

Part 1 – Teaching with Parables

Psalm 78

I ... Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

The words ‘**give ear**’ here mean **to broaden out the ear** (with the hand), i.e. (by implication) **to listen** (#238). And the word ‘**incline**’ means (in the context of this Psalm) **to stretch or spread out** (#5186). And the ‘law’ of course, is *God’s Law* (#8451) which includes not only the Ten Commandments [https://t.me/BibleStudyBooks_Exodus/88] (laws governing *individual* conduct) but also His Statutes (laws pertaining to *national administration*), Judgments (court judgments) and ordinances (rituals set in place to find forgiveness from God *until* the Messiah, Jesus Christ, came). So, the Psalmist is calling his people (fellow Israelites) to listen *closely* to what he’s about to say concerning God’s Laws. And his reason for doing so, is to teach them *how important* it is to *obey* God’s Laws. And he does this in a wonderful way: by giving a history lesson. This Psalm therefore has a very important ‘moral lesson’, which is essentially that: Divine history (i.e. the Bible) is *very important* to remember *because* it contains ***much more than appears on the surface***. While the Psalms of Asaph typically start with expressions of deep resentment (Psalm 73:2–3; 74:1; 77:2–3; 79:5) which are then overcome by reassurance about God’s past mighty works and even His nature (Ps 73:16, 18, 74:12, 77:10–11, 79:13), this psalm was written to encourage (and explain) *that very process*. That’s why this is a ‘*Mas'-chil*’ Psalm, which is a Psalm of ‘*Understanding*’ or ‘*Instruction*’ – it *gives us the basis of all true instruction and understanding* if we simply take the time to study and meditate (think deeply upon) it. After all, God *wanted* Israel to remember what God had done for them (Exodus 10:2). And Israel’s history was *supposed* to be (and clearly was with at least some of them) passed on from generation to generation (Psalm 44:1). So, in this Psalm, the Psalmist commits to teaching his era’s children about all the Lord’s incredible work *on behalf of Israel*. This is both an encouragement to trust and obey God as well as a warning about those who failed to honor, fear, love and obey Him.

Moreover, the beginning of this Psalm is very similar to the ‘Song of Moses’, which was a song that God Himself gave to Moses, to give to the children of Israel, **for a witness for God against** the children of Israel (Deut 31:19) because He *knew* they would not always obey His Laws. He actually told Moses that: *it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that **this song shall testify against them as a witness**; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swore* (Deut 31:21). And the first few verses of this ‘Song of Moses’ pretty much sum up why God wanted it to be given to Israel...

1 Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

3 *Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.*
4 *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*
5 *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.*
Deut 32:1-5

So, the Psalm begins by testifying of God's righteous attributes and then testifying how His children have corrupted *themselves*... i.e. they did *not* learn to do evil from Him! And, the rest of the 'song', not only gives some history, but also much *prophecy* of how God made Israel into a nation and how they would corrupt *themselves*. It also prophesies of what God would do in response to it, and also gives us the ultimate judgment of Israel (and all of God's enemies), even at the Second Advent. So, it's a *wonderful* Song to study *and remember*. If you'd like to do so, check out this link: [https://t.me/BibleStudyBooks_Deuteronomy/127]. But the point to our study here is that: just as God gave Israel the 'Song of Moses', so likewise is the Psalmist here in Ps 78 giving this Psalm *for instruction and learning* but also a warning (testimony) to Israel (*and us*). So again, it is, *not only* to cause the people (and future generations, including us today too) to remember all that God *has* done (as an encouragement to trust *and obey* God) but also as a warning about those who fail to honor, love, fear and obey Him...

Psalm 78

2 *I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:*
3 *Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.*

The Psalmist is now going to 'open' his mouth, which means *to open wide* (#6605) in a 'parable', which means *a pithy maxim*, usually *of metaphorical nature*; hence, *a simile* (as an *adage, poem, discourse*) (#4912). And the words 'dark sayings' mean *a puzzle, hence, a trick, conundrum, sententious maxim* (#2420) and have also been rendered as a hard question, proverb or even a riddle. And the words 'of old' mean *from antiquity time* (#6924). So, this simply means the Psalmist is going to explain a *very* important (and timeless) truth that applies to *everyone* in the world (and truly, to *all* generations). And it's something that many people don't understand, which is why he calls it a 'parable' or a 'dark saying' (puzzle or a conundrum). So again, the Psalmist is going to give a really good history lesson but, in doing so he will reveal that there is more to Divine history (i.e. that which is written in the Bible) than appears on the surface. So, **it is the 'moral lesson' of history that is the 'parable' or 'dark sayings' here.** Notably, Proverbs begins this way too (Prov 1:6) and sums up the point to studying (and meditating on God's Word, i.e. Divine history) really well in vs 7 when Solomon states that *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction*. So, if we don't want to be fools, we too need to 'give ear' and 'incline' our ears to what is said in this 'Maschil' Psalm!

