

The Heavenly Courtroom

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Preacher: Aaron Reeves

[0:00] Well, a very warm welcome to the evening service for Calvary Evangelical Church Brighton and an extra special warm welcome to you if you're visiting us for the first time.

! My name is Aaron and as you might have guessed, I'm at home. So during these times of Covid, we continue to provide our evening services in a variety of ways.

Our morning services, however, are live streamed from the church building with limited numbers in attendance. So if you're interested in coming along and seeing what we're about, don't hesitate to get in contact with us via our website.

With God's help, I'll be leading us through the service tonight and we'll be looking at Psalm 82 and this theme of judgment. We also have some hymns to sing and some prayers to pray.

So let's begin our time together by singing. He stood before the court. He stood before the court.

[1:23] On trial instead of us. He met its power to hurt. On dead to face the cross.

Our king accused of treachery. Our God abused for blasphemy.

These are the crimes that tell The tale of human guilt. Our sins are death, Our hell.

On these the case is built. To this world's powers their Lord stays dumb.

The guilt is ours. No answers come. The sentence must be passed.

[2:33] The unknown prisoner killed. The price is paid at last. The law of God fulfilled.

He takes our blame. And from that day, the accusers claim His white away.

To this world died. To this world died. To this world died. To this world died. To this world died. To this world died. Shall we be judged and tried? In Christ our trial is done.

We live for He has died, our condemnation gone.

In Christ are we both dead and raised, alive and free. His name be praised.

[3:46] Although we can't be together in the flesh, singing songs of praises to our God, we can be together in spirit, singing at home.

And we are very thankful for the technology that enables us to do that. And for the people who have been working hard putting this music together to enable us to sing.

So before we go any further, let's commit our time to the Lord as we pray together. Holy Father, as we approach you tonight, we praise you that we can do so by your Son, Jesus Christ.

We thank you for our measure of health and strength today. We thank you for the technology that enables us to continue teaching your word during these times.

And we pray that you would use it by your mighty hand to advance your kingdom. Lord, that you would use it by your grace. We thank you that we can once again meet in person for our morning services.

[4:54] Lord, that's by your grace. And we pray that you would continue to show your mercy and grace that we may soon meet together without restrictions.

Lord, we ask that you would quiet our minds tonight and prepare us to hear your voice. We pray that you would speak to us and help us to clearly understand your word.

Lord, we pray for those amongst us who may be suffering in some way because of the events of the last year and the challenges. And we pray that there would be healing where it's necessary, physically, spiritually, mentally, Lord.

And we ask that you be amongst your people now as we come to worship you. In the name of our mighty Jesus. Amen. Let's sing another song together.

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away. Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away.
 [6:24] Slain for us. And we remember the promise made that all who come in faith find forgiveness at the cross.

So we share in this bread of life. And we drink of his sacrifice as a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.
 The body of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, torn for you.
 Eat and remember the wounds that healed the death that brings us life.
 Pay the price to make us one. Pay the price to make us one. So we share in this bread of life.
 [7:45] And we drink of his sacrifice as a sign of our bonds of love.

Around the table of the King. The blood that cleanses every stain of sin shed for you.
 Drink and remember the drain. Drink and remember the drain desk cup that all may enter in to receive the life of God.
 So we share in this bread of life. And we drink of his sacrifice as a sign of our bonds of grace.
 Around the table of the King. And so with thankfulness and faith we rise to respond.
 [9:17] And to remember our call to follow in the steps of Christ as his body here on earth.

As we share in his suffering. We proclaim Christ will come again.
 And we'll join in the feast of hell. Around the table of the King.
 Around the table of the King. So now we'll have our reading.
 And we're going to be reading Psalm 82. And I'll be reading from the NIV. God presides in the great assembly.
 [10:21] He renders judgment among the gods. How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?

Defend the weak and the fatherless. Uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy.
 Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. The gods know nothing. They understand nothing. They walk about in darkness.
 All the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said you are gods. You are all sons of the Most High. But you will die like mere mortals. You will fall like every other ruler. You will rise up.
 [11:17] You will rise up. O God. Judge the earth. For all the nations are your inheritance. This is the word of the Lord. So that's the text that we'll be looking at in our teaching tonight.

