

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Psalm 82 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the psalm. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

PSALM 82:1-8 ESV

1 A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: 2 "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." 5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. 6 I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; 7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince." 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

STRUCTURE

- I. The psalmist sets the scene: God assumes His supreme role on the "divine council" (1)
- II. God tells it like it is to wicked council members (2-7)
 - a. These council members have judged unjustly and shown partiality to the wicked (2)
 - b. They should have done the opposite (3-4)
 - c. Their failure has shaken the earth's foundations (5)
 - d. Their failure will lead to a shared fate with mortals: death (6-7)
- III. The psalmist prays: for God to act on His role by judging the council and inheriting the nations (8)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

This is a weird psalm to Western cultures. The West values the scientific method and what we observe with our five senses. Christianity in the West affirms spiritual realities, but cultural bias affects our interpretations. This explains why the true meaning of Psalm 82 has never been heard by most Christians in the West. Fortunately, a critical mass of scholars have had the blinders ripped off, and most of our modern translations now affirm the supernatural worldview of Psalm 82.

If you have no idea what I'm talking about, here we go. For centuries, westerners have interpreted Psalm 82 as a song about human rulers or judges who did bad things and would one day pay the price. Our translations even reflected this interpretation, rendering the word "gods" as "rulers"—as in, human rulers. But what if "gods" means... gods? What if Psalm 82 is not about wicked human rulers but wicked non-human rulers—what the apostle Paul calls "rulers... authorities... cosmic powers over this present darkness" and "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12)?

As the verse-by-verse commentary affirms below, I believe that's exactly what "gods" means. Any ancient Israelite reading Psalm 82 believed that Israel's God, Yahweh, presided over a "divine council" (v. 1) of "gods"—spiritual beings—some of which were righteous, and some wicked. These "gods" were also called "sons of God" throughout the Old Testament, or "sons of the Most High" in Psalm 82:6. As Dr. Michael Heiser contends (quotes below), these "sons of God" were labeled such because God has two families: one human and one non-human. He created both to rule the earth but in different spheres. The non-human "divine council" members were to rule the earth from above, while man ruled from below. Together, we would submit to God's commission to bring the earth under God's perfect rule—on earth as it is in heaven. Unfortunately, just like God's earthly children, some of His spiritual children—the "sons of God"—also rebelled. At Babel, God responded to His rebellious earthly children by handing them over to His rebellious spiritual children (more verses below). This explains why, outside of Israel, the nations worshiped false gods. In Jewish thinking, their false gods were not just fairy tales. They were fallen members of the divine council. They were demons. When the nations rejected the one true God at Babel, he handed them over to "the gods" as a form of judgment.

Psalm 82 pictures Israel's God as addressing the corrupt members of His ruling council. Because these demonic rulers have shaken the foundations of the earth with unrighteousness (vv. 3-6), God promises to judge these

“gods” as if they were mortals. They will die (v. 7). The New Testament illustrates this when not just humans but non-human angels get tossed into the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10), also called “the second death.”

The song begins and ends with the psalmist’s narration. Verse 1 sets the scene, with Yahweh presiding over His council to judge. Verses 2-7 introduce divine speech, heightening the intensity of His looming decree. Finally, verse 8 returns to the psalmist’s narration as he responds to God’s decree with prayer. Because God rules over the demonic rulers who make this world look hellish, the psalmist cries out for God to judge them speedily. Simultaneously, the psalmist asks for God to inherit the nations. What is the connection between judgment of demons and God’s inheritance of nations? I explore that below. Here, I’ll simply say that it all comes down to Christ. Psalm 82 is about Him. Jesus is the original “Son of God” who predated all the “sons of God” and who presides over the divine council of both wicked and righteous spiritual beings. Jesus is the One who began His judgment of these wicked beings on the Cross. On that same Cross, He also “re-inherited” the nations once handed over at Babel. One day, Jesus will return to finalize and consummate the judgment and salvation that began on Calvary.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

—“A Psalm of Asaph”: see commentary on Psalm 73 for a character sketch of Asaph.