Now, what is also quite important about this verse is that, it was quoted by Jesus Christ *Himself*. As it is written...

*34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and **without a parable spake he not unto 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 which have been kept secret from the foundation** [see apx 146] **of the world**.*

Matt 13:34-35 [The World That Then Was - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/496>]

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

*34 But **without a parable spake he not unto them**: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.*

Mark 4:33-34

There're several key points to glean from these Scriptures. First off, Jesus spoke 'parables' to the multitudes of people *but* when He was alone with His disciples He would expound (explain #1956) what they meant. Thankfully, we have written record of His explanations for several very important parables. And the Greek word for '**parable**' is pretty much the same as in the Hebrew: **a similitude** ("parable"), i.e. (*symbol.*) **fictitious narrative** (of common life conveying a moral), **apoth gm or adage** (#3850). And *one* reason He only spoke parables to the multitudes of people (while explaining them in detail to His disciples) was to (as Mth 13:35 says) *fulfill scripture*.

What Scripture? THIS Scripture, in Psalm 78:2! So, 'parables' and 'dark sayings' (puzzles or riddles) are another way to explain something *that is written* in God's Word. As verse 3 says, the Psalmist was simply explaining (through parables and 'dark sayings') *what he had heard* (and known) *from past generations*. So, the truths in the parables *should* be something we know IF we study God's Word. But, many people do not, and this is nothing new to our time. Back in days of the Psalmist, and in Jesus' day, there were *many* Biblical illiterate people. And, because many people like to remain that way (they don't thirst spiritually for the truth), a parable, or a 'dark saying' was given so that *those who were interested in learning more* (as the disciples were) *would ask for more clarification*. It was a way of separating those who were sincere about following God (seeking Him and wanting to obey Him) from those who were just 'play actors' [Church is Not Christianity - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/212>].

A classic example of this is when Mary valued listening to Jesus' detailed explanations more than helping around the house. When her sister Martha complained about this to Jesus, He simply told her that Mary had chosen '*that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*' (Luke 10:38-42). Simply put, Mary valued learning the deeper truths that Jesus taught over worrying about menial tasks around the house. In other words, she had her priorities straight. While she surely

helped around the house, she simply didn't spend *excess* time doing so. She'd rather spend her free time learning from Jesus Christ instead of worrying about 'things of the flesh'. How wise she was. That's why Jesus said that the truth she learned would not be taken away from her (Rev 3:7). She soaked Jesus' teachings up like a dry sponge does water. Now, Jesus' disciples actually asked Him one time why He always taught to the multitudes in parables. After all, He gave them *detailed* explanation of those same parables. So, why didn't He do that with the multitudes? Well, we know one reason was to fulfill Scripture (Matt 13:35). But, why did our Heavenly Father want the people taught this way? After all, God inspired the Psalmists to write what they did, so it was obviously God's *will* that the people be taught this way. Further, Jesus didn't say (or teach) anything that was out of God's Will (John 8:28-29), so teaching the multitudes in parables was obviously in God's will. Let's see how Jesus responded to the disciple's question...

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

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

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

*13 **Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.***

*14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, **By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:***

*15 **For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.***

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Matt 13:10-17

The words '**at any time**' in verse 15 can mean several things: **not ever; also if** (or lest) **ever** (or **perhaps**) (#3379) and it's been translated as: *if peradventure, lest* (at any time, haply), *not at all, whether or not*. In other words, even though the people didn't initially understand the parables, there might (perhaps) come a time when they began to seek truth. This did actually happen, as Acts 2:37-47 well documents. Thus, **the parables are designed to provoke thought**, much as questions do... and thinking with more than your carnal mind (Rom 8:5-8) is a vital part of coming around to seeking the truth. But, then *why* was the truth 'given' (directly explained) to the disciples not the multitudes? After all, Jesus Himself said that: *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth* (John 18:37). It was 'given' to them because their hearts were already open to the truth. [Likely, they (like Jeremiah

