

Psalms 89

This evening - we're continuing our overview of the Old Testament book titled Psalms.

With this as our focus - let's open our Bibles to Psalms chapter 89 - and as we make our way to the 89th Psalm...

...I should take a moment to point out that - this is the last Psalm - found in the third section of this book.

I'll remind you that this third section - which began with a Psalm written by a seer named Asaph...

...is now ending with a Psalm was written by Ethan the Ezrahite.

Now - the name - Ethan - means - enduring - - and while there are several men in the Old Testament named Ethan...

...Ethan the Ezrahite is mentioned in 1st Kings 4 - where we learn that he was a wise man - who's wisdom was only surpassed by King Solomon.

From this - we can see that Ethan the Ezrahite was a contemporary of King Solomon.

And as we consider the content of this Psalm - it's safe to assume that...

...Ethan lived during the days of both King David - and King Solomon.

As we make our way through this Psalm - we'll soon discover that Ethan the Ezrahite wrote this Psalm - during a time of national distress.

And while some Bible teachers believe that this Psalm may've been written during the days of Absalom's rebellion...

...there are others who believe that Ethan was writing about the days...

...when the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms - according to the punishment of the Lord.

Here's how John Trapp explained it - in his commentary of this chapter...

Ethan the Ezrahite who having out lived Solomon, and seen both the defection of the ten tribes from the house of David, and the woeful work made by Shishak, king of Egypt, in the kingdom of Judah composed this psalm (as it may seem), and left it for an instruction to all succeeding ages what to do in such dismal changes and concussions.

If Trapp is correct - then - Ethan the Ezrahite wrote this Psalm during the reign of King Rehoboam...

...shortly after the Lord punished King Solomon - for his many idolatries.

After watching the LORD divide the kingdom of Israel - - Ethan wrote this Psalm...

...in order to remind the LORD about the covenant that He made with King David.

Now - as we take the time to consider Ethan's concerns - we can rejoice in knowing that the Lord is always faithful to keep His covenants.

And as we make our way through this contemplative Psalm - we'll soon see how God will accomplish the covenant He made with David.

Not only that - but - we'll also consider how the LORD will accomplish the covenant that He's made with us.

And with that being the case - it's my prayer that we will all learn how to sing the praises of the Lord...

...even when it seems like the Lord has forsaken us.

With this as our focus - let's turn our attention to the lyrics that we find here in the 89th Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 1 - where we learn that this is...

Psa 89:1 A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever;

With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.

Psa 89:2 For I have said, "Mercy shall be built up forever;

Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens."

Psa 89:3 "I have made a covenant with My chosen,

I have sworn to My servant David:

Psa 89:4 'Your seed I will establish forever,

And build up your throne to all generations.'" Selah

Here in the beginning of this Psalm - we find Ethan the Ezrahite - assuring his audience...

...that - he is going to sing of the mercies of the LORD forever.

Not only that - but - he was writing this Psalm - so that every generation might know about the faithfulness of the LORD.

Then - after proclaiming the praises of the One Who has established His faithfulness in the heavens...

...Ethan then reminded the LORD - about the covenant that He made with King David.

And just to be clear - it's there in verse 4 - where Ethan quoted the Davidic covenant - by declaring...

Psa 89:4 'Your seed I will establish forever,
And build up your throne to all generations.'" Selah

Now - this promise - which is known as the Davidic Covenant was initially presented by the prophet Nathan.

We find this in 2nd Samuel chapter 7 - beginning at verse 12 - where Nathan presented this promise to King David - by declaring...

2Sa 7:12 “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

2Sa 7:13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

So - according to the Davidic Covenant - the Lord was promising to establish the throne of King David...

...by raising up a descendant of David - Who will rule over Israel forevermore.

And as the children of Israel watched David's son ascend to the throne - and then build the temple of the LORD...

...there were many who were sure that this promise would be fulfilled by King Solomon.

Sadly - the reign of King Solomon was cut short - and the reason why was because - he turned away from the Lord - and worshipped idols.

The prophet Jeremiah informed us that King Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD...

...and he did not fully follow the LORD - as did his father David.

He offered sacrifices to Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

He built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab....

...and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.

And it's for this reason that the Lord divided the kingdom of Israel.

It's in 1st Kings chapter 11 - beginning at verse 9 - where we learn that...

1Ki 11:9 ...the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

1Ki 11:10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded.

1Ki 11:11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.