So before we start, let me pray for the word. Thank you, Father, for making yourself known to your people, for showing us the way of salvation through faith in your Son.
 We ask that you come now and teach us through your word so that we may be ready to serve you for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in his name we ask. Amen.
 So we're in the book of Psalms. Tonight we're looking at Psalm 82. This is a Psalm of Asaph. 1 Chronicles 16 verses 4 to 5 tell us that he was appointed by David as chief of praise before the ark of the Lord.
 So Asaph was to minister by way of music. So this is singing, thanking and praising God in poem and song.
 [12:41] Asaph was also recognized as a seer. It's said in 1 Chronicles that he prophesied under direction from the king.
 That is to say that he would speak with divine insight. We see that, of course, in Scripture. But particularly in this Psalm, we see with it a picture of things to come.
 So to look at this Psalm is relatively short. In fact, it's the shortest of all the Psalms written by Asaph.
 But that's not to say that we'll get any less from it, of course. So here's my introduction. It has the clever name of introduction.
 Asaph. So if you were to quickly glance at this Psalm, you'll see that the theme is actually pretty clear.
 [13:43] Asaph opens with God as supreme judge and closes with the same. In just the first three verses, we see judgment in first one.

Unjust beings in verse two. And need for justice in verse three. But despite the Psalms rather short length and its obvious theme, Psalm 82 holds a particular difficulty for the reader, primarily because of its continuing reference to gods with a little g.

These beings are the focus of the text. But the text itself doesn't identify precisely who they are. The difficulty comes with some of the words used to describe these beings, such as sons of the Most High and gods. In the Hebrew, the same word is used to describe both God the Father and these very much subordinate beings or gods.

The Psalm also points to them as judges in verse two. So these would be beings that held substantial authority over others.

[15:18] Later on in the book of John, Jesus quotes from this Psalm and he gives some extra information, calling them beings to whom the word of God came.

If you were to follow up more thoroughly on all these clues and references, you might come to one of these three popular conclusions as to the identity of these beings.

And those are that the gods are angels or human judges or Israel, as in God's people, as they were at Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus.

So we have something of a mystery. But does the fact that we can't specifically pinpoint the identity of these gods interfere with our text tonight?

Obviously, I'm going to say no. Even though these gods feature heavily throughout the text, I think the information that we do have about these gods is more than sufficient for the task at hand, because we still have exactly what we need to make sense of the text.

[16:46] Just in case you're wondering, no, my opinion for what it's worth is that all of these have the potential to be correct, though I am leaning towards the gods being human judges.

So let's begin to go through the psalm. So I don't watch TV, really.

I like movies. There's some series that I like. I do watch TV occasionally, and it seems that whenever I do, more often than not, there are dramatic scenes of people fighting for justice.

Personally, one of my favourites is Clint Eastwood, from bringing justice to evil men in the Wild West to fighting bullies with his pet orangutan at his side.

Justice captures the imagination. We long to see resolution to situations. We long to see a hero arise and put an end to evil.

[18:00] And so I'm reminded of these things as I read this dramatic opening to the psalm. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 82, verse 1.

Verse 1. God presides. God presides.

God presides. God presides. And so they're referred to in this psalm as God's little g. And God judges.

So we know that this is not a meeting of conversation or mutual debate. This verse is part of a longer process of judgment.

And we see that God is about to assess and intervene where he sees failure. Notice that God is in the great assembly.

[19:38] He's not far off. Or conducting things via Zoom like a boss being out of office. God is in the great assembly.

God is very present in this courtroom. Verse 2. So God begins to present the charges.

God begins to present the charges. Questioning the accused. God says. How long will you continue in injustice?

Literally. How long will you judge unjustly and carry the wicked? Notice how this is a complete inversion of the righteousness that God expects in verses 3 and 4.

God is saying that his representatives, these gods, are doing the exact opposite of what they should be doing. I can't read this without picturing that scene from Matthew 27.

