

A SONG OF THE TEACHER

Songs Of The Savior-Our Messiah Revealed In The Psalms

by Doug Goins

Sometimes when a student of the Scriptures is studying in preparation for ministering to others, they have the wonderful experience of having God speak very directly to them prior to discovering anything they might have to say to the others. It doesn't always happen that way, but when it does it is encouraging and strengthening. That happened to me last week. It helped me remember why it is that I do what I do. The passage I've been working on to share with you, Psalm 78, is a song of the great Teacher Jesus, the Wisdom-Speaker who brings words of eternal life.

I am committed, as all the pastors at PBC are, to making the Scriptures the center of our counseling, teaching, preaching, and leading. But sometimes the spirit of the age can discourage me, and I can begin to second-guess why I'm spending so much time and energy in the subtleties of the word. Our generation wants us to be therapists, not preachers; it wants us to be program directors, not biblically directed counselors and teachers. I am so thankful that God stiffened my spine last week as I studied through this passage, saying, "You're doing the right thing-this *is* what is central." I hope I can share with you some of my renewed enthusiasm for this very great responsibility of teaching words of eternal life-that is, to people who want to hear. As we will see, another of the important points that comes out of this passage is that what we get out of the teaching of the word depends on the heart desire we bring to it.

Matthew 13 presents a compelling picture of Jesus Christ as the Teacher. It opens with a picture of Jesus on the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee at the village of Capernaum. The crowds were pressing in, so anxious to hear Jesus' words that he had to get into a boat and move some distance out so that he could see the crowd and they could hear him. Jesus taught that day in parables-he painted word pictures, told stories. He told several stories about the kingdom of heaven, about God's supernatural presence and power and activity in our lives and in our world. He said the kingdom of God is like a field where a farmer sows seed. Then he told stories of good seed and bad seed, crops that were abundant and crops that withered and died. He said the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, so tiny you can hardly see it, that grows into an enormous tree. He said the kingdom of God is like leaven, a simple substance that when mixed with dough has a powerful effect. Those stories that Jesus told helped his hearers understand the supernatural dynamic of the kingdom of God among them.

At the end of one of the stories in verse 9, Jesus said, "He who has ears, let him hear." He was implying that it is possible to listen to stories about God and heaven without really heeding the spiritual issues behind the words that are being spoken. Jesus' invitation was to hear everything he said as life-giving and life-enhancing, as the source of life itself.

He also talked about how blessed were the eyes of the people who were able to see, the ears of those who were able to hear. Then he said, "...Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (vs. 17). That reminds us of King David of Israel, the prophet who wrote in Psalm 40 about his own personal experiences, but ended up speaking truth that went far beyond his experience. He wrote empowered by the Holy Spirit in anticipation of what was to happen a thousand years later in the coming of Jesus the Messiah. David introduced us to the Passion-the atoning work, the death on the cross-of Jesus and how important it is for us (see Discovery Paper 4424).

The authority of the messianic teacher

Now we're going to be introduced to another prophetic anticipation in Psalm 78. This time the prophet is going to talk about the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ. There is a quote in Matthew 13:34-35 from Psalm 78:2: "All

these things [summarizing his preaching ministry, for that day at least] Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He was not talking to them without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world."

Matthew says that the psalm was predictive of the words that came out of the mouth of Jesus. We're going to look only at the first eight verses of Psalm 78, which is the introduction. It is messianic, focusing on the teaching ministry of Jesus, the One who was to come.

The superscription of Psalm 78 says it is a *maskil* of Asaph. Whenever you see a word in Hebrew in your English Bible, it means the translators didn't know what it meant. Part of the reason this word is confusing is that it has two different roots. One root has to do with wisdom, learning, and instruction. So perhaps this a didactic psalm of instruction. But the word *maskil* also has a primitive root having to do with music, with skill in creating harmony. So rather than going either way, to be accurate the translators simply say *maskil*.

