

Psalm 89 Part 1

Introduction:

The term “Maskil” appears in 13 Psalms – 6 attributed to King David, 4 to the sons of Korah with 1, Psalm 88, stated as a Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite, 2 to Asaph, and 1 to Ethan the Ezrahite. Maskil is another term of uncertainty, though the overwhelming majority think it means didactic or instructive. Didactic is a term that means “adapted to teach; preceptive or commands for the regulation of moral conduct; containing doctrines, precepts, or principles”. In short didactic and instructive are synonymous. According to Dr. Gill, the Targum, which is a collection of explanations of the Hebrew Scriptures in Chaldaic (Western Aramaic) which was wrote for the benefit of those Jews who had partially or completely ceased to understand the original Hebrew, renders Maskil “a good understanding”, and the word properly signifies instruction or causing to understand. It is even thought that the Maskils, according to the Rabbis, were explained by an interpreter. Let’s look at the title of Psalm 88 to better understand. The title of Psalm 88 reads: “A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. For the choir director; according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite”. It seems the song was sung by the sons of Korah, but the Psalm is a Maskil of Heman. This suggests that the Psalm was either explained or written for the purpose of instruction by Heman. Mahalath Leannoth is most likely a wind instrument or the tune to which the Psalm is set. I offer this only that we are familiar with the terms and possibility of the meaning. This has no weight or bearing on the meaning of the Psalm itself.

The author is as well uncertain. Some suggest it is Ethan, the son of Mahol, the grandson of Judah as mentioned in: [1 Kings 4:31 NASB] **31 For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was [known] in all the surrounding nations.** The “he” in this passage of Scripture that was wiser than all men is Solomon. This doesn’t seem likely seeing that this particular Ethan lived hundreds of years before the times of David. Those who hold to this view see it as prophetic, which very well could be. Most suggest that the author is another Ethan, a singer in David’s time, who may have lived to the times of Rehoboam and saw the decline of David’s family as well the revolt of the ten tribes. Or perhaps it was one who lived in the times of the Babylonian

captivity and was written to comfort the people of GOD reminding them of the Eternal Covenant.

Regardless of the author and the meaning of maskil, we can be certain of the fact this Psalm is GOD's Holy Word. This Psalm, which is the last Psalm of Book 3, is an instructive Psalm causing us to understand as well as offers a spiritual crisis of the greatest magnitude. It deals with and considers a most important subject – the **Covenant of Grace**, the promises of it, the Mercy and Faithfulness of the LORD GOD in making and keeping the Covenant, concerning the Messiah, His church and His people. Last week we looked at the Covenant as given to David in II Samuel 7 and the Apostle Paul's further explanation in Acts 13. This subject, the Covenant made with David, the Covenant of Grace was the starting point for the Apostle as he preached the Gospel in the synagogue. The LORD has mercifully shown us in the Word that Jesus, the Son of GOD, the Son of man, the Son of David is the fulfillment of the promise.

We also looked at the crisis of the psalmist in that it seemed as though GOD had spurned the covenant and how the Psalm teaches us to go honestly, humbly, and faithfully before the Throne of Grace and lay our hearts bare before our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. As Dr. Godfrey reminded us – the Psalms are GOD's Word to us, His people, as well as words that we might speak back to Him. The Psalms teach us how to pray, how to praise, and how to come before the LORD. It teaches us that in times when what "seems to be" is not in line with what the LORD has mercifully made known to us, that we are to go before our Father with honesty, with faith, and humbly.

Read Psalm 89:1-8

We know from reading last week the first four verses and then a few of the latter verses of this Psalm that it is unique in that the psalmist begins with praise and moves toward expressing deep grief before the LORD. Most Psalms that contain laments or expressions of grief have the opposite movement. They begin with the complaint and then toward praise. This

Psalm teaches us that even when we are troubled, that it is good and commendable to sing of the Mercies of the LORD whether or not we can perceive them. It is a work of GOD and His Grace that our perception does not dictate when we are to praise Him. If that were so we would only offer praise in times that we considered good. This is especially true for you and I as NT believers, which have been plainly shown that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made to David, and it is certain that His Kingdom and Throne will stand forever. The mercy of belonging to Him and the persevering Grace shed upon His people is not only our future hope, but a present reality. May the LORD deliver us from singing and praising Him only by sense or feel and teach us by His grace and for His glory to always sing and rejoice by faith. We are not to just praise the LORD when we “feel” like it, but we are to believe Him and rejoice in His goodness always. Please don’t misunderstand me. I am not speaking against godly emotion. Those who delight in the LORD and take joy in Him will show it. Joy is not stoic nor stiff. However, we should not be carried along by how we feel.

