

God Above All gods

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, thank you that this evening, though we are few, we know that we are indwelt by your Spirit and he is here with us and we are gathered as the church, gathered in your name and we want to seek your face, cry out to you, hear from you.

So please lead us, address us, meet with us and answer our praise, oh God, we pray. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. We are in Psalm 82.

It is rather short. It is a shorter psalm. Yeah, it is very short. We are going on longer stuff. Yeah. Psalm 82 is a psalm of Asaph.

Let me read it out loud. God has taken his place in the divine council. In the midst of the gods he holds judgment. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. They have neither knowledge nor understanding.

[1 : 22] They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless, like men you shall die and fall like any prince.

Arise, oh God, judge the earth. For you shall inherit all the nations. This is really a short psalm. It's a unique psalm. There's no other psalm in this altar that has the content, really similar content as this psalm.

And it's a prophetic psalm that recounts a vision, basically, of a divine council, a heavenly council, where God judges the so-called gods who rule over the earth. And so we see in verses 1 to 2 God's prosecution of these angelic beings.

And then in verses 3 to 5 we see God's verdict. And then in the final few verses we see God's execution of his judgment. And the main point really is that God who judges in heaven is the one who brings justice to earth.

And it begins abruptly in verse 1. God has taken his place in the divine council. In the midst of the gods he holds judgment. So right away, obviously, this is very interesting because who are these gods, right?

[2 : 34] And God is holding judgment among them. The Bible clearly teaches that the Lord our God, the Lord is one. So there's only one God. And it also clearly teaches that the idols that people worship are no gods at all.

So then who are these gods? And scripture sometimes describes angelic beings as sons of God or gods. And describing something as a son of something is like a Hebrew idiom.

And it doesn't necessarily refer to like an actual father-son kind of relationship. So, for example, Psalm 89.22 calls a wicked person a son of wickedness.

And Proverbs 31.5 describes those who are afflicted as sons of affliction. So when verse 6 describes these gods as sons of the Most High, it's not suggesting that they're actual offsprings of God, children of God, but it's saying that they're in some way God-like.

They resemble God, right? And so it's referring to the fact that they're angelic beings, spirits. And God has summoned these angelic beings to hold a divine counsel kind of to his throne room.

[3 : 46] And God's presiding over them. So this kind of scene also takes place in other parts of the Bible. 1 Kings 22, Job 1-2, right? That you see God in his throne room and holding counsel among the sons of God, the angelic beings.

And God begins to cross-examine and prosecute these angelic beings in verse 2. He says, How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

Selah. So it appears that instead of upholding justice, these angelic beings were, you know, kind of continuing injustice and showing partiality to the wicked.

And so in verses 3-5, God gives his verdict of them. He judges them and issues his verdict. What they should have done was to judge justly.

It says here, Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Right? These are all, these words all kind of similar.

[4 : 46] The weak, fatherless, afflicted, destitute, weak, needy. They all represent these marginalized people. People who are not, don't have any power in society. The most vulnerable members of society.

And these so-called gods should have been protecting them. But instead, they were exploiting them and letting the wicked people have their way. And then in verse 5, we see God's verdict.

So here, it seems like the narrator who spoke in verse 1 is speaking again. He's really kind of revealing God's mind here. Because he's referring to the angelic beings in the third person instead of in the second person, as God did when he was speaking.

He says, They have neither knowledge nor understanding. They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. Right? And so because these angelic beings were supposed to uphold justice, have neither knowledge nor understanding.

And because they who should have shed light on the affairs of earth, have instead walked about in darkness, because of them all the foundations of the earth are shaken. And the scripture repeatedly says that righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne.

[5 : 56] Right? So it's Psalm 89 and 97 talk about that. So justice is the foundation upon which God rules the world. Yet these angelic beings who are supposed to do God's bidding and exercise justice on earth have instead subverted justice.

And because of that, the very foundations of the earth are shaken. And the order that God had instituted on earth is subverted and there's chaos. And in the final phase, in verse 68, we see God's execution, his execution of his judgment.

He says in verse 67, I said, You are gods, the sons of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless, like men, you shall die and fall like any prince. So God decrees that these immortal angelic beings will have a mortal human end.

And God's saying that like any ordinary human ruler or prince, like any ordinary human being, these so-called gods shall die.

When he decrees that, there's no struggle or resistance. You know, God's all-powerful and he's supreme in sovereignty. And so these gods must simply acquiesce.

[7 : 13] They simply have to accept God's decree in silence. And then having deposed these angelic rulers of the earth, the question arises, then who then will rule the earth, right?