—“God... in the midst of the gods”

- The word for “God” and “gods” is “Elohim”—a masculine plural form that can be taken as singular. We do this in English, for instance, when we use the word “deer.” Context decides whether the speaker intends one deer or a herd of deer. Likewise, context determines whether authors of Scripture intended the one true God (Elohim) or the false gods (elohim) of the nations around them.
- In Psalm 82:1, the first “Elohim” refers to the one true God and the second refers to the false “gods” worshiped by their pagan neighbors. This is how the ESV reads, as do most modern translations:
 - NLT: “**God** presides over heaven’s court; he pronounces judgment on the **heavenly beings**.”
 - NIV: “**God** presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the ‘**gods**’.”
 - NASB: “**God** takes his position in his assembly; He judges in the midst of the ‘**gods**.’”
- Dr. Michael Heiser experienced a radical transformation in worldview upon reading Psalm 82:1. Historically, in the West, translators often rendered the word “gods” as “rulers”—as though the psalm details God’s judgment against corrupt human leaders. But Heiser knew Hebrew. When he came across this verse, he marveled to himself (paraphrase): “It appears that the psalmist is portraying Israel’s God, Yahweh, as the overseer of a pantheon of pagan ‘gods’ within a divine council.” Heiser remarks that Western rationalism caused generations of believers to discount the “supernatural worldview” of Hebrew prophets and poets. We read our Bibles through an anti-supernatural lens—markedly unlike the original authors intended.
- There are several reasons why this verse cannot be chiefly about human rulers and why it must be about the “gods” of the nations—which were demons (more on that soon):
 - It is unnatural to refer to humans as “Elohim”—the word for spiritual beings.
 - “sons of the Most High” in verse 6 parallels “elohim” (gods), and that term—“sons of the Most High” or “sons of God”—elsewhere refers to spiritual beings:
 - Spiritual beings that fell into sin (Gen. 6:1-4; Jude 6)
 - Spiritual beings that governed the nations dispersed at Babel (Deut. 4:19; 32:8-9).
 - Spiritual beings that presented themselves before Yahweh to receive direction (Job 1:6-13; 2:1-7)
 - Spiritual beings that were present at the creation of the world (Job 38:6-7)
 - Verse 7 pronounces a judgment whereby “like men... [these gods] will die.” The verse implies that they are not men, but they will die like men.
- Pagan cultures in the ancient Near East worshiped a pantheon of gods. Israel did not believe they worshipped fairy tales. Moses taught, and Paul affirmed, that the nations’ false gods were “demons” (Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20).
- Kidner agrees that “these ‘gods’ are ‘principalities and powers’, the ‘world rulers of this present darkness’ (cf. Eph. 6:12). There are a few OT references to such potentates, good and bad (Is. 24:21; Dn. 10:13, 20ff; 12:1), for whom the NT uses the term ‘angels’ (Rev. 12:7).”

