

**Psalms 89:0 ¶ Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.**

A maschil is a psalm of instruction. Ethan the Ezrahite was known for his wisdom.

*1 Kings 4:30–31 “And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than **Ethan the Ezrahite**, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol:”*

John Gill: “There was another Ethan, a singer, in David’s time; and it is more probable that he is the person, who might live to the times of Rehoboam, and see the decline of David’s family, and the revolt of the ten tribes from it; or perhaps it was one of this name who lived in the times of the Babylonish captivity, and saw the low estate that David’s family were come into; to which agrees the latter part of this psalm; and, in order to comfort the people of God, he wrote this psalm, showing that the covenant and promises of God, made with David, nevertheless stood firm, and would be accomplished: the title of the Septuagint version calls him Etham the Israelite; and the Arabic version Nathan the Israelite: the Targum makes him to be Abraham....But whoever was the penman of this psalm, it is “maschil”, an instructive psalm, a psalm causing to understand; it treats concerning the covenant of grace, and the promises of it; and concerning the mercy and faithfulness of God....”

**Psalms 89:1 ¶ I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.**

The psalmist begins with a commitment to sing about God’s lovingkindness, goodness (from Hebrew for “mercy”) and faithfulness forever. I think “to all generations” would reference those in his lifetime, but maybe he knew that his song/psalm would continue to speak to future generations. I know that for however long it is before the LORD returns to establish His kingdom, I pray that my writings will in some way will continue to honor Him and be helpful to others—especially in my own family.

I liked Spurgeon’s observation: “Because God is, and ever will be, faithful, we have a theme for song which will not be out of date for future generations; it will never be worn out, never be disproved, never be unnecessary, never be an idle subject, valueless to mankind. It will also be always desirable to make it known, for men are too apt to forget it, or to doubt it, when hard times press upon them.”

**Psalms 89:2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.**

The psalmist is declaring that God’s mercy and faithfulness will last forever, as long as the very heavens that God had established. Everything about God is eternal and unchanging—His character, His word, His love, His mercy, His truth, etc.

*Malachi 3:6 “For I am the LORD, I change not....”*

*Psalms 119:89 “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”*

1 John 4:7–8 *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”*  
Psalms 136:26 *“O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

Psalms 117:2 *“...the truth of the LORD endureth for ever.”*

**Psalms 89:3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,  
Psalms 89:4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.**

The psalmist notes that God chose David as His servant and promised that his posterity would continue for eternity and his throne would be preserved through all generations.

1 Samuel 16:1 *“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons....And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.”*

2 Samuel 7:16–17 *“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.”*

This statement bothered me for a long time. I can't remember who right now, but one commentator pointed out that though David's throne has been empty for many years, it is still a valid position before the LORD. That made sense to me. Following verses will explain that this is a consequence of the sins of his descendants. Before Jesus was born, the angel told Mary that He would reign on the throne of His [earthly] father David. When Jesus returns to establish His kingdom, that promise will be completely fulfilled.

Selah = a pause, a time for meditation

**Psalms 89:5 ¶ And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.**

The psalmist seems to be calling for the angels (one choice from the Hebrew) to praise the wonderful works of God and His faithfulness to His holy ones (from Hebrew for “saints”). This verse makes me think of Psalm 19:1: *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”* Every time I gaze with wonder on the myriads of stars, it's like they are shouting for the world to see the greatness of the God that made them.

**Psalms 89:6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?  
Psalms 89:7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.**

The psalmist declares that there is no one in heaven that can be compared to the LORD—no angel, none of the “false gods” that others believe live there. God is to be feared and held in awe and reverence by those that acknowledge Him as LORD.

**Psalms 89:8 O Lord God of hosts, who *is* a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?**

The psalmist’s questions are rhetorical; the answer is obvious. There is no being as strong as the LORD or that is characterized by the faithfulness He shows toward those that trust in Him.

This reminds me of some of my favorite verses in Isaiah as God describes Himself.

*Isaiah 45:18 “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.”*

*Isaiah 45:22 “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”*

*Isaiah 46:9 “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,”*

**Psalms 89:9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.**

The psalmist notes that God rules over His creation, acknowledging His control of the raging seas and the fact that He can still them with a command.

**Psalms 89:10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.**

The Hebrew for “Rahab” is a reference to Egypt. The psalmist is referencing once again how God broke the power of Egypt as He delivered His people from slavery there. In fact, He had scattered all those that had stood against Him and His people.

