

2001

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Recommended Citation

Keller, Walter E., "Psalm 9: To the choirmaster: according to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David." (2001).
Walter E. Keller's Devotional Studies of Psalms. 12.
<https://scholar.valpo.edu/kellerpsalms/12>

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Psalm 9

To the choirmaster: according to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

(NRSV)

- ¹ I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.**
- ² I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.**
- ³ When my enemies turned back,
they stumbled and perished before you.**
- ⁴ For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment.**
- ⁵ You have rebuked the nations, you have destroyed the wicked;
you have blotted out their name forever and ever.**
- ⁶ The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins;
their cities you have rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.**
- ⁷ But the LORD sits enthroned forever,
he has established his throne for judgment.**
- ⁸ He judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with equity.**
- ⁹ The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.**
- ¹⁰ And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.**
- ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.**
- ¹² For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.**
- ¹³ Be gracious to me, O LORD.
See what I suffer from those who hate me;
you are the one who lifts me up from the gates of death,**
- ¹⁴ so that I may recount all your praises,
and, in the gates of daughter Zion,
rejoice in your deliverance.**
- ¹⁵ The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.**
- ¹⁶ The LORD has made himself known, he has executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. *Higgaion. Selah***

- 17 The wicked shall depart to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.**
- 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.**
- 19 Rise up, O LORD! Do not let mortals prevail;
let the nations be judged before you.**
- 20 Put them in fear, O LORD;
let the nations know that they are only human. *Selah***

(Psalm 9 and 10 were originally a single acrostic Psalm, consisting of 22 strophes, the first strophe beginning with the first letter of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet and each strophe thereafter beginning with the next letter. In many ancient manuscripts Psalms 9 and 10 are combined, and appear as a single composition.)

Psalm 9 pictures a world in which three parties play their roles. There is, first of all, the “I” of the Psalmist himself, traditionally understood to be David, who feels himself oppressed (verse 9), and who suffers hatred (verse 13). There are, secondly, the enemies (verses 3, 6), and the wicked (verses 5, 17). And thirdly, there is God, the LORD, the just Judge (verses 7-8). The LORD has in the past come to the aid of those who seek him (verses 9, 10). The Psalmist now summons the LORD once more to judge against the nations (the hostile outsider, the Gentiles), and in favor of the poor and needy (verse 18). We may also read verses 5 and 6 as a prophetic reference to God’s final judgment at the end of time when all evil will be blotted out forever. So confident is the Psalmist in this outcome that he writes in the past tense as if this had already occurred.

When we Christians pray this Psalm, we need to think of great David’s Greater Son, our Lord Jesus, who prays to the heavenly Father in his distress; and then we may pray this Psalm with Jesus that the heavenly Father would deliver us also from all evil.

Prayer to accompany Psalm 9:

Lord God, righteous judge, hear the cries of your oppressed people. Rescue them from their oppressors and save them from the gates of death, so that we may always rejoice in your help and speak your praise in the gates of Zion; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Linger longer over verse 10:

**And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.**