classified under Wisdom Literature, and we will show you later. I'll show you later why is it so. A few things to note about this Speculative Wisdom. Ecclesiastes is a monologue. Monologue means that one person talking. Now, Job is a dialogue. That means after the first two chapters of the narrative, it launches into a conversation, whereby Job was answering his three friends in three cycles of conversation. So, there's a dialogue going on. Now, why do we consider Ecclesiastes and Job? Wisdom Literature. Because, instead of telling you, what is the right thing to do. These two books, they are trying to dwell into the problems such as the meaning of existence, and the relationship between God and man. They were exploring the thoughts that Proverbs is suggesting, that if you just do this, it'll be well. But it's that so?

So, turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter one, verses 16 to 17, to see how Speculative Wisdom works in the book of Ecclesiastes. In verse 16 of Ecclesiastes, chapter one, it says, I said in my heart, I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had a great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. So, he's saying, you know, I try to think through all these issues about life. But you know, as much as I try, I find that it's empty. Then the question is, why is it empty? If wisdom is all you need, if knowledge is all you need, then why is it empty? So, the book brings you on a journey with the author of Ecclesiastes. So, the whole approach here is no longer telling you do this, it'll be well. Think about this. Think about that. That's Proverbs. Okay. In Ecclesiastes it's like a journey, and you're going on a journey with this person, called the preacher, and he is exploring the meaning of life with you. Of course, he has his conclusion at the end, but it's Speculative Wisdom. Now let's look at Job. Turn with me in the book of Job, to chapter 16.

09:10

Or rather, let's start with Job chapter 15. Just to take a look at how this book operates. In Job chapter 15, verses one to six, you'll find that there is Eliphaz the Temanite, who answered and said to Job.

Remember, they're having a conversation. He said, should the wise man in verse two of chapter 15, answer with windy knowledge and fill his belly with the East wind? Should he argue in unprofitable talk or in words with which he can do no good. But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. Verse six, your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you. So here you have someone charging Job with sin, as the reason for his sufferings. So, you see that three friends came along, and they were questioning along with Job, why is he suffering? Speculative Wisdom? So, you see, wisdom is not something in the Bible presented to us, as you know it because your IQ is high. You know it because you read the Bible well, alone. Yes, that is a starting point. You study the Word, you understand the truth, you apply this up to a point, you will see that it leads to successful living. But life is not so simple. So, these two books come along, and they begin to question why, how? When this happened, how are you going to understand it? Well, Eliphaz the Temanite conclude that it has to do with Job's sin.

Now in Job chapter 16, turn with me to the next chapter. Job chapter 16, verses one to five. You see Job answering and said, I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are you all. Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place: I could join words together against you and shake my head at you. I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain. So, what is Job saying here? Job is saying, if you are in my shoes, and I am in your shoes. In other words, if Eliphaz, you are the one suffering, I can say the same thing. But now I'm the one suffering. What do you know about me? Why are you so sure that I have sin? Can you only by observation of my circumstances conclude that I must be wrong? To Eliphaz it's like, of course. To Job, he says, no, I have not sin. Based on what do you accuse me? You're just merely talking, you're merely speculating. So, you see, the whole dialogue goes on this way. Because they're trying to explore deeper into the issues of life, of man's relationship with God. As they go through the different trials and difficulties that they are facing. So, what can we say about Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. We can say that Proverbs contains the moral substance of true wisdom. That's the starting point. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So, you start there, but Job and Ecclesiastes are the intellectual explorations of men, who are seeking to understand the fundamental issues of their existence. They're trying to find meaning in Ecclesiastes. And in Job, they're trying to understand why is a person suffering. And they are helping to balance out the whole idea of wisdom in the Bible. While it is simple to teach, when you live it out, you have to wrestle with various issues before you can come to the right conclusion.

