

August 11, 2021 | Wednesday Night Live | Psalm 119: Learning the Letters of Scripture

Week 13 | Psalm 119:89-96 | Lamedh

Today, we move on to the twelfth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Lamedh. <Insert Picture>

Time without end, usually referred to as "eternity," comes into focus throughout this stanza. And at the center of this discussion stands God's word. In fact, the top of the Scriptures eternal nature bookends this stanza.

READ: Psalm 119:89-96 (ESV)

Lamedh

⁸⁹ Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

⁹¹ By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants.

⁹² If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

⁹³ I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.

⁹⁴ I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts.

⁹⁵ The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies.

⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

What are the principles the Psalmist is trying to instill in this twelfth stanza?

Vs. 89 God's "word" is cemented ("firmly fixed") in the very "heavens." Never to be removed, the Bible will stand as a fixture throughout all time and space ("forever"). The earth and the skies above will pass away, but the Scripture will remain (cf. Mr. 13:31). One would be hard-pressed if they were tasked with removing something in the realm of God, let alone being expected to remove the very word of God out of the dominion of God. Thus, His world and word stand as time takes its toll on our world. His word cannot be negated, amended, or destroyed. When all else has fallen away, God's word will remain standing.

Vs. 90 God's perpetuity ("faithfulness") has remained unchanged ("endures") from Adam to us and will remain unchanged long after ("all generations"). God's

permanence is what settled (“established”) our world (“the earth”). And it is because the Lord lasts forever that the earth does not sway or falter but “stands fast” in space. What we witness in our observable world implies a truth about the unobservable world; the seen sheds light on the unseen. The Psalmist's point is that the ground beneath our feet is firm; doesn’t this also suggest that God is as reliable and faithful as the foundations of the earth itself? After all, God is the one who laid those foundations (cf. Ps. 102:25). If not for God’s absolute authority over our universe, the universe would break apart. He is the One Who Upholds (cf. Heb. 1:3). For instance, by His decree, the Earth's rotational speed at its equator is roughly 1,000MPH, which is itself moving around the sun at 67,000MPH.¹ Yet, because the Lord has established gravitational forces, life remains secure atop this rapidly spinning planet. An ordered world pays homage to its Creator. The universe and its continued existence testify to God’s constancy in our world (cf. Ps. 19:1).² Because He is the I AM, we exist.

Vs. 91 Because God has “appointed” his created elements, “they” have not failed (“stand this day”). What God has established cannot be undone unless God does the undoing. As such, “all things,” not some things, not most things, but *all* things are the “servants” of God. This means everything from the animate to the inanimate serves some divine purpose. From a single raindrop to sprawling riverways, each function per God's direction. After all, God knows the names of every star (cf. Ps. 147:4). The Lord has counted the hairs of every head, and He has seen the resting place of every fallen sparrow (cf. Lu. 12:4-6). Nothing occurs without God causing it to occur. And nothing happens without God knowing that it happened. All things live to serve the Lord Most High. And while we know that not every living thing obeys, this does not mean God cannot use their disobedience to suit His purpose. They, too, are servants all the same. This is why F.B. Meyer famously said, “God uses all men; some as tools, some as servants. But, in the end, God uses all men.” Cut open a tree, and written on its spherical rings are the words, “I am a servant of God.” Translate the melody of a songbird, and the chorus will intone, “I am a servant of God.” Solve the

¹ Herman, Rhett, “How fast is the earth moving?” October 26, 1998, *Scientific American*, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-fast-is-the-earth-mov/>, [accessed, August 11, 2021].

² Allen, Leslie C., *Psalm 101-150*, The World Biblical Commentary, Volume 21, (Nashville, TN; Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), p. 189.

equation of the human genome, and we will discover that we were made to be the servants of God.

