

“Wise Words About Money” (Psalm 49)

Introduction:

A. Introductory verses

49:1-4)

All peoples are commanded to hear the wisdom of Psalm 49.

49:2) Note the two merisms.

Money is a problem for the rich: pride, self-sufficiency, idolatry

Money is a problem for the poor: worry, envy, fear, idolatry

Materialism is not a measure of how much you have, but how much you think of money and possessions.

Note the wisdom terms: wisdom, understanding, proverb, riddle

B. The first stanza of the poem (49:5–12) describe the limits of money.

49:5-9)

We shouldn't fear or be overawed by those with wealth. Wealth does not deliver in the end. Nor is it necessarily an indication of God's blessing on a righteous life.

49:10-12)

Wealth can deceive people into thinking they will go on and on.

The only land they will continue to possess is their tombs!

49:12 is a refrain with 49:20 and helps us solve the riddle.

C. The second stanza of the poem (49:13–20) describes what happens to those who are foolish and trust in themselves and their possessions. But the second stanza also shows us a way out of death.

49:13-15)

Focusing life on money leads to eternal death; focusing on God, to eternal life.

49:16-19)

49:16 is the only command in Psalm 49: Don't be afraid or overawed when others have a lot and you don't.

Those who live for money/possessions will lose everything they have lived for.

49:19 This verse hints at a warning for parents and grandparents.

49:20)

This is the refrain with 49:12 and the key to solving the riddle of Psalm 49.

Conclusion:

The Biblical Poet's Toolbox

-Foreshadowing: Hinting or picturing in advance what is going to happen later.

Example: Abraham “sacrificing” the son he loves on Mt. Moriah.

-Inclusio: Similar material at the beginning and ending of a section, making a frame or envelope around the section.

Example: “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth” is the beginning and ending of Psalm 8.

-Merism: Contrasting words are used to express completeness or totality.

Example: “In his hand are the depths of the earth,
The mountain peaks belong to him. [*everything on the vertical axis*]
The sea is his, for he made it,
And his hands formed the dry land.” [*everything on the horizontal axis*]
(Ps 95:4–5)

-Parallelism: Two lines, usually about the same length, where the first line says something and the second line says something that is related. (Sometimes three lines are parallel.)

Example of **Affirming parallelism** (the second line say something similar):

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord
And on his law he meditates day and night.” (Ps 1:2)

Example of **Opposing parallelism** (the second line says something opposite):

“Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness will surround him.” (Ps
32:10)

-Refrain: A repeated line or verse.

Example: “Man in *his* pomp will not remain;
He is like the beasts that perish.”

“Man in *his* pomp, yet without understanding,
Is like the beasts that perish.”

(Ps 49:12, 20)

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What did you learn from Ps 49? What did God impress on you?
2. In what ways can money be deceptive?
3. How can you apply the wisdom of Ps 49 to your life right now?
4. How does Satan use money or possessions to tempt you?
5. What fears do you have concerning money or people who have lots of money?