Now, so how do we understand how to read these 3 books in the Wisdom Literature? Now, it's good to start with Proverbs, because Proverbs presents you with a straightforward case. There is a moral starting point. What's the moral starting point? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Okay, and it continue to teach you along that path, what is the straight road? What is the right road? And what is the pathway to successful living before God? So, it teaches you the right things. Integrity, discipline, justice, common sense, hard work, watch your tongue, etc. And generally, it's true in life. If you observe these rules, you stay out of trouble. You stay on the right path, you have a successful life before God on earth. Now with Proverbs as your starting point for Wisdom Literature, what happens is, Job and Ecclesiastes come alongside, and they test the claims of wisdom in Proverbs. How do they test it? Well, the book of Ecclesiastes passed the wisdom of Proverbs through the lens of skepticism. So, when

you read Ecclesiastes please, don't take word for word without thinking. Yeah, life is so empty. So therefore, let's just be miserable. You know. Didn't I read in the book of Ecclesiastes, that you need to come before God and be very fearful of him. Because if you don't pay your vows, you know, He's going to judge you. And then you walk away without thinking. Well understand where Ecclesiastes is coming from. He's testing everything. He's testing the whole idea of being happy with wealth. He's testing the whole idea of just having outward religion, and so on and so forth. And what did he conclude? He concluded at the end of the whole book, fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of men.

And so, it links back to Proverbs. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In other words, if you just have wisdom, for wisdom sake. If you just have knowledge for knowledge sake, and in all that you seek, you have no relationship with God, you have no fear of God, then it will be empty. You will have empty religion, you will have empty wealth, you will have empty knowledge, because I have tried it all. That's what the author of Ecclesiastes is saying. So, it's testing wisdom. Is it wisdom, just being clever? Is it just being wise, is it having good IQ or whatever? He said, no, I've tried all this, and it doesn't work. You need to fear God. So, after testing, he made the same conclusion that Proverbs declared from the very beginning. So, Ecclesiastes test the wisdom, claims of Proverbs through the lens of skepticism. Job, on the other hand, test the claims of wisdom through his own sufferings. So, Job is coming alongside of Proverbs, and he's saying, you know what, I have lived a righteous life. Correct, so righteous and so blameless, that God not Job, God himself pointed out, Job to the tempter, Satan and say, who is like Job, a righteous man. That was God's commentary on Job.

So, if a man fear God, live a righteous life, does it mean that it will always be without suffering? Is that the solution? Be wise, fear God, be spiritual, and all problems will flee. Job gives you the other angle, that you know what, there is something beyond all that, that you need to realize a man still needs to keep learning and growing. He doesn't know everything, God is still greater than all, and you need to trust God. And when you trust God, that means you fear Him, you will eventually come out with even greater wisdom. Notice that through it all, there was a lot of suffering. Notice that at the end of it all, there was even greater blessings. So, you'll notice that the fear of God, the trust in God, that Job has, that he sustained, proved to be true at the beginning, and also at the end of his life. But it doesn't mean that in between, is all just prosperity, health, wealth, happiness, all good because you love God. There can be sufferings. But the sufferings do not end in sorrow, because the fear of God the trust in God, eventually, like the book of Proverbs says, is a strong tower, and those who run to Him will be saved.

18:50

So, you see, Job test it, from suffering. Ecclesiastes, test it, to skepticism. And together, they're saying, yes, there are permutations, there are differences. There are journeys, that seem to deviate from what Proverbs claimed but eventually the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So, this is how these three books of Wisdom Literature works together.

B. Main Features of Wisdom Literature

i. Comparison (Pr 17:1)

Now let's see the main features of Wisdom Literature. Okay? This is just to help you understand when you read slowly to know what is going on. Number one, let's turn to Proverbs chapter 17, verse 1. Some of it you will turn to, some of it you won't. It's very common in Wisdom Literature to use comparison. So, in Proverbs 17, verse 1, it says, better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife. So, it's telling you that even if you have just a piece of bread. If all you have is a loaf of Gardenia at home, and that's all you have for a meal, it's better than if you have lots of great food, but a lot of under currents, and a lot of tension, a lot of stress and family relations. Well, so that is a comparison. Which matters more? Food abundance or good relations? So, this is an example. So that's why you need to read slowly, you see, when you read the book of Proverbs. Because you need to think about whether they are comparing, contrasting or doing something else.

ii. Numerical Sequences (Pr 6:16-19)