Vs. 92 As has already been pointed out, the Psalmist's "delight" of God's word ("law") is a prominent theme in this chapter (cf. vs. 14, 16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77). This is not surprising as God's word is the main focus of this Psalm. One who does not enjoy the Scriptures would scarcely write such an extensive treatise on the topic. More depth is given to our understanding of the Psalmist's fascination with God's word as here we're told about an instance in which our sojourner's obsession with the law helped him stave off his own demise. The Psalmist tells us that he would've crumbled away ("perished") if not for God's word. Amid "affliction," it was the precepts, commandments, and promises of God that sustained him. Thus, joy in a joyless situation is to be found within the pages of the Bible. The written word of God brightens the darkest night. Languishing turns to laughing for those who love God's word.

Vs. 93 The Psalmist commits himself to never "forgetting" God's "precepts." Why? Because he explains, it was through those words that "life" was "given" to him. Life cannot exist apart from God's word, vs. 90-91 has made that abundantly clear. And that principle is found throughout Scripture. For example, this is why Jesus said He was the "bread of life" in John 6. The Messiah was claiming to be the very thing that sustains our existence. This is also why John the Beloved wrote, "In [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of men." The assertion that "God's word = life" is plastered on almost every page of the Bible. And that same principle is echoed once again here when the Psalmist proclaimed that life was only to be found in God's word. If there is one theme that repeats itself from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, it is this: God's word gives life. God repeatedly reminding us throughout the Scriptures that the Scripture brings us life helps us avoid losing sight of this crucial principle. Expeditions to find life in the furthest reaches of our galaxy overlook the fact that sentience is as near as the Bible.

Vs. 94 Rather than take ownership of himself, our wanderer says to God, "I am yours." This is the language of servitude. God is the master, and our sojourner is the servant. No longer would the Psalmist dictate the steps of his life; instead, he would bend his will to God's. And if he was the property

of Yahweh, then it stands to reason that it is God's responsibility to "save" him. Our Lord would feel no compulsion to help another's servant. The charge of that servant's well-being would be in the hands of their own master. Thus, the Psalmist has reminded the Lord that he is the property of the Most High; and as such, God is obligated to protect him from harm. For, as the Psalmist explains, he is no wayward slave but one who has pursued ("sought") God's "precepts." Essentially, our singer/songwriter removes any doubt as to whether or not God should help him. Negotiating using one's obedience is a powerfully convincing tactic. What reason would God have to refuse?

Vs. 95 The Psalmist revisits the idea that he is being pursued by nefarious beings (cf. vs. 51, 61, 69-70, 78, 85, 87). These "wicked" ones are in hiding ("lie in wait") poised to strike at him when the time comes. If they succeed, our sojourner will be "destroyed." And while we have delved deep into this conflict before, I still find it interesting how different these two people are. The Psalmist contemplates ("considers") God's "testimonies," whereas these hunters contemplate on how to kill the Psalmist. It seems premeditated murder is the hobby of the biblically illiterate. When you do not know what is right from wrong, lying in wait to shed innocent blood is a perfectly acceptable thing to do.

Vs. 96 In the estimations of our Psalmist, even "perfection" has its limits. By contrast, he then says that God's commandments are borderless. What he means by this is not clear. Perhaps he's implying that some things may be perfect, but they are still finite.³ If that is the idea, then the Psalmist may hint at themes that the book of Ecclesiastes takes head-on.⁴ All things, even faultless things, come to an end, with one exception: *God's word*. The Psalmist says that God's word is extraordinarily infinite ("exceedingly broad"). Long after perfection has come to its end, the Word of the Lord will continue on. Thus, the only way to exceed our own limitations is to trust in God's word (cf. Eccl. 12:13).

³ Alter, Robert, *The Hebrew Bible*, Volume 3, The Writings, (New York; W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 3:285.

⁴ Kidner, Derek, *Psalm 73-150*, The Kidner Classic Commentaries, (Downers Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity Press Academic, Reprint, 2008), p. 462.

"What's your takeaway?"

My takeaway this evening is this: all things are servants to God. From the smallest atom to the largest black hole, all things serve a divine purpose. Precisely what that purpose is, is unknowable to us. But if God has endowed all things with a divine mandate, then surely God has some objective for me. My life only has a purpose so long as God exists.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

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TITLE: Lamedh

TEXT: Psalm 119:89-96

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: