

**SBC – Feb. 5, 2023**

**Psalm 78:1-72 (NKJV)**

***“Messianic ‘Snapshots’ in Psalm 78”***

In Psalm 78 there is one direct application to the Messiah’s ministry as seen in Jesus’ ministry. Matthew 13:35 references Jesus teaching in parables as a fulfillment of Psalm 78:2. In John 6:31 Jesus critics quoted from Psalm 78:24 ***“He gave them bread from heaven”*** in an effort to persuade Jesus to continue to miraculously provide bread. So we have these two verses in Psalm 78 that specifically intersect with the ministry of Christ.

Psalm 78 is the longest of what is called the historical Psalms. It has some deep spiritual lessons for us that we can learn from Israel’s history.

***Slide # 1***

### ***Outline – Psalm 78***

#### ***Israel’s Rebellion – God’s Faithfulness***

- 1-4 – Learning from the Past
- 5-8 – Responsible to Reach Each Generation
- 9-11 – The Rebellion of Ephraim
- 12-16 – God’s Work in the Exodus
- 17-20 – Israel’s Rebellion to God’s Works
- 21-25 – God’s Anger with Israel’s Sin
- 26-31 – God’s “fowl” Judgment
- 32-39 – God’s Mercy – Israel’s Sin
- 40-55 – God’s Faithfulness – Israel’s Provocation
- 56-64 – Rebellious Israel in the Promised Land
- 65-66 – God’s Triumph over Israel’s Enemies
- 67-72 – God’s choice of Judah, Zion, & David

#### ***Verses 1-4 – Learning from the Past***

### **A Contemplation Of Asaph.**

Asaph was a singer/musician in the time of David and Solomon. He was also a prophet in his musical compositions.

**1 Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.**

## **2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,**

The word “parable” is often translated as “proverb”. In fact, the book of Proverbs is named after this word. A parable is the idea of “comparison”. It illustrates by way of comparison.

“Dark sayings” is the idea of a riddle or a puzzle that can only be known by divine revelation (cf. Ps. 49:4). God likes to reveal His truth in puzzle form that makes us think and work for it (cf. Eccl).

### **Slide # 2**

#### **Proverbs 1:6 (NKJV)**

**6** To understand a **proverb** and an **enigma**, The words of the wise and their **riddles**.

### **Slide # 3**

#### **Proverbs 2:1–5 (NKJV)**

**1** My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,

**2** So that you **incline your ear** to wisdom, And **apply your heart** to understanding;

**3** Yes, if you **cry out for discernment**, And lift up your voice for understanding,

**4** If you **seek her as silver**, And **search** for her as for hidden treasures;

**5** **Then you will understand** the fear of the LORD, **And find the knowledge of God**.

Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter” but it is also the way of God to reveal a matter to those who diligently seek out His truth. Deut. 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever”. 1 Cor. 2:9-10 says that now by His Spirit God reveals to us the secret things that can otherwise not be known. James 1 says that God freely gives wisdom to those who ask in faith.

If we have a right heart and truly seek out God’s truth in His Word He will show it to us. And there are deep lessons from Israel’s history for us to glean as seen in Psalm 78.

Matthew 13:35 quotes this verse as being a fulfillment of prophecy in the ministry of Christ when He began to teach in parables.

#### **Slide # 4**

##### **Matthew 13:34–35 (NKJV)**

**34** All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in **parables**; and without a **parable** He did not speak to them,

**35** that it might be **fulfilled** which was spoken by the prophet, saying: **“I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.”**

Matthew 13:35 is a paraphrased quote of Psalm 78:2.

Matthew apparently perceived in this psalm a prophetic voice anticipating that of the great Prophet [Jesus]. – ***NIV Study Bible***

#### **Slide # 5**

##### **Matthew 13:10–11 (NKJV)**

**10** And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

**11** He answered and said to them, “Because it **has been given to you to know** the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

The main theme of Psalm 78 depicts God’s faithfulness despite Israel’s pattern of disobedience. The patterns of history recalled in Psalm 78 without proper interpretation might simply be seen as one long pattern of disobedience. But the writer sees God behind it all and sees His unwavering faithfulness as He shepherds Israel to a determined end. The enlightened mind will be able to see this through study.

Jesus applied this parabolic teaching ministry to new truth He brought forth in relation to redemptive history.

#### ***New Kingdom Insights in the Matthew 13 Parables include...***

- 1) True kingdom citizens are those who receive the Word with an “honest and good heart” and bear fruit with perseverance.
- 2) The inauguration of the kingdom has been DELAYED.

- 3) During the time of DELAY God is still building a kingdom people but there are also many false professors and God will sort it all out in the end.

Asaph via a history lesson is showing God's sovereign and faithful ways in relation to His people Israel. Someone has summed up Psalm 78 as depicting "God's ways in grace and Israel's ways in perverseness". One of the purposes of the Psalm is to help us learn from Israel's mistakes.

