

SBC – Sept. 28, 2025
Psalm 82:1-8 (NKJV)
“The Judge of Judges”

Psalm 82 (NKJV)
A Psalm of Asaph.

Asaph was a lead singer and musician in the days of David and Solomon (1 Chron. 15:17-19; 16:5-7; 25:6). The OT also points out that he was a prophet in his musical compositions (1 Chron. 25:1; 2 Chron. 29:30). Psalm 50 and Psalms 73–83 are attributed to Asaph so his contribution to the book of Psalms is great.

Psalm 82 deals with the issue of corrupt judges. We know that God has ordained human authorities related to the home, the church, and the government (cf. Rom. 13). But what about when these authorities are corrupt? This the great issue in Psalm 82.

Slide # 1

Psalm 11:3–4 (NKJV)

3 If the foundations are destroyed, **What can the righteous do?**

4 The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

The sense is we can appeal to God, the highest authority over all other authorities and to whom all are ultimately accountable. In Daniel 4, three times Nebuchadnezzar is told that heaven rules in the kingdom of men (v. 25, 26, 32). By the time God got done with Nebuchadnezzar he was a believer!

Slide # 2

John 19:10–11 (NKJV)

10 Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? **Do You not know that I have power** to crucify You, and power to release You?”

11 Jesus answered, “**You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.** Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

Romans 13:1 (NKJV)

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is **no authority except from God**, and the authorities that exist **are appointed by God**.

God makes it very clear that those in authority are put there in keeping with His sovereign appointment.

Slide # 3

Psalm 82

“The JUDGE of Judges”

- v. 1 God’s Standing among the Judges
- vv. 2-4 God Rebukes the Judges
- v. 5 God Exposes the Judges
- vv. 6-7 God Judges the Judges
- v. 8 A Call for God to Judge the Earth

1 God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.

God stands in the context of the mighty and He judges among the gods. Normally a judge would sit when he heard a case and would stand to render his sentence. God is standing in the midst of these who are in a position of power (humanly speaking).

Right from the outset the emphasis is that God is the supreme JUDGE over all the judges. “He judges among the gods.”

As a new believer I was on fire for God but didn’t yet have a lot of knowledge. One day, as a new believer someone challenged me on the idea that there is only ONE God pointing to this verse.

Well, I didn’t know quite what to say. It plainly calls these people gods and that God judges among them. I quickly learned you can make the Bible say anything if you want to rip it out of context. The sense of what God is saying is clear enough if you read on in context.

Slide # 4

Psalm 82:6–7 (NKJV)

6 I said, "**You are gods**, And all of you are children of the Most High.
7 But **you shall die like men**, And fall like one of the princes."

Obviously, whatever God means by calling them gods it is a whole different deal than what He says about Himself as the One true God Who cannot die and in fact is LIFE itself. But these so-called "gods" can die.

Here is the deal. The word translated as "gods" here is the Hebrew word "Elohim". It is a general word that is often used to describe the One true God. It is a plural word used of God in the very first verse of the Bible. Thus it is used to speak of the multifaceted majesty of God and gives a hint to the triune nature of the One true God – One God in Three Persons.

However, Elohim is also sometimes used to designate false gods. Sometimes it is used to designate angels, and sometimes it is used to designate human judges.

It really is a lofty title but here used with a small "g". One of the great defining realities of God is that He is the JUDGE of all. Those dignified with the title "gods" are really judicial representatives of God. They too judge and thus perform a God-like function. Hence, they are called "gods", but they are not really a god in any way, shape, or form, in the sense that God is God. They are simply judges performing a God-like function.

But being in the position of judge can go to your head, as we often see in our society. They control so much and determine so much in terms of the lives of people, that they start thinking they really are a god of sorts! That is a problem and the one true God calls them out on it here in this chapter.

This text both establishes and limits the authority of these judicial representatives of God.

God stands in the congregation of these mighty ones (humanly speaking) and He, God, judges among these judges dignified with the title of "gods".

To these judges God says:

**2 How long will you judge unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked?
 Selah**

God calls them out. They have been showing partiality to the wicked, probably being paid off. This provided no justice at all.

Selah! This calls for sober reflection!

“This gives the offenders pause for consideration and confession.”
(**Charles Spurgeon**)

3 Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

4 Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked.

Here is what they should have been doing! It was their job to defend the poor and the fatherless – the most vulnerable in society.

