

Psalm 34 - Observation and exposition

1. Psalm 34

2. Context

a. 1 Samuel 21:10-15

b. Issues?

- i. The psalm title says “Abimelech” but 1 Samuel says “Achish” - are they the same person?
- ii. There is an “Abimelech” in Genesis 20, 21, and 26. See specifically 20:2 and 26:1.
- iii. “As P. C. Craigie says, ‘It is more plausible to assume that “Abimelech” (literally, “my father is king”) was an official title for Philistine kings, just as *Pharaoh* was an official title for Egyptian kings. The word “Abimelech” in the psalm title, in other words, presumably refers to the Achish of 1 Samuel 21:10....Support for this reasonable assumption is found in the fact that the time span between Genesis 20 and Genesis 26 probably indicates that two different individuals are involved in these accounts, though given the same name, and that the name is therefore more accurately a title.’ Boice, 376

3. Acrostic pattern

a. Acrostic psalms: 9 and 10 (together make a single acrostic psalm), 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145

- i. Psalms 25 and 34 are both “missing” the sixth Hebrew letter, *waw*, and have a second *pe* at the end after the *taw*.

b. Other examples of Hebrew acrostic poetry:

- i. Proverbs 31:10-31
- ii. Nahum 1:2-10

c. Why would a poet go to the “trouble” of using an acrostic pattern?

d. Unfortunately, the pattern is “lost” in translation, as it’s not possible or practical to reproduce from one language to another. Or is it.....?

4. Structure

a. According to Boice, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon called the first ten verses a ‘hymn’ and the last twelve verses a ‘sermon.’”

b. VanGemeren says that “the structure is not clear because of the acrostic pattern,” but he offers this structure for our consideration:

- i. Thanksgiving for God’s Goodness and Justice (vv.1-7)

1. Individual and Communal Praise (vv.1-3)
 - a. Individual and Communal Experiences (vv.4-7)
 - ii. In Praise of Wisdom (vv.8-22)
 1. Exhortation to Wisdom (vv.8-14)
 - a. The Rewards of Wisdom (vv.15-22)
5. New Testament usage?
- a. Verses 12-16 are quoted by Peter in **1 Peter 3:10-12**, as “a promise of God’s blessing for those who live a godly life.” Boice, 293
 - b. Verse 20 is quoted by John in **John 19:36**, saying that it was a prophecy fulfilled at Jesus’ crucifixion.
 - c. Allusions and parallels (from the appendix *Index of Allusions and Verbal Parallels*, Greek New Testament, UBS 4th Edition)
 - i. 34:8 → Hebrews 1:14; 1 Peter 2:3
 - ii. 34:13 → James 1:26
 - iii. 34:14 → Hebrews 12:14
 - iv. 34:15 → John 9:31
 - v. 34:19 → 2 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:11
6. Observe, interpret, and apply (what does it say? what does it mean? so what?)

Resources

1. *ESV Study Bible*
2. *Psalms, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Volume 5)*, Willem A. VanGemeren
3. *Psalms: An Expository Commentary, Volume 1*, James Montgomery Boice
4. <http://www.knowableword.com/2012/08/10/our-bible-study-method-oia/>
5. <http://www.knowableword.com/2013/04/19/why-i-dont-like-inductive-bible-study/>