There's a vacancy now. Who's going to rule over the earth? Recognizing this power vacuum, the psalmist prays in verse 8, Arise, O God, judge the earth, for you shall inherit all the nations.

So the God who judges in heaven will now bring justice to the earth as well. And the God who deposed the angelic rulers will himself assume direct kingship over all the nations.

This idea is referring back to a passage in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 32, verses 8 to 9. It says this there, When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.

But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob, his allotted heritage. So what that's talking about there is that when God divided humanity, he fixed their boundaries according to however many sons of God there were, these angelic beings.

[8 : 28] And he put these angelic beings in charge of the nations. But then he reserved Israel, his people, as his own special possession. So he rolled over them in a special way, while he let these angelic beings rule over the nations.

But Psalm 82, 8 is prophesying of a day when God will put an end to injustice on earth by demoting these angelic beings who rule over the nations and by gathering all the nations under his rule and kingdom.

And that day came when God sent the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to establish his kingdom over all the nations. And that's why in John 10, I don't know if you guys remember this when we went through the Gospel of John, but when Jesus gets into trouble with the Pharisees for calling God his Father and then saying, I and the Father are one, the Pharisees try to stone him for blaspheming.

And then Jesus quotes Psalm 82, verse 6. And he says this, So he's basically quoting this Psalm and saying, You know, if according to Scripture, these lower angelic beings who received the word of the Lord to rule over these nations can be called sons of God, how much more than can the Son of God, whom the Father consecrated, set us apart for himself, and sent into the world, how much more than can he be called the Son of God?

Right? And so this Psalm 82, 8, prophesied that God himself will rise to judge the earth and gather all the nations to himself. And that's what Jesus does when he comes.

[10:15] He puts an end to the unjust and merciless reign of the angelic beings by displaying God's justice and mercy on the cross.

And the cross shows the injustice of the world, right? Because the injustice was so bad in the world that the Son of God had to die on the cross for the sins of this world. And likewise, the cross also reveals God's mercy in that even though the world, along with these angelic beings, should have been judged and should have received this death and judgment, God made a way through Jesus on the cross and his death and resurrection to make a way for the rescue and redemption of people.

And it's because of Jesus, right, that we don't need to be under this, the tyranny of these angelic beings and the cruel reign that they have instituted on earth forever.

Instead, we can come under the reign of Christ, come into the kingdom of God, who is just and gracious. And that's why, because Jesus brought all the nations now in the new covenant era after Jesus came, not just the Jews, but all nations come to him and are under his kingdom.

And that's why in Matthew 28, when Jesus gives the Great Commission, he says, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, right?

[11:40] And all nations meaning not, you know, geopolitical groups, countries, but ethnic groups, people groups, nations, all the nations of earth, all tribes, people, and tongue need to worship the Lord.

They are all being gathered into the kingdom of God. And obviously, this psalm teaches us a couple very important truths that we can apply. And one is, it teaches us about God's justice, right?

That God cares about justice, right? And so much so that, you know, he reduces to mortality the angelic beings who fail to uphold justice on earth. And he says that when justice on earth is subverted, that the very foundations of the earth are shaken, right?

And so treating the weak, the fatherless, afflicted, destitute, and the needy well, giving them justice, upholding their right, is important to God. And when they are mistreated and exploited, the very foundation of earth is disturbed and its harmony and order crumble, right?

Because that's the way in which God decided to create this world. So then we have to ask ourselves, do we take God's justice seriously in our lives, right? If people were to watch a film of our lives, both public and private, will they see concern for the weak and the fatherless and the oppressed and the poor?

[13:01] Or will they see kind of this, you know, disinterested people or uninterested people or even prideful, kind of dismiss all of them?

And then secondly, this psalm teaches us about God's rule, right? That God is not king over Israel alone, that God is king over, he's not just the king over the United States, or he's the king over all the earth and over all the nations.

And there are still nations, people groups, who are under the cruel reign of these unjust rulers. And we have the gospel that can liberate them, the message of Jesus Christ that can liberate them and bring them under the kingdom of God and under the reign of Christ.

And so do we yearn to see the kingdom of God spread to all these nations? Do we support the work of missions and engage in the work of missions? And do we pray, verse 8, along with the psalmist, arise, O God, judge the earth, for you shall inherit all the nations.

That's really why we evangelize, share the gospel, we serve our communities as a church, everything that we do, because we want to see God's glory, his kingdom of God, come to the nations that do not have his gracious and just reign over them yet.