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# PSALMS - The SONGS

Forty-nine

Riddle: Should I Fear the Boastful Rich?

## READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Psalm 49** and mark every reference to the LORD, or God, including all pronouns and synonyms, with a red triangle.

Read through **Psalm 49** and mark every reference to the wise man, including all pronouns and synonyms (i.e. upright, etc.), with a blue capital "R+".

Read through **Psalm 49** and circle every reference to fear, along with all pronouns and synonyms, with a purple and red jagged circumference.

Read through **Psalm 49** and underline every reference to the peoples, along with all pronouns and synonyms (i.e. inhabitants of the world, rich, poor, etc.) with a purple flag.

Read through **Psalm 49** and mark every reference to the foolish man, along with all pronouns and synonyms (i.e. stupid, they, he, man in his pomp, etc.)

Read through **Psalm 49** and underline every reference to any type of wealth, along with all pronouns and synonyms (i.e. riches, redeem, ransom, costly, houses, dwelling places, lands, etc.) in green.

Read through **Psalm 49** and mark every reference to death or Sheol, along with all pronouns and synonyms, with a black rectangle.

Read through **Psalm 49** and mark every comparison with a pink equal sign.

Read through **Psalm 49** and surround **verses 7** and **15** with pink diagonal lines (contrast marks), noting how they are different.

Read through **Psalm 49** and double underline in pink the lines of **verses 10** and **17** which are similar.

Read through **Psalm 49** and double underline **verses 12** and **20** in pink (comparison marks), noting how they are alike.

Read through **Psalm 49** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. Rich and Poor: Listen to the riddle!
2. The rich can not redeem another soul
3. The rich will not endure
4. The foolish rich will end up in Sheol
5. The boastful rich are like animals that perish

## READ AND ANSWER

### Psalm 49:1-4

To whom is this **Psalm** addressed?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

What is every single person on the face of the earth called to do?

Why? What was the psalmist about to do?

Rich and poor, low and high, is there anyone who will not benefit from listening to (and hearing) this **Psalm**?

The psalmist declared that his mouth would speak wisdom—what did he declare his mind would do?

What did the psalmist say he would do with his ear?

What instrument was he going to use to express himself?

What did he say he would communicate on his harp?

**Psalm 49:5-9**

The psalmist tells all the people of the earth to listen and listen carefully. He is going to propound a riddle, a proverb, an inspired measure of wisdom and understanding. **Verses 1** through **4** are his formal injunction to hear him out. Just as riddles are often broached with a question, the psalmist begins his words of wisdom with a question in **verse 5**. What is it?

His question is rhetorical. *Should* he fear in days of adversity? *Should* he fear when the iniquity of his foes surrounds him?

What situation does the psalmist seem to be in?

What surrounds him?

Who does he identify as his foes?

1.

2.

Are his enemies simply people who are rich?

What do his wealthy enemies do?

- 1.
- 2.



**Neither individuals nor nations should trust or boast in their wealth  
nor in the abundance of their riches...**

**Proverbs 23:5**

***When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.  
For wealth certainly makes itself wings  
Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.***

**However, there is One Who *is* trustworthy...**

**Psalms 20:7**

***Some boast in chariots and some in horses,  
But we will boast in the Name of the LORD, our God.***

**And praiseworthy...**

**Galatians 6:14**

***But may it never be that I would boast,  
except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
through which the world has been crucified to me,  
and I to the world.***

Can anyone redeem his brother's soul, even a wealthy man?

Can anyone give God a satisfactory ransom to save another man's soul?

Why not?

How expensive is the redemption of a soul?

Should you try?

What should you cease forever?

1.

2.

In other words, can anyone prevent death from overtaking his life?

Does anyone live eternally (in the flesh)?

What happens to the bodies of all who live (even the rich and powerful)?

**Psalm 49:10-12**

Who is aware that even wise men die? (Hint: Who has been the “he”?)

In addition to the wise man, who else makes the psalmist’s list of those who can not avoid death?

1.

2.

What will be left behind?

Who are the stupid and the senseless in the context of **verses 10-12** (and this **Psalm**)?

Why are they called stupid and senseless?

