

The Book of Psalms

Psalms 9-10(Part I)

Opening Prayer

Read Psalms 9-10

Overview

While Psalms 9 and 10 are divided in our English translations, there is a great deal of evidence that originally they formed one unit, one psalm. In both the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the Vulgate (the Latin translation by Jerome), Psalms 9 and 10 are combined into one psalm. As a result when someone is studying the Psalms and comparing the Septuagint or Vulgate to the English, from Psalm 10 on they will be different by one number.

Why should Psalms 9 and 10 be regarded as one psalm?

- (1) There is no title to Psalm 10. Psalms 3-9 have titles, as does Psalm 11, but not Psalm 10.
- (2) There is a Partial Alphabet Acrostic which spans Psalms 9 and 10. (See special section below)
- (3) The musical notation *selah* appears at the end of Psalm 9 rather than in the middle of a psalm as it appears everywhere else. This suggests that the psalm is meant to continue.
- (4) There is a common vocabulary shared by the psalms suggesting they go together.

Given all of this evidence it is very compelling to consider Psalms 9 and 10 as actually one psalm.

The major theme of the combined psalm could be summarized as: “The powerful Lord is the champion of the poor and oppressed”. This theme begins in the combined psalm as a song of praise, but by the end of the combined psalm it is a lament for the Lord to act.

The title of the combined psalm presents its own challenges. In the title we read, “For the choir director. *Muth-labben*. A Psalm of David”. *Muth-labben* carries one of two meanings. First, it might be translated “death of the son”. The other possibility is that it would be translated “a high pitched song for the son”. In this second possibility, *muth* is understood as a music direction referring to the song being sung by women or young boys; thus the high pitched character of the song. Whichever translation is used, the idea that it is “to the son” suggests that it was a tribute or lament sung in remembrance of Absalom. (See the historical background in the Psalm 3 study.)

Alphabet Acrostics in the Psalms

There are eight alphabet acrostics in the Psalms. (9-10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145) These psalms begin each sentence with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Here is an English example of the beginning of an Alphabet Acrostic:

All praise be to God on high.
Blow the trumpet in Zion.
Call a sacred assembly.

In this example you can see that each sentence begins with the next letter of the English alphabet. Hebrew poetry used this literary device for one of two purposes. First, it made the poetry (psalm) easier to memorize. Remember that at the time the psalms were written no one got copies to take home! Everything was committed to memory and passed down audibly. Second, this type of acrostic may have been used to send a secondary message by the arrangement of the letters at the beginning of each sentence. Psalm 119 is the most complete example of an Alphabet Acrostic that we have in the psalter. The Book of Lamentations also uses this literary device extensively.

*What are some good memorization devices that work for you?
Why is memorization of the Scriptures useful?*

Structure

As stated above the general theme of the combined psalm is “the powerful Lord is the champion of the poor and oppressed.” With that in mind the combined psalm may be broken down as follows:

1. Giving thanks to God (9:1-2)
2. God’s righteous judgment to the nations (9:3-6)
3. God’s righteous rule of the world and refuge of the oppressed (9:7-10)
4. Singing the praises of God enthroned in Zion (9:11-14)
5. The self-entrapment of the nations and God’s care of the needy (9:15-20)
6. The arrogance of the wicked (10:1-11)
7. Prayer for God’s intervention on behalf of the afflicted (10:12-18)

Give Thanks to God (9:1-2)

:1-2 - These verses really look in 2 directions. They look to God. We are thanking Him. We are praising His name. Yet, these verses also take into account that there is horizontal direction to this praise and thanksgiving. Our praise and thanksgiving to God (vertically) echoes out to others (horizontally). That is, the praising and thanking of God is also the telling of

others. We quite often see this 2 dimensional aspect of praise and thanksgiving. **Read 1 Chronicles 16:8-10, 29-36**

How does this passage from Chronicles demonstrate this twofold dimension of praise and thanksgiving?

What was the end result according to verse 36?

What does this tell us about worship?

Read Ephesians 5:15-21

How do these verses demonstrate this twofold dimension of praise and thanksgiving?

God's Righteous Judgment to the Nations (9:3-6)

:3 - The picture painted here in verse 3 is of a victory already begun. The image is of a retreating army who flee in such terror that they stumble during their retreat.

:4 - The psalmist's cause was declared right by the vindication and judgement of God. His was a "just cause". It is vindicating to have our righteousness revealed, but that won't happen often in this life. Often we will be unjustly accused:

- a. We may be falsely accused of saying or doing something we didn't
- b. We may not be appreciated by those we show love for
- c. The value of our work and service may not be understood or appreciated
- d. Our good ideas and suggestions may be ignored

- You probably find yourself relating to at least one of these unjust declarations.

*How can we respond when we are treated unjustly? **Read Matthew 5:38-48***

What does Jesus ask us to do when we are treated harshly?

:5-6 - The defeat hinted at in verse 3 is now brought to ultimate completion. 3 times the eternalness of the enemies defeat is mentioned in these verses:

1. "blotted out their name forever and ever" (v.5)
2. "perpetual ruins" (v.6)
3. "very memory of them has perished" (v.6)

- The eternal "nothingness" left of the enemy is in contrast to verse 7 and the eternal presence of God.

God's Righteous Rule of the World and Refuge of the Oppressed (9:7-10)

:7 - "The Lord abides forever" – in contrast to the end of the enemies of God, God remains and always has been. The eternalness of God is incomprehensible to us. **Read Job 36:26**

What is comforting about the eternalness of God?

What might be disquieting about it?

Read Hebrews 13:5-9

:8 - This verse relies heavily on the justness of God. He is equipped to judge righteously because He is all-knowing and all-powerful. Thus His judgment will be above reproach.

:9 - Here we see a particularly good example of that similarity of language between Psalms 9 and 10 we talked about at the beginning of the lesson. The phrase "times of trouble" in the Hebrews shows up here and in 10:1, but nowhere else.

What is useful about the phrasing "times of trouble"?

*How is God a stronghold during those times? **Read John 10:27-29***

:10 - "Those who know Your name" – There is a common ideology in our day that all people worship the same god, but simply by different names. This idea of universalism is so prevalent that Christians are seen as intolerant for advocating that they worship the only true God. Yet the Bible is clear!

Read John 14:6; Acts 4:8-12

How should we react when we are asked to observe or even be happy about the practices and holidays of other religions?

Closing prayer