Number two, numerical sequence. Proverbs chapter 6 verse 16 to 19. It says here, there are six things that the Lord hate and seven that are an abomination to Him. You'll be like, Wow, that is so cool. Because of the way, it's being said. It's like He said something spiritual, something mystical here. If I find the seven, is this the da Vinci Code, you know, is that some conspiracy? No, it's just a literary device. Okay. When I say, I want to tell you seven things, listen to the first six. Immediately you listen to the first six and ask, you know, my, what is the seven, right? So just imagine when they taught this Proverbs, a lot of people were learning through listening. So, when they use numerical sequence and devices, they're helping you make your mind focus. Okay, there are seven things I need to pay attention to. And here's the first six. So, he goes on and says, haughty eyes, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who brings out lies, and one who sow discord among brothers. So immediately through this device, you know the seven items. But they use a six and a seven to get your attention, to pay attention. Now, this device will not work as well for those who are reading the Proverbs. You know why? Because when you are reading, you know, your Bible won't run away. You know that you don't have to pay such careful attention. So, when you read it, you say why like that? So, troublesome, just tell me 1, 2, 3, 4. If you see 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 easier, right? But think, they are listening. When you are listening, and they talk like that it helps, it aids memory. Okay, so keep that in mind.

iii. Alliteration and Acrostic Patterns (Ps 37; Pr 31:10-31)

Next, alliteration and acoustic acrostic patterns. Now this one I can't show you here. In fact, I find it very hard to show you because the Bible was written in Hebrew. So, you turn to Proverbs 30, right? If you turn to Proverbs 31, sorry, you won't see any pattern. You won't see any acrostic because we don't know Hebrew. Even you open the Hebrew Bible, you'll see already, you'll also catch no ball. Because we don't read Hebrew. But if you read Hebrew, then you're going to see the Hebrew alphabets out there. Okay, so I can't show you this, but just know that for the Hebrew listeners and learners, this acrostic pattern will be like the A, B, C, D, E or the three C's, you must know. And in preaching, you

know, like with Pastor Jason, he tends to put everything in C's or B's or D's or whatever, right? That is the same device that the Hebrew poetic writers, Wisdom Literature writers, they also use.

iv. Riddles (Jdg 14:12ff)

Now riddles. Riddles would be for example, Samson's riddle. Again, for sake of time, I won't turn there but just remember that this is another style of writing. Okay, in giving a riddle.

v. Fables (Ezek 17:3ff)

Fables would be telling a story and there are some references there that you can go and check out.

vi. Parables (2 Sam 12:1-4)

Parables, I'm sure you're familiar. It's like a story within a narrative. Jesus uses parables a lot. And allegory.

vii. Allegories (Is 5:1-7)

Allegories would be something that is not quite true, but it parallels. Okay, parallels a truth in our real life. Now, this one we'll turn to because it's very interesting. I want you to turn with me to Isaiah chapter 5 verses 1 to 7. Allegories, okay? It's not true that Israel is a grapevine. Physically, Israel is a nation, it has 12 tribes. Okay, but in poetic writing in Wisdom, Literature, an allegory means that a grapevine represents Israel, or Israel is represented by a grapevine. And so, if you see over here, it starts with, in verse 1. Let me sing for my beloved, my love song concerning his vineyard. So now the whole nation of Israel is represented by the vineyard. This happened in Wisdom Literature and Poetic Writing. My beloved has a vineyard on a very fertile hill. So, you notice that immediately, you are not thinking about people. You're not thinking about tribes, you're not thinking about the cities. You're not thinking about the tempo, etc. But you are thinking of a vineyard, representing the people of God. And if you read on to verse 7, you will read about how God came to his vine, and wanted to look for fruits, but He did not find any. This is known to be the background in the Old Testament, against which Jesus declared in John 15, that He is the true vine. So, when you read Isaiah chapter 5, verse 1 to 7, you see the failure of Israel to bring forth fruit.

When you read John 15, you see Jesus claiming that He is the one who will truly bring forth fruit. And in the light of Israel's failure, you will then understand why Jesus said that those who are branches, they are expected to bring forth fruit, much fruit, and more fruit. And the vine dresser, who is the Father, who sang out this song in Isaiah 5 is going to prune. So, when we understand this allegory, then you will understand that in John 15, when Jesus said, I am the true vine, you are the branches. He was speaking for the first time to Jews who fully understand what he was referring to, because it's in their prophetic writings, and the expectations are not unreasonable. Today as Christians we read, sometimes you think, fruit, not enough more fruit. Still not enough much fruit. What a hard life we live as Christians. No, in the allegory of the vine it's perfectly normal. So, it's all woven into the cultural into the

allegorical realities, involved in the history of Israel. So, all that will take a long time to go into but I just want to highlight this to you that in Western Literature, this is what we are looking at.

