

Psalm 69:1-4

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-69/psalm-691-4/>

David implores God to save him from the imminent dangers threatening to sweep his life away like a flood. He is exhausted from crying out and is surrounded by many enemies who unjustly are against him.

For the choir director; according to Shoshannim. A Psalm of David (superscription).

According to the superscription, *David* is the author of Psalm 69.

As a boy, *David* was anointed the future king of Israel. Soon after he killed Goliath the Philistine. When Saul, the current king of Israel, became jealous of *David's* popularity, he tried to kill *David*, forcing him to flee from the king. Later *David* did become king of Israel. As king, he fought many battles on behalf of Israel. *David* lived a dangerous life and had many enemies—foreign and domestic—who threatened his life. *David* is the author of this *psalm*.

This psalm appears to have been intended as worship music, because it was addressed *for the choir director*. The phrase *according to Shoshannim* may be a reference to a particularly musical melody or tune that is now unknown to us—but not to the people of *David's* cultural era.

Psalm 69 is similar to other psalms *of David* where the psalmist urgently cries out to the LORD about unjust sufferings at the hands of enemies, and praises the LORD for his deliverance. Psalm 69 is also prophetic of Jesus the Messiah's sufferings and His deliverance, much like Psalms 22, 31, and 35.

Each of The Bible Says commentaries for Psalm 69 will be divided into two sections. One section will explain how the psalm portends to *David*, the author of the psalm; and one section will explain how the psalm prophetically corresponds to Jesus as the Messiah. For easier navigation, these sections will be marked with boldfaced headings. Moreover, the commentaries for Psalm 69 will attempt to point the prophetic correlations of *David's* prayer to the Messiah.

Psalm 69:1-4 as it applies to David.

Psalm 69 begins with an urgent but simple petition:

Save me, O God (v 1a).

David, the psalmist, directly appeals to *God*. He asks *God* to physically *save* him from the harm his enemies intend for him.

After making this opening request, David describes his circumstances:

For the waters have threatened my life (v 1a).

The term *waters* in many ancient cultures, including Israel, was frequently used as symbol for “chaos.” Such appears to be the case here. The psalmist is asking *God* to *save* him from the chaotic circumstances that *have threatened* to take his physical *life*.

David elaborates, *I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold* (v 2a).

The term *mire* describes a swamp-like mud that is both slippery and thick. To put one’s weight upon *mire* causes that person’s feet and legs to sink into it. *Mire* often creates a muddy vacuum that sucks a person’s feet down as they try to pull themselves out—making extracting oneself extremely slow and difficult.

To be *sunk in deep mire* possibly means being chest or even neck-*deep in mire*—which is more than inconvenient; it is potentially deadly. The psalmist says *there is no foothold*. If a person *sunk in mire* can find *there is no foothold*, they will likely be stuck or continue to sink.

The effect of David’s image—*I have sunk deep in mire, and there is no foothold*—is that he is trapped in an increasingly vulnerable and perilous predicament.

The psalmist continues elaborating upon the severity of his circumstances: *I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me* (v 2b).

For the second time in as many lines, *David* describes how he is *deep* in peril. This time he says he is *in deep waters* instead of *deep mire*. *Deep waters* refers to the depths of the sea. *David* likely feels disoriented and/or far from the safety and security of the shore without land in sight. Again, because *waters* can mean “chaos,” the expression *deep waters* can mean *David* is *in deep chaos*.

The psalmist says *a flood overflows me*.

A *flood* is reminiscent of how *God* judged the world in the time of *Noah* (Genesis 7:17-18). The Hebrew term that is translated as *flood* describes a swift current that sweeps everything in its path. *David* likens his troubles to a rising *flood* that *overflows* and sweeps him away.

Next, *David* describes the toll that his troubles have taken on him:

*I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched;
My eyes fail while I wait for my God* (v 3).

His troubles have upset him greatly. His sorrows have been expressed through much *crying*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *crying* describes calling out and lamenting with one’s voice more than it describes weeping tears. *David* is physically *weary* and emotionally exhausted from *crying* out in pain or *crying* out for help.

David says: *my throat is parched*. This could mean that his voice may be hoarse from a lack of water or from *crying* out so much—or both. The psalmist laments *my eyes fail while I wait for my God*. This could refer to tears which have blurred his vision. Or this could also suggest that *David* is tempted to lose hope and to *fail* to anticipate good to come as he waits for *God* to intervene.

Finally, *David* assigns the direct cause of his troubles to his adversaries:

*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* (v 4a).

