

Psalm 9 • The Final Judgment to Come

Introduction

In the Septuagint, Psalm 9 & 10 are treated as one, single Psalm, and together they follow an acrostic pattern of the Hebrew alphabet. Furthermore, Psalm 10 is the only one found among Psalms 3-32 which is not assigned a title. Together, they are an excellent example of how parallelism is often employed for the entire structure of a poem. In this case, the first section (9:1-12) and the last section (10:16-18) commonly address God's rescue of the oppressed, the second and fourth sections (9:13-14 & 9:15-10:15) the oppression of enemies, and the middle section (9:15-18), serving as the main point, the affirmation of God bringing about His justice. There are additional parallelism within this overall outline. Likewise, they provide an eschatological message of God's ultimate disposition of the nations with an additional look at each individual. Here we will concentrate on Psalm 9's teaching on final judgment as it applies not just to the individual, but the nations.

For the choir director; on Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

¹I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart;
I will tell of all Your wonders.
²I will be glad and exult in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

[Read v.1-2]

Q: What are the common actions in each of the opening statements?

A: "...give thanks", "tell of all Your wonders", "be glad and exult You", and "sing praise to Your name". They are all expressions of an attitude of praise.

Q: If this is a teaching about the final disposition of the nations, why does it begin with four consecutive "I will" statements from an individual's perspective of praise?

A: A message of God's sovereignty over the nations should begin with an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over one's self.

Observation: It is interesting to note that the structure of the book of Revelation, which ultimately shows how God fulfills His Word concerning the nations of the earth, is formatted in such a way that before each of its eight major sections a view into what is taking place in heaven is shown, most often accompanied by praise and worship of the Godhead. That which is a judgment for the non-believing is a fulfillment of His Word to the believing, and therefore results in their natural expression of praise and worship.

Application: Those in a right relationship with God, even in the face of impending **judgment**, are not **fearful** of what is about to come, but filled with an attitude of praise and worship for what is about to be **fulfilled**.

[Read v.3-6]

³When my enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish before You.
⁴For You have maintained my just cause;
You have sat on the throne judging righteously.
⁵You have rebuked the nations,
You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.
⁶The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins,
And You have uprooted the cities;
The very memory of them has perished.

Q: What is the overall sequence describing the experience of the nations as presented in v.3?

1. First they "turn back";
2. Then "they stumble";
3. Finally "they...perish".

Q: How does God accomplish this according to v.4?

A: By "judging righteously".

Q: What is the three-fold response of God in v.5 which parallels v.1?

1. "You have rebuked the nations"—they are turned back.
2. "You have destroyed the wicked"—they are caused to stumble or fall short of their intentions.
3. "You have blotted out their name forever and ever"—the biblical definition of what it means to "perish" not just where this life is concerned, but in the second death to come.

Q: What is telling about the fact that they have been "blotted out"?

A: God originally included everyone in the Book of Life, and only those who have chosen to reject Him are subsequently removed or "blotted out". It is an indication of the result of free will.

⁹The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. — 2 Peter 3:9

Q: And how is this ignoble ending described in v.6?

A: "Perpetual ruin". As Scripture often documents, the literal consequences of this life are mirrored in the eternal consequences for the next life. For both, "The very memory of them has perished".

Q: How might these verses provide a justification for the opening verses of praise and worship where the believer is concerned?

A: In spite of what we may be experiencing on earth at the hands of such enemies of God, they are seen here as God sees them, already judged and bearing the eternal consequences of their present actions. Like God's view of eternity, we see the end result as already having occurred, as a "future fact" of fulfillment.

Application: The **judgment** of God rendered in the course of this life is but a **reflection** of the deeper, more consequential eternal **judgment** to come.

[Read v.7-10]

Q: How does this describe the foundation for the believer's attitude of "future fact" taking hold where God is concerned?

A: "...the LORD abides forever..." (v.7) He is truly seen as not just sovereign, but eternal, something more than just involved in the current circumstances.

