

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 69 — Overwhelmed by Deep Waters

1.0 Introducing Psalm 69

- Psalm 69 is one of the imprecatory psalms. (See the introductory notes to Psalm 35.)
- Some of the terminology and the general picture of the psalmist's circumstances bring the prophet Jeremiah to mind.
 - ✓ "Pit" (v. 15) could be translated as "cistern"—cp. Jeremiah 38:6-13.
 - ✓ A few commentators (Perowne, Scroggie) suggest that Jeremiah was the author of this psalm rather than David.
- A number of phrases and concepts in Psalm 69 closely parallel 22 and 40.
 - ✓ Both Psalms 22 and 69 conclude with salvation and universal praise.
 - ✓ The psalmist is overwhelmed in both Psalms 40 and 69.
- Psalms 69–71 form a group of laments and prayers for deliverance.
 - ✓ "Together with Psalms 70–71, Psalm 69 prepares the way for the exalted hopes for the enduring and righteous rule of the king in Psalm 72—a rule that will last as long as the moon and will reach to the ends of the earth (72:5-8)."—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 950.

2.0 Reading Psalm 69 (NAU)

69:1 A Psalm of David.

Save me, O God,
For the waters have threatened my life.

69:2 I have sunk in **deep mire**, and there is no foothold;
I have come into **deep waters**, and a **flood** overflows me.

69:3 I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched;

My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

69:4 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head;
Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies;
What I did not steal, I then have to restore.

69:5 O God, it is You who knows my folly,
And my wrongs are not hidden from You.

69:6 May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me,
O Lord GOD of hosts;
May those who seek You not be dishonored through me,
O God of Israel,

69:7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;
Dishonor has covered my face.

69:8 I have become estranged from my brothers
And an alien to my mother's sons.

69:9 For zeal for Your house has consumed me,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

69:10 When I wept in my soul with fasting,
It became my reproach.

69:11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.

69:12 Those who sit in the gate talk about me,
And I *am* the song of the drunkards.

69:13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time;
O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness,
Answer me with Your saving truth.

69:14 Deliver me from the **mire** and do not let me sink;
May I be delivered from my foes and from the **deep waters**.

69:15 May the **flood** of water not overflow me
Nor the **deep** swallow me up,
Nor the **pit** shut its mouth on me.



69:16 Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good;
According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me,

69:17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant,
For I am in distress, answer me quickly.

69:18 Oh draw near to my soul and redeem it;
Ransom me because of my enemies!

69:19 You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor;
All my adversaries are before You.

69:20 Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick.
And I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
And for comforters, but I found none.

69:21 They also gave me gall for my food

And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

- 69:22** May their table before them become a snare;
And when they are in peace, *may it become* a trap.
- 69:23** May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see,
And make their loins shake continually.
- 69:24** Pour out Your indignation on them,
And may Your burning anger overtake them.
- 69:25** May their camp be desolate;
May none dwell in their tents.
- 69:26** For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten,
And they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded.
- 69:27** Add iniquity to their iniquity,
And may they not come into Your righteousness.
- 69:28** May they be blotted out of the book of life
And may they not be recorded with the righteous.
- 69:29** But I am afflicted and in pain;
May Your salvation, O God, set me *securely* on high.
- 69:30** I will praise the name of God with song
And magnify Him with thanksgiving.
- 69:31** And it will please the LORD better than an ox
Or a young bull with horns and hoofs.
- 69:32** The humble have seen *it and* are glad;
You who seek God, let your heart revive.
- 69:33** For the LORD hears the needy
And does not despise His *who are* prisoners.
- 69:34** Let heaven and earth praise Him,
The seas and everything that moves in them.
- 69:35** For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there and possess it.
- 69:36** The descendants of His servants will inherit it,
And those who love His name will dwell in it.

For the choir director.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 69

3.1 Outline

- I. David's Distress (vv. 1-12)
 - A. Plea for Rescue (vv. 1-4)
 - B. Portrayal of Reproach (vv. 5-12)
- II. David's Desperation (vv. 13-21)
 - A. Prayer for Mercy (vv. 13-18)
 - B. Proof of Misery (vv. 19-21)



III. David's Deprecations (vv. 22-29)

IV. David's Declaration (vv. 30-36)

3.2 Notes

- vv. 1-12 David's Distress
 - Plea for Rescue (vv. 1-4).
 - ✓ v. 1 "Save me"
 - Together with "salvation" (from the same Hebrew root) in verse 29, this word forms an inclusio marking off the extremities of the psalmist's lament. The same root occurs also in verse 13, a key verse structurally, and is echoed in verse 35 in rounding out the psalm.
 - ✓ v. 2 "flood"
 - The Hebrew word is *shibboleth*, like that in Judges 12:6.
 - ✓ v. 4 "What I did not steal, . . ."
 - This could be a proverb depicting injustice. See J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. (reprint; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 1:546.
 - Portrayal of Reproach (vv. 5-12)
 - ✓ v. 5 "folly"
 - David confesses both "folly" and "wrongs." God knows he is a sinner, but God also knows that he has done nothing to merit the attacks of his enemies. Even if parts of Psalm 69 are messianic, this verse's content does not apply to Christ.
 - ✓ v. 6 "through me"
 - Individual folly or guilt has corporate consequences.
 - ✓ v. 7 "for Your sake"
 - David indicates that his distress is, at least in part, caused by his relationship to and faith in God. "At some level the psalmist's suffering is vicarious—both for God (69:9) and for the people (69:26)."—Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary, 949.
 - ✓ v. 9 "zeal for Your house"
 - See 1 Chronicles 6:31-32, 48; 13:2-8; 15:1-17:1; 22:2; 23:27-32; 2 Samuel 12:20; Psalm 52:8; 55:14. David had an obvious zeal for the Tabernacle (= the house of God).
 - ✓ v. 9 New Testament Citations
 - Psalm 69 quoted nearly as often as Psalms 22 and 110.
 - Psalm 69:4 in John 15:25.
 - Psalm 69:9 in John 2:17 and Romans 15:3.
 - Psalm 69:13 in 2 Corinthians 6:2.
 - Psalm 69:21 in Matthew 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23, 36; Luke 23:36; John 19:29.
 - Psalm 69:22-23 in Romans 11:9-10.
 - Psalm 69:25 in Acts 1:20.