### **Slide # 6**

#### **1 Corinthians 10:6 (NKJV)**

**6** Now these things **became our examples**, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

#### **1 Corinthians 10:11 (NKJV)**

**11** Now all these things **happened to them as examples**, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

**3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us.**

**4 We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.**

God's design is that His truth be passed on from one generation to the next. He doesn't give all new truth to every generation. No, He gives His truth and then expects us to communicate it to our children and then they to their children (cf. Deut. 6:6-9). What has been known is seeing and understanding the sovereign hand of God as He moves in and through history. Ours is a historical faith.

### ***Verses 5-8 – Responsible to Reach Each Generation***

**5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children;**

**6 That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children,**

**7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments;**

**8 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.**

In reviewing Israel's history Asaph begins with God's giving of the Law. And then he says that the fathers were a stubborn and rebellious generation "that did not set its heart aright". They were accountable for the truth given to them by God but had a HEART problem.

This Psalm basically charts Israel's history from Moses to David. (cf. Stephen in Acts 7). Right from the start it was rebellion that characterized them as a people.

***Verses 9-11 – The Rebellion of Ephraim***

**9 The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, Turned back in the day of battle.**

**10 They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law,**

**11 And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them.**

Ephraim was one of the larger tribes in Israel and sometimes God calls the whole of Israel by the name of "Ephraim" (cf. 2 Chron. 25:7). We don't know exactly what occasion is in view here but clearly betrayal of her covenant relationship with God is in view.

***Verses 12-16 – God's Work in the Exodus***

**12 Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.**

The field of Zoan is thought to be a place where Moses performed miracles before Pharaoh to persuade him to let God's people go. The city of Zoan is also mentioned in Isaiah 19:11, 13, Isaiah 30:4 and Ezekiel 30:14.

**13 He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; And He made the waters stand up like a heap.**

The parting of the Red Sea at the beginning of the Exodus which allowed Israel to escape from the Egyptian armies, was always considered to by the OT saints to be the most spectacular miracle of their history (cf. Ex. 14). -**John MacArthur**

**14 In the daytime also He led them with the cloud, And all the night with a light of fire.**

**15 He split the rocks in the wilderness, And gave them drink in abundance like the depths.**

**16 He also brought streams out of the rock, And caused waters to run down like rivers.**

### **Verses 17-20 – Israel’s Rebellion to God’s Works**

This section provides an overview of Israel’s rebellion against God in the desert during their 40 years of wilderness wanderings.

**17 But they sinned even more against Him By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.**

**18 And they tested God in their heart By asking for the food of their fancy.**

**19 Yes, they spoke against God: They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?”**

**20 Behold, He struck the rock, So that the waters gushed out, And the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?”**

They were very “self-oriented” and not satisfied with God’s provision, instead wanting the finer foods that the world has to offer – such as they had back in Egypt. And they “tested” God which is to say in sinful doubt challenged His ability to take care of them in the wilderness. This was very offensive to God.

### **Verses 21-25 – God’s Anger with Israel’s Sin**

**21 Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious; So a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also came up against Israel,**

**22 Because they did not believe in God, And did not trust in His salvation.**

**23 Yet He had commanded the clouds above, And opened the doors of heaven,**

**24 Had rained down manna on them to eat, And given them of the bread of heaven.**

**25 Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full.**

Israel’s great sins were ingratitude, testing God, doubting His power and His care. This made God furious. God miraculously provided manna (angels’ food) and yet they did not appreciate it.

### Verses 26-31 – God’s “fowl” Judgment

**26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; And by His power He brought in the south wind.**

**27 He also rained meat on them like the dust, Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;**

**28 And He let them fall in the midst of their camp, All around their dwellings.**

**29 So they ate and were well filled, For He gave them their own desire.**

**30 They were not deprived of their craving; But while their food was still in their mouths,**

**31 The wrath of God came against them, And slew the stoutest of them, And struck down the choice men of Israel.**

God gave them what they wanted and then judged them in the midst of their self-indulgence.

#### **Slide # 7**

##### **Numbers 11:31–33 (NKJV)**

**31** Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and about a day’s journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground.

**32** And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

**33** But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.

The Lord showed them that He could “provide flesh for His people,” even enough to spare. He also showed them that when lust wins its desire, it is disappointed.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

### Verses 32-39 – God’s Mercy – Israel’s Sin

**32 In spite of this they still sinned, And did not believe in His wondrous works.**

In some ways this is the most tragic line of this psalm. Despite all the blessings and the strongest of corrections, they still sinned. Israel didn’t learn either from God’s goodness or from His wrath.

**-David Guzik**

**33 Therefore their days He consumed in futility, And their years in fear.**

**34 When He slew them, then they sought Him; And they returned and sought earnestly for God.**

**35 Then they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer.**

**36 Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue;**

**37 For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant.**

They played games with God pretending allegiance to Him, but it was not genuine. Their heart was not true and faithful. It always comes back to a heart issue.

**38 But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, And did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, And did not stir up all His wrath;**

**39 For He remembered that they were but flesh, A breath that passes away and does not come again.**

We see here the great mercy of God. Many a time He turned His anger away. He remembered how fragile they were and had mercy on them.

