

## Psalm 69

*"It is the zeal for your house that has consumed me"*

1. The psalmist in Psalm 69 is alone (20) in facing opposition, hatred and false accusations (4, 12) from other Jews (10-12), due to his "zeal" (9). The psalmist considers himself innocent (4), yet is facing a threat second only to physical harm in Middle-eastern cultures, that of shame and ostracization (6-8). To top it off, he is mocked for responding with the tradition acts of contrition, fasting and sackcloth (10-12; 26). In all this, his concern is for the honor of God's people (6) and God's "house" (9).

Try to construct a plausible context for this psalm.<sup>1</sup> Do you think the psalmist's zeal for God's house refers to protection of the temple (or tabernacle), protection of its purity, or even, if 34-36 persuade you to take a late date, zeal for rebuilding the temple? Is the author guilty as charged?

2. What does the psalmist mean when he says his persecutors have attacked those whom "you [God] have wounded" (26; lit. "pierced")?
3. In the change of tone at v. 30, is the psalmist praising God in the midst of this trial or because the trial's ended?
4. This psalm is tied with Psalm 22 for the greatest number of citations in the NT:
  - **"Zeal for your house has consumed me"** (9) is quoted by John (2:17) in relation to the cleansing of the temple;
  - Jesus warns his disciples (Jn 15:25) quoting part of v. 4, **"More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause"**;
  - Paul in Rom 11:9-10 quotes v. 23, including the phrase **"let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see"**, to explain the rejection of Jesus by the majority of the Jews;
  - Rom 15:3 uses v. 9b, **"the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me"**, to encourage an attitude of self-sacrifice on the part of mature Christians for the less mature;
  - Acts 1:20 sees Judas' death as a fulfillment of v. 25 (**"May their camp be a desolation"**); and
  - Jesus' passion statement, **"I am thirsty"** and the soured wine he received (Jn 19:28-29; Mt 27:34; Mk 15:36; Lk 23:36) parallel v. 21.

The references in the NT to Psalm 69 are used in very different ways: In Jn 15:25 Jesus explicitly says the hatred of the "world" is a *fulfillment* of the Psalm (so too with Acts 1:20 and Rom 11:9-10); In Jn 2:17 we are told that upon seeing Jesus cleanse the temple *"his disciples remembered"* Psalm 69 (not quite the same thing); when Paul quotes "the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me," he grounds his use of Psalm 69 by saying, *"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."* Mt 27:34 refers to Jesus' drinking wine with gall without even referring to Psalm 69, and John 19:28-29 describes the same scene but says that Jesus *deliberately chooses to fulfill* Psalm 69 with his actions on the cross.

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<sup>1</sup> The prescript, "of David" could mean David's the author or that it's written in the style of David... though Paul doesn't think that's the case here (Rom 11:9). The final stanza, 34-36, appears to fit with a later context such as that of Hezekiah and 2 Kings 18:13 when the cities of Judah were captured, but could be an addition making this psalm more relevant to a later congregational use.

- . In C. S. Lewis' *Reflections on the Psalms*, he addresses the NT use of Psalms, considered under the broader topic of second meanings. He first looks at extra-biblical texts which appear to have a deeper spiritual meaning, such as a statement by the poet Virgil regarding what may be a virgin birth, a text which medieval commentators took to be a sort of pagan prophecy. Lewis then relates this to second meanings in the NT.

Read pp. 102-5. Focusing first only on Lewis, what does he mean when he refers (page 102, bottom) to "prolonging his meaning in a direction congenial to it"?

- . Lewis later adds, "If even pagan utterances can carry a second meaning, not quite accidentally, but because, in the sense I have suggested, they have a sort of right to it, we shall expect the Scriptures to do this more momentously and more often" (109). Lewis sees this as a divinely-guided inspiration of Scripture. Is it possible that the NT writers see in the Psalms a pattern, further reinforced by the connection between David and the Messiah, which resonates so strongly with Jesus and the church as to constitute a "fulfillment" which is richer than, and different from, a simple prediction of the future?

5. Lewis writes,

On all [the writings of the OT] I suppose a Divine pressure; of which not by any means all need have been conscious. The human qualities of the raw materials show through. Naivety, error, contradiction, even (as in the cursing Psalms) wickedness are not removed. The total result is not "the Word of God" in the sense that every passage, in itself, gives impeccable science or history. It carries the Word of God; and we (under grace, with attention to tradition and to interpreters wiser than ourselves, and with the use of such intelligence and learning as we may have) receive that word from it not by using it as an encyclopedia or an encyclical but by steeping ourselves in its tone or temper and so learning its overall message. (111-2)

Bearing in mind Lewis' model of pattern fulfillment of deeper truths, how is the imprecatory section of Psalm 69 (vv. 22-28) fulfilled according to the NT? (Does the *curse* of the OT become the *consequence* of the NT?)