The psalmist describes his adversaries as *Those who hate me without cause* and *those who would destroy me*. *David's enemies* are both numerous and difficult to count—they *are more than the hairs of my head*; and they *are powerful*. Moreover, they have no valid reason to seek *David's* harm. They *hate him without a cause* and are *wrongfully his enemies*.

Finally, in this section of scripture, *David* cries out to *God* about how his *enemies* treat him unjustly:

What I did not steal, I then have to restore (v 4b).

According to the Law of Moses, if a court convicted someone of stealing, part of the penalty was to pay back or *restore* to their victim what they had stolen (and more). This principle is called “restitution”:

“If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.”
(Exodus 22:1)

By lamenting: *I then have to restore what I did not steal*—the psalmist is rightly complaining that he is being blamed and punished for crimes he did not commit. He is innocent of what his enemies say about him, but he is being unfairly treated and unjustly punished as though he is guilty.

Psalm 69:1-4 as Messianic Prophecy

The Bible Says has identified eight Messianic prophecies in Psalm 69:1-4 that were fulfilled by Jesus.

1. The Messiah will call out for God to save Him when He is in chaotic life-threatening circumstances.

*Save me, O God,
For the waters have threatened my life* (v 1).

Jesus, the Messiah, called out for *God to save Him* when His *life* was threatened during chaotic circumstances.

Waters is often a symbol for “chaos” in the Old Testament (Genesis 1:2, Psalm 18:16, 124:4-5, Isaiah 43:2).

After Jesus identified Judas as His betrayer (Matthew 26:20-25, John 13:21-30) and thus exposed the religious leaders’ elaborate conspiracy to murder Him (Matthew 26:3-5, John 11:47-57), He

went to Gethsemane to pray (Matthew 26:36, John 18:1-2) while His enemies chaotically scrambled to arrest and convict Him on the night of Passover.

The disorganization of the conspiracy to urgently take Jesus's *life* is evident in the first two religious trials of Jesus—first in the home of Annas (John 18:12-24) and then again in the house of Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-66, John 18:24). The chaos was especially glaring at Jesus's Nighttime Trial in the home of Caiaphas, where the prosecution was so disorganized that they had trouble finding two false witnesses whose accusations agreed (Matthew 26:59-60) until the high priest illegally intervened (Matthew 26:63-66).

To learn more about the chaotic and illegal circumstances of Jesus's religious trial, see The Bible Says' article: "[Jesus's Trial, Part 3. The 5 Stages of Jesus's Trial.](#)"

As His *enemies* frantically gathered together in a fright to take His life before their evil conspiracy became exposed and risked their being deposed, Jesus prayed for *God* to *save* Him from the rising *waters* that *threatened* His *life*:

“And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”
(Matthew 26:39)

2. The Messiah will be in a deadly predicament with no clear way to escape without divine intervention.

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

This prophecy has two basic fulfillments in the life of Jesus, the Messiah.

First, Jesus was surrounded by His *enemies* who were determined to take His *life*. There were *no* earthly appeals or *foothold* available to Him as the highest courts in the land condemned Him to death—the Sanhedrin (Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, Luke 26:66-71) and Pilate the Roman governor of Judea (Matthew 27:26, Mark 15:15, Luke 23:24, John 19:15-16).

Surrounded by *enemies*, Jesus was *sunk deep in* their *mire* and a *flood* of their false accusations (Mark 14:56) and petitions to “Crucify Him!” (Mark 15:14, Luke 23:21) “began to prevail” (Luke 23:23). In terms of the volume of His opposition, Jesus could say with David: *a flood overflows Me*.

The second fulfillment of verse 2's Messianic prophecy was Jesus's death.

When He bowed His head and dismissed His spirit (John 19:30), Jesus *sunk in a deep mire* of death. There was *no* longer any part of His body that was alive. He had *no foothold on life*. There was *no* way for Him to be physically revived apart from a divine miracle.

He had plunged *into* the *deep waters* of death. Death's *flood* swept away Jesus's *life* when He gave up His spirit (Luke 23:46).

3. The Messiah will be exhausted from sorrow and *crying* out to God.

I am weary with my crying (v 3a).

When He was in Gethsemane, Jesus, the Messiah, confided to His disciples, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death” (Matthew 26:38) because of His troubles. Shortly after He said this, Jesus “fell on His face praying,” *crying* out to *God* if there was any way to let this cup of troubles pass from Him (Matthew 26:39).