What do they foolishly believe will endure forever?

1.

2.

Why have they called their lands after their own names?

What will even the rich, powerful man not be able to do?



**The Hebrew word for “pomp” is *yaqar* and is a primitive root which means to be heavy (as when precious metals are weighed for their value).**

**The Hebrew word for “endure” is *luwn* and is a primitive root that means to stop or lodge overnight. It has the idea of staying permanently.**

**Verse 12 highlights the fact that man, no matter his value, can not stay alive. Every man is on a journey which can not be paused, his final destination, death, will be reached as planned.**

To what is man compared?

**Psalm 49:13-15**

Who are the foolish (in this **Psalm**)?

What is the “way” of those who are foolish?

What is the “way” of those who come after them and yet approve of their words?

What is the end of these foolish men and those who follow in their path?

What is true about these men?

Who is their shepherd?

Who will rule over them in the morning?



**Let's stop a minute  
and gather the thoughts of the Psalm together for understanding's sake.  
Remember, the psalmist has broached the truth of this Psalm  
as as riddle for us to ponder.**

**Who are the characters in this Psalm?  
The psalmist, who represents the wise upright man who trusts in God  
and rich men, who trust in their wealth and oppress the upright.**

**The psalmist is answering his riddle throughout the Psalm.  
He is showing us why the upright need not fear foes who are powerful  
(in a worldly way through their riches)—they are going to die.  
And in the end, the upright will rule over them!**

**There is more to see as we continue in the Psalm,  
but I thought it would be good to catch us all up before we go any further!**

What will happen to the bodies of the boastful rich who oppress the upright?

What will happen to their souls?

What, on the other hand, will happen to the soul of the upright?

Why?

Where will the habitation of the upright be?



Compare **verse 15** with **verse 7**. What is the contrast?

**Psalm 49:16-20**

What do we not need to fear?

1.

2.

Why might we be afraid of a man who becomes rich and the glory of his house is increased? What might happen? (Hint: **Verse 5**)

Why don't we need to fear if a man becomes rich and the glory of his house is increased?

What will happen when he dies?

1.

2.

Compare **verse 10** with **verse 17**. What is the similarity?

What does the man who becomes rich do while he lives?

What do men do when you do well for yourself?

Despite the praise and adoration from himself and other men, what will eventually happen to the rich man who boasts in his wealth?

Who will never see the light? (Reread the **Psalm** and keep the characters in context asking, "Who are 'they'?.")

Compare **verse 12** with **verse 20**. What is the similarity?

Compare **verse 12** with **verse 20**. What is the difference?

What does a boastful rich man, in all his honor, not have?

Despite the value that humans possess above animals, to what is the boastful rich man compared?

## READ AND REASON

Is this **Psalm** saying that being rich is a sin? No.

Is the **Psalm** saying that those who trust in their wealth are sinners? Yes.

These people boast in the power and position that wealth brings them. They slap themselves on the back for what they have accomplished, and slap the less fortunate in the face for being less than they...

What a difference in the two characters of **Psalm 49**. Although neither is described with any fulness, the end of the one (the arrogant sinner) sets the direction for the path of the other (the upright).

It is the oppressor's present that determines his future. It is the oppressor's future that determines the present of the oppressed.

The one, in his life, has everything of value that he will ever have—because in death he will have nothing. The other has nothing in this life but the promise of the future—and in death he will receive everything that is lovely and precious.

One trusts in riches to bring him glory... the other trusts in the Glorious One to bring him glory...

One will spend eternity without even so much as a dwelling place for his soul... The other will be received out of the tomb and into the dwelling places of the Most High...

Oh, glorious truth!

## ~ Segment by Segment

Try titling these segments yourself.  
Ask God to help you.

**Verses 1-4**

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**Verses 5-9**

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**Verses 10-12**

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**Verses 13-15**

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**Verses 16-20**

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## ~ Purpose of Psalm 49

Try to identify the purpose of Psalm 49.  
The purpose simply states “*why* the Psalmist wrote the Psalm”.

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 Theme of Psalm 49

**Try giving Psalm 49 a title by identifying its theme.  
The theme simply states “*what* the Psalm is about”.**

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