But when we see who wrote the psalm, Asaph, we get a clue as to the meaning of the word *maskil*, because Asaph was a choir master, a leader of Levitical musicians under King David in the time of temple worship in Israel. First and Second Chronicles tell us that he had great impact as a leader in worship in Israel. He was the composer of twelve different psalms that are in our psalter. He was not only a theologian, someone who wrestled with God's presence and activity and power through history, but also a skilled musician. So I would suggest to you that what we're going to enjoy together is really theology expressed through music. Asaph combines clear understanding of God and his works with great poetic skill as he creates beautiful word pictures.

The first eight verses of Psalm 78 fall into three sections. Verses 1-3 introduce us to the authority of the messianic Teacher. Verses 4-5 present the content of his teaching. And finally verses 6-8 speak of the purpose of the messianic Teacher.

In verses 1-3 there is a call to attend, to listen carefully. It talks about the enthusiasm of the teacher as he speaks parabolically, creatively. And finally it says he speaks in historic continuity; there is nothing innovative about his ministry.

Listen, O my people, to my instruction;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.

There are basic keys here that help us understand how to blend all of Scripture together from Genesis to Revelation, because these three verses tie together Moses as a teacher in the Pentateuch, and Jesus himself. Asaph stands in the middle as a wisdom teacher, looking back to Moses and looking forward to Jesus, which says that Scripture is connected as a wonderful whole. It takes us "back to the future," if you will.

In Matthew 13, in our passage here, and in the writings of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-2), the phrase "the words of my mouth" is used (as it is throughout the Old Testament) to speak of Torah, God's instruction that has been placed in the mouth of the teacher. So the teachers are not speaking on their own authority or making things up. They are speaking as God informs, teaches, and directs them. So the Teacher says here, "Listen, O my people, to my instruction," or "what I have to share with you is a gift from God."

In verse 1 there is a command to listen and then a second command to incline their ears. Both of these verbs are built on the noun "ears." It really means to stretch out your ears, to pull them wide open so you don't miss anything. Jesus himself, as we read earlier in Matthew 13, uses these same subtleties of Old Testament language when he says, "If you have ears, use them. Don't miss out on the important things that I have to say

to you." It is possible to miss them!

In working through this last week I was reminded of the first Little League baseball coach I had in Westfield, Indiana when I was about eight or nine years old. His name was Paul Bardsley. Paul was a high school student, a catcher on the varsity baseball team. Because I idolized Paul, I wanted to be a catcher. I was a little fat kid who was really uncoordinated, yet Paul treated me with great care, helping me get my equipment on and teaching me catching technique. He was very personal in relationship. But there were times in our practices when he would stand up and say, "Listen up, men!" We were a bunch of little squatty nine-year-olds, yet he honored us as his men as he called us to attention, his point being, "I have important things to say to you, and if you don't pay attention you're the ones who will suffer in the long run." He was a great coach and teacher because he treated us like important people, but he was tough in confronting us about important issues that we needed to take seriously. That is really what the teacher is doing here. He is giving a strong command to work hard at listening.

He talks in verse 2 about teaching in parables, word pictures and stories that don't allow us to stay passive, that pull us in. When I was in college and graduate school it was said of the monological lecture format that it was possible for the information in the notes of the professor to go to the notes of the student and then back to the test of the professor without ever entering either one of our brains. That really is a possibility in passive listening, in the transferring of information for its own sake. But the parabolic method of Jesus' teaching doesn't allow that because it really is learning in process. Jesus said, "Those who have ears to hear [active listeners] get involved." People would ask Jesus, "What did you mean by that?" The disciples asked, "Why do you teach in parables?" (see Matthew 13:10). The listeners were pulled into his teaching. And for people like that who cared about truth and wanted to understand, he revealed eternal meaning. But they had to be people who were genuine learners, who really wanted it to make a difference in their lives.