Interesting note from Guzik: “In the ancient times Middle East there were many popular legends about the gods who combated different hostile deities in order to create the earth. Ethan, Asaph, Job, and Isaiah took some of these stories and made Yahweh the hero of them. Therefore, it is Yahweh who rules **the raging of the sea**, when ancient legends said that Tiamat (the Deep) was the chaotic goddess defeated by the hero god Marduk (Bel), or Yam (the Sea) who was defeated by Baal. It is Yahweh who cuts **Rahab in pieces**, not Marduk or Baal.... It is important to note that the Hebrew Scriptures do not simply believe or adopt this Canaanite mythology; they take it and transform it, using it to exalt Yahweh in a way that the Canaanite myths never did.”

**Psalms 89:11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.**

**Psalms 89:12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.**

The psalmist acknowledges God as the Creator of heaven and earth—especially Israel; and, therefore, the rightful authority over it all. Verse 12 seems to be referencing north and south as representative of everything in between. Tabor (on the border between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel) and Hermon (on the northern border of Israel) are specific reference to two mountains in Israel. Commentators note that Tabor was west of the Jordan River and Hermon on the east—effectively representing east and west.

**Psalms 89:13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand. Psalms 89:14 Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.**

The Hebrew for “mighty” makes reference to force that is victorious and shows mastery. For “strong” it references hardened strength that prevails. To be “high” is to be exalted and lifted up. In other words, the LORD is exalted above all as the strong victorious master of all.

God rules from His throne in moral righteousness and judges rightly according to His divine law (from the Hebrew). His character is one of lovingkindness and truth. I liked Spurgeon’s comment: “God as a sovereign is never unjust or unwise. He is too holy to be unrighteous, too wise to be mistaken; this is constant matter for joy to the upright in heart.”

How wonderful would it be if the judges of men did their jobs according to moral righteousness as declared by God’s word in a spirit of love and truth! But that will never be until Jesus takes His throne in the millennium.

**Psalms 89:15 ¶ Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.**

**Psalms 89:16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.**

Blessed or happy are those that have learned to walk in accordance to the will of God. The rejoice every day as their spirits are lifted up in Your justice and righteousness.

**Psalms 89:17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.**

**Psalms 89:18 For the Lord *is* our defence; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.**

Those who put their faith in God find their strength in Him. He is the only protection one can count on. We have nothing to fear, since He will allow nothing to touch those that belong to Him that He does not intend for good—even when it makes absolutely no sense to us. His ways are far beyond our understanding. I am so thankful that the LORD gave us this truth through the prophet Isaiah.

*Isaiah 55:8–9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

The psalmist declares that no matter who sits on the throne of Israel, it is God, “the Holy One of Israel” who is their true King.

**Psalms 89:19** ¶ Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is mighty*; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.

**Psalms 89:20** I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

**Psalms 89:21** With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.

**Psalms 89:22** The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

**Psalms 89:23** And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.

The psalmist seems to be referencing when God told Samuel to anoint David as the future King of Israel. He told the prophet that He had chosen a man that was a true servant of God that He had anointed with His holy oil—referencing the fact that He had filled him with His Spirit.

*1 Samuel 16:1 “And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons....Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.”*

God had strengthened him so that no enemy could deceive or browbeat him (from Hebrew). God would personally destroy his foes and strike down those that hated him.

And God did exactly that even though He allowed David to experience several years of adversity in the process of preparing him to serve as Israel’s king. As king, God gave him victory over every enemy that tried to stand against him.

**Psalms 89:24** But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

God had declared that He would bless David with His faithfulness and lovingkindness. It was as the servant of God that he would be exalted. I think this also probably looks forward to the reign of Jesus the Messiah that would be a descendant of David.

**Psalms 89:25** I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

I think the NLT has the right idea in making a connection to the extent of David’s kingdom—from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. The kingdom of Jesus will extend over all seas and rivers from the throne of David in Jerusalem as foretold by the angel Gabriel and the Apostle John.

*Luke 1:30–33 “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”*

*Revelation 19:11 “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.... And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.... And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

**Psalms 89:26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.**

**Psalms 89:27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.**

**Psalms 89:28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.**

God declared that David would cry out to Him as God my Father and the rock of his salvation (and that truth is affirmed in many of David’s psalms). He in turn would acknowledge him as His firstborn, occupying a higher position than all the other kings on earth, as king of Israel, God’s firstborn among all the nations on earth.