- Ross: "The psalm may be set against the background of the religions of the ancient world, divine assemblies of lower gods who met to determine the course of worldly events. The psalmist would not have accepted the idea that they were viable gods, but rather that they were supernatural beings, or angels, who formed a heavenly court (meaning an assembly of supernatural beings appearing before God to receive their orders; see Job 1 and 2, in which assembly even Satan was present). These angelic beings were given the responsibility of overseeing the proper functioning of human society (see Deut. 32:8-9). However, many of them failed to comply with the divine commission and became the forces of evil of these nations represented by their gods (e.g., Ezek. 28:11-19; and Daniel 10).... Because of their failure to administer justice, they would receive an ungodlike punishment—death." (Note: Ross believes that these "gods" are supernatural beings represented by human judges. Basically, this is a mediating position. The traditional view considered them human judges; the view growing in popularity is that they were supernatural beings. He essentially says, "It's both." In my opinion, I think he's right that supernatural beings influence judges and kings. However, I think the psalm most directly addresses the supernatural dimension.)
- It is worth a pit-stop in Deuteronomy to explore this worldview some more. Consider these passages:
 - According to Deuteronomy 4:19, God "allotted" pagan deities to the pagan nations: *"And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven."*
 - But why would God do such a thing? He explains in 32:8-9: *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."*
 - The first part of Deuteronomy 32:8 reminds us of the Tower of Babel, when God judged the nations, dividing up the earth, and scattering them about. When He did this, He established their borders "according to the number of the sons of God." Remember, "the sons of God" refers to spiritual beings in God's divine council. By this point, some of God's council had rebelled. Nevertheless, these demonic beings still appeared before God. Even Satan appeared before God in Job 1-2, which is a divine council scene.
 - Putting this all together, the nations rejected God at Babel, so God rejected the nations at Babel by handing them over to the rebellious "sons of God"—the pantheon of evil spirits representing the false gods of the nations in Ps. 82.
 - Deuteronomy 32:9 says that unlike the nations, which God judged by handing over to false gods, Israel would become God's "portion" and "heritage." Israel did not yet exist at the time of Babel's failed construction project. Abram was a moon worshiper when God plucked him out from among the wayward nations. Therefore, Abram's salvation is portrayed as God "starting over" from the nations He had "handed over." Through Abram (later, Abraham), God would one day redeem those very nations. When Jesus rose again, He announced that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matt. 28:18). Through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, He re-inherited the formerly dis-inherited nations. The nations had rejected God, so God rejected them—but only for a season. Now, in Christ, the nations (not just Israel) are God's "portion" and "heritage."
- Given this biblical background, what is happening in Psalm 82? God is taking His place in the divine council—not as one god among many, as pagan religions would have it. Yahweh, the one true God, rules over all the spiritual beings. He takes His place, the place of prominence. The place of judgment. God holds these demonic beings accountable for leading the nations astray. God's law applies to both men and devils. At the end of the age, He will hurl Satan into an eternal lake of fire. Hell was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Satan will not preside over hell like a rogue prison warden. Hell is the devil's punishment! He, along with rebellious demons and humans, will pay the price for their sins. Psalm 82 foreshadows the day when God will "judge the earth"—but from a spiritual perspective. God will judge not only all flesh but also all spirits.

—"divine council":

- God didn't need a council to oversee the earth. He rules according to His good pleasure, but He is not a micromanager. He operates through a council of high-level spiritual beings, some of which have rebelled (others of which did not rebel—see the "elders" and "living creatures" in Rev. 4; I believe these comprise part of God's divine council for reasons that take too much space to explain). As stated above, God handed the nations over to the rebellious spiritual beings to judge them for rejecting Him.
- Some other divine council scenes in Scripture:
 - 1 Kgs. 22:19-23: *19 And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; 20 and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' 22 And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' 23 Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you."*
 - Dan. 4:13-17 (called "Watchers"): *13 "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. 14 He proclaimed aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. 15 But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16 Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. 17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'"*
 - Job 1:6-12 (called "sons of God"): *6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." 8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" 9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*

—Verse 1 thus introduces Yahweh taking the prominent seat among the spiritual beings, pronouncing a looming judgment over the rebellious ones who have oppressed the nations.

—The rebellious spiritual beings would almost certainly be what the Apostle Paul labels "principalities." Daniel identified "the prince of Persia" and "the prince of Greece" as engaged in spiritual battles with archangels and manipulating earthly kings. "Principalities" are not "low-level" spirits that merely demonize individuals. They are appointed to nations and do their most significant work among kings, presidents, judges, and other government leaders.

2 "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

—These wicked spirits “judge unjustly” and “show partiality to the wicked.” They do not “give justice to the weak and the fatherless”; they do “maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.” God thus commands them to “rescue the weak and the needy” rather than strengthening “the hand of the wicked.” —This gives us insight into the “rebellious sons of god,” about whom this psalm was written. Even though God handed the nations over to these wicked principalities, He did not give them carte blanche to wreak havoc. (Think about it—if the devil and his angels could do whatever they wanted, they’d kill us all immediately!) God commanded these spirits to oversee nations and uphold His righteous law. He knew they wouldn’t obey, and He knew He would judge them for it. But this is not unlike similar scenarios in the domain of humans. In Isaiah 3, God judges Israel by elevating unqualified rulers whose governance will be characterized by oppression. God still had standards for those rulers even though He knew they would break the standards and receive His judgment. It is the same for these principalities. God judged the nations who rejected Him by giving them wicked spiritual overseers. Now, in Psalm 82, He holds those wicked spiritual overseers accountable.

