

STUDIES IN PSALMS
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the use of the word "glory" as in verse 1?
2. Discuss examples of how God chose the weak to confound the strong—the ignorant to confound the wise.
3. Are we to understand that man without the revelation of the spoken or written Word of God can by his own perception discover God's greatness and goodness? Cf. Rom. 1:20 ff.
4. By looking through a telescope man becomes smaller and of less and less importance—what can change this concept?
5. Are animals "naturally" afraid of man or does man need to earn his supremacy over animals—discuss. Remember: dominion over animals does not mean destruction of them.
6. Discuss in what manner God has created man just a little lower than angels.

PSALM 9, 10

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Kingship of Jehovah in Zion Finally Triumphant over a League between the Nations and the Lawless One.

ANALYSIS

These two psalms are bound together as originally one, chiefly by the remains of a set of Alphabetical Initials beginning the former psalm and extending into the latter, and by Coincidences of Language which cannot be regarded as accidental; and yet the feeling of the Compound Psalm so completely changes as to reveal Two Distinct Situations,—the one suited to the time of David after a decisive victory over his enemies, and the other strikingly fitted for Hezekiah's peculiar trials due to the Assyrian Invasion. For an attempt to trace these changes, see "Exposition." The Remains of the Alphabetical Acrostic are as follow: *aleph*, vers. 1, 2, four times; *beth*, ver. 3, once; *gimel*, ver. 5, once; *he*, ver. 6, once; *waw*, vers. 7, 8, 9, 10, four times; *zain*, ver. 11, once; *beth*, ver. 13, once; *teth*, ver. 15, once; *yod*, ver. 17, once; *koph* (? for *kaph*), ver. 19, once; *lamed*, 10:1, once; *koph*, 10:12, once; *resh*, 10:14, once; *shin*, 10:15, once; *tau*, 10:17, once.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 I would fain thank Jehovah with all my heart,
I would tell of all thy wondrous works:

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- 2 I would rejoice and exult in thee,
I would make melody of thy name¹ O Most High!
- 3 Because mine enemies turned back,—
they stumbled and perished at thy presence:
- 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause,
thou hast sat on a throne judging righteously.
- 5 Thou hast rebuked nations hast destroyed the lawless one,
their name hast thou wiped out to the ages and beyond.
- 6 As for the enemy they have come to an end their ruins are
perpetual,
and as for the cities thou hast uprooted perished is their
very memory.
- 7 But Jehovah to the ages holdeth his seat,
he hath set up for judgment his throne;
- 8 And He himself will judge the world in righteousness,
will minister judgment to the peoples in equity.²
- 9 So may Jehovah become a lofty retreat for the crushed one,³
a lofty retreat for times of extremity:⁴
- 10 That they may trust in thee who know thy name,
because thou didst not forsake them who were seeking after
thee Jehovah!
- 11 Make melody⁵ to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion,
declare among the peoples his doings:
- 12 For he will exacteth satisfaction for shed blood of them had
remembrance,
he forgat not the outcry of humbled⁶ ones:—
- 13 “Be gracious unto me Jehovah, see my humiliation from
them who hate me,—
my Uplifter out of the gates of death!
- 14 To the end I may tell of all thy praises,⁷—
in the gates of the daughter of Zion let me exult in thy
salvation.”
- 15 Nations have sunk down in the pit⁸ they made,
in the net which they hid hath been caught their own foot.

1. *Ml.*: “I would psalm thy name”=“celebrate in psalm” (singing and playing). See Intro. Chap. II., 2.

2. *Ml.*: “in straightnesses.” (Prob. intensive pl.)

3. “The oppressed”—*Del.*: “the down-trodden”—*Dr.*

4. *Ml.*: “Dearth.”

5. *Or.*: “psalm.”

6. So *written*: *read*, “humble.” Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Humble(d).”

7. Some *cod.* (w. 5 ear. pr. edns. [i Rabb.]): “praise” (sing.)—*Gn.*

8. *Or.*: “ditch.”

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- 16 Jehovah hath made himself known justice hath he done,¹
by the work of his own hands is he striking down the lawless
one.

Sololiquy.

- 17 Lawless ones shall turn back to hades,—
all nations forgetters of God;
18 For not perpetually shall the needy be forgotten,
nor the expectation of humble² ones perish for ever.
19 Oh arise Jehovah! let not mere man prevail,³
let nations be judged before thy face:
20 Set O Jehovah a Terror⁴ for them,
let nations know that mere men they are.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 9

O Lord, I will praise You with all my heart, and tell everyone about the marvelous things You do.