Matthew 13 tells us the strange fact that Jesus told stories to hide truth as well as reveal truth. He did want people to understand about heaven and hell and God's love and judgment and salvation. But he said, "For whoever has [that is, whoever acts on what he hears and knows], to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken from him" (13:12). The more some people hear, the less they will understand. It is as if there is a law of diminishing returns; it will make less and less sense. And the people Jesus was talking about are those of us who sit under truth with no intention of doing anything about it. Jesus warns us that this is dangerous because our thinking will start to get muddled; things will become less clear. What we might have actually understood five or ten years ago will not make sense anymore. For people like that who become increasingly insensitive to truth, the message of Jesus can be dulling and damning, the seed of death. "For the heart of this people has become dull" (13:15). But to people who listen actively with enthusiasm for what Jesus has to say, it is the message of life; it is liberating. And the more they learn, the more life makes sense, and the more they want to know.

That is great news.

Verse 2 of Psalm 78 uses the word utter, which means literally to bubble over. It is as if the teacher is so full of life and good news that he just can't keep a lid on it. It bubbles out of him; he has an attractive enthusiasm for what he does.

Finally, verse 2 says that there is nothing superficial about what he has to say. Jesus talks about uttering dark sayings, things that have been hidden since the creation of the world. He deals with the riddles of life, mysteries, secret things. These are the things that are most important to us, the deepest issues with which we struggle in ourselves and in our relationships. Jesus doesn't want to just make us feel better by entertaining us. He wants to change our lives. So he asks us whether we as learners are willing to go deep with him and wrestle with these issues.

Although our Teacher says in verse 2 that these things are secret, in verse 3 he says that they really can be understood, because they have been made known by the spiritually sensitive fathers of previous generations. We see again a wonderful continuity between Moses, the wisdom teacher of Asaph, and then a thousand years later Jesus. They all stand in solidarity. God's word is always new yet old. It is the continual unfolding of that which has already been.

Remember the creativity and practicality of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (see Steve Zeisler's Matthew series, Discovery Papers 4403-4416). The concluding statement in the Sermon on the Mount talks about how astonished the people were because Jesus taught with authority, not like the scribes (Matthew 7:28-29). He didn't have to refer to other authorities; there was an authority within him. Yet it rang true to Old Testament revelation. His teaching was compelling and powerful, but it was not innovative. He said himself several times in the gospels that he was completely committed to the absolute authority of the whole of Old Testament truth. Matthew 5:17-18: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished." I have heard Christians say that they believe that Jesus brings new truth in the gospel. But the real point of Jesus' teaching ministry is that in him truth is made clear, revealed and explained. His teaching displays truth that has been God's gift from the very beginning. Nothing has changed.

To summarize the authority of the teaching ministry of Jesus, he had the ability to arrest attention and demand that we listen to something life-changing and amazingly important. He had enthusiasm and creativity in communication. Finally, he acknowledged that he stood in a stream of historical continuity.

When I was in junior high school I had a Sunday School teacher for two years who embodied that authority. Her name was Jo Kennison. She was a young high school teacher who taught drama, literature, and English. She had a Sunday School class of twenty squirrely, squirmy, easily distracted junior high boys and girls. I was one of those junior high boys, who was about ninety-nine percent hormones. Any Sunday School teacher's ability to arrest my attention was pretty phenomenal. But there was something about Jo's absolute conviction of who she was in Christ. She had the ability to demand attention and order, to demand that we listen and interact. She had the ability to draw things out of students that still amazes me as I look back through the years. There was creativity in the way she engaged her students, but she was not an innovator in what she taught; it was grounded in biblical revelation.

You may know that I have a great love of church history, and since my teenage years I have read voraciously about God's activity through the two thousand years of our history as his people in the church. It was Jo Kennison who introduced me to that great heritage as a seventh grader, if you can believe it. Seventh graders interested in church history? But it happened. I remember her reading and telling us great stories from the history of the church that always focused on God's sovereignty, goodness, and faithfulness to his church. She once told the story of how Charles the Hammer led French Christian troops in a decisive battle on the border between France and Spain, which turned back the Islamic invasion of northern Europe, and of how God used that battle to protect and preserve Christianity in Europe. That arrested my attention. So I thank God for Jo Kennison, for her enthusiasm and her commitment to the authority of the Scriptures, and for how much she emulated our great Teacher Jesus.