—When it comes to national governance in the Scripture, these same concerns always arise: justice for the weak, the fatherless, the afflicted, the destitute, the poor... and justice enacted against the wicked. If we share the heart of God, our political passions should direct us toward care for the weak and justice against the abusive strong. (Of course, each “platform” identifies different problems, different abuses, and different ways of resolving these.)

—Kidner: “Here the spiral reaches ‘the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places’. But what verses 2-4 make clear is that the Highest of all has no patience with this chain of misrule; we cannot yet read off His will from the way things are on earth. Scripture, from the flood story onwards, shows the patience of God orientated to perfecting salvation, not towards condoning the corruption which meanwhile abuses it (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9, 13, 15).”

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

—There is debate about whether verse 5 addresses the wicked oppressors who lack knowledge and understanding or whether it addresses the poor and weak who lack knowledge and understanding.

—If it refers to the oppressors, it would be speaking of spiritual ignorance that spurs their harmful behavior, breaking down the very foundations upon which societies are built.

—If it refers to the weak and needy, it would be speaking of the spiritual darkness they suffer on account of being caged in by their oppressors. A modern example would be citizens of North Korea who don’t know their right hand from their left (spiritually) due to the oppressive regime.

—Contextually, it seems to me that the verse refers to wicked oppressors since verse 4 mentions them last. Verse 5 thus serves as an elaboration on the wickedness of these oppressors, who—spurred along by wicked spiritual beings—have shaken the very foundations of the earth.

—By elaborating upon their wickedness, God further condemns the spiritual beings who allowed this to happen and even egged it on. “You will pay for this,” the LORD says to these principalities.

6 I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; 7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”

—As I mentioned above, this verse clinches that the “gods” of Psalm 82 are not (1) human rulers or (2) mythical “made up” entities with zero spiritual reality behind them.

—On (1), “nevertheless” in verse 7 establishes a contrast between “gods” in verse 6 and “men” in verse 7. They cannot be the same for the contrast to make any sense. The point of the verse is to say, “You are spiritual beings and members of the divine council, yet this lofty status will not exempt you from dying like a mere mortal. The wages of sin is death—and that goes for every being, visible or invisible.”

—On (2), while it’s true that the “gods” of the nations are mythical, made-up, non-existent beings, that is not the whole story. Behind Baal and Leviathan and Marduk and Zeus and Nike and Leviathan and every made-up god is a demonic spirit, deceiving the masses. These “gods” are true spiritual beings—“sons of the Most High”—who in this case have rebelled, ruled the nations wickedly (vv. 2-5), and been condemned for it (vv. 1, 6-7).

—Why are they called “sons of God” or “Sons of the Most High”? According to Dr. Heiser, “God alone created humankind to function as his administrators on earth. But he has also created the other elohim of the unseen realm. They are like him. They carry out his will in that realm, acting as his representatives. They are his heavenly council in the unseen world. We are God’s council and administration in this realm. Consequently, the plurals inform us that both God’s families—the human and the nonhuman—share imaging status, though the realms are different. As in heaven, so on earth.”

—In other words, God has two families that are, in a sense, God’s offspring. Acts 17:28 describes all humanity as God’s offspring. We are made in God’s image, just like children are made in the image of their parents (cf. Gen. 5:1. Think, “spittin’ image”). At the same time, the “sons of God”—spiritual beings—were also made in His image. That’s why they are called “sons.” These “sons of God” sang for joy at earth’s creation (Job. 38:7). Like God’s human family, His spiritual family would be entrusted to rule over the earth, albeit, from the unseen spiritual realm. God intended this to be a beautiful partnership between humans and non-humans, but Genesis 6 tells the story of “sons of God” who rebelled. Genesis 3 implies another rebellion, by Satan, although the story of Satan’s fall is less clear. Overall, the point is that God has a human and non-human family, designed by God to rule the earth underneath His perfect Lordship. Some humans and non-humans rebelled, and this explains why we’re in the mess we’re in. Psalm 82 promises: it won’t always be this way.

