

*THE  
BOOK  
OF  
PSALMS*

## Psalm 9

**0** To the Chief Musician. To *the tune of* “Death of the Son.”  
A Psalm of David.

**1** I will praise *You*, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

**2** I will be glad and rejoice in You;  
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

**3** When my enemies turn back,  
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.

**4** For You have maintained my right and my cause;  
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.

**5** You have rebuked the nations,  
You have destroyed the wicked;  
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

**6** O enemy, destructions are finished forever!  
And you have destroyed cities;  
Even their memory has perished.

**7** But the LORD shall endure forever;  
He has prepared His throne for judgment.

**8** He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in  
uprightness.

**9** The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,  
A refuge in times of trouble.

- 10** And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;  
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.
- 11** Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion!  
Declare His deeds among the people.
- 12** When He avenges blood, He remembers them;  
He does not forget the cry of the humble.
- 13** Have mercy on me, O LORD!  
Consider my trouble from those who hate me,  
You who lift me up from the gates of death,
- 14** That I may tell of all Your praise  
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.  
I will rejoice in Your salvation.
- 15** The nations have sunk down in the pit *which* they made;  
In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.
- 16** The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;  
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Meditation.

- 17** The wicked shall be turned into hell,  
*And* all the nations that forget God.
- 18** For the needy shall not always be forgotten;  
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.
- 19** Arise, O LORD,  
Do not let man prevail;  
Let the nations be judged in Your sight.
- 20** Put them in fear, O LORD,  
*That* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men.

# Introduction

## Title:

“To the Chief Musician. To *the tune of* “Death of the Son.”  
A Psalm of David.”

It is worth noting once more that many commentators and scholars think the titles of the psalms that have titles were added by editors who compiled and collated the Psalter, and that the titles contribute nothing at all to our knowledge or understanding of the psalms. Many of these scholars deny that David is the author of any of the psalms. However, it is also worth remembering that writers in the early church, such as Augustine and Theodoret, considered the titles inspired writing also, since they have apparently been included with the Psalms since prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture.

Again, the title identifies the author as David. It is addressed to the Chief Musician, so it was meant to be used publicly. No information about any specific occasion or circumstances of the psalm is given. The NKJV translates the Hebrew phrase “Muth-labben” as “To the tune of ‘Death of the Son’”, indicating a musical instruction to use the tune of another song. Some translations treat “Muth-labben” as a musical instrument. Some commentators translate the phrase “on the death of the son”. However, all of the commentators and translators admit that their translations are all just speculations; there is no information that provides a clear understanding of the phrase and it has no effect on our understanding of the Psalm.

# Background

Some commentators see Psalms 9 and 10 as one psalm and the Septuagint and the Vulgate translations of the Bible translate these two psalms as one psalm. Many commentators also see Psalms 9 and 10 as acrostic psalms (or psalm, if they think the two form one psalm). An “acrostic” is a “Literary device by which each section of a literary work begins with the succeeding letter of the alphabet.” Psalm 119 is an example of an acrostic psalm that uses the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostics were used to help with memorization. Approaching Psalms 9 and 10 as acrostic psalms has some effect on the interpretation of the psalms as well.

However, the acrostic patterns in both psalms are incomplete and, in some places, must be forced by rearranging some words or phrases, so quite probably these are not actually acrostic psalms. In our study, we will not treat them as acrostic psalms or discuss the possible acrostic indicators. The clearest understanding of the two psalms appears to derive from careful consideration of the literary structure used by the psalmist and the specific language of each psalm.

It is also interesting to notice the arrangement of the order of Psalms 7, 8, and 9.

Psalm 7 ends with “I . . . will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.”

Psalm 8 begins and ends with “O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth,” and

Psalm 9, v. 2 declares, “I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.”

So, there is an echo of the same praise to the name of God through all three psalms.

## Structure

In the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Willem A. VanGemeren, sees the “internal structure of Psalm 9” as forming “a complete unit.” His structural outline provides the most helpful approach to understanding and interpreting the psalm. This is not a typical chiasmic structure, but the literally effect is quite similar.

A. Individual Praise (vv. 1-2)

A. Judgment on the Wicked (vv. 3-6)

C. Hope in God's Just Rule (vv. 7-10)

A'. Communal Praise and Individual Prayer (vv. 11-14)

B'. Judgment of the Wicked (vv. 15-18)

C'. Hope in God's Just Rule (vv. 19-20)

## Psalm 9

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A Psalm of David.