The judges were ordained by God to see justice carried out so that the afflicted and needy were treated right and fair. The judges, as intended by God, were to be the protectors of the poor and needy. They were not to allow the wicked to take advantage of them.

Here is what king Jehoshaphat instructed the judges of his day.

Slide # 5

2 Chronicles 19:6–7 (NKJV)

6 and said to the judges, “Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

7 Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.”

It is an awesome responsibility to judge for the LORD. You'd better work it out with fear and trembling (cf. Phil. 2:12). Since they are doing it for the LORD they will most certainly give account to the LORD for every judgment rendered!

But alas here was the terrible condition of these corrupt judges.

5 They do not know, nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are unstable.

They do not know, they do not understand, they walk in darkness. That is a description of depraved blindness and darkness. This is the condition of people without the Lord.

As the old saying goes, they are like a blind man looking for a black cat in a dark room.

Slide # 6

Ephesians 4:18 (NKJV)

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

This is a pitiful condition! It is a pitiful moral condition. A condition of total depravity!

Despite their high standing and higher opinion of themselves, they are often ignorant and easily overestimate their own understanding.

- **David Guzik**

God brings them down to reality in a hurry. They have no real understanding because they don't know God. Their whole way of life is characterized as stumbling around in darkness. And his conclusion is that "all the foundations of the earth are unstable."

When the judges are corrupt and without a clue, the whole of society is in jeopardy. Nothing is stable!

James Montgomery Boice mentions three perils that are the destined doom for governments that forget God:

- Ignorance (**they do not know**).
- Inept action (**they walk about in darkness**).
- A society shaken (**all the foundations of the earth are unstable**)

We often pray for our governing authorities, but don't forget the judges! When the judges are corrupt all the foundations of society are unstable. Such a government cannot stand for long.

6 I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High.

God reminded them that He dignified them with the title "gods" as they were appointed to carry out the dignified position of being His judicial representatives. All of them are made in the image of God and are children of the Most High in that sense (cf. Acts 17:28-29).

However, we should quickly note that in another sense all people are NOT the children of God. Spiritually speaking, some are children of God and others are children of their father the devil.

Slide # 7

John 8:44 (NKJV)

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Sam Dalton an evangelist whom we new years ago used to say, “Be very careful dating that unbeliever lest you wind up with the devil as your father-in law.” He makes for the worst kind of in-law.

As a footnote Jesus referenced this very text (Ps. 82:6) in John 10. The Jews said their problem with Jesus was that He being a man made Himself out to be God (Jn. 10:33). Jesus then responded in this way.

Slide # 8

John 10:34–36 (NKJV)

34 Jesus answered them, “**Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods” ’?**

35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?

Jesus knew the Scriptures and how to use them perfectly. The word “*law*” normally refers to the first five books of the Bible, often referred to as the Torah or the Law of Moses. However, it is occasionally used generally to reference the whole of the OT. Jesus here used the word “*law*” in the general sense of the term that referred to the whole of the OT.

Specifically, He zeroed in on ONE word in an obscure Psalm; namely Psalm 82:6 to make His case. That is using the Word with precision showing that every word matters. And that ONE word He zeroed in on was the word “*gods*”.

His whole argument was made to hang on this one word in this OT context of Psalm 82.

Jesus here is made a very technical argument based on how the Scripture uses the Hebrew word “*elohim*” in the OT. As I say, the term “*elohim*” is the most common word for God in the OT Scripture. It has the basic meaning of “supreme being”, “higher power” or “mighty one”. It is used of God in the ultimate sense but then used of other authorities in a lesser sense.

Context is all important when understanding the nuance of how this word is being used. This is the most general word for God but it is sometimes also used in a secondary sense of false gods, angels, or human judges (cf. Ps. 138:1; Ex. 21:6; 22:8; Ps. 8:5; 97:7; 138:1). So, it needs to be qualified by the context.

- The sense in the CONTEXT of Psalm 82 is that God is THE SUPREME BEING Who holds accountable these human judges that He has placed in the office of supremacy. They too were dignified with a HIGH title but were under God! Their role was “God-like” but they were not God.

The old saying: “***There is a God and you are not Him***” certainly applies here.

This is a good reminder to look at how Scripture uses terms. The general word for God (*Elohim*) was sometimes in a lesser sense applied to the high calling of human judges. But the name YHWH was NEVER applied to anyone other than God. The use of words in their context makes all the difference.