—Jesus quotes this verse in John 10:34. Here is the full context:

- *30 I and the Father are one." 31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" 33 The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, 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 Scripture cannot be broken— 36 do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"*
- Contextually, the Jews wanted to kill Jesus for His claim of deity. Jesus responds by quoting Psalm 82:6 as a defense. How does Psalm 82:6 defend Jesus in this dispute?
- It could be that Jesus is saying, “God called your Jewish fathers ‘gods,’ so there’s nothing wrong with me claiming to be “the Son of God.” Many have taken it this way, and it supports the traditional explanation that the “gods” of Psalm 82 are human rulers.
- For the reasons listed above, however, I don’t think these verses can be referring to human rulers. Verse 35 does not necessarily mean that the “them” who are called “gods” are the same as those “to whom the word of God came.” I would contend that “them” refers to the Elohim—NOT the recipients of Scripture. Historically, this is definitely true. God didn’t give His word to godless human rulers; He gave His word to godly prophets, poets, and sages. Furthermore, it would be a nonsensical argument. Why would Jesus say, “It’s okay to call me the Son of God because even corrupt human rulers are called ‘gods’?” This would have the effect of downplaying, if not denying, His divine status. It would be tantamount to saying, “I’m just another man.” John’s thesis is that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and find life in His name (John 20:31). The “gods are just humans” view of Psalm 82 undermines John’s central argument. And it also doesn’t explain why men seek to arrest Jesus for quoting Psalm 82 (John 10:39).
- Assuming Jesus read Psalm 82 as it was intended—where “gods” are spiritual beings—the argument would go more like this: “God called the spiritual beings ‘gods’ when He handed the Scripture to your Jewish fathers. God obviously has no problem assigning such a lofty label to members of His divine council. So why are you up-in-arms about My claim to be ‘the Son of God,’ considering these members of the divine council are called ‘gods’ and ‘Sons of the Most High’? Of course, I belong to that council—as its most supreme member! Psalm 82 is about Me! I am the “God” who “has taken his place in the divine council”—to judge the demon gods of the nations!”
- Jesus is not downplaying His divinity, as if to say, “Anybody can call himself god, like the mortals of Psalm 82.” Instead, He is emphasizing His divinity, as if to say, “I can call myself ‘Son of God’ just like Scripture labels other members of the divine council ‘Sons of the Most High God.’ I belong to the same council and can bear the same name. After all, I am not just part of that council. I preside over it as God! You’re darn skippy that ‘I and the Father are one!’”

- Heiser agrees: “John 10:30 and 10:38, however, go even further—when Jesus says that the Father is in him, and he is in the Father, and he and the Father are one, he is connecting himself to the council coregency. In effect, he equates himself as co-regent to the lord of the council, Yahweh himself. The blasphemy charge now makes good sense.”
- Heiser’s conclusion: “Briefly, I view John’s use of Psalms 82:6 in John 10:34 as making the point (from Jesus himself) that there are other non-human sons of God. By referencing Psalm 82, which is not about “human *elohim*,” Jesus is in effect tweaking his opponents by claiming to be more than human. Had Jesus/John instead quoted something like Psalm 2:7, where the Israelite king was referred to as God’s son, the point would have been a claim to be the Davidic king (which, of course, his Jewish opponents could not have claimed). But instead we get Psalm 82:6 to distinguish Jesus. Situated as it is between clear claims to be one with the Father, and that the Father is in Jesus (cp. Exodus 23:20-23, where the Name—the presence/essence of Yahweh (cp. Deuteronomy 4:37)—is in the angel, who is therefore Yahweh in human form), John is both asserting Jesus is divine and distinct from other divine sons of God. In effect, Jesus is lord of the council. This interpretation is consistent with: (1) Psalm 82 understood in its original ancient Near Eastern context; (2) other instances of “sons of God” being divine in the Hebrew Bible; and (3) John’s portrayal of Jesus as God in his gospel. No other view meets these criteria.”
- The last two quotes come from a paper Heiser wrote:
<https://thedivinecouncil.com/Heiser%20Psa82inJohn10%20RegSBL2011.pdf>.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

—“Arise”: the psalmist feels the weight of God’s delayed judgment and calls for action. This resembles the prayer at the end of Revelation, “Come, Lord Jesus.” It also echoes the prayer of Paul—recited throughout church history—“*maranatha*” (1 Cor. 16:22). “*Maranatha*” is an Aramaic word that means, “Our Lord, come!”