Luke adds that “His sweat became like drops of blood” (Luke 22:44) and that an angel from heaven was sent to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). Jesus’s statements, actions, bodily response, and the heavenly angel which was strengthening Him all indicate how *weary* Jesus was *with* His *crying* to *God*.

4. The Messiah’s voice will become hoarse and *parched* during His suffering.

My throat is parched (v 3b).

As Jesus the Messiah hung on the cross, He cried out: “I am thirsty” (John 19:28b). Dehydration was one of the most common sufferings of crucifixion. After hanging on the cross for six hours Jesus’s *throat* would have been *parched* and dry.

John comments that Jesus said: “I am thirsty” (John 19:28b), “to fulfill the Scripture” (John 19:28a). Psalm 69:3—*My throat is parched*—is one of the scriptures which Jesus fulfilled when He said: “I am thirsty” (John 19:28b).

John also observes how, after Jesus said this,

“A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.”
(John 19:29)

The sponge full of sour wine which Jesus was given to drink is a fulfillment of Psalm 69:21b which says: “for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”.

To learn more about Jesus’s fifth statement on the cross and how it relates to Psalm 69, see the Bible Says article: [“Jesus’s Seven Last Words from the Cross—Part Five: A Word of Agony.”](#)

5. The Messiah will be tempted to lose heart as He waits *for God*.

My eyes fail while I wait for my God (v 3c).

The expression *my eyes fail* refers to either a lack of either physical or mental vision—or both.

If this expression refers to physical vision, then this may have been fulfilled when Jesus’s eyes became blurry with tears, exhaustion, dehydration, or physical swelling from the abuse He received during the ordeal of His trial and crucifixion—all the while Jesus waited for *God*.

If this expression refers to mental vision, it likely refers to how Jesus was tempted to give up hope on the cross. This temptation is perhaps most visible to us by His expression from the cross: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34).

To learn more about Jesus’s fourth statement on the cross see the Bible Says article: [“Jesus’s Seven Last Words from the Cross—Part Four: A Word of Desolation.”](#)

Even though Jesus was tempted on the cross, He did not succumb to temptation—Jesus overcame temptation through trusting *God* (John 16:33b, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 3:21b). Without relying on His own divine strength, Jesus trusted God and obeyed His Father even unto death (Philippians 2:7-8).

Although tempted in every way as we were, Jesus remained without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21). As a result, all who believe upon Him will be delivered from the penalty of sin and death (John 3:14-16).

6. The Messiah’s enemies will be numerous and *powerful*.

*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* (v 4a).

The *enemies* of Jesus, the Messiah, were numerous and difficult to count as David’s expression prophesies—*more than the hairs of my head*. *Those who hated Jesus without cause* include:

- **The Sadducees**—the priestly order who controlled the Temple complex and were in charge of offering sacrifices.
- **The Pharisees**—the teachers and guardians of the Jewish Tradition and Mosaic Law, who ran the local synagogues.
- **The Scribes**—the religious lawyers who worked closely with the Pharisees to prosecute any who violated their rules even as they created loopholes for themselves so they could exploit others.
- **The Sanhedrin Council** consisting of the leaders among the Sadducees (chief priests), Pharisees (elders), and Scribes. The Sanhedrin illegally conspired, had Jesus illegally arrested, and illegally condemned Him to death.

To learn more about the illegality of Jesus’s religious trials see the Bible Says article: [“Jesus’s Trial, Part 1. The Laws Broken by the Religious Leaders: A Summary.”](#)

- **The Herodians**—the Romanized Jews loyal to the Herodian dynasty—Rome’s puppet government ruling Israel. The Herodians executed Jesus’s cousin, John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12), and they abused and mocked Jesus (Luke 23:8-11).
- **Pilate**—the Roman governor of Judea who tried, punished, and ordered Jesus to be crucified, even though he declared Jesus’s innocence (Luke 23:22).

- **The Roman Legionnaires**—who flogged Jesus and cruelly mocked Him (Matthew 27:26-31, John 19:1-3) and who divided His garments after crucifying Him (Matthew 27:35, John 19:23-25).
- **Judas**—one of Jesus’s closest disciples, who betrayed his Rabbi (Matthew 26:25).
- **The Crowds of Jews**—who called for Pilate to “Crucify Him” as Jesus was on trial (Mark 15:12-14).
- **The Numerous Scoffers**—who passed by Jesus and mocked Him as He was being crucified (Matthew 27:39-40). Jesus was crucified near the entrance of Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:12), and because it was Passover, Jesus was seen by functionally all of Israel. It is estimated that Jerusalem’s population swelled to over a million as Jews made the pilgrimage to the city.