Slide # 9

Ever since Genesis 9:6, God had transferred to humankind the execution of His personal prerogative of determining life and death and had instituted among them an office that bore the sword. God had transferred the exercise of His power to these subordinate “gods” without thereby divesting Himself of the ultimate say.

– ***Hard Sayings of the Bible, p. 279***

Jesus took these Jews to task using their own Scriptures and their own principles. His brilliance was nothing short of divine.

He showed them that technically they didn't have any ground on which to stand if their charge was that He being a Man made Himself God. Even the Scriptures used this terminology this way – properly understood. I am sure that gave them pause. They knew the Scriptures – they knew this was true, and it doesn't appear that they had a comeback. However, Jesus had a greater point and was really arguing from the lesser to the greater.

In John 10:35-36 He said,

35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

God, in effect, spoke to the nation through these judges in the form of their rulings. If mere men (who were evil at that), if mere men who served in the position of judges could in some sense be called "gods," how much more fitting is it that Jesus call Himself "the Son of God"? That is Jesus' argument as He argues from the lesser to the greater.

But the point is, He used this obscure text in Psalm 82:6 to make His point. All the Scripture is relevant and Jesus, the Master of the Scriptures, used it with absolute perfect precision.

And note the parenthetical statement: "*and the Scripture cannot be broken*". This shows us how Jesus viewed Scripture.

He zeroed in on ONE word in an obscure OT text, written by an obscure writer called "Aspah", to make His point. This ONE word "gods" in Psalm 82:6 cannot be broken. The Scripture, right down to the very last word, is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. This represents a HIGH VIEW of Scripture that sees the whole text, every last word, as binding and authoritative.

The Bible truly is THE WORD OF GOD, right down to every last word and letter as given in the original manuscripts. And God has sovereignly guided the transmission of the text so that while copyists did make some spelling mistakes, etc., no doctrine is affected at all. The truth of the Bible remains totally intact at every point. There is no doctrine in question at all.

Almost always, even where copyists messed up, because we have so many manuscripts, translators most of the time know what the original probably said. Again, there is NO doctrine in question in any legitimate translation that is faithful to the preserved manuscripts.

In John 10 in my Bible, I have drawn a line from “make Yourself God” in verse 33 to “I am the Son of God” in verse 36. Note they are used interchangeably here as indicated by Jesus. Son of God simply means “of the order of God” – sharing in the very nature and being of God. This was the issue!

Slide # 10

John 10:33–36 (NKJV)

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, **make Yourself God.**”

34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods” ’?”

35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because **I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?**

You see Jesus was not merely saying he was a “god” in the same sense as others who were called “gods”. Rather, He was setting Himself completely apart from them and ABOVE THEM.

If unjust judges were called “gods” in the OT, how much more right did He have to say He was the Son of God. The word of God *came* to them; He was and *is* the Word of God. They were *called* gods; He was and *is* God. – ***William MacDonald***

7 But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes.”

God called them “gods” as seen in verse 6, but the reality is that they would die like men. They would die like mere mortals because, in truth, that is all that they were. Just like princes (rulers) come and go, so would they!

In truth, they were mere men proven in the fact that they too would all die!

By the way Jesus did die, but the difference is He didn't stay dead. He raised Himself back to life on the third day.

I get lots of Christmas cards, but one I have never forgotten said:
"History is crowded with men who would be gods, but only one God who would be man."

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; For You shall inherit all nations.

Asaph calls on God to do His thing, as God, and that is to arise and judge the earth. This is His ultimate place as JUDGE over all. Human judges have their role, but God is the JUDGE of all the earth.

Slide # 11

Genesis 18:25 (NKJV)

25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"**

The answer is "Yes, He will!"

And in the process of coming to Judge the earth He shall inherit all nations as brought out in Psalm 2 where God promises this inheritance to His Son.

Slide #12

Psalm 2:8–9 (NKJV)

8 Ask of Me, and **I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.**

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "

And then Psalm 2 gives this advice to the Judges of the world.

Slide # 13

Psalm 2:10–12 (NKJV)

10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

“The last days shall see him enthroned, and all unrighteous potentates broken like potter’s vessels by his potent sceptre. The second advent is still earth’s brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (**Charles Spurgeon**)

Psalm 82 is a call to all human judges to recognize the fact that God alone is the ultimate JUDGE of Judges. They all will die like men and give account to the Almighty Judge of the universe. But God, the Judge of all the earth, in the end will rule the nations.

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Indeed, BLESSED are all those who put their trust in Him!