### **Verses 40-55 – God’s Faithfulness – Israel’s Provocation**

The psalmist is going to go over the whole sorry history again (vv. 40-58). If we as readers grow weary of the repetition, think of how irritating it was to the Lord! – *William MacDonald*

Verses 40-55 are essentially a summary review of Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness reviewing where God had brought them from and where He brought them to.

**40 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert!**

**41 Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel.**

**42 They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy,**

**43 When He worked His signs in Egypt, And His wonders in the field of Zoan;**



44 Turned their rivers into blood, And their streams, that they could not drink.

45 He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them, And frogs, which destroyed them.

46 He also gave their crops to the caterpillar, And their labor to the locust.

47 He destroyed their vines with hail, And their sycamore trees with frost.

48 He also gave up their cattle to the hail, And their flocks to fiery lightning.

49 He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, Wrath, indignation, and trouble, By sending angels of destruction among them.

50 He made a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, But gave their life over to the plague,

51 And destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt, The first of their strength in the tents of Ham.

52 But He made His own people go forth like sheep, And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;

53 And He led them on safely, so that they did not fear; But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

54 And He brought them to His holy border, This mountain which His right hand had acquired.

55 He also drove out the nations before them, Allotted them an inheritance by survey, And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.

#### Verses 56-64 – Rebellious Israel in the Promised Land

56 Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, And did not keep His testimonies,

57 But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers; They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58 For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.

59 When God heard this, He was furious, And greatly abhorred Israel,

60 So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, The tent He had placed among men,

61 And delivered His strength into captivity, And His glory into the enemy's hand.

What an amazing statement. In context here Asaph is recalling how God allowed the Philistines to have victory over Israel and captured the ark of the covenant – which represented the very presence of God.

**Slide # 8****1 Samuel 4:19–22 (NKJV)**

**19** Now his daughter-in-law, **Phinehas' wife**, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her.

**20** And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it.

**21** Then she named the child **Ichabod**, saying, "**The glory has departed from Israel!**" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

**22** And she said, "**The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.**"

**62** He also gave His people over to the sword, And was furious with His inheritance.

**63** The fire consumed their young men, And their maidens were not given in marriage.

**64** Their priests fell by the sword, And their widows made no lamentation.

**Verses 65-66 – God's Triumph over Israel's Enemies**

**65** Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, Like a mighty man who shouts because of wine.

**66** And He beat back His enemies; He put them to a perpetual reproach.

Of course God doesn't sleep (cf. Ps. 121:3). What is being pictured is the feeling that God had been inactive and allowed this to happen to them. And then suddenly it was like the Lord awoke and in great power beat back His enemies.

Sometimes, as a matter of discipline God allows His enemies to wreak havoc on His people – even violating His glory. But that ultimately is short lived as God in the end always vindicates His name.

And note: When the Gentiles oppress God's people Israel they in reality are showing their enmity against God. Verse 66 depicts them as "His enemies" – meaning God's enemies.

## Verses 67-72 – God’s choice of Judah, Zion, & David

67 Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.

69 And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has established forever.

70 He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds;

71 From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance.

72 So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

God in His sovereign ways did not choose Joseph (although he personally was greatly blessed). He did not choose the large tribe of Ephraim. Rather God chose Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10) and Mount Zion where His temple would be built. And He chose David to shepherd His people.

The Psalm comes to a close on David’s shepherding care. Many of the commentators bring out that David was a prototype of the GOOD SHEPHERD which is ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus (cf. Ps. 23; Jn. 10:17; Rev. 7:17).

Like many aspects of David’s rule, this was fulfilled in a much greater way in David’s Greater Son, Jesus the Messiah. David’s heart *mostly* had integrity; the heart of Jesus was perfect in integrity. David guided Israel with great skill; Jesus leads His people with perfect skill. – **David Guzik**

What is the secret lesson related to the historical lesson of Israel? It is this. In spite of Israel’s continual miserable failure God is working out His sovereign plan. He is doing this in spite of Israel – not because of her.

History teaches us that mankind learns nothing from history. But we can learn a lot from God and how He presides over history. In Israel’s history we learn about God’s character and how He is a very merciful and patient God. He is ever faithful! And yet He is holy. He has a plan and no one can thwart it – not even a stiff-necked and rebellious people like Israel.

History really is “His Story” – God’s story. This is ultimately a story about God’s sovereign glory and He has chosen to work it out through Israel.

**In 1899 Mark Twain (who was no true believer) wrote...**

*"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way.*

*Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvellous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.*

*The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.*

*The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"*

Awe, there is the enigma? There is the riddle that can only be answered in the God of the Bible. He alone is the secret to their preservation (Mal. 3:6). In David God provided a man after His own heart to shepherd them, but there is a greater David coming who will ultimately restore and fulfill all the covenant promises that God has made to His covenant people Israel.

The riddle of history surrounding Israel is solved in the God of the Bible. He is sovereign over all – and has chosen to reveal His truth in conjunction with Israel. The Word of God, the Messiah, and the Kingdom are all ultimately delivered to the world through Israel. The enlightened find the parable and dark sayings of God's truth revealed in the history through Israel. Such is the lesson of Psalm 78.