

# Ezekiel 20:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

## Analysis

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**Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?** This verse captures Ezekiel's frustration with his audience's dismissive response to God's prophetic word. The Hebrew interjection "Ah" (ahah, אָהָה) expresses deep emotion—here, exasperation and perhaps despair. "Lord GOD" translates Adonai Yahweh (אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה), the most solemn divine name, indicating the gravity of Ezekiel's complaint.

"They say of me, Doth he not speak parables?" reveals the people's evasion of prophetic truth. The Hebrew mashal (מַשָּׁל, "parable") can mean allegory, proverb, or riddle—here used pejoratively to dismiss Ezekiel's messages as obscure, irrelevant, or merely literary rather than direct divine revelation. The people preferred to intellectualize and distance themselves from the uncomfortable truths rather than repent.

This resistance to God's word is a recurring biblical theme. Jesus Himself spoke in parables partly because people had hardened their hearts (Matthew 13:10-15). Ezekiel's lament reveals the tragedy of willful spiritual blindness—when truth is unwelcome, people relabel it as metaphor to avoid its claims. The passage warns against treating Scripture as mere literature rather than God's authoritative word demanding response. True hearing requires humble submission, not clever interpretation that sidesteps obedience.

## Historical Context

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This verse concludes Ezekiel 20, which recounts Israel's history of rebellion from Egypt through the wilderness to the exile. Ezekiel prophesied to Jewish exiles in Babylon (593-571 BC) who were in denial about their sin and judgment. They preferred to view their situation as temporary bad luck rather than divine discipline.

The exiles' dismissal of Ezekiel as a mere storyteller reflects their hard-heartedness. Despite witnessing Jerusalem's fall (597 BC) and being themselves captives in a foreign land, they resisted the prophet's call to repentance. They wanted encouraging messages, not confrontational truth about their covenant unfaithfulness.

In ancient Near Eastern culture, prophets were respected but also feared and sometimes persecuted. Dismissing a prophet's message as "mere parables" was a defense mechanism—if Ezekiel was just using symbolic language, his warnings could be ignored. This attitude parallels our contemporary tendency to treat difficult biblical passages as "cultural" or "metaphorical" to avoid their challenging implications. The exiles' resistance ultimately delayed their restoration, teaching that rejecting God's word prolongs judgment rather than escaping it.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. Do you ever dismiss biblical teachings as "just metaphorical" to avoid their challenging demands?

2. How can we cultivate hearts that receive God's word humbly rather than intellectualize it away?
3. What truths in Scripture make you uncomfortable, and how do you respond to that discomfort?
4. How does this verse warn against preferring comforting messages over confrontational truth?
5. In what ways might we be resisting God's word while appearing to engage with it?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּל אֵלֶּי אָמַר יְמִינָה אָדָנִי אֲבָה אָמַר יְמִינָה

they say

H559

I Ah

H162

Lord

H136

GOD

H3069

H1992

they say

H0

H3808

מִמְשֵׁךְ לְ

of me Doth he not speak

H4911

מִשְׁלֵי יְמִינָה

parables

H4912

H1931

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 16:25** (Parallel theme): These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.