[20:51] Just after Pilate is sitting in the judge's seat. Where the chief priests and elders convinced the crowd to call for the execution of the innocent Jesus.

And instead call for the freedom of the guilty who was Barabbas. The human version of righteousness is completely reversed.

And so in continued assessment and rebuke of these gods.

God puts forward his command in verses 3 and 4. Stating for the record. The very thing the gods should be doing.

Defending the weak and fatherless. Literally judging justly and intervening for those who need help.

[21:58] For orphans. Rescue, deliver the weak and the needy. From the hand, strength, power of the wicked.

Who are the wicked? They're those who live in hostility to God's righteousness. Those who seek to abuse and destroy for self-gain.

Proverbs 17 verse 23 says, The wicked accept bribes in secret to pervert the course of justice. So these two parties are connected.

The representatives of God. These gods have fallen in line with the wicked for personal gain.

In their continuing failure to uphold God's righteousness. They've become actively hostile to God.

[23:10] Verse 5. So the charges are presented. And I want us to notice that the gods stand silent.

And we see a shift in the courtroom dialogue. This appears almost as a dramatic device.

Like a pause in a movie where the narrator picks up the story. What happens next is a description of the spiritual condition that these gods are in.

In a court, perhaps this could be almost seen as a sympathetic defence. Circumstances that perpetuated the crime.

Relieving the accused of some of the responsibility. So first, there is an explanation of the symptoms in their condition.

[24:16] Symptom 1. The gods know nothing. Or they do not know. These gods, judges, find themselves without the fundamental knowledge of true righteousness.

They cannot produce righteousness. Because they don't possess the knowledge of righteousness. You know, this reminds me of Jesus' words on the cross. As he asks the Father for forgiveness for his executioners. Forgive them, Father.

They do not know what they are doing. That's the first symptom. Symptom number 2. They do not understand.

For these gods, there is no ability to even discern the truth. Not only are they without possession of the knowledge of righteousness.

[25:25] They can't even recognise it. They are completely blind to it. So these symptoms, they manifest. They are outwardly obvious.

Corruption perpetuates. And it impacts everything around them. So secondly, we have the cause of the symptoms.

The text says, they walk about in darkness. The verb used in context here means to go. Or to go on. And it's calling back to verse 2.

When God says, how long will this continue? The symptom of injustice. Completely lacking in righteousness.

Is a result of their choice to walk in darkness. So we have the symptoms of the gods' condition.

[26:28] And the reason for the gods' condition. And then thirdly, we have the consequences of their condition.

And it's here that we see the decisive point. Because despite the circumstances.

The gods are not void of responsibility. Their choice to walk in darkness. Has consequences.

Far outside their own lives. And as a result. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. The impact of injustice is felt throughout the lands.

The process. So in this courtroom. The assessment period.

[27:34] In this case. Closes. As God begins to. Pronounce. His verdict. Verse 6. I said.

You are gods. You are all sons of the most high. This text. This text. Often been misused. As is true.

To the nature. Of human beings. We choose to see ourselves. In a glorified position. Rather than God. It's an intense.

And captivating. Thing. To hear. Because. We want to be. In that position. And hold. That power. Remember.

Remember. The deception. Of the devil. In the garden. Of Eden. In Genesis 3. The serpent. Seduces Eve. With the promise. Of being like. God.

[28:35] The emphasis. In this psalm. In this verse. Isn't. On the beings. In question. Or their privilege. The emphasis.

Here. Is on that very first word. I. I. And it's a call. To remember. Exactly. Who. God is. I. Said. This is. Not. God. Who gave. These judges. Their position. And authority. This is. God. The source. Of all things. Including life. Said. You are. God's. Sons. Of the most high. You see.

The difference. And this. Segways. The narrative. Into verse seven. Where God. Pronounces. The final. Verdict.

[29:34] Verse seven. God. But you. Will die. Like mere. Mortals. You. Will fall. Like every. Other. Ruler. This is.

Not. To say. That. These. Gods. Were. Already. Immortal. But. Instead. To say. I think. That. Regardless. Of their. High end.