6. Discuss Keller's commentary on 69:19-21:

David is suffering without relief despite his prayers. Suddenly there is a startling reminder of Jesus—how on the cross *he* was scorned, disgraced, and shamed, helpless, friendless, and offered vinegar to drink. Jesus knew—and knows still—the pain of unanswered prayer when he asked if another way could be found to save us besides the agony of the cross. God answered that prayer by saying, in effect, "There is no other way to save them... If they are to be saved, I must not save *you*." This not only answers the question: Is there any other way to be saved besides Jesus? (No.) It is also the ultimate comfort when we sense no answer to our prayers. (*The Songs of Jesus*)

7. What are you zealous for? Have you ever experienced misunderstanding and hostility for your zeal?

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*Fun fact:* In 1968 Duke Ellington recorded his *Second Sacred Concert* of religious jazz music which culminates in the climactic "Praise God and Dance", based on Psalm 150.

# Leader's Notes

## Hesed

- I. Routledge
  - a. General agreement:
    - i. most often hesed is in accordance with social norms in a relationship
    - ii. Hesed involves both attitude and action
  - b. Hesed between people
    - i. Examples
      1. Husband and wife (Gen 20:15)
      2. Father and son (Gen 47:29; Ruth 1:8)
      3. Relatives (Gen 24:49; 1 Sam 15:6; Ruth 2:20)
      4. Host and guest (Gen 19:19; Josh 2:12)
      5. Friends (...)
      6. King and subjects (...)
      7. Within a community (...)
    - ii. It entails mutuality—when you receive hesed you should return it; this can occur then outside a relationship
      1. E.g. Rahab showed hesed to the Israelite spies and expected it in return (Josh 2:12)
    - iii. Hesed doesn't *require* an existing covenant but a covenant can ensure hesed
      1. E.g. 1 Sam 18:1-3: David and Jonathan's friendship covenant produces hesed
    - iv. It's related to goodness and kindness but also to loyalty and faithfulness and duty
    - v. It's not simply kindness or goodness; it goes deeper (185)
      1. So it is often rendered "unfailing love" or "covenant love", etc.
      2. **Q: QUOTE DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS AND NOTE IF THEY CAPTURE THE LEXICAL RANGE**
  - c. Hesed and God
    - i. 2/3 of the times it's shown by God toward people

- ii. Numerous times the Law is referred to as the “covenant of love [hesed]”—here, hesed is the *context* of the law
- iii. Elsewhere (e.g. Ps 89:28) it’s not the content of the Law but “the basis on which it’s enabled to continue”
- iv. **FUN FACT: HESED IS THE ROOT OF “HASIDIC”**
- v. Important Psalms: 89 (*long*)

## Psalm 69:

- I. Uses in the NT:
  - A. Cleansing the temple
    - i. 69:9 : “for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.”
    - ii. John 2:17: “ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.””
  - B. Jesus speaking of the hatred his followers would experience
    - i. 69:4, “Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head;”
    - ii. John 15:25: “But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’”
  - C. When Jesus was very near death he said, “I am thirsty” and was offered soured wine
    - i. 69:21: “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”
    - ii. John 19:28-29 (Mt 27:34; Mk 15:36; Lk 23:36): “28 Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”
  - D. Judas' death is understood as fulfilling David's curses on his enemies
    - i. Ps 69:25: “May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents.”
    - ii. Acts 1:20: “18 (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19 Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms: “‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’[e]”
  - E. Paul sees the refusal of Israel to recognize Jesus as the messiah as a fulfillment of David's curses:
    - i. Psalm 29:23-24: “May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. 24 Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them.”

- ii. Rom 11:9-10: “7 What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, 8 as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day.”[c] 9 And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. 10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.”[d]”
- F. Paul figures that if Christ was willing to suffer verbal abuse from his enemies we should be willing to bear with the failings of other believers rather than only doing what pleases ourselves
- i. Ps 69:9b: “and the insults of those who insult you fall on me”
  - ii. Rom 15:3 : “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”[a] 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### Psalms in the NT:

- You are my son, today I have begotten you (fulfilled by raising Jesus)\*
- The Gentiles raging against the Son\*
- The Messiah will be a conquering king\*
- The sinfulness of man
- God’s truth out of the mouths of babes
- The glorious state of man, a little lower than the angels
- He would be raised (deduced by a messianic psalm, not a pattern)\*
- The gospel will go to the gentiles\*
- The Messiah will suffer grievously\*
- All belongs to God
- The Messiah will be persecuted\*
- An end to the sacrificial system\*
- The Messiah speaks in parables\*
- Judas’ death\*

- The Messiah's of the priesthood of Melchizedek\*
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