

“THE JUDGE OF THE JUDGES”

PSALM 82

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INTRODUCTON

“This Psalm is a solemn rebuke, addressed in prophetic strain, to those who, pledged by their office to uphold the Law, had trampled upon it for their own selfish ends. It is a ‘Vision of Judgment,’ in which no common offenders are arraigned, as it is no earthly tribunal before which they are summoned” (P. 101). The rulers of Israel were intended “to embody in visible form the majesty of” God’s divine righteousness. “As in the presence of God, the Psalmist takes up his parable against these unjust judges (Ibid.). These men had been put into the loftiest position and are even called “sons of the highest” and “gods,” They bore God’s image and exercised His authority and were charged to carry out God’s divine will. They should have been God’s living representatives, indeed “the very pattern and likeness of His righteousness and wisdom—but they failed miserably! Instead, they loved unrighteousness and manifested favor to the wicked who had wealth and power. They crushed the poor and helpless and fatherless “whose only protection lay in the unsullied uprightness and incorruptibility of the judge” (P. 102). They failed morally and intellectually, and their light had become darkness. Having loosed “the bonds of law,” “the foundations of social order are shaken, and the whole fabric threatened with dissolution” (Ibid.). But their exercise of power in tyranny against their Creator is coming to an end and they are about to fall into ruin and die. With that thought, the psalmist turn to prayer in an appeal to the righteous Sovereign who reigns over these unjust rulers, that He might bring true justice to the earth itself—indeed not only to Israel, but to all the nations!

Our world is in chaos—politically, morally, spiritually. Our rulers, to a large degree, are unjust and wicked. Laws that have been passed in recent years have oppressed godly people and have promoted wicked persons. Good is called evil, and evil is called good. The spiritual shepherds are blinding the sheep, by feeding the people with watered down milk and not the pure meat of the Word of God. The truth is that our leaders, to a large degree, “do not know, nor do they understand. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken” (v. 5). What is a believer to do? Pray the prayer of v. 8: “Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is you who possesses/will inherit all the nations.”

ENTRUST YOUR LIFE AND YOUR NATION TO THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH WHO DOES RIGHT (Gen. 19:25)

- I. GOD’S UNBOUNDED JURISDICTION (1)
 - A. God Takes His stand.
 - B. He stands in the “congregation of God.”
 - C. He judges among the “gods”—i.e. the rulers.
- II. GOD’S DELEGATION OF POWER (6)
 - A. God’s words of delegation to the earthly rulers—“I” is very emphatic: “You are gods.”
 - B. God’s description of their intended likeness to their sovereign—“sons of the Most High—all of you.”
 - They are not absolute; there is a Sovereign above them.
 - As “sons” they are intended to be like Him and to rule like Him.
 - 1) Ex. 21:6—where the slave owner whose slave determines to stay with him permanently is required to bring the slave “to God” first, or the judges who acted in God’s name. 2) Ex. 22:8-9 speaks of a case when one who has had property stolen from him that he was guarding on behalf of another, must go “before God”—evidently the judge(s) to determine whether he is indeed innocent; this requirement to bring each such case “before God”—the judges(s)—is repeated twice in v. 9. The context clearly requires a legal determination in each matter, and we know that beginning with Moses and the elders whom he appointed there were judicial rulers in place to consider such matters.
 - 3) Ex. 22:28 commands that they must not “curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”
 - 4) Moses said that ‘the people come to me to inquire of God; ...and I make them know the statutes of God and his decisions’ (Ex. 18:15f). When one comes to the earthly ruler, he comes to a divine representative who rules on God’s behalf.

- C. Jesus' use of this passage in John 10:34-36.
1. Jesus affirms the application of the verse to earthly rulers
 - The Jewish leaders to whom He speaks are like these earthly rulers—wicked and unjust.
 2. If He called such earthly rulers “gods” to whom God’s word came, and Scripture cannot be broken, then surely Jesus can call Himself the Son of God—and He is not blaspheming!
 - God sanctified Him—unlike these unholy rulers.
 - God sent Him into the world, and He carries out God’s plan and does righteousness.
 3. Jesus’ interpretation rules out the application to angels.
 - It is true that they are at time called “princes” in Dan. 10 and 12.
 - In Job they are called “sons of God” (ch. 1; ch. 38:7).
 - The NT refers to the principalities and powers, rulers and authorities.
 - Compare Rev. 19:20-21; with 20:1-11. This latter passage shows the close identification of the wicked earthly rulers with the fallen demonic rulers.
 - Psalm 8:5 speaks of man being made a “little lower than God” (Elohim) and yet crowned with glory and honor; Hebrews 2:7 interprets “a little lower than the angels” who are “godlike” in power and dignity.
 - Angelic beings do not die! (v. 7) But, earthly rulers who took to themselves divine attributes (as has often been the case) do die like all ordinary men.
 - In what sense would this entire psalm be appropriate if addressed to angels? Can they be expected to carry out the judgments demanded in vv. 2-4?
 - Moreover, angels nowhere are actually called “gods” as here.
 4. Jesus’ interpretation rules out the application to false gods of the heathen.
 - He nowhere has called them “gods” in the true sense. They are always shown as worthless.
 - Nor certainly “the sons of the Highest”; the Bible never gives them validity.

III. GOD’S DIAGNOSIS OF THE PROBLEM (2-5)

A. Unjust Judgment (2)

1. “How long?”—divine impatience with wicked judgment.
2. They “judge unjustly”—opposite of judging righteously.
3. They “lift up the face” of the wicked—show partiality/favoritism.

B. The Need for Proper Judgment (3-4).

1. For the weak and fatherless, the afflicted and destitute and the needy.
2. “Judge/vindicate them”; “Do justice” for them; “rescue them”; “deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.”

C. The Assessment of the Rulers/Judges (5).

1. Spiritual ignorance; lack of spiritual understanding.
2. Walking in darkness.
3. The spiritual, moral, and political foundations of society are shaken.

IV. GOD’S DRASTIC INTENTIONS (7)

- A. You will die like ordinary men.
- B. You will fall like any of the princes.

V. THE BELIEVER’S PLEA FOR GOD’S ACTION (8)

- A. Arise—Judge the earth.
- B. You possess all the nations—this is not Satan’s world; **this is my Father’s world!**

CONCLUSION

The bullies of this world are not in control—God is. He possesses the nations of the Earth.

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