Word-based teaching of God's greatness

Let's move on to verses 4 and 5 and the content of what the Teacher says. You can be the most creative person in the world, but if what you say is meaningless or erroneous or dangerous, then creativity doesn't count for much.

We will not conceal them [these wonderful mysteries] from their children,
But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
That they should teach them to their children....

In these verses Asaph summarizes the important things about God's character and activity that must be

communicated to each new generation. And he says we are not to conceal truth, but continually communicate God's revelation of himself and his saving activity throughout human history and in our own lives.

Now, Asaph wrote for fathers and mothers. He was concerned that parents understand how important it was to teach their own children. He wanted them to take seriously their responsibility before the Lord so that each generation would grow up bathed in life-changing truth. Ron Ritchie has a wonderful sermon in print on these eight verses in Psalm 78, entitled *Our Changeless Lord's Instructions to Parents* (Discovery Paper 3722).

But what I want to emphasize here is the teaching of this eternal wisdom by Jesus Christ, our great Teacher. There are two things that stand out in verses 4 and 5 about the essential content of his message. First, in verse 4 there are three phrases that basically summarize God's activity. The first phrase is "the praises of the Lord," or his glorious, praiseworthy deeds. Second, it talks about his "strength," his might or power. And third, it talks about his "wondrous works," or his wonderful, marvelous activity. Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase of the Psalms says this is *Yahweh*'s "fame and fortune, the marvelous things he has done." We can consider all the powerful works of God that have been done in Jewish history, the miraculous interventions that are worthy of praise and thanksgiving, the events at which his chosen people could marvel: the Exodus from the nation of Egypt, the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, the conquest of the land of Canaan under Joshua, the deliverance of the nation through the powerful Judges God raised up, the uniting of the tribes under David. But none of those marvelous works can compare with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by which he brought salvation to us as individuals. And that event had clear meaning in all of Jesus' teaching as well.

In John 5 there is an interaction between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, who were upset over his healing ministry. The power of God was being clearly demonstrated in wonderful works, and they didn't like it. They also didn't like Jesus' claiming personal authority from his Father for what he was doing. He said to the leaders (5:17), "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." He was saying, "The God of the Old Testament's "wondrous works" is still expressing himself, and I am part of that expression." John 5:18 says that as a result they decided to kill him. Listen to Jesus' final response to them (verses 19-21):

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and [here is the heart of it] greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes."

Jesus was saying, "The resurrection will be the most amazing, awe-producing event in human history. You're going to marvel!"

Just as Asaph called the people of Israel to marvel at the great works of God, the resurrection invokes in us awe and wonder and praise of God for his amazing deeds. Jesus told truth that anticipated his own death and resurrection. There is a sense in which he knew that the resurrection would authenticate everything he said.

The second thing that stands out about the essential content of the Teacher's message, in verse 5, is that it is word-based; that is, the Old Testament word of God is exalted.

"For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel."

He teaches the commandments of God, the witness of God. Often in his teaching ministry Jesus would quote the Old Testament: "...For this is the Law and the Prophets."

So two things comprise the content of what the teacher says: the activity of God, the character of God, and the power of God exploding everywhere, which means that the teacher has to have eyes to see God at work; and the word of God itself, the Torah, the Old Testament, which is filled out and completed by the New

Testament.