2 I will be glad, yes, filled with joy because of You. I will sing Your praises, O Lord God above all gods.⁵

3 My enemies will fall back and perish in Your presence;

4 You have vindicated me; You have endorsed my work, declaring from Your throne that it is good.⁶

5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked, blotting out their names for ever and ever.

6 O enemies of mine, you are doomed forever. The Lord will destroy your cities, even the memory of them will disappear.

7, 8 But the Lord lives on forever; He sits upon His throne to judge justly the nations of the world.

9 All who are oppressed may come to Him. He is a refuge for them in their times of trouble.

10 All those who know Your mercy, Lord, will count on You for help. For You have never yet forsaken those who trust in You.

1. Or: "maintained"—Del., Dr.

2. So written; read, "humbled"—Gn.

3. Or: "be defiant"—Del.

4. With other vowels: "a lawgiver."

5. Literally, "O Most High."

6. Literally, "You sit on the throne judging righteously."

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11 Oh, sing out your praises to the God who lives in Jerusalem.¹ Tell the world about His unforgettable deeds.

12 He who avenges murder has an open ear to those who cry to Him for justice. He does not ignore the prayers of men in trouble when they call to Him for help.

13 And now, O Lord, have mercy on me; see how I suffer at the hands of those who hate me. Lord, snatch me back from the jaws of death.

14 Save me, so that I can praise You publicly before all the people at Jerusalem's² gates and rejoice that You have rescued me.

15 The nations fall into the pitfalls they have dug for others; the trap they set has snapped on them.

16 The Lord is famous for the way He punishes the wicked in their own snares!³

17 The wicked shall be sent away to hell; this is the fate of all the nations forgetting the Lord.

18 For the needs of the needy shall not be ignored forever; the hopes of the poor shall not always be crushed.

19 O Lord, arise and judge and punish the nations! don't let them conquer You!

20 Make them tremble in fear; put the nations in their place until at last they know they are but puny men.

PSALM 10

(Nm.)

- 1 Why Jehovah wilt thou stand in the distance?
why wilt thou hide thyself in times of extremity
- 2 Through the pride of the lawless one the humbled one
burneth,—
let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.
- 3 For the lawless one hath boasted of the longing of his soul,
and the robber hath contemned⁴ Jehovah:

1. Literally, "in Zion."

2. Literally, "in the gates of the daughter of Zion."

3. The Hebrew text adds here: "Higgaion. Selah." The meanings of these words are not known.

4. "The primitive reading"—G. Intro. 365.

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- 4 The lawless one according to the loftiness of his look saith,
 "He will not exact."
 "No God here!" is in all his plots.
- 5 Firm are his ways at all times,
 —on high are thy judgments out of his sight,—
 as for all his adversaries he puffeth at them.
- 6 He hath said in his heart
 "I shall not be shaken,
 To generation after generation am I one
 Who shall be in no misfortune."
- 7 Of cursing his mouth is full
 and of deceits and oppression,
 Under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.
- 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of villages,
 in hiding places he slayeth the innocent one:
 As for his eyes for the unfortunate are they on the watch.
- 9 He lieth in wait in the hiding-place like a lion in his thicket,¹
 he lieth in wait to capture the humbled one,—
 He captureth the humbled one dragging him along in his net.
- 10 He croucheth he sinketh down,
 and there fall into his claws the disheartened.²
- 11 He hath said in his heart
 "GOD hath forgotten,"
 "He hath veiled his face,"
 "He hath never seen."
- 12 Oh arise Jehovah! do not neglect the crushed one,³—
 do not forget the humbled⁴ ones.
- 13 Wherefore hath the lawless one contemned God?
 said in his heart "Thou wilt not exact"?
- 14 Thou hast seen!
 for thou travail and vexation dost discern
 to lay them in thine own hand:
 Unto thee doth the unfortunate one give himself up,
 to the fatherless thou thyself hast become a helper.
- 15 Shatter thou the arm of the lawless one,
 and as for the wrongful wilt thou exact his lawlessness till
 thou find it no more.⁵

1. So *Gt.* Cp. Jer. 4:7.

2. So written: to be read, "host of afflicted ones"—Gn.

3. So *Gt.*

4. So written: read "humble"—Gn.

5. "That it may vanish from before thee"—Del.