C. What is Poetic Literature?

Now, let's move on. What is Poetic Literature? Much of the Old Testament is poetic in spirit and structure. We often find passages of elevated poetry, and use of powerful imagery. One way in which you can tell quickly if the scripture is poetic is by looking at your English Bible and you see the paragraphing in the book of Psalms. It should look a little different. Then you will know that this is poetic. If you read even in Deuteronomy, or you read in the prophetic book, suddenly the structure or the writing have more spacing, then it should alert you that you're looking at a piece of poetry.

D. Main Features of Poetic Literature

i. Figures, metaphors & hyperbole

Now, what are the main features of Poetic Literature, like the Psalms in the Old Testament? Turn with me now to Psalm 97. Here is an example of figures, metaphors and hyperboles that are extremely common in Hebrew poetry. Okay? Figures, metaphors and hyperboles that are extremely common in Hebrew poetry. What happens is when you read poetry, it's supposed to bring about a picture in your mind, and stirs certain intense emotions when you think about it. That's the whole point of Hebrew poetry. Okay, so let's look at Psalm 97. The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. You notice the number of pictures that thrown at you. It's not just about the Lord reigns, it's about the whole earth rejoicing. Then it talks about coastlands. So, it shifts your thought from the earth. Maybe you thought of the globe. Maybe you thought of the world map. But it then brings your mind to coastlands. All those villages, towns, cities that stay by the sea. Let those people be glad. And then it gives you another shift to a new picture of clouds and thick darkness, surrounding God. And then you talk about righteousness and justice, which are values. But then they become like the foundation of His throne. So, you're constantly being bombarded in your mind with different images.

30:33

That is why when you read Hebrew poetry, when you read Psalms, again, you got to read slowly. You're not reading a story. You got to slow down and think about the pictures that are being thrown at you as you read. Because that is how it is communicating the story. Verse 3, fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around. Whoa, okay. His lightning's light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. Suddenly you are now shifted in your thought. There's joy, there is rejoicing. Now there's fire and there's lightning. What is going on here? Well, it seems like there is a display of great power in what is happening in the natural world. Yet this is transferred now to how God reigns. Notice how the first phase began, The Lord reigns, right? It's talking about the rule of God. It's about His sovereignty. It's about His control. And it's giving us a vivid picture of how powerful He is. So, His lightning lights up the world verse 4. The earth sees and trembles.

Verse 5, the mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. Okay, so you see, in Hebrew poetry, when you read the Psalms. When you are looking at these poetic structures, you are looking for the thoughts, that it communicates. The images that are being conjured. And you

need to imagine along with the Psalmist. A very famous Psalm you'll be familiar with is, the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Obviously, it's not trying to give you a story of how shepherding life takes place. But in a short 6 verse in Psalm 23. It's throwing up images after images of a pastoral leadership of a shepherd. I don't mean pastoring a church, I mean shepherding sheep. So, you can imagine for the Hebrew people who are familiar with these pictures, when that psalm is written not to city folk like us. City folks like us must go back and read about how shepherds shepherd their sheep. Okay, we therefore read this author, who write about how a shepherd looks at Psalm 23. And then you're like, wow, there's so many wonderful truths here. Well, because they're throwing out images from the natural world, from natural life, and throwing those images into your mind to communicate spiritual truth. So, figures, metaphors and hyperboles are extremely common.