—When Jesus comes, He will judge rebellious humans and *elohim*. Similarly, Revelation ends with Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet being thrown into the lake of fire.

—This prayer implies that God’s judgment and His inheritance of the nations intertwine.

—We have begun to see this already. In John 12:20, “some Greeks” approached Jesus, and this marked the beginning of the end. Our Lord responded, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23). In John’s gospel, “glorified” meant “crucified.” My heart feels stirred just writing that. My goodness. Can you imagine? Our God chooses the ugliest injustice to magnify His beauty and justice. I have no words. Anyway, back to the story. Jesus elaborates on the “hour” of His glorification/crucifixion by saying, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (12:31). The “ruler of this world” is the devil. He’s called a “ruler” because Satan is one of the corrupt “gods” who governs the earth (under God’s sovereignty, of course). But in this scene, God’s kingdom takes a decisive step forward. Greeks approach Jesus. Jesus says, “The hour is here.” The hour is one of judgment. Nails of crucifixion will seal the devil’s fate. They will also secure the world’s salvation. The devil will die, but Greeks—and Romans and Oklahomans—will live. Jesus continues by expounding on this link between the devil’s judgment in 12:31 and the world’s salvation in 12:32: “*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*” The same Cross that judges the devil saves us. The connection is that, through Jesus, God re-inherited the nations that Satan and his minions once governed. At Babel, God handed the nations over to their false demon gods. In Christ’s first coming, however, He took them back. Now, all the nations belong to King Jesus. Since the first century, the church has fanned out to the four winds, preaching “the gospel of the kingdom”—the good news that Christ reigns, not the devil. Slowly, King Jesus is making this earth look more like heaven and less like hell. He’s reversing the devil’s work. And when Jesus comes back—*maranatha*!—He will consummate that work. Earth will look like heaven once again. And God’s redeemed human family will join his non-human family in eternal praise on the redeemed planet, with God’s two families finally ruling the earth in harmony, as God intended in Eden.

—Derek Kidner says this psalm invites us “behind and beyond our present wrongs, to portray God’s unbounded jurisdiction, His delegation of power, His diagnosis of our condition, and His drastic intentions. The closing prayer responds fervently to the breadth of the vision.”

—God’s “unbounded jurisdiction” includes the “gods” (vv. 1, 6) and “the nations” (v. 8). His “delegation of power” references the “gods” to whom He handed the nations until the time He won them back in Christ. God’s “diagnosis of our condition” assigns culpability for oppression not just to human but also non-human

tormenters. God's "drastic intentions" include judgment of both human and non-human actors, and also grace—wonderful grace!—for the nations He re-inherits through the work of Jesus.

—The first and last verse of Psalm 82 provide a different perspective from the body of the composition. The latter reveals divine speech—pronouncements of coming judgment. In contrast, the outer verses are spoken by the psalmist. Verse 1 narrates the scene, setting us up for the divine speech of vv. 2-7; verse 8 responds to the scene with an urgent prayer.

—The structure of the psalm thus centers the divine pronouncement, revealing the reality from God's perspective. Seeing through His lens, we receive (1) an explanation and (2) a promise, which together drive us to (3) prayer.

- God's explanation for the problem of evil is that evil spiritual beings foment and accelerate the evil that already exists in human hearts. Our battle is not against flesh and blood but against these wicked spiritual beings. When we lack this explanation, we fight the wrong battles. We fight people. God wants us to direct our battle efforts against dark spiritual forces.
- God's promise is that one day, He will judge these evil spiritual beings, and we won't have to deal with them anymore. Thus, the psalm functions as "smack talk" (the scholarly term is "polemic") against the "gods of the nations."
- When we have this explanation and promise, faith arises in our hearts to pray verse 8 or its New Testament equivalents: "Maranatha!" or "Come, Lord Jesus," or "May Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."