I thought this week of another teacher I had who taught as Jesus did. I grew up in a small church in a little farm town in central Indiana. Victoria Davis was my Sunday School teacher in elementary school. She was a little white-haired lady who seemed too fragile to be teaching kids that full of energy. But when she talked about the strength of God and the awesome, praiseworthy deeds of God-and she was a great teller of Old Testament stories---she had an enthusiasm, an excitement, a conviction. She believed what she was talking about. I can remember her getting energized when she talked, as if she had become Super-Teacher! It was amazing to watch. She knew the God she was talking about, and she believed every word that the Scriptures said, which she was communicating to us.

A part of our Sunday School curriculum was Scripture memorization. There are pros and cons of that. One negative is that it can be a competitive thing in which children store up as many verses as possible without having a clue as to what they mean, just so they can win. But Victoria never introduced competition. When we memorized a verse, it was a verse she had explained carefully so that we understood the context for it and what it meant. We hid God's word away in our hearts. She conveyed a great reverence for the word of God. It was obvious that Victoria loved the Bible; it wasn't just information that she was passing on. She had steeped herself in it her entire life. So it had an ownership over her that was wonderfully compelling.

Trusting, remembering, obeying

We come now to the purpose of the Teacher in verses 6-8. The Teacher knows why he is doing what he is doing: He wants to present God's character and his activity so clearly that each new generation will come to know him beyond a shadow of a doubt and will live in grateful submission to him. The end of verse 5 says that parents should teach their children the word of God, the testimony of the Law...

...that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born,
That they may arise and tell them to their children,
That they should put their confidence in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments,
And not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not prepare its heart,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

In verse 7 there are woven together three purposes of the teacher, or what the teacher wants to see happen in the lives of the learners. These are presented as positive goals, while in verse 8 the purpose of the teacher is presented as a negative statement, a warning about consequences if we don't take the truth seriously.

Let's look first at how the Teacher wants to help us learn in verse 7. First of all, he speaks of learning to put our confidence in God, setting our hope on God and putting our trust in him. And he is talking about personal, practical confidence in and complete reliance on the God who is with us and for us and involved with us-not just intellectual or theological assent. That personal trust in God was a basic issue in Jesus' teaching ministry. Without it, Jesus said, we live lives that are driven by anxiety. In Matthew 6:30 Jesus defines that as "little faith," and the result of little faith is not living that is God-confident, but a lifestyle of anxiety about physical and material needs-worrying about the future, fearing for our health and welfare.

Listen to the Teacher, Jesus himself, in a wonderful paraphrase by Eugene Peterson in *The Message* . :

"If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

"Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion-do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers-most of which are never even seen-don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."

This is what it means to "put their confidence in God."

The second purpose of the teacher is to help us learn, in the second phrase in verse 7, to "not forget the works of God," or his deeds. Two things are addressed here: cultivating humility before him and a grateful heart, in order to guard against the danger of forgetting the works of God. For me, at least, being thankful doesn't come very naturally, and it doesn't sustain itself very well over the long haul. Remember the story of Jesus' healing the ten lepers in Luke 17. Jesus was surprised and personally saddened that only one of them, a Samaritan, came back to thank him. He had restored everything to them: their physical health, their families, their place in the community, and their place in worship. In Jesus' own life in the gospels, over and over again we see him saying, "Father, thank you" for all kinds of things-relationships, physical provisions, intimacy with the Father. Jesus not only taught thanksgiving, but he modeled it wonderfully in his own life.

The third purpose of the teacher in verse 7 is to help people learn to keep God's commandments. We're back to the Bible again-not just knowing biblical truth, but surrendering to it, living in dependence on the Scriptures. It is a matter of cultivating an obedience to the revealed will of God. In the gospels Jesus placed himself and his teaching on the same level of authority as the Old Testament (see John 12). And he claimed that he was doing it out of obedience to his Father. He said in effect, "I'm not just another good teacher whose morality you can compare and contrast with anybody else's. I am presenting absolute, ultimate, final truth." He taught his disciples in the upper room on his last night on earth that obedience to his commandments, his own teaching, would be evidence that they really did love him. We say we love him do we do what he asks us to? Do we follow the revelation of the word of God even though it's tough?