ii Couplets

Number 2, couplets. The normal unit of Hebrew verse is the couplet of two parallel lines. Turn with me to Psalms 27 verse 1. You will notice that poetry evidently had a lot of thought given to its writing. That's why it takes a lot of thinking, to unpack its richness. That's why you need to read slowly and think. Just now I was telling you about images. Now I'm telling you about couplets or parallel lines. Psalm 27, verse 1, The Lord is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Do you notice that the first two lines parallel the next two lines and they together wish to reinforce why you should not be afraid? So, it's not just telling you, hey don't be scared. They're not telling you a story like Jesus walked on the water and calmed the waves and the sea. Therefore, you don't need to be afraid. It's throwing out to you in a repeated form, who God is, who He should be in your life. He's your light. Think about light. He's your salvation. Think about what it means to be delivered. He's your stronghold. Think about what it means to be in a safe place. So, when you connect those three thoughts together, remember metaphors and then now with couplets because they are repeated. They reinforced the message of why you should not be afraid. But you see, if you just read quickly, then you tend to miss it. Because you didn't pause to think about what it means to have light. What it means to have deliverance or salvation. What it means to have a strong hold in your life.

iii. Meter is absent

Now, this third point on poetry is very important for both English and Chinese poetry readers to take note. Meter is missing. What does it mean? Meter is missing. You see, in a lot of English poetry, when you talk about poem. The first thing most people think about who read English poem is they think of rhyme, right? For example, what child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping. So you think of the meter. Even our last Good Friday video clip has rhyme and meter built into it and you say wow, so cool, right? Because it seems to have this poetic element into this English. Okay, a lot of songs you sing. The old hymn, especially, they all have all these things built in. Okay, Silent night, holy night etc. All has meter and rhyme built in. Even Chinese poetry. Right? Can you think of a very simple, basic Chinese poem that everybody knows? I can think of one. Even got Hokkien or English version. Are you ready? Chuang chien ming ye kwang... Y'all heard that before? Right? And then the English translation? Bed front moon bright, bright. You see how our mind work. We think of meter, we think of rhyme. I want you to know that Hebrew poetry has no concern for meter or rhyme. That's why you can't

see it in Psalm. This one call poem? Where's the meter? Where's the rhyme? No. Hebrew poetry is poetic in thoughts. Can you follow? Stop looking for meter, stop looking for rhyme. That's English or Chinese poetry. Hebrew poetry is consumed with thoughts, images. The things that are highlighted to you before. Okay. So, when you understand that, you will realize that hey, actually, that is also poetry, because it is not communicating through a story. It is throwing out pictures after pictures to strengthen, intensify and communicate the truth. So now with that in mind, you are going to see that in Hebrew poetry.

iv. Parallelism

a. Synonymous (Ps 19:1)

Because it wants to communicate a lot of thoughts, it's going to use the next item called parallelism a lot. It doesn't have much concern about meter or rhyme. It's not trying to make sure that the word sounds the same. But it wants to intensify its images to you through parallelism. So first, let's look at Psalm 19 verse 1, where it talks about synonymous parallelism. This is when a thought expressed in the first part is repeated in the second part in different but same way. In different but equivalent manner. Okay, so you see in Psalm 19 verse 1, it says, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. So, you see, same thought here, but two different sentences to communicate two different aspects. The glory of God, how to see the glory of God. You see in His handy works, the things that He has done. The heavens here is parallel with the sky. So, he is suggesting to you just look up to the sky, just look around you and you will see the glory of God in everything he has created. That is an example of synonymous parallelism.

b. Antithetic (Pr 13:9)

Now turn with me to Proverbs 13, verse 9 and you will see how antithetic parallelism works to communicate Hebrew thoughts. Here, antithetic means that you have one idea but the second contradicts or is the opposite. So again, if you read slowly it makes you think. Okay, you told me about this, but now this is the opposite. Oh, okay. So, this is a contrast. Proverbs 13, verse 9, the light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

40:32

So, the thought here is one is the light, the other is a lamp. Okay, both produced light, equivalent. One is the righteous, the other is the wicked. Now, the very direct opposite. Now, what happens is, it's saying the righteous, the light, will rejoice. There will be joy, but the other will be snuffed out or put out, no joy. In fact, no future. So, when you stop and think about the contrast that is bringing to you, then you understand what it's trying to communicate.

c. Synthetic (Ps 3:5,6)

Now, the third way of communicating thought, in Hebrew poetic devices is synthetic parallelism. Turn with me to Psalms chapter 3, verses 5 and 6. Now what happens in synthetic parallelism is that the idea that is communicated in the first verse will be developed and completed in the subsequent verses. So just now I've showed you about parallel, right? One thought repeated and other to strengthen it.