**1** I will praise *You*, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

**2** I will be glad and rejoice in You;  
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

**3** When my enemies turn back,  
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.

**4** For You have maintained my right and my cause;  
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.

**5** You have rebuked the nations,  
You have destroyed the wicked;  
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

**6** O enemy, destructions are finished forever!  
And you have destroyed cities;  
Even their memory has perished.

**7** But the LORD shall endure forever;  
He has prepared His throne for judgment.

**8** He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in  
uprightness.

**9** The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,  
A refuge in times of trouble.

- 10** And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;  
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.
- 11** Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion!  
Declare His deeds among the people.
- 12** When He avenges blood, He remembers them;  
He does not forget the cry of the humble.
- 13** Have mercy on me, O LORD!  
Consider my trouble from those who hate me,  
You who lift me up from the gates of death,
- 14** That I may tell of all Your praise  
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.  
I will rejoice in Your salvation.
- 15** The nations have sunk down in the pit *which* they made;  
In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.
- 16** The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;  
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Meditation.

- 17** The wicked shall be turned into hell,  
*And* all the nations that forget God.
- 18** For the needy shall not always be forgotten;  
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.
- 19** Arise, O LORD,  
Do not let man prevail;  
Let the nations be judged in Your sight.
- 20** Put them in fear, O LORD,  
*That* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men.



## Theme

Psalm 9 is both a song of praise and a prayer emphasizing God's nature as a righteous judge who punishes His enemies and protects His people.

Some form of the word "judge" or "judgment" is used six times in the psalm and the great majority of the verses in the psalm describe God's act of judgment resulting in punishment of His enemies or blessing for His people.

# Exposition

## A. Individual Praise (vv. 1-2)

<sup>1</sup>I will praise *You*, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

<sup>2</sup>I will be glad and rejoice in You;  
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

- In these two verses, the psalmist is not saying that he will praise God sometime in the future; he means that he continually praises God and rejoices in Him. Praise is a habit for the psalmist.
- God's constant goodness towards his people provides the foundation for confident hope in God's goodness and protection in the future, so David can proclaim with assurance that he will continue to praise God.
- He says he will praise God with his "whole heart", meaning not only his feelings but all of his will and intellect, his mind.
- By saying he "will tell of all Your marvelous works", the psalmist is not only focusing his attention away from his troubles, but he is taking action to deepen his own faith and trust in God in the face of circumstances that threaten to kill him (v.13). He commits himself to declaring God's "marvelous works" or "wondrous works". The Hebrew phrase used here for "marvelous works" occurs only in the psalms. We find it in 26:7; 7:17; 106:7; and 145:5. The phrase is reference to God's supernatural power in creation, His authority as eternal King, and His characteristic acts of deliverance, such as the exodus in which God reveals His divine character.



### **A. Individual Praise (vv. 1-2 Cont.)**

- These two verses form an inclusion describing the psalmist's praises that is framed by praise to God's name.
  - V. 1 begins, "I will praise You, O Lord (YAHWEH),
  - V.2 ends, I will sing praise to Your name O Most High (El Elyon)
  - El was the supreme God over all the Canaanite gods and Elyon meant "Most High".
  - Genesis 14:18 states that Melchizedek was priest of El Elyon, God Most High.
  - By this construction, David declares that YAHWEH is El Elyon, God Most High. There is no other Elyon but YAHWEH.

**B. Judgment of the Wicked (vv. 3-6)**

<sup>3</sup>When my enemies turn back,

They shall fall and perish at Your presence.

<sup>4</sup>For You have maintained my right and my cause;

You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.

<sup>5</sup>You have rebuked the nations,

You have destroyed the wicked;

You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

<sup>6</sup>O enemy, destructions are finished forever!

And you have destroyed cities;

Even their memory has perished.

- Here, David expresses his confidence that God will protect him from his enemies (v.3) and bases that confidence on God's righteousness that has resulted in his actions of judgment in the past.
  - God has confirmed that David has been in the right and that his cause was just.
  - God has rebuked nations.
  - God has destroyed the wicked.
  - The destruction has been so complete that even the memory of them will perish.
- God's past acts give us assurance that He will act to protect and provide for us always.
- God ultimately rebukes all nations.