Heavenly. Position. Their. God. Given. Position. Their. Continued. Walk. In. Disobedience. To God. Can only. Lead. To one.

Verdict. Guilty. And the. Punishment. Here. Is. Death. Their.

Condition. The. Condition. Of. These. Gods. Walking. In. Darkness. Offered. No. Excuse. For. The. Crime. So.

[30:29] They're. To be. Removed. From. Their. Heavenly. Position. With. God. Cast. Away. From. His. Presence. So.

Asaph. Here. Draws. This. Snapshot. Of. Heavenly. Courtroom. Drama. To a. Close. As. He. Resumes. His. Personal. Voice.

Verse. Eight. Asaph. Cries. To God. In. Anticipation. For. True. Righteousness. To reign. Upon. The. Whole. Earth. For. All. Nations. Belong. To. God. They. Are. God's. Property. This.

Last. Verse. Is. A. Picture. Of. All. The. Nations. Standing. Before. The. Perfect. Judge. It's.

[31:24] A. Picture. Of. The. Future. As. Is. Written. In. Matthew. 25. When. The. Son. Of. Man. Comes. In. His. Glory. And. All. The. Angels. With. Him. He. Will. Sit.

On. His. Glorious. Throne. All. The. Nations. Will. Be. Gather. Before. Him. And. He. Will. Separate. The. People. From. One. Another. As. The. Shepherd. Separate. The. Sheep. From. The. Goats. Asaph. The. Seer. Has. Painted. A. Picture. To. Be. Fulfilled. Leaving. A. Space. In. This. Courtroom. Drama.

For. A. Hero. To. Arise. Asaph. Is. Asking. These. Questions. Who. Can. Truly. Deliver. The. Weak. Without. Failure. Who. Can. Intervene. And. Bring. The. Unjust. Out. Of. Darkness. And. Forgive. Them. Who.

[32:20] Can. Hold. Perfect. Righteousness. And. Discernment. Who. Rises. Up. To. Judge. The. Earth. The.

Answer. To. All. These. Questions. Is. Jesus. He. Alone. Is. The. Perfect. Unfailing.

Son. Of. God. He. Alone. Is. The. Perfect. Judge. For. God. So. Loved.

The. World. That. He. Gave. His. One. And. Only. Son. The. Whoever. Believes. In. Him. Shall. Not. Perish. But. Have. Eternal. Life. John.

316. God. Has. Given. Us. All. This. Perfect. Gift. In. His. Son.

[33:16] His. Son. Paid. The. Price. For. Our. Evil. So. That. We. Could. Be. Declared. Not. Guilty. Therefore.

There. Is. Now. No. Condemnation. For. Those. Who. Are. In. Christ. Jesus. Romans. Eight. One. God. Be.

Praised. Amen. Amen. Well that brings our service to a close for this evening.

I hope you found it edifying and helpful in some way. If you have any questions or comments please get in touch with us via our website. Allow me to bring this service to a close now with a closing blessing and then we'll sing my Jesus my saviour.

God bless you. God bless you. eternal god and father by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed guide and strengthen us by your spirit that we may give ourselves to your service and live this day in love to one another and to you through jesus christ your son and our lord amen my jesus my savior but there is none like you all of my fears i long to praise the

wonders of your mighty love now confers my shelter tower of refuge and strength ready for breath
all that i am never seems to worship shout to the lord the earth let us sing power and majesty praise
you to the king mountains bow down and the seas will go what the sound of your name i sing with
joy i sing with joy at the work of your hands my jesus my savior but there is none like you
[36:14] Nothing compares to the promise I have in You My Jesus, my Savior
But there is none like You All of my things I want to praise The wonders
of Your mighty love I come through my shelter Tower of refuge and
strength Let every breath, all that I am Never cease to worship Shout to
the Lord

Lord, all the earth let us sing Power and majesty Praise to the King Mountains bow down and the
seas will roll At the sound of Your name I sing with joy at the work of Your hands Forever I'll love
You, forever I'll stand Nothing compares to the promise I have in You To the ending of Your night
To the ending of Your night To the ending of Your night To the ending of Your night To the ending
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