

## **The God Who Holds The Responsible Responsible**

### **Psalm 82**

Introduction: 1) There is a theological principle that helps us understand the rightness and justice of the judgment of God: “Revelation brings responsibility. The more you know, the greater is your responsibility.” In other words there will be both degrees of punishment and reward at the judgment bar of God.

2) Psalm 82 brings to light another theological principle that sounds a similar, but not identical note: “Responsibility brings accountability. The greater your responsibility, the greater is your accountability” (cf. Luke 12:48).

4) Psalm 82 is short (8 vs.) and difficult to analyze with any degree of certainty.

- It has been classified as a New Year hymn celebrating the Lord as Judge of all the earth. The latter observation is clearly correct.
- Others see it as a prayer song or lament to God about the lack of justice being administered on the part of those in positions of authority and responsibility.

#### **I. God will judge those in authority.      82:1**

- Verse 1 is an interpretive challenge to say the least.

*NKJV:* “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.”

*NIV:* “God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the gods.”

*NASV:* “God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers.”

*HCSB:* “God has taken His place in the divine assembly; He judges among the gods.”

- One can see the repetition of the word “gods” in several translations. This is the best rendering of the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Now the crucial and challenging question: who are the gods?
  - 1) Human rulers or judges of Israel (Leupold,; Maclaren)
  - 2) Demon spirits, the principalities and powers (Kidner)
  - 3) Pagan deities (Van Gemeren)
  - 4) Foreign rulers
  - 5) Israel at time of the giving of the law (Carson)
- I believe #1 above to be the best understanding. As divine representatives on earth, the word *Elohim* emphasizes both the source and nature of their authority.

## **II. God will condemn those who are unjust.**

**82:2-7**

- Vs. 2-7 is a blistering indictment of these judges who have failed to exercise their positions of responsibility with grace and goodness, fairness and equity (cf. Micah 6:8).

### **1) God judges those who show partiality.**      **82:2**

### **2) God judges those who shun the poor.**      **82:3-4**

- 4 penetrating imperatives, words of command, make crystal clear what God expects of all who find themselves in positions of responsibility, leadership and authority.
  - 1) “Defend the poor and fatherless”.
  - 2) “Do justice to the afflicted and needy”.
  - 3) “Deliver the poor and needy”.
  - 4) “Free them from the hand of the wicked.”

Do not miss the irony of this final phrase. The wicked, whom these judges showed partiality in v. 2, are the ones who have their hands around the throats of the poor and needy in v. 4.

### 3) God judges those who scorn His precepts **82:5**

- Three accusations are brought against these earthly rulers followed by a divine observation of what their unjust reign of terror has ushered in:
  - 1) “They do not know” (*NIV*, “they know nothing”). Professing to be wise, they are actually fools in the sight of God.
  - 2) “Nor do they understand” (*NIV*, “they understand nothing”). They live and act in ignorance. Peterson calls them “head-in-the-sand judges!”
  - 3) “They walk about in darkness.” The darkness here is moral not visible. Morally and spiritually they are blind.
    - (cf. Hosea 4:6).
    - Verse 5b sounds a similar refrain, “All the foundations of the earth are unstable, moved, shaken.” The entire world order is amuck and goes haywire when justice is thrown out the door.

### 4) God judges those who sin against their privilege **82:6-7**

- The Big God now dethrones the little gods!  
The true God now sets aside the little gods!
- You were my regents on earth but now you shall: 1) die like men and 2) fall like one of the princes. You are not real Gods but mere mortals (*Adam*) and therefore you will die just like everyone else.
- (cf. Hebrews 9:27).

**III. God will inherit those things that are His****82:8**

- The psalm concludes with a prayer for justice. Along with vs. 1, it frames the speech of vs. 2-7.

**Conclusion:**

- One cannot help but read vs. 3-4 and see our state as sinners without Christ and what the Lord Jesus did for us. We were poor and fatherless, afflicted and needy, poor and needy, held by the power of the wicked one.
- But then came Jesus to defend and justify, to deliver and set free. Now I am rich not poor, I have a Father I am not an orphan. I am wealthy with no needs. I am free and free indeed. This is what my Jesus has done for me. Now, this is what I must do for others!