and Paul, Jer 1:5 & Acts 26:16-18) were chosen from the first earth age (Eph 1:4-5, Rom 8:29-30) [<https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/489>]. So, Jesus Christ chose them because God *knew* these men would accept the truth *and be faithful servants* who would establish the Church and *make sure* that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would not ‘die off’ after Jesus ascended to heaven. After all, Luke 6:12-13 tells us that only *after* Jesus prayed **all** night, did He choose His disciples. So, the choice of who the twelve disciples would be came directly from God Himself. And Judas too was truly chosen, for the express purpose of fulfilling Scripture (John 6:70-71). But the simple (yet sad) truth is that not everyone *wants* to hear the truth. As Paul said in 2 Thess 2:10 and 12, some people simply *refuse to receive the love of the truth* that they might be saved because *they find pleasure in **unrighteousness***. They are deceived into thinking that sin is fun and that it has no consequences. They can’t ‘add’ up the facts very well; they don’t see how their sins tear them down and cause most of their problems. Which is why Jesus said (in John 18:37) that *every one that is of the truth heareth my voice* (John 18:37). Those who are seeking truth will hear His ‘voice’ – be it the written Word or the Holy Spirit (John 6:63). And that was also the prophet Isaiah’s point in Isaiah 6, which Jesus quoted from here in Mth 13...

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

*9 And he said, **Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.***

*10 **Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.***

Isa 6:8-10

In case you have not studied all of this chapter [which you can do here, via this link if you’d like: https://t.me/BibleStudyBooks_Isaiah/135] Isaiah had been taken, in a vision, to the very throne of God, in this chapter. This was pretty overwhelming to Isaiah and he proclaimed he wasn’t worthy of such a thing. So, an angel came and touched his lips with a ‘live coal’ from the altar of God, which cleansed his iniquity – making him fit for his mission. God then asked who would ‘go’ for ‘Us’ and Isaiah immediately pipped up and volunteered for the unknown mission. God then told him (in the verses above) to go and tell ‘this people’ (speaking of His ‘chosen’ People, Israel) *to turn away from their sins or they would be carried away by the Assyrians*. And, true to His Word, the northern Ten tribes were taken away captive. But, the southern kingdom of Judah was saved because Isaiah, Hezekiah and many others in Jerusalem were praying God would save them. Which, as 1 Kings 19:34 and 20:6, He did for His own sake and for the sake of keeping the promises He gave to David (2 Sam 7).

But, even though God sent Isaiah to prophesy to Israel (both kingdoms) He knew that most wouldn’t hear or understand. But, as God pointed out in Ezek 3:17-18 and Ezek 33:1-9, the Lord

(YHVH) still wanted them warned *because He is righteous* and *it's only right* to warn people to repent *before* judgment is enforced. As the *Companion Bible* points out, the phrase 'Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes' (in Isa 6:10 above) is simply a figure of speech (a common Hebrew idiom of the day) that means ***to declare or foretell that the heart of the people*** (Israel) ***would be 'made fat'***. In other words, they would (for the most part) not be open to receiving the truth and this would make their heart 'fat' (translated as 'waxed fat' in Mth 13:15 above) and their ears 'heavy' and their eyes shut. In other words, ***hearing the truth would only harden their heart more so***. They didn't want to hear the Assyrians were coming; it pissed them off and they refused to listen because they simply *did not want to change from their sinful ways*. Many people react the same way if you (without discernment) bluntly tell them that the 'traditions of man' they have believe in their whole life are truly a lie. If you've ever told someone who sincerely believes in the Rapture Theory that there is no such thing, you'll likely understand this [<https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/457>]. It *takes time* to plant seeds of truth (with discernment from the Holy Spirit) before people will come around to opening their heart to the truth; and some never do, unfortunately. That's why Paul told us to *walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. And let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man* (Col 4:5-6).

So, that essentially is why Jesus used parables. He set forth the truth in a way that, IF they were interested, they could ask for further explanation (as the disciples did) but if they were not, they could go on their way and they would not really be accountable for rejecting the truth because it was put forth as a parable instead of a clear truth that was undeniable. However, of the 'religious men' – who *claimed* to know the truth – He said...

