

MSB242

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE POETIC NATURE OF THE BIBLE

By Mike Walko

A poem is an artistic form of impassioned feeling or thought often expressed in lofty language. The word "poem" itself is derived from the Greek **poiema** and the verb form is **poiein** which means to make (produce by design). *Poiema* is used in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. . . ." In Scripture, the "poet" (*Gk-poietes*, Acts 17:28) is usually a prophet, one who tells the Word of God.

This way of writing assumes different forms in different cultures. While words rhyme in much of English poetry, parallelism marks Hebrew poetry; an idea in one line is repeated in the next line, but expressed by other words. For example, in Psalm 147: 12 we find, "**Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion.**" Here "LORD" and "Jerusalem" in the first half of the verse correspond to "God" and "Zion" in the second. Similarly, there is "**Praise ye the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights**" in Psalm 148: 1.

Although the words do not rhyme, one might say the thoughts they express do. The parallelism might be an antithesis, as in Proverbs 14:34: "**Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people,**" "sin" being the antithesis of righteousness.

God often works parallelism into history. This is indicated in Isaiah 41:22, where it teaches us to consider former things so that we may know the latter end of them. In other words, when we take a present situation and link it with an event in the past. This may be seen in the prophetic words of Isaiah 7:14. Here, Isaiah was given a sign for King Ahaz about the birth of a certain child. That child was born in chapter 8, but seven hundred years later, Matthew relates that prophecy to the virgin birth of the Lord (Matt. 1:23). This completed the poetic nature of that particular prophecy. This idea is also expressed in Ecclesiastes 1:9.

This may also be the case in Hosea 11:1; God talks about Israel as a child being called out of Egypt. This was the "former thing." The latter-end and fulfillment of this is found in Matthew 2:14-15 when the Lord Jesus, Himself, was brought up out of Egypt. In a similar way we might say that the Lord's transfiguration in Matthew 17:2 is an adaptation of Ecclesiastes 8:1.

Poetic history can also be seen in the story of the prophet Hosea, who was told to take a wife who would be unfaithful and then woo her back and restore their relationship again (Hosea 1:2). This corresponds with God's covenant relationship with the nation of Israel, as they would for a time become unfaithful until He again brings them back into their land under the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31, Ezek. 34:13). The Lord Jesus showed Himself to be the long-predicted Messiah of Israel by fulfilling the law and the prophets in that He was born in Bethlehem, and had existence in God even before His birth (Micah 5:2). He would live a perfect life according to the law (Psa. 119: 112). He suffered and died for the sins of the world (Isa. 53:1-12) and was raised from the dead (Psa. 16:10).

Many of the sayings of the Lord and teachings of the New Testament have their roots in the Old Testament prophets and are reflections of what was said by Moses and the various Old Testament prophets. These great and wise sayings include the following:

The Supreme Principle

- ◆ The Lord our God is one (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29).
- ◆ Love God with all thy heart, mind and soul (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37).
- ◆ Love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39).

The Golden Rule

◆ Do unto others whatsoever you would have them do unto you (Prov. 24:29; Matt. 7:12).

The Lord's Prayer

- ◆ Our Father who art in heaven (1 Chron. 29:10-11; Matt. 6:9).
- ◆ Hallowed be thy name (Lev. 22:32; Matt. 6:9).
- ◆ Thy kingdom come (Psa. 103:19; Matt 6:10).
- ◆ Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven (2 Chron. 6: 18; Matt. 6:10).
- ◆ Give us this day our daily bread (Exod. 16: 12; Matt. 6: 11).
- ◆ And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us (Gen 50:17- 21; Matt. 6:12).
- ◆ But deliver us from evil (Job 5:17-19; Matt. 6:13).
- ◆ For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever (1 Chron. 29:10-11; Matt. 6:13).

The Beatitudes

- ◆ Blessed are the poor in spirit (Isa. 66:2; Matt. 5:3-4).
- ◆ Blessed are the meek (Psa. 37:11; Matt. 5:5).
- ◆ Blessed are the merciful (Psa. 18:25; Matt. 5:7).
- ◆ Blessed are the pure in heart (Psa. 24:3-4; Matt. 5:8).
- ◆ Blessed are the peacemakers (Isa. 32: 17; Matt. 5:9).

Other sayings of the Lord which have similar poetic connections with the Old Testament include the following:

- ◆ Love your enemies and pray for those who would persecute you (Matt. 5:44; Psa. 109:4-5).
- ◆ He who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword (Matt. 26:52; Psa.37.14-15).
- ◆ What shall it profit a man if he should gain the world but lose his soul? (Matt. 16:26; Job 27:8).
- ◆ Do not tempt the Lord (Matt. 4:7; Deut. 6:16).
- ◆ Come to me all that labor and I will give you rest (Matt. 11 :28; Psa. 55:22).
- ◆ Ye are all clean through My word (John 15:3; Ezek. 36:25).

- ◆ Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit (Luke 23 :46; Psa. 31 :5).

- ◆ Man shall not live by bread alone (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3).
- ◆ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? (Matt. 27:46; Psa. 22:1).
- ◆ Teach the little children the things of God's kingdom (Mark 10:14; Psa.34:11).
- ◆ Seeking that which was lost (Matt. 18:11; Ezek. 34:16).
- ◆ I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11; Ezek. 34:31).
- ◆ I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last (Rev. 1:8; Isa. 41:4).
- ◆ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Matt. 7:7; Prov. 8:17).
- ◆ In my Father's house there are many abodes (John 14:2; Isa. 56:5).

The theme which runs constant throughout the Old Testament is that of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Although the term itself as such is not used until we come to the New Testament, the idea of God's governing the Earth was always there and was often expressed in poetic imagery. An example of this is found in Psalm 72:3, where it says the mountains shall bring peace to the people and the little hills by righteousness. We can see from Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1 that "**the mountains**" represent God's government and "**the hills**" represent the people that He governs. One will find similar language in Psalm 114:4. Also, take notice in Isaiah 11:9, that the Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. These things will start to happen in the day that God governs the Earth. Kingdom truth is also found expressed in a poetic way in the New Testament; for example, in the parable of the seed growing in secret in Mark 4:26-29.

In the Old Testament, the book of Esther is the story of a hateful man named Haman, who plotted to kill all of the Jews in the land of Persia. His plot backfired, and he ended up hanging on the very gallows that he had built. One may call this "poetic justice." In the Dispensation of Grace in which we now live, God works out His own designs in the lives of those who trust Him. Believers today are given gifts of grace we are expected to use for God's glory (2 Tim. 1:6). These may be called "skills" or "talents." They may be related to spiritual or even just social interests. When God works in these areas, one may call this "poetic grace." Let us all trust Him and look forward to His kingdom when His "divine poetry" will purify us (Titus 2:14) and complete the good work He has begun in us (Phil. 1 :6).

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