1Ki 11:12 "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

1Ki 11:13 "However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

From this - we can see that the Lord divided the Kingdom - in order to punish the idolatries of King Solomon.

And as we consider this context - it's no wonder that Ethan the Ezrahite was struggling to understand...

...how God would fulfill the Davidic covenant.

With this as our focus - let's turn our attention back to the 89th Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 5 - where Ethan declared...

Psa 89:5 And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints.

Psa 89:6 For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD?

Psa 89:7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
And to be held in reverence by all those around Him.

Psa 89:8 O LORD God of hosts,
Who is mighty like You, O LORD?

Your faithfulness also surrounds You.

Psa 89:9 You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.

Psa 89:10 You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one who is slain;

You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.
Psa 89:11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all its fullness, You have founded them.
Psa 89:12 The north and the south, You have created them;
Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name.

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - proclaiming the praises of the Lord.

He began with a focus on the heavens - which present the praises of our wonderful God.

Then he shifted his focus to the temple - where the faithfulness of the LORD is seen in the assembly of the saints.

He worshipped the One - Who rules over the raging waters of the sea...

...and he sang the praises of the One Who broke Rahab in pieces - as one who is slain.

In this context - the name - Rahab - probably refers to a powerful sea serpent...

...which the Canaanites believed was killed by Baal.

And yet - Ethan assured his audience - that the Lord not only killed that sea serpent...

...but - He also scattered the enemies - which is probably a reference to the Canaanites.

Ethan also proclaimed the praises of the One Who created the pillars of the Earth - including Tabor and Hermon.

Mount Tabor is a large hill in the Lower Galilee of Israel...

...while Mount Hermon is a massive mountain that straddles the border between Lebanon - Syria - and Israel.

To sum it all up - the LORD is the One Who created the heavens and the Earth.

And the LORD is the One Who is worthy to be praised - by the assembly of the faithful.

And listen - this is true - no matter what's happening in this world.

Let's consider how Ethan explained it - here in the lyrics of this song.

Let's pick up our study of the 89th Psalm - beginning there at verse 13 - where he declared...

Psa 89:13 You have a mighty arm;
Strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.

Psa 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;
Mercy and truth go before Your face.

Psa 89:15 Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!
They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - continuing to sing the praises of the Lord.

This included a focus on the almighty power of the One - Who's right hand is lifted up.

And he also focused on the heavenly throne of the Lord - which is founded upon Righteousness and justice.

In other words - the judicial throne of the LORD - is established with righteous rulings - and just judgments.

And it's for this reason that those who are guilty of sinning against God - should cry out for forgiveness.

And knowing that we're all guilty before God - - we can rejoice in knowing that...

...the throne of the Lord is not only established on righteous rulings - and just judgments...

...but - Mercy and truth goes before His face.

In other words - the Lord is not only a just judge - Who is ready to judge with righteous judgment...

...but - He is also a merciful judge - Who is ready to pardon us - with His steadfast love and faithfulness.

And it's for this reason that Ethan assured his audience - that those who walk in the light of the Lord...

...will be blessed by the joyful sound of those who sing His praise.

Let's consider how Ethan expanded upon this point - here in the 89th Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 16 - where he declared...

Psa 89:16 In Your name they rejoice all day long,
And in Your righteousness they are exalted.

Psa 89:17 For You are the glory of their strength,
And in Your favor our horn is exalted.

Psa 89:18 For our shield belongs to the LORD,
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - describing the way that those who trust in the LORD - will rejoice every day...

...and the reason why is because - those who trust in Him are exalted in the righteousness of our Redeemer.

Not only that - but - the LORD is also the One Who glorifies His people with His supernatural strength...

...and at the same time - He also gives those who trust in Him the victory - according to His gracious favor.

Ethan also worshipped the Lord - because - He is the King of kings - Who was serving as a shield - for the people of Israel.

And while it's true that the Lord was the righteous King - Who was providing Israel with supernatural protection from their enemies...

...it's also true that the Lord was the One - Who raised up King David...

...so that they might be established - there in the land of promise.

Let's consider how Ethan explained it - here in the 89th Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 19 - where he declared...

Psa 89:19 Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one,
And said: "I have given help to one who is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the people.

Psa 89:20 I have found My servant David;
With My holy oil I have anointed him,

Psa 89:21 With whom My hand shall be established;
Also My arm shall strengthen him.

Psa 89:22 The enemy shall not outwit him,
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

Psa 89:23 I will beat down his foes before his face,
And plague those who hate him.