## C. Hope in God's Just Rule (vv. 7-10)

- 7** But the LORD shall endure forever;  
He has prepared His throne for judgment.
- 8** He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples  
in uprightness.
- 9** The LORD also will be a refuge for the  
oppressed,  
A refuge in times of trouble.
- 10** And those who know Your name will put their  
trust in You;  
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who  
seek You.

- Vv. 7-8 tell us that God is the eternal king and will rule forever “The ground of hope in prayer is the belief that the Lord rules?” (VanGemeren)
- The central point of these verses is the truth that God is a “refuge” for His people. In Psalm 144, David declares that God is his “high tower and deliverer.”
- V. 10 God does not and will never forsake those who rely on Him.
- Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

## **A'. Communal Praise and Individual Prayer (vv. 11-14)**

**11** Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion!  
Declare His deeds among the people.

**12** When He avenges blood, He remembers them;  
He does not forget the cry of the humble.

**13** Have mercy on me, O LORD!  
Consider my trouble from those who hate me,  
You who lift me up from the gates of death,

**14** That I may tell of all Your praise  
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.  
I will rejoice in Your salvation.

- While verses 1 & 2 expressed the individual praise of the psalmist, verses 11 & 12 call the people to join together in praise. Even when Israel was suffering and it appeared God was not with His people, the nations were to understand that God's nature will never tolerate injustice done to His elect. (VanGemeren)
- In vv. 13-14, David pleads for mercy from God, depending on God's righteousness to vindicate him and protect him, and he declares that his motive in asking God for mercy is so that he might tell of God's salvation to the people.

## **B'. Judgment of the Wicked (vv. 15-18)**

**15** The nations have sunk down in the pit *which* they made;

In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.

**16** The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;  
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Meditation.

**17** The wicked shall be turned into hell,  
*And* all the nations that forget God.

**18** For the needy shall not always be forgotten;  
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.

- Vv. 15-18 describe the moral degradation of the nations and God's judgment, which allows the ungodly to suffer the results of their own actions.
- V. 16 reveals that when the ungodly suffer the results of their own wickedness, God's judgment is displayed in the connection between their sin and their suffering in contrast to the righteousness of God.
- Vv.15-16 state truths so profound that the reader is called to pause and meditate on the substance of these verses.
- Vv.17-18 declare the ultimate judgment of the wicked and all who "forget God." Those who forget God include those who are moral and respectable and religious but who do not believe in God nor worship and serve Him.
- Vv.17-18 also emphasize, once again, the contrast between the destinies of the righteous and the ungodly.



## C'. Hope in God's Just Rule (vv. 19-20)

- 19 Arise, O LORD,  
Do not let man prevail;  
Let the nations be judged in Your sight.
- 20 Put them in fear, O LORD,  
*That the nations may know themselves to be  
but men.*

- In v. 19, the psalmist calls on God to “Arise”, but he does not mean that God has not been paying attention. He describes our experience of God when He takes action; it often seems as though God has been absent, but when he takes action against evil, it appears as though He has risen to act.
- The psalmist calls on God to punish the nations and not let the godless plans of men succeed without consequences.
- In v. 20, the psalmist asks God to put the nations in fear so that they “know themselves to be but men.” He does not ask God to destroy them; rather, he asks God to display Himself and His power and holiness by causing nations to fear and to realize their weakness and helplessness in contrast to God.

## Exposition (Cont.)

### B'. Man's Glory as Ruler (vv. 6-8 Cont.)

- These verses contrast God's power and glory with the glory and honor given to man and emphasize the generosity of God towards man. This generosity serves as the cause or motive for amazement and praise of God.

### A'. Concluding Exclamation of Praise (v. 9)

“O LORD, our Lord,  
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth!”

- After describing God's glory and declaring God's amazing generosity to man by bestowing glory and honor on him, David concludes by the same shout of praise with which he began.

## Application

- 1) God's "marvelous works" throughout history should strengthen our faith that God will help us and give us confidence when we ask Him for help.
- 2) We should remind ourselves that we are citizens of heaven, and that God will hold even the nation in which we live accountable. No nation on earth will ever be able to claim righteous standing before God.
- 3) Because God is the righteous King over all creation, we can depend on Him to answer our prayers.
- 4) We should cultivate a consistent attitude of praise and thanksgiving because God has demonstrated His power and His love for His people and promises to bless us forever.
- 5) When things look really terrible throughout the world, we should remind ourselves that God is in control and that He always governs with truth and righteousness. He will both keep evil in check and avenge harm done to His people.