Verse 8 presents the purpose of the Teacher negatively. It is the sounding of an alarm, a warning against self-destruction. It calls us to self-examination. And it describes a three-fold cord of dereliction. First, he warns us not to be stubborn and rebellious. It is possible for God's people to develop patterns of rebellion, disobedience or bullheadedness. Remember, the Bible says the wages of that sort of attitude is death, ultimately, in all kinds of dangerous ways.

The second warning in verse 8 is against faithlessness, or fickleness. That is really what is meant by the phrase "...a generation that did not prepare its heart." Their hearts weren't steadfast. It describes a generation with no firm purpose. The root word means physical infirmity or ill health. We can make ourselves sick spiritually and emotionally by disregarding the clear word of God.

Finally, the last word: "...[a generation] whose spirit was not faithful to God." Their hearts weren't fixed steadfastly. They never stayed true to God. It describes people who can't be trusted to do the right thing, who say one thing but do another. And the warning is that patterns like that will cause us to suffer in the long run.

At least in my young adult life, the teacher who most consistently conveyed the purpose of Jesus in terms of helping us understand God-confidence, focusing on God's activity and power within us and through us, calling us always to biblical obedience, and warning about the consequences of rejecting truth, was Ray Stedman. As a young man I sat under Ray's preaching and teaching at the Mount Hermon Conference Center. He always clearly and simply opened up truth, making things that were complicated plain, making truth accessible, and always pointed us to God's ultimate purpose in our lives of wanting to be everything to us.

The remainder of the Psalm, which you can read on your own, is an elaboration of these purposes of the teacher. Asaph reviewed the history of Israel up to the time of David so that the people of his day could learn from the experiences, both bad and good, of the generations before, so they wouldn't repeat the failures of history. But this psalm becomes as well the psalm of our great messianic Teacher.

There is an alternation back and forth in Psalm 78 of people hearing truth from God, benefiting from God's provision, such as the manna in the wilderness and his deliverance out of Egypt, experiencing God's grace; and then distancing themselves from it, rejecting it, throwing up barriers. We see the same thing happening in the teaching ministry of Jesus in the gospels: "Teacher, we want to hear from you, we want to press around you, but we don't really want to follow everything you say. We'll be selective in what we like. We'll pick and choose."

But Jesus kept teaching with authority, conviction, and confidence. He knew who he was, he knew why he was saying what he was saying, and he knew that what he was saying was life-changing, supernatural in power. He always told the truth purposefully. I am really thankful for this pure wisdom of Jesus. I told you at the beginning how much it affected me this week in bringing me back to who I am and why I do what I do, to the power of the word of God.

Jesus was effective and authoritative. It's amazing that Jesus' effectiveness was predicted a thousand years before by the Levitical musician Asaph. In his commentary on Psalm 78, John Calvin, the great voice from the Reformation, still challenges us today to hear the psalm, to hear Jesus speaking through the gospel and respond: "If in this psalm there shines forth such a majesty as may justly stir up and enflame the readers with a desire to learn, we gather from it with what earnest attention it becomes us to receive the gospel, in which Christ opens and displays to us the treasure of his celestial wisdom."

In John 6:48-51 Jesus claimed that he was the bread of life and related it to God's provision of manna in the wilderness, which is referred to here in Psalm 78. The people received it, but then tired of it and complained about it. There was the same response in John 6 to Jesus' own claims about himself. There was consternation, confusion, and finally violent opposition and rejection. As a matter of fact, John says poignantly (verse 66), "As a result of this, many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him any more." People who had made confessions of loyalty to Jesus decided to bail out. Then Jesus turned to the twelve, his inner circle of relationship and ministry, and asked them if they were going to leave, too. And Peter made a great confession of faith and of submission to Jesus as the Teacher. He said (verses 68-69), "Lord, to whom shall we go? You [alone] have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." I pray that this will be our confession as well.

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Doug Goins
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