Considering how many *people hated the Messiah without cause*, David’s prophecy that they *are more than the hairs of my head* is certainly figuratively, if not literally, accurate.

Likewise, *those who would destroy Jesus were powerful*.

- **Pilate**—the Roman Governor of Judea
- **Caiaphas**—the High Priest
- **Annas**—Caiaphas’s father in-law and patriarch of a priestly dynasty
- **The Sanhedrin Council**—the highest Jewish court in Israel.

7. The Messiah’s enemies will be *wrongfully* against Him.

*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* (v 4a).

Not only were Jesus the Messiah’s *enemies* numerous and powerful—they were *wrongfully* against Him and they hated Him *without cause*.

Jesus was the Messiah, who came to redeem Israel and inaugurate His kingdom of righteousness and prosperity. The religious leaders—the Pharisees, scribes, and priests—should have been the first to recognize and worship Him. But as John said:

“He [Jesus] came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”
(John 1:11)

Instead of receiving Jesus as the Messiah, Christ’s *enemies* wrongfully sought to *destroy* Him.

According to Jesus's "Parable of the Landowner" (Matthew 21:33-41), instead of listening to the Landowner's Son (the Messiah) as the vine-growers (religious leaders) should have done, they killed Jesus *without just cause* (Matthew 2:39).

As for Pilate and the Roman Legionnaires who crucified Jesus, they were created by Him (John 1:1-3). And though "the world was made through Him...the world did not know Him" (John 1:10).

The Jewish people whom Jesus came to save, rejected Him for a criminal and called for His crucifixion.

"But the governor said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said, 'Crucify Him!'"
(Matthew 27:21-22)

In their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, they committed blasphemy, declaring: "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

Judas betrayed Jesus *without a just cause* and *wrongfully* became His enemy. Judas was one of "the twelve apostles" whom Jesus personally selected to be His closest disciples (Matthew 10:2-4). He was Jesus's "friend" (Matthew 26:49-50). And yet Judas *wrongfully* betrayed Jesus into the hands of His enemies, despite the responsibility and love Jesus invested in him (John 13:29, 5).

Jesus the Messiah's enemies were wrongfully against Him.

8. The Messiah will unjustly pay the penalty for laws He did not break.

What I did not steal, I then have to restore (v 4b).

Jesus, the Messiah unjustly was punished and paid the penalty for laws He did not break.

The religious leaders fraudulently condemned Jesus to death when they illegally claimed He committed blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-66, Mark 14:60-64, Luke 22:66-71). Jesus did not commit blasphemy—He was who He claimed to be—the Messiah and Son of God. However He was condemned for truthfully answering the religious leader's question. In ironic fact, Caiaphas, the high priest, committed blasphemy according to Jewish customs in the manner in which he accused Jesus.

To learn more about this ironic illegality of Caiaphas's charge of blasphemy see the Bible Says article: "[Jesus's Trial, Part 5. The Laws of Practice that were Violated.](#)"

The political charge for which Jesus was crucified was insurrection. The crime posted above His head on the cross was: "This is the King of the Jews" (Luke 23:38). Pilate the Roman governor who presided over this case and who personally interviewed Jesus twice, repeatedly declared that Jesus was innocent of the charges leveled against Him (Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 22).

Giving in to the demands of the crowd (Luke 23:23), Pilate had Jesus crucified anyway (Luke 23:24). Upon Jesus's cross, Pilate refused to post the crime His enemies accused Him of breaking, but rather he posted "This is the King of the Jews" to expose the true source of Jesus's crucifixion—the Jewish leaders' envy (John 19:19-22).

In both His religious and civil trials, Jesus was punished for crimes He did not commit as David prophetically predicted of the Messiah when he wrote: *What I did not steal, I then have to restore.*

But David's prophetic utterance is true of Jesus, the Messiah, in a much larger sense than any human court or conviction could authorize.

This is because Jesus, who perfectly kept the law (Matthew 5:17, Hebrews 4:15, 1 John 3:5), died as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for all the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:5-6, 10-12, 1 John 2:2).

"[God] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
(1 Corinthians 5:21)

Jesus the Messiah was condemned for what He *did not steal*, but chose to lay down His *life* so He could *restore* the world (Matthew 20:28, Romans 5:8, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 1 Peter 3:18).

Biblical Text

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For the waters have threatened my life.

² I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me.

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

My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

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