- ✓ **v. 12** “Those who sit in the gate”
 - City gates were places where elders and rulers administered justice and community affairs (Ruth 4:1; 1 Kgs 22:10). In both the public square and in the pub everyone is insulting David.
- David’s Desperation (vv. 13-21)
 - Prayer for Mercy (vv. 13-18)
 - ✓ **vv. 13, 16, 17** “Answer me”
 - Three times in quick succession David pleads with God. He is desperate; he needs deliverance.
 - ✓ **vv. 14, 15** “mire . . . deep”
 - Words employed in the opening of the psalm (v. 2) recur here (“sink,” “deep waters,” “overflow,” and “flood”)—another is replaced by a synonym (“mire” is a different Hebrew word).
 - ✓ **v. 18** “redeem . . . Ransom”
 - The first term is from the realm of family (fulfilling the obligation of a close relationship like a kinsman-redeemer), while the second is from commerce (purchase for a price).
 - Proof of Misery (vv. 19-21).
 - ✓ **v. 19** “You know”
 - The pronoun is emphatic. God alone knows David’s folly and guilt (v. 5) and He alone also knows his distress.
- David’s Deprecations (vv. 22-29)
 - ✓ **vv. 22-28** Imprecation = Curse
 - See Romans 11:9-10 (quoting Ps 69:22-23) about the judicial binding of most of Israel because they rejected Christ.
 - ✓ **v. 26** “whom You Yourself have smitten”
 - The primary act of hostility came from God Himself.
 - ✓ **v. 28** “blotted out of the book of life”
 - In the Old Testament, the “life” is covenant life—receiving covenant blessings primarily related to life on earth (Exod 32:32; Ps 139:16; Isa 4:3).
 - In the New Testament, one whose name is in “the book of life” has eternal life (Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rev 17:8; 20:15).
 - See Charles R. Smith, “The Book of Life,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6/2 (Fall 1985): 219-30.
- David’s Declaration (vv. 30-36)
 - Answered prayer produces praise and thanksgiving. God’s ultimate deliverance of His people will result in universal praise.
 - ✓ **vv. 30, 36** “the name of God . . . His name”
 - The inclusio marking off the final section of this psalm alludes to the covenant name of God: Yahweh.

- ✓ vv. 30, 31 “song . . . ox”
 - In the Hebrew there is a word play: “song” (*shir*) and “ox” (*shor*). The song of praise is better than a sacrificed ox.
- ✓ v. 35 “build the cities of Judah”
 - Some commentators think that a later editor must have added verses 34-36. How could David be speaking about “rebuilding” the cities of Judah (cp. Ps 51:18, also a psalm by David)? Here the reference could be to the yet future salvation of Israel and rebuilding of the cities Judah (see Isa 40:9-11; 44:1-8, 21-26; 62:10-12; Jer 31:21-40; 33:1-16; Zeph 3:8-18; Rom 11:25-27).

4.0 Singing Psalm 69

Save Me, O God, the Swelling Floods

Tunes: “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?”



Save me, O God, the swelling floods
Break in upon my soul;
I sink, and sorrows o’er my head
Like mighty waters roll.

Now shall the saints rejoice, and find
Salvation in My Name;
For I have borne their heavy load
Of sorrow, pain, and shame.

Amongst My brethren and the Jews
I like a stranger stood,
And bore their vile reproach, to bring
The Gentiles near to God.

They hate my soul without a cause,
And still their number grows
More than the hairs around my head,
And mighty are my foes.

Grief, like a garment, clothed Me round,
And sackcloth was My dress,
While I procured for naked souls
A robe of righteousness.

He saved Me from the dreadful deep,
Nor let My soul be drowned;
He raised and fixed My sinking feet
On well-established ground.

— Isaac Watts

5.0 Praying Psalm 69

- Save me, O God. [v. 1]
- Lord, You know what I am and what I have done. [v. 5]
- Lord, don’t allow Your people to be slandered because of me. [v. 6]
- Father, answer my prayer. [vv. 13, 16, 17]
- Revive the hearts of those who seek You. [v. 32]

6.0 Applying Psalm 69

- All our deeds and suffering are known by God.
- Consider “the reproach of Christ” (Heb 11:26) a privilege.
- Even the most desperate prayers should end in doxology.

“[I]f the psalm comes out of the experience of David, who, as the holder of the office and the benefits that are to come from the Messiah, experiences in miniature form the identical malice that his namesake will experience, then it becomes evident that the suffering is both literal and predictive of the Messiah, or at least is true in a typical sense and therefore predictive.”

—Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*
(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 104