Psa 89:24 "But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him,
And in My name his horn shall be exalted.

Psa 89:25 Also I will set his hand over the sea,
And his right hand over the rivers.

Psa 89:26 He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.'

Psa 89:27 Also I will make him My firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.

Psa 89:28 My mercy I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall stand firm with him.

Psa 89:29 His seed also I will make to endure forever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - recounting the promises that the Lord made - concerning His servant - David.

And just as the Lord promised - King David was anointed - strengthened - and established there in the land of promise.

From the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea - David's horn was exalted over Israel...

...and all for the glory of the LORD.

Ethan also reminded his readers - about the covenant that the Lord made with King David...

...which would result in the exaltation of his seed - - which is to say that...

...a SON of King David would rule from His throne forevermore.

We actually find Ethan - quoting this covenant - here in the lyrics of the 89th Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 30 - where he declared...

Psa 89:30 "If his sons forsake My law

And do not walk in My judgments,

Psa 89:31 If they break My statutes

And do not keep My commandments,

Psa 89:32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod,

And their iniquity with stripes.

Psa 89:33 Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him,

Nor allow My faithfulness to fail.

Psa 89:34 My covenant I will not break,

Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.

Psa 89:35 Once I have sworn by My holiness;

I will not lie to David:

Psa 89:36 His seed shall endure forever,

And his throne as the sun before Me;

Psa 89:37 It shall be established forever like the moon,

Even like the faithful witness in the sky." Selah

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - reminding his readers about the David Covenant - which is found in 2nd Samuel chapter 7.

And to sum it up with simplicity - the Lord promised to raise up a descendant of David...

...who would sit on the throne of Israel - forevermore.

And while it's true that the Lord promised to keep this covenant - according to His unfailing faithfulness...

...it's also true that the Lord tore the kingdom of Israel - from the hands of Solomon.

Now - remember - there were many who believed that King Solomon would be the One - Who would fulfill the Davidic covenant.

And yet - by the end of his reign - the 10 northern tribes of Israel were no longer living under the rule of Judah.

And while Solomon's son - Rehoboam - reigned over the southern kingdom of Judah for 17 years...

...he was unable to protect the people of Judah - from Shishak - the king of Egypt.

This seems to be the reason for why Ethan cried out to the Lord.

Let's consider the way that he put it - here in the 89th Psalm - look with me beginning there at verse 38 - where he declared...

Psa 89:38 But You have cast off and abhorred,
You have been furious with Your anointed.

Psa 89:39 You have renounced the covenant of Your servant;
You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

Psa 89:40 You have broken down all his hedges;
You have brought his strongholds to ruin.

Psa 89:41 All who pass by the way plunder him;
He is a reproach to his neighbors.

Psa 89:42 You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries;

You have made all his enemies rejoice.

Psa 89:43 You have also turned back the edge of his sword,
And have not sustained him in the battle.

Psa 89:44 You have made his glory cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.

Psa 89:45 The days of his youth You have shortened;
You have covered him with shame. Selah

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - voicing his concerns about the way that the Lord had cast off and abhorred the anointed king of Israel.

We know that this wasn't about King David - - and the punishment of King Solomon didn't begin until after his death.

That being the case - it seems to me that Ethan was referring to Solomon's son - Rehoboam...

...who followed in his father's footsteps - by doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

It's for this reason that the Lord exalted the right hand of his adversaries; and made all his enemies rejoice.

As a matter of fact - it was during the reign of Rehoboam - when the Lord raised up Shishak king of Egypt...

...who came up against Jerusalem - and he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD...

...AND the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything...

...including the gold shields which Solomon had made.

With all of this in mind - it's no wonder that Ethan believed that the Lord had renounced the Davidic covenant.

And it most certainly seemed as if the LORD had cast down the crown - and the throne of David.

And it's for this reason that Ethan cried out to the Lord.

Let's consider how he put it - here in the 89th Psalm

Look with me - beginning there at verse 46 - where he declared...

Psa 89:46 How long, LORD?

Will You hide Yourself forever?

Will Your wrath burn like fire?

Psa 89:47 Remember how short my time is;

For what futility have You created all the children of men?

Psa 89:48 What man can live and not see death?

Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave? Selah

Here in these verses - we find Ethan - struggling with the situation that was unfolding right before his very eyes.

And as he considered the consequences of a God Who fails to keep His covenant...

...Ethan wrestled with the question - - concerning the futility of our existence...