Antithetical, one thought express, the opposite is presented to contrast it. Now you have one thought presented, and the rest of the verses develop it, that's called synthetic parallelism. Now in Psalm chapter 3, verse 5 and 6, it says, I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. So why is it that he could lay down and sleep. He says, he could lay down and sleep, because God sustained him. How did God sustained him? God sustained him by keeping him from the fear of thousands of people who are against him. So, you'll see that thought of how he could find rest. How he could have no insomnia was developed through the subsequent verses. So, the principal was given, and then the specifics were then spelled out. So, this is what we mean by synthetic parallelism. And you have to look for these things in your reading of the Psalms, in the reading of Poetic Writing in the Bible.

v. Acrostic (Ps 119)

Now, the last one Acrostic Psalm 119. Again, I mentioned earlier, acrostic, you can't quite see it in our English Bible. Whatever version you use, unless you read Hebrew, you can't quite see it. But the truth is in Psalm 119, it is actually arranged along the alphabetical order of the Hebrew alphabet. Okay, so if you have some English Bible, they will actually give you whatnot. Well, if you know Hebrew, you will like, this makes perfect sense. If you don't know Hebrew, you'll be like, what is this? Doesn't matter. Just realize that this is another way in Hebrew that they are communicating in poetry. Now, here's one more question.

E. Why poetry?

Why poetry? Now, think of the many ways we can express ourselves through our writing. Obviously, most of us prefer to express ourselves through a story. That's what we tell others all the time. We tell others what happened. Right? We come home and we tell our parents what happened in our lives today. You know, our parents, tell our children what they've encountered, and that's a very normal part of our lives. But, you know, sometimes just sharing a story doesn't quite communicate the intensity and all the emotions, the pictures in your heart and mine, it conjures. And that's where poetry comes in. Do you notice that sometimes we like to sing together as a church, we like to sing together in our family? Because when we sing together, it not only tells us a story, it has certain images and pictures, which we all align ourselves to and agree upon. And not only that, something else interesting happened. Our feelings are also moved along with those thoughts. And that is what the Bible seeks to do in its poetic structure. It's not just trying to communicate to you information. It's trying to paint pictures in your heart and mind and move your emotions towards the right response towards God, towards various issues of life that God is concerned about.

In other words, poetic structure, Wisdom Literature, moves us beyond a story. Moves us beyond a narrative, move us beyond an event. To consider what this would mean for us in our understanding of life. To move us beyond to consider how we would and should feel when these things are true in your life. So, it takes you a step beyond. Now, think of this with me, because what I'm sharing with you maybe still be a bit confusing. Let's say I talk about the cross. Let's say I talk about the Lord Jesus. And this is what I say to you. I say Jesus Christ, who never sinned, died for sinners to pay the penalty they deserve. Is that true? I guess so. Since nobody objected, right? Jesus died for our sins. Jesus who

never sin died for our sins. Well, that's true. But then you're sitting there thinking, what do you mean about that? Now turn with me to Isaiah chapter 53. And look at how the prophet Isaiah communicated this same truth with Hebrew poetry. Isaiah chapter 53. You'll notice that over here, he is not telling you just a story, or giving you a statement of fact. He is using various thoughts to drive home a picture and move your feelings to engage with the reality of the fact.

And so, in Isaiah, chapter 53, verses 5 to 7. This is what the prophets say. But he was pierced for our transgressions. Now, don't you think the word pierced for our transgressions is a lot more vivid and pointed than Jesus died for our sins? I mean, Jesus for our sins is really bad. I mean, why should He? But when you use the word, pierced for our transgressions. Now it went a little beyond. It is trying to evoke in you and I a sense of the pain He suffered. He was crushed for our iniquities. Now not just oh, he died. That's it. No, think about it. Think about his death, he was pierced. And the next phrase, parallel, remember, crushed. So, He didn't go out there happily, and just hung there on the cross. And then three days later, happily rose again. Not that kind of dying. It's not an easy-going deal. He's trying to communicate to us the agony, the suffering that Jesus endured. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. So again, it's trying to move us emotionally. Can you see the intent of the prophet here? They were saying, He just didn't die for your sins, like, you know, no big deal. You realize that all that he suffered is what brought peace to you. And with His wounds, we are healed. So, He's asking you to turn now your gaze to those weeping, to those sufferings and think about what price Jesus paid in order for you to have healing.