*Exodus 4:22 “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn....”*

God would hold David fast in His lovingkindness and the strength of His covenant. God always keeps His word. His covenant with David is found in 2Samuel 7.

*2 Samuel 7:12–16 “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”*

**Psalms 89:29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.**

**Psalms 89:30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;**

**Psalms 89:31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;**

**Psalms 89:32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.**

**Psalms 89:33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.**

As seen in the Davidic covenant shown above from 2Samuel, God has promised that David's seed and his throne would endure forever. He was warned, however, that if his children rebelled against God and His commandments, He would punish them; they would suffer as stricken with a leprous plague (from the Hebrew). Nevertheless (a beautiful word), God would not allow that to interfere with the keeping of His covenant. He would be faithful to His word.

**Psalms 89:34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.**

**Psalms 89:35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.**

**Psalms 89:36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.**

**Psalms 89:37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.**

Once God makes a promise, it is sure; He had made a promise to David and will not lie.

*Psalms 119:89 "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."*

*Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."*

*Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."*

God promised David that His seed would endure forever and his throne would endure as surely as the sun and moon were fixed in heaven.

Selah – a pause, an opportunity for meditation

**Psalms 89:38 ¶ But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.**

**Psalms 89:39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.**

Whatever the time of trouble being referenced, it is clear that the psalmist recognizes it as coming from the hand of God. We know "thine anointed" is not referencing David; it must be a reference to one or more of his successors. We know that God keeps covenant, so He hasn't gone back on His word. He has followed through with the consequences of judgment based on rebellion and rejection on the part of the king (possibly the last of Judah's kings—which would make it seem like the God had voided His covenant).

**Psalms 89:40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.**

**Psalms 89:41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.**

The psalmist bemoans the fact that the king has been disgraced and shamed in the eyes of his neighbors since God has taken away His hedge of protection around him.

Reminder—God had warned David what would happen if his seed rejected Him as LORD. As Christians, we should be mindful that when we choose to disregard God’s will as revealed in His word, we effectively step outside His realm of protection and are subject to the consequences that result from such disobedience.

**Psalms 89:42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.**

**Psalms 89:43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.**

The psalmist credits the LORD with strengthening the enemy and giving them victory over Israel.

Reminder—God often uses the wicked when seeking to bring His people to their knees in repentance.

**Psalms 89:44 Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.**

**Psalms 89:45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.**

He emphasizes again that the king has been removed from his throne in shame.

Reminder—Rebellion against the LORD often results in being humbled in shame.

Selah = a pause, an opportunity for meditation

**Psalms 89:46 How long, Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?**

**Psalms 89:47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?**

**Psalms 89:48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.**

The psalmist is discouraged and wondering how long the LORD is going to stay angry. He asks God to remember how short a person’s lifetime is in the relative scheme of things. Death comes to every man.

Selah – a pause, an opportunity for meditation

I was intrigued with Spurgeon’s comment on verse 46: “Even thus we would entreat the Lord to remember the cause of Christ in these days. Can he be so angry with his church as to leave her much longer? How far will he suffer things to go? Shall truth die out, and saints exist no more? How long will he leave matters to take their course? Surely he must interpose soon, for, if he do not, true religion will be utterly consumed, as it were, with fire.”

Spurgeon lived from 1834-1892. If he had those thoughts then, how shocked he would be at the state of the church today! Yet how valid his statement stands in reference to the church today.

**Psalms 89:49 Lord, where *are* thy former lovingkindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth?**

The psalmist poses a question to God—Where are the lovingkindnesses you faithfully promised to David?

**Psalms 89:50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;**

**Psalms 89:51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.**

I liked the wording of the CJB for these verses: *“Remember, Adonai, the taunts hurled at your servants, which I carry in my heart [from] so many peoples! Your enemies, ADONAI, have flung their taunts, flung them in the footsteps of your anointed one.”*

The psalmist feels like God has forgotten His people. He has been personally affected as a result of God’s judgment.

As a member of the “church,” it grieves me, as it should all true believers, when the body of Christ is affected negatively by those claiming to be part of the church. Sadly, more and more churches are becoming like the church of Laodicea in these last days—lukewarm and prosperous; not realizing that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17).”

**Psalms 89:52 Blessed *be* the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.**

The psalmist ends abruptly, pronouncing an emphatic blessing on the LORD. He had said all that was on his heart. Though he was troubled, he had not lost faith. Though he was discouraged, he still trusted God.