

Psalm 82
10-13-19 PM

Psalm 82 is another Psalm of Asaph. It is directed to the leaders of the nation and directs them to pursue the concepts of fairness and justice or risk the justice of God.

PART I: You Are Gods

There is an unusual theme in this psalm in regards to other gods. In verse 1 in the NKJV He speaks of those who are “gods” (NASB “rulers”). Then in verse 6 Asaph declares that God says “you are gods”. This language is unusual, as we would typically say that there is no God but Jehovah.

Are there other gods? In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 Paul declares that “there is no other God”, but then in the next verse make the statement that there are other “gods”. He means that there is no other Creator Being; there is none like Jehovah. As the Psalmist says in Psalm 86:10 “You alone are God”. But sometimes this term is used to describe those who have divine attributes. Jesus used this same passage in John 10:34-35 when He said that He was the Son of God, and that men were themselves “gods”; they had divine attributes, being made in the image of God. In Exodus 7:1 God declared that Moses would be a God to Pharaoh; God was describing the divine authority that Moses would project.

Even Satan is called a “god” in 2 Corinthians 4:4. He has authority, and is in a power over this world. This would make sense in that we are told that demons are behind the idols of men in 1 Corinthians 10:20. Perhaps this speaks to the idea (such as in Exodus 12:12) that some things are gods by credit or esteem given to them. In other words, what men worship or serve is their “god”. Jesus said this of wealth in Matthew 6:24.

In Psalm 82, the “gods” are the rulers of men. They are the princes who exercise the authority given by God (consider Romans 13).

PART II: Social Justice

The main point of Psalm 82 is this: the authorities of men had failed God. Perhaps we might describe their failure as having failed to observe “social justice”. In this case these are the charges: Defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the needy and afflicted, and deliver the poor and needy. Because they had failed at this, the “foundations” (perhaps the social contract) was unstable.

There has always been a charge to humanity: To deal justly with one another. Consider Cain and Abel in this. We are called to protect those in society who are weaker. We might call this principle “social justice”. It is carried out by the authorities of men, and also applied in our personal actions.

God has always expected those with authority over others to seek what He calls Justice and Righteousness.

Abrahams house: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." Genesis 18:19

Job's house: *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban*"
Job 29:14. In Job's case, he goes on to elaborate that this meant listening to servant's complaints (31:13) and caring for the poor and needy (31:16-21).

The Law of Moses : *Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen!* Deuteronomy 27:19

The Law of Christ: *Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.* Colossians 4:1

Disciples of Christ are meant to esteem the virtues of Social Justice. We ought to defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the needy and afflicted, and deliver the poor and needy. But sometimes social justice is diverted because of political ideologies. Matters of justice and righteousness are pulled into political parties, and sometimes we fail to support the right ideas because we see them being used in opposition to each other. Consider the social justice issues of abortion (James 2:11), poverty (Galatians 2:10), assistance to handicap (Leviticus 19:14), racial injustices (Acts 10:28), and immigration (Matthew 25:35). All of these are matters of justice and righteousness, but because of their political charge today, we often oppose them. We need to be careful not to believe political ideologies are faith, and not to become unnecessarily confrontational (Titus 3:9, 2 Timothy 2:23).

What does God expect of us personally?

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world". (James 1:27)

God judges nations that do not seek justice. We need to remember too that God judges us if we are not careful to work helping the poor when opportune, enabling justice when opportune, and defending the weak when opportune.