...in a world where our Creator could break His covenant with King David.

What Ethan was failing to realize is that - God's plan doesn't always play out - the way we imagined.

And the reason why is because - His thoughts are way beyond anything that we could fantasize.

Let's consider how the Lord explained it - in Isaiah chapter 55 - it's beginning at verse 8 - where He declared...

Isa 55:8 "My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

Isa 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts."

From this - we can see that the LORD is able to accomplish things - that we can't even begin to imagine.

And so - if you're wrestling with questions about why God is failing to fulfill His promise...

...then - I encourage you to remember that - His ways are higher than our ways.

Sadly - there are many like Ethan the Ezrahite - who are easily distracted by their questions and concerns - regarding God's plan.

And rather than trusting in the God - Who alone is able to keep all of His promises...

...it's not uncommon for the people of God to question the love of the LORD...

...whenever He fails to fulfill His covenant - in the way we wanted.

With this in mind - let's take some time to consider the way that Ethan questioned the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.

Let's look at the final section of this Psalm - beginning there at verse 49 - where Ethan asked...

Psa 89:49 Lord, where are Your former lovingkindnesses,
Which You swore to David in Your truth?

Psa 89:50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants—
How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples,

Psa 89:51 With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD,
With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.

Psa 89:52 Blessed be the LORD forevermore!

Amen and Amen.

Here in the final verses of this Psalm - we find Ethan - presenting the Lord with a loaded question...

...about why he was withholding the lovingkindness that He promised to pour out on King David.

And while it's true that he concluded this Psalm with a proclamation of praise...

...it's also true that he was struggling to understand why the Lord failed to establish the seed of David...

...there upon the throne of Israel.

What he failed to understand - was that the Lord was preparing to fulfill the Davidic Covenant - - through the lineage of David's son - Nathan.

You see - when the Lord tore the kingdom of Israel from the hands of Solomon...

...this punishment also included his removal from the bloodline that would bring forth the promised Seed.

And it's for this reason that the Lord chose David's son - Nathan...

...to produce the bloodline - from which the Lord Jesus would be born.

As a matter of fact - it's in Luke chapter 3 - where Luke presents us with the Genealogy of Jesus - through the family tree of Mary.

And it's there where we learn that Jesus came from the lineage of King David - through his son - Nathan.

And in this way - the Lord Jesus is the promised Seed - Who will fulfill the Davidic covenant.

This was precisely the promise that the angel Gabriel presented to Mary - prior to her pregnancy.

It's in Luke chapter 1 - - beginning at verse 30 - where Gabriel declared...

Luk 1:30 “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Luk 1:31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.

Luk 1:32 “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

Luk 1:33 “And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

From this - we can see that - the Lord Jesus is the promised Seed - Who was sent to fulfill the Davidic covenant.

And listen - there's coming a day when He will return - and establish the throne of David - forevermore.

That being the case - Ethan's concerns about the Davidic covenant were unnecessary...

...because - the LORD will always keep His promises.

At the same time - you might also be interested to know that - the Lord still blessed Solomon...

...by using his descendant - Joseph - to serve as the adoptive Father of our Savior - Jesus.

The proof of my point can be found in Matthew chapter 1 - where we find the genealogy of Joseph.

And it's there where we learn that - Joseph came from the bloodline of King David...

...through his son - Solomon - and through Solomon's son Rehoboam.

In this way - God graciously allowed the lineage of Solomon...

...to play a role in the upbringing of the promised Seed.

Now - as we consider the way that the LORD fulfilled the Davidic covenant - through the incarnation of Christ Jesus...

...we can rejoice in knowing that - the LORD will always fulfill His promises - because - it's impossible for Him to lie.

I like the way that Paul put it - in Hebrews chapter 6 - it's beginning at verse 17 - where he declared...

Heb 6:17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

Heb 6:18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

Christian - listen - it's impossible for the Lord to lie.

Therefore - it's also impossible for Him to break the covenant that He makes - with those who trust in Him.

Now - I realize that it seems like the Lord is allowing the enemies of the cross - to engage in all manner of wickedness - here in these last days...

...and yet - it would be a mistake for us to think that the Lord has profaned His crown - and cast down His throne.

Rather than following Ethan the Ezrahite - into the pit of despair...

...I encourage you to rest in the realization that the Seed of David will return...

...and it's at that point in time - when the Lord will fulfill the covenant that He has made...

...with those who trust in His perfect promises.