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- 16 Jehovah is King to the ages and beyond,
vanished are nations out of his land.
17 The longing of humble¹ ones hast thou heard Jehovah!
thou dost establish their heart dost make attentive thine ear:
18 To vindicate the fatherless and the crushed,—
that weak man of the earth may cause terror no more.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 10

Lord, why are You standing aloof and far away? Why do you hide when I need You the most?

2 Come and deal with all these proud and wicked men who viciously persecute the poor. Pour upon these men the evil they planned for others!

3 For these men brag of all their evil lusts; they revile God and congratulate those the Lord abhors, whose only goal in life is money.

4 These wicked men, so proud and haughty, seem to think that God is dead.² They wouldn't think of looking for Him!

5 Yet there is success in everything they do, and their enemies fall before them. They do not see Your punishment awaiting them.

6 They boast that neither God nor man can ever keep them down—somehow they'll find a way!

7 Their mouths are full of profanity and lies and fraud. They are always boasting of their evil plans.

8 They lurk in dark alleys of the city and murder passersby.

9 Like lions they crouch silently, waiting to pounce upon the poor. Like hunters they catch their victims in their traps.

10 The unfortunate are overwhelmed by their superior strength and fall beneath their blows.

11 "God isn't watching," they say to themselves; "He'll never know!"

12 O Lord, arise! O God, crush them! Don't forget the poor or anyone else in need.

1. Some cod. have "humbled." Others write: "humbled" but read humble"—Gn. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Humble(d)."

1. Literally, "that there is no God."

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13 Why do You let the wicked get away with this contempt for God? For they think that God will never call them to account.

14 Lord, You see what they are doing. You have noted each evil act. You know what trouble and grief they have caused. Now punish them. O Lord, the poor man trusts himself to You; You are known as the helper of the helpless.

15 Break the arms of these wicked men. Go after them until the last of them is destroyed.

16 The Lord is King forever and forever. Those who follow other gods shall be swept from His land.

17 Lord, You know the hopes of humble people. Surely You will hear their cries and comfort their hearts by helping them.

18 You will be with the orphans and all who are oppressed, so that mere earthly man will terrify them no longer.

EXPOSITION

In all probability these two psalms were originally one, as may be inferred from the remains of an *alphabetical* structure beginning with Psalm 9 and ending with Psalm 10, and from coincidences of language and sentiment which cannot otherwise be easily explained. The probability is nearly as great that the interference with the original initial alphabet is due, not so much to accident, as to editorial adaptation to later circumstances. In short, the phenomena visible on the face of this compound psalm seem to be easily reconcilable by the hypothesis that it was originally composed by David after some signal overthrow of his enemies, and was afterwards adapted—very likely on two occasions—by Hezekiah, first soon after the Assyrians invaded his land, and then again, when their presence had for some time been permitted to continue. This hypothesis will account for the gradual subsidence of praise into prayer, and the increasing sense of urgency which is seen in the suppliant's petitions. It will also account for the disappearance of so many of the successive alphabetical initials; it being natural to think that in the perturbed state of things consequent on the presence of invaders in the land, Hezekiah would lack both time and inclination to preserve so refined and elaborate a literary result of a perfect alphabetical arrangement in the adapted psalm. The great inspiration of faith derivable from his illustrious ancestor's danger and de-

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liverance, would be the attraction offered by the old carefully prepared composition: some abruptness and lack of finish in the new matter do but add to the verisimilitude of additions made under such disadvantageous circumstances.

The more fully we allow for changed circumstances as thus accounting for the damage visible on the surface of the psalm, the more firmly can we maintain its essential unity. The enemies of Israel are throughout foreigners: only, in David's day they were foreigners threatening the land, whereas in Hezekiah's time they were foreigners already encamped in the land and insolently treading down its *villages*. The *lawless one* would be *the robber*; the robber would be the God-defier (Rabshakeh) whose blasphemies are heard reproaching Jehovah the God of Israel (as in Isa. 36, 37). *The humbled one, the crushed one, the unfortunate one*, would, all through, be Israel, or Israel's suffering representatives.

When we have thus approximately ascertained the conditions under which this remarkable psalm was originated, our minds are set free to observe the outgoings of the Spirit of Prophecy working through the circumstances of the present into the future.

The overthrow of David's enemies was sufficiently decisive to furnish a thread of thought along which the psalmist's mind could easily be led to the contemplation of the overthrow of all Israel's enemies who should at any time rise up against her: he foresees *nations rebuked, the lawless one destroyed, the ruins of Israel's foes made perpetual*.

The re-establishment of David's own throne, brings in glimpses of the perpetuity and universal extension of Jehovah's reign out of Zion over all the earth; when *He himself should minister judgment to the peoples in equity*.