*22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: **but now they have no cloke for their sin**.*

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

John 15:22-24

As James 4:17 says, *to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*. The 'multitudes' of people did not know what the Law really said. All they had to go on was the perverted 'traditions of man' that the religious men taught them (Mth 15, Mk 7). **But** the 'religious' men *were* able to read the Scriptures, and therefore did not have the 'cloak' of innocence that the multitudes of people did *because they knew better yet they still sinned...* and *then* pretended to be 'holy' men of God. *And* when they saw Jesus Christ come and do all the miracles that *the Scriptures said He would do*, they should have recognized He *truly was* the Messiah (John 5:37-47). So, the Scribes and Pharisees (such as Paul) - who were well learned in

the Scriptures - really *had no cloak for their sin*; but the multitudes *did* because *they didn't know the Scriptures* (and didn't have access to them as we do today) while the 'religious' men did.

So again, Jesus did not teach bluntly before the multitudes because it was not God's will for Him to do so. After all, for the people in Jesus' time, judgment (like that which came upon Israel in Isaiah's days) was not near. And further, the Gift of the Holy Spirit would be given after Jesus died, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven (Acts 2:33). And the Holy Spirit *would* help many of them to come to a good repentance. So, God wanted Jesus to teach in parables, not only to fulfill Scripture, but also because that was the befitting teaching method at that time. But, when the Holy Spirit came, the disciples (led by the Holy Spirit) would expound the truth much more clearly, *to those willing to listen*. Case in point: after the crucifixion, many who didn't understand the parables Jesus taught, and even called for Jesus' death, later came to repentance after the Holy Spirit spoke through Peter on the first Pentecost day (Acts 2:37-47). So, a critical part of salvation is ***not* hardening our heart to truth**, as Paul lays out so well in Hebrews 3-4. *That's* what 'quenching the Holy Spirit' is, which Paul advises us NOT to do, in 1 Thess 5:19. And, this is *so* important that Jesus warned His disciples (including us) about it too...

*34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be **overcharged** with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Luke 21:34-36

Jesus warned us not to let our hearts be 'overcharged' with cares of this life so that we get *distracted from the truth*. And truth, is what this beautiful Psalm 78th is about to teach us. The word '**overcharged**' here mean **to burden** (#925) and comes from a word that means **weighty, burdensome** or **grave** (#926). In other words, it means to be **burdened down with sin**. Loving things of this world rather than our Heavenly Father, as John also warned us about...

*15 **Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.** If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*16 For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

*17 And **the world passeth away, and the lust thereof**: but he that doeth the will of God **abideth for ever**.*

1 John 2:15-17

If we let our heart (desires, emotions, intentions and motivations) and mind (thought process) get 'wrapped up' in worldly things then 'that day' will come upon us 'unawares', as Jesus warned in

Lk 21:34. *What ‘day’ is He referring to? The day that Jesus Christ returns.* Jesus warned us about this also in Mth 24, Mk 13 and Luke 21. In fact, the New Testament is *full* of warnings not to let your heart become hardened (Heb 3-4 for example) because, *if it does, you’ll not be found acceptable to Jesus Christ when He returns, because* you’ll be a ‘worker of iniquity’ (Mth 7:21-23) instead of a spiritual virgin whom He can marry (spiritually); which means you’ll miss the first resurrection (Rev 20:4-6) and not be given eternal life, nor be allowed to rule with Jesus Christ when He returns. So, understanding the parables and ‘dark sayings’ that both the Old and the New Testaments teach us is so *very* vital to being acceptable to Jesus Christ. Therefore, if you have not already, you might want to check out the special studies below which help explain the parables Jesus Christ taught us...

Parables Tell a Story by Comparing - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/357>

He That Hath an Ear, Part 1 - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/381>

He That Hath an Ear, Part 2 - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/382>

He That Hath an Ear, Part 3 - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/383>

Parable of the Tares - <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/251>

Now that we’ve laid the ‘ground work’ for what this Psalm will be teaching us, and the *crucial* importance of it, we’ll move on in the next study to learn just what this ‘parable’ and ‘dark sayings’ the Psalmist is going to tell us. But let’s remember...

*1 My son, **if** thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
2 So that thou **incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;**
3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
4 **If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;**
5 **Then** shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.
6 **For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.**
7 **He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.**
8 **He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.**
9 **Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.**
10 *When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;*
11 **Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:**
12 **To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;**
13 *Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;*
14 *Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;*
Prov 2:1-14*

We’ll pick this up in part 2...

AMEN.