So, this is going beyond a simple fact already. This is trying to engage you beyond the facts with images to help you understand the reality of the crucifixion, of how it looks like. If you really think about it. That's why you need to slow down. You need to think about the Hebrew thought, about the images. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to our own way. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Just now when we say, you know, Jesus died for our sins, ya I agree, I'm a sinner. So, you are also a sinner. We are all sinners, so how? It's like no big deal. But now there's a picture of our sin, all we like sheep have turn astray. You see, when you are in that shepherding community, a sheep that has gone astray, is going to fall sick. It's going to get lost, and it's eventually going to rot in his own fur and die. That is what it means for a sheep to go astray. Now, when you think about oh, yeah, so I sin, no longer no big deal. Right? It's like, yeah, you sin, I sin, everybody sin. So, we all sin, what's the big deal? Well, Jesus died for my sins, good. It's no longer a matter of fact that doesn't matter. Or yeah, I heard it before already. He's trying to tell you, think about your sins. Think about how your sin caused you to not find the right path home. How it costs you to come down with diseases, with so much pain and suffering, and no one is coming to your rescue. And you're going to rot in your very own skin, and eventually die, and be separated from your shepherd. And yet, because of these sins, although we have turned to our own way, the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Verse 7, He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opens, not his mouth. So again, we see a different picture here now. Now the picture of the sheep is no longer us, who have gone astray. Now, the picture of the sheep is the Savior, who is going to be judged and accused of crimes He did not commit. He is going to be led like a sheep to the shearers in order to be executed, and yet He was silent. So, there is a moving picture of sheeps that have gone astray. And we deserve to die. Then

there's another ship, who don't deserve to die. And yet it is going intentionally, purposefully without complaining, to give up its life. And this is what the Hebrew poem in the book of Isaiah here 53 is trying to communicate. So, do you see why you need to slow down, you need to read slowly. Think about whether it's having a contrast, whether it's strengthening the thought, whether it is enhancing, intensifying the emotions.

You need to think and go with the flow of Hebrew poetry. You know, the good thing about Hebrew poetry is this. If you study English or Chinese poetry, maybe you need to learn rhyme and meter and all that is like way over the head for most people. Right? But when you read Hebrew poetry, because it majors on thought, on images, on pictures, it will throw at you. It doesn't matter what language you read your Bible in. English, Chinese, you know. Indonesian, Malay, you know. Whatever language because the same thoughts can be conveyed. And then you will know what exactly is an inspired author trying to tell you about God and His will for your life. But the end impact is this. You will come away with, if you think about it, a more vivid, colorful, understanding of the spiritual truths contained in Wisdom literature, and the Psalms. And more than that, if you really dwell on it, you're going to be moved in your emotions, to how God is trying to tell you about His love, His holiness, His righteousness, and His redemption. So, practical exercise, Psalm 1. Now, if you look at the time, we have 2:30. So I ask you to be good boys and girls, men and women, to go home and practice. All right, observe, interpret, apply. Just take this page, go back, sit down. Don't ask yourself, what is the story? What's the plot, etc.? Ask yourself, what is the thought? Is it being repeated? Is it being contrasted? Is it being developed? What is it trying to tell me? I've walked through Isaiah 53 with you already. Try it and see what it does to your own soul. To your own reading of the Scripture, as you observe, interpret, and apply with your understanding of Wisdom Literature, and Poetic Writings that you have gained today. All right, so let me pray for all of you. And we will dismiss the class after the word of prayer.

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the amazing way you have written your word. Sometimes we may think that it's all just the same. But it's not. Understanding how you've written your word in different parts. Learning to slow down and think about what you're saying, is going to help us reap great profit for our own souls. So, I pray for all those who are gathered here today, because they are hungry for your word. They want to know how to read and study for themselves. I ask that with this tools that they have been introduced to, you will guide them in their study of Wisdom Literature, and the Poetic Writings to help them develop the mind of Christ, as they consider all the images that you are conveying to our hearts, to teach us to love you, to obey you and to follow you as we should. So, Father, bless this to your people, help them to be fruitful in their studies, because we ask this now in Jesus name, Amen.