Q: In v.8, what exactly is the nature of the judgment for which His throne is established?

1. "...He will judge the world in righteousness..."
2. "...judgment for the peoples with equity."

The Hebrew parallelism, when it twice emphasizes the same thing back-to-back like this, is a powerful affirmation of God's Word.

Q: But how are the consequences of His Judgment on the world contrasted with His people?

A: That which is a throne of judgment to the unbelieving is a "stronghold" for believers.

Q: How does v.10 provide insight into exactly what it means for someone to be able to take up a position in such a "stronghold"?

A: It is accomplished by faith, by those who "put their trust in You", knowing that God has not forsaken them.

Application: All that non-believers have to look forward to is a **throne** of judgment, whereas believers are already provided a **stronghold** both in this life, and the one to come.

[Read v.11-16]

Q: What are the two groups who are being contrasted here?

A: There is God's people who are characterized here as "the afflicted" (v.12) and "the nations" (v.15) who are characterized as "the wicked". (v.16)

Q: What are the two locations associated with each and what do they mean?

- God's afflicted are found at "the gates" (v.13 & 14) which is the place in those times where judges held court. Being "afflicted", this shows them as seeking justice from the Judge rather than attempting a remedy on their own.
- The wicked nations are found "in the pit which they have made" and "in the net which they hid" (v.15), a victim of their own making by which "the work of his own hands the wicked in snared". (v.16)

⁷But the LORD abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment,
⁸And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.
⁹The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of trouble;
¹⁰And those who know Your name will put their trust in You,
For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.

¹¹Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion;
Declare among the peoples His deeds.
¹²For He who requires blood remembers them;
He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
¹³Be gracious to me, O LORD;
See my affliction from those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death,
¹⁴That I may tell of all Your praises,

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That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in Your salvation.
15The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.
16The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. Higgsaion Selah.

17The wicked will return to Sheol, Even all the nations who forget God.

18For the needy will not always be forgotten, Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.

19Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail; Let the nations be judged before You.

20Put them in fear, O LORD; Let the nations know that they are but men. Selah.

Application: A chief difference between the saved and the unsaved is relying on **God** in all things—even when unfairly **afflicted** by the world, versus undertaking everything **personally**. The former by faith trust in **God's** relief, the latter **dig** their own **hole** even deeper.

[Read v.17-20]

Q: Where are the problems being experienced by the believer taking place? Why is that significant when compared to this response?

A: The afflictions the believers is experiencing are all taking place in the course of this life, but the justice and remedy he trusts in take place in the next life.

Q: What is "Sheol"?

A: The Old Testament Hebrew belief was that this was the world of the dead, where a person was cut off from God. The Hebrew belief was that this was a place to which everyone went upon death. (Num. 16:30-32; Job 3:17-19; Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; Is. 14:9-11; 38:18)

Q: So why might it be an important distinction being made that, "The wicked will RETURN to Sheol"?

A: There seems to be an acknowledgement of a final disposition beyond Sheol, what is described in Scripture as "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5-6) for believers, and "the second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:14; 21:8) for non-believers.

Q: For what purpose does the Psalmist request God's judgment of the nations in this present life?

A: "Let the nations know that they are but men". (v.20) There is still time for them to come to the realization of their mortal condition and the need to accept God in this life in order to avoid the present course of consequences for the next.

Application: While there is still **life** left in this **world**, there is still an opportunity to make a **life** in the one to **come**.

Overall Application

Biblical accountability is not limited to just the individual, but extends to the group, even to an entire nation. It reflects God's original intention for Israel to operate directly under His authority without a worldly ruler operating a government. Such are repeating the mistake of placing someone between them and God. Although Scripture is firm in its insistence that such worldly authority needs to be recognized and obeyed, it is an object lesson showing how anything short of God's rule alone is not just inferior, but deficient in all the qualities and attributes which make God superior to all things.