We read how Ethan the Ezrahite declares to make known to all generations the Faithfulness of the LORD GOD which, is the grand topic of our reading this morning – His Faithfulness. Husbands and Fathers, are you making known to all generations, beginning with your home, the Faithfulness of the LORD GOD? May we not fail here. Here is what I have discovered. I have already said things this morning in which our children will probably need further explanation. Men, we need to ask our wives, our children, our grandchildren, ourselves, one another, and all in our household questions regarding the Word of GOD that we sharpen one another and bolster one another’s faith in the LORD GOD and His promises. We should pour over the sermons that come from the pulpit and speak of them. They should be used for further study and meditation. We should be considering what we heard and read looks like in all areas of our lives – at home, school, work, in our neighborhoods, wherever the LORD GOD places us.

Here is a word that we rarely hear in our time that we should be familiar with, “perspicuity”. Let me explain. Sometimes I find myself stumbling when I am answering a question from Jailyann or trying to better explain something. The truth is that if I can’t clearly and with perspicuity answer her, then I don’t know the answer. I need to be able as a husband

and father, as a disciple of Christ, to be able to answer with clarity and articulate the Truth. It is not shameful to not know, but it is shameful to leave the Truth which we all desperately need, unknown. So, perspicuity is a term that means clarity, freedom from obscurity; it is being able present an idea, thought, or answer in a manner that is easily understood. It is painful to think of GOD's Word falling to the ground and not bearing fruit for His glory in any one of us, but especially jarring when we consider our own families. Men, may we be diligent and joyful in the endeavor to wash our wives with the water of the Word, to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD. Brothers and Sisters, may we do so diligently and delightfully in word and by deed. By the way, admonition is to instruct and to gently correct and to nurture is feed or nourish, to educate or train. Both terms as expressed in Ephesians 6:4 imply love. This is what it means and looks like to love those around us.

Sometimes there is a peculiar movement in the Psalms in that "who" is speaking. Notice how the psalmist moves from himself speaking to the LORD speaking in verse 3. The psalmist introduces GOD Himself as speaking and sanctioning the Covenant that it be more effectually confirmed, not only to him, but to believers of all generations. This movement or manner of speaking shows, as our faith depends on and looks to this Divine promise, the LORD GOD as coming forward and calling us to Himself by His own voice. This manner is of greater effect than the psalmist himself simply stating and repeating the summary of the Covenant.

The psalmist's ground for confidence in GOD's mercy and truth (which should be ours is stated for us: [Psalm 89:3 NASB] **3 "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant,** The LORD says, "I have sworn". These are words of assurance, hope, and joy for the believer. The LORD made a Covenant with David, His elect, which runs along in the line of his seed until it received a final and never-ending fulfillment in the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the recipient of the promise is referred to by our Lord as "chosen" and "My servant". We are "chosen" for no other reason than GOD's good pleasure and His choosing allows us the joy of belonging to Him and being His servant.

Our hope is magnified because the Father has established the seed of David and built up His Throne forever. There is no greater honor than being made a part of this Eternal Kingdom

of which Jesus Christ is our King. There is no greater honor than to be chosen and to be His servant. This Covenant is Eternal and has implications upon every soul.

Our benefit in this Covenant is made certain, but mostly that which is expressed in these first 8 verses is GOD's Eternal and boundless Mercy, His Faithfulness, and an aspect of His Holiness in that He is distinct – He is so much greater than and unlike anyone or anything. The rhetorical question is raised “who in the skies (or heavens) is comparable to the LORD”. It is pure folly and sin to have any other reaction to such a question than to worship and praise our Heavenly Father. We are given the psalmist's heart as should be ours, in praising GOD for His Faithfulness as the heavens praise His wonders. May we as His people live by, with, and upon the certainty of His Faithfulness, even or especially when it seems otherwise. O LORD, please grant us Yourself, Your Mercy and Grace, that we know, live upon, and proclaim Your Faithfulness for Your Glory and Honor.

Amen