But even as his eye catches sight of this entrancing prospect, there seems to be borne in upon the singer the foreboding, that, as he himself had been led up to the throne of Israel along a path of sore trial and long waiting, so his people would yet have to be humiliated and *crushed*, and to pass through *times of extremity* before their destiny among the nations would be realised. This foreglimpse of such *times* in 9:9, 10 is so remarkable as to tempt us to think that here already we detect the revising and adapting hand of Hezekiah; until a comparison of this place with 10:1 causes us to reflect on the access of power to the psalm, if

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we choose rather to think that there was really granted to David a foresight of "the times of trouble" through which Hezekiah had to pass; which would serve to invest the second allusion to such dark times with an experimental interest which otherwise it would not possess; as much as to say, in the second reference: "Alas! *the times of extremity*, of which thy servant David my father spake, are now upon me, but he desired that when such times should come thou wouldst prove a *lofty retreat*: wherefore, then, shouldst thou *stand in the distance* and suffer us to pass through such a *fiery trial* as this, whilst thou *hidest thy face*?"

Thus declining to yield to our first inclination to see in 9:9, 10 some other than David's hand, we are triumphantly borne along (still by David) through the jubilant call to praise found in 9:11, and the anticipation of Divine remembrance and vindication preserved in 9:12, past the parenthetically quoted *outcry of the humbled ones* set forth in 9:13, 14 up to a suitable Davidic climax in 9:15, 16, whereupon, after a significant *Soliloquy* and *Selah*-call to look backwards and forwards (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Selah"), and *mark well* the path by which we are travelling—way is made for Hezekiah's newly originating hand to put before us first his assurance, in 9:17, 18, that the present Assyrian enemy shall be overthrown, and then the strong plea that Jehovah will effect that overthrow:—the which prayer, however, not at once being answered, but the Assyrian occupancy of the land still dragging along its slow length, to the fearful devastation of the *villages*, further additions and modifications follow, which, while wholly unsuited to David's circumstances, depict to the life the ravages and the reproaches and the blasphemies of the robber Rabshakeh. And thus the present Tenth Psalm unfolds itself, with echoes, indeed, of the previous psalm, but modified by the sombre mutterings of present trouble: nevertheless, at length rising up to the very same climax as that which characterised Hezekiah's first addition at the end of the Ninth Psalm: the desired Divinely taught lesson in each being a lesson to the *nations*, to be enforced by Jehovah's ultimate deliverance of his people Israel.

It would not be wise to lay overmuch stress on the sevenfold occurrence of the expression *the lawless one*, in the singular number (9:5, 16, 10:2, 3, 4, 13, 15), as against the one occurrence of the plural number (9:17), as though that circumstance alone

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would warrant the inference that here already we have references to "The Lawless One" of later prophecies. It is easy to conceive that, in every combination of nations against Israel, there has ever been some one turbulent spirit actively inciting the nations to rebel against Jehovah and his Anointed One. Nevertheless the appearance of such a lawless one in combination with what looks like a final assault by the nations on Israel's *land* is very suggestive, and should be borne in mind by the student of prophecy. All the more does the significance of this ebullition of evil become impressive, when it is observed how the heading-up of evil is converted into its death-knell.

On 10:15, 16 Delitzsch significantly observes: "The thought that God would take the wickedness of the wicked so completely out of the way that no trace of it remained, is supplemented by the thought that he would do this by means of a punitive judgment. It is not without deliberation, that, instead of employing the form of expression that is used elsewhere (37:36; Job 20:8), the psalmist still addresses his words to Jahve: that which can no longer be found, not merely by the eyes of man, but even by God Himself, has absolutely vanished from the sphere of that which actually exists. Such a conquest of evil is as certainly to be looked for, as that Jahve's universal kingship, which has been an essential element in the faith of God's people ever since the election and redemption of Israel (Ex. 15:18) cannot remain without a perfect and visible realisation. His absolute and eternal kingship must ultimately be exhibited in all the universality and endless duration predicted in Zech. 14:9, Dan. 7:14, Apoc. 11:15."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There were several singular victories in David's life to which this 9th psalm might have application—discuss two of them.
2. Is it true that the Lord always gives deliverance to those who call on Him? Discuss.
3. How shall we account for the note or suggestion of vengeance which seems to be present in these psalms?
4. Are we to assume that the wicked men described in 10:3-11 have had opportunity to know the God they mock? Discuss.
5. Why do the poor—the humble and the orphans have a special claim on the interests of God?