

Psalm 82
Yahweh Rebukes Those Responsible for Injustice

Introduction:

This psalm is from the third book of psalms (73-89) which focuses on the end of the historical Davidic house.

It is easily outlined as the psalms of Asaph (73-83) and the psalms of the sons of Korah (84-89).

This section (73-83) focuses on judgment and justice. Hamilton highlights this as follows:

Psalm 73, Response to Perceived Injustice

Psalm 74, Destruction of Temple

Psalm 75, Judgment Appointed

Psalm 76, Judgment Accomplished

Psalm 77, I Will Remember

Psalm 78, History of Disobedience

Psalm 79, Destruction of Temple

Psalm 80, Plea for Restoration

Psalm 81, Feasts Anticipate Restoration

Psalm 82, Gods Judged

Psalm 83, Peoples Judged

Superscription: *A Psalm of Asaph.*

1) God reveals Himself as the true and righteous Judge—82:1-5

a) He rules from His **preeminent position** as Judge—82:1

i) He presides: ¹ *God takes His stand* (cf. Is. 3:13-14a) *in the congregation of God* (i.e. Israel);

(1) This congregation is gathered to be judged, not consulted for advice.

(2) Cf. Gen. 18:25; Is. 33:22

ii) He judges: *He judges in the midst of gods* (human leaders and judges of Israel).

(1) Some see this as Gentile gods; others see this as angels; others see this as human judges acting in God's name to the people.

(a) Cf. Gen. 23:6 ("mighty"); Exod. 22:8, 9 ("judges", "judges"); Ps. 138:1 ("gods")

(b) These beings can die. (cf. 82:7)

(2) He is the Judge of judges.

iii) Referred to by Jesus in John 10:34-36 as human judges.

b) He **laments over** Israel's judges—82:2

- i) Deviation from the legal norm: ² *How long will you judge unrighteously*
 - ii) Malpractice in sentencing: (How long will you) *and show partiality*
 - (1) To show favoritism to the godless
 - iii) Both charges echo Lev. 19:15 and Deut. 1:17.
 - (1) Perversion of justice has a long history. Cf. Eccles. 5:8
 - (2) As William MacDonald writes: The scales of justice have become scales of oppression.
 - (3) If they want to be identified as gods, they should reflect God's image as judges. Cf. 2 Chron. 19:7
 - iv) As Allen Ross writes: The general observation is that judicial decisions that rule against godliness and righteousness signal the beginning of the end for a society.
 - v) *Selah*.
- c) He issues **commands** to Israel's judges—82:3-4
- Refers to the most vulnerable among exploited Jews.
- i) ³ *Give justice to the poor and the orphan;*
 - ii) *justify the afflicted and destitute.*
 - iii) ⁴ *Protect the poor and needy;*
 - iv) *deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.*
- d) He **evaluates** Israel's judges to those observing the trial—82:5
- This appears to be the focal point of the psalm.
- i) Their self-imposed, ineffective ignorance: ⁵ *They do not know and do not understand;*
 - (1) Of all people in Israel, they should know the Law best.
 - ii) Their harmful inability: *they walk about in darkness;*
 - iii) Their dangerous insurrection: *all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*
 - (1) This may refer to the future judgment in Rev. 20:11-15.
 - (2) Others see this as the subversion of society's law and order.
- 2) **God reveals His sentence for Israel's judges—82:6-7**
- a) The **privilege** of being God's chosen representatives: ⁶ *I said, "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.*
 - i) Quoted by Jesus in John 10:34-35.
 - ii) And because of this privilege, they are obligated to administer God's laws in a manner that pleases God.
 - b) The **punishment** dispensed by God: ⁷ *"Nevertheless you will die like men (Adam, who wanted to be like God) and you will fall like any one of the princes."*

- c) Privilege brings responsibility, and responsibility brings accountability.
(Warren Wiersbe)

3) The psalmist prays to the true and righteous Judge—82:8

- a) The two-fold request for God's intervention:
 - i) ⁸ *Arise, O God,*
 - ii) *judge the earth!*
(1) Cf. Is. 32:16; Ps. 94:1-3; 98:9
- b) The reason:
 - i) *For it is You who will inherit [Qal impf.] all the nations.*
(1) He has the sovereign right to judge His own possession. (cf. Ps. 2:7-8)
(2) Cf. Acts 17:31

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) The one true God always has a deep interest in justice. (paraphrase Allan Harman)
- b) “Those who will not observe the judgments of God’s **mouth** shall not escape the judgments of His **hand**.” (Matthew Henry)
- c) The ending prayer is little different than Matt. 6:10, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”