

Psalm Sundays

Text
Psalm 82

Topic
**We are introduced to supernatural beings called “gods,”
who oppose God by exercising an evil influence
upon human beings and our societies**

Title
**“My God’s Better than Your gods;
My God’s Better than Yours”**

The Walking Dead is **not** about zombies.

On the surface, the hit AMC television series tells how people stay alive after the zombie apocalypse. And, yes, there are lots and lots of slow-walking zombies in various states of decay.

It’s amazing, by the way, how many ways you can kill a zombie - considering it must always involve beheading, or a wound through the skull into the brain.

Killing zombies is merely a backdrop for the real story. After the collapse of human society, groups form, and the show explores how they struggle with establishing a “new normal” in their post-apocalyptic world.

1 of 12

Psalm 82

“My God’s Better than Your gods”



The way societies regroup after what is commonly, but mistakenly, called “the apocalypse” is a time-tested SyFy plot point. They usually regroup badly. A recent film example would be *Snowpiercer*:

After an attempt to stop global warming via climate engineering catastrophically backfires, creating a new ice age in 2014, the remnants of humanity have taken to a circumnavigational train, the *Snowpiercer*, run by recluse transportation magnate Wilford. By 2031, the passengers on the train have become segregated, with the elite in the extravagant front cars and the poor in squalid tail compartments controlled by armed guards.

Today we are talking incessantly about the “new normal.” Folks want to redo society. In the secular and in the spiritual, wholesale changes are being suggested, or made.

Maybe we should take a deep breath and look to the One Who established human society on bedrock foundations.

Psalm 82 is important in that regard:

- 🧠 First of all, we will see a direct statement about how human society is to behave. In the middle of the psalm, it says, “Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free *them* from the hand of the wicked.”
- 🧠 Second of all, we will meet supernatural beings who oppose God by influencing humans to ruin the foundations of society. This supernatural interference is almost never factored in.

We must be careful not to read anything into this psalm. It wasn’t written for 21st century America.

2 of 12

Psalm 82

“My God’s Better than Your gods”



It is applicable to us, however, because God never changes. It does indeed speak to our current national and international turmoil.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 There Are 'gods' Who Encourage Society's Ruin,** and **#2 There Is God Who Establishes Society's Righteousness.**

#1 - There Are 'gods' Who Encourage Society's Ruin (v1-2 & 5-8)

"gods?" Where did I come up with that? Bear with me. This psalm needs a longer introduction than most.

I'm going to read verses 1&2, and verses 5-8, in the English Standard Version (ESV).

Psa 82:1 A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

Psa 82:2 "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?
Selah

First thing that is clear to anyone: There is a "divine council" of beings called "gods" (with a little "g"). They have some oversight, or at least involvement, with mankind because they are to "judge." In their judging, they prefer the "wicked."

Psa 82:5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Second thing to note that is clear to anyone: Whoever these "gods" are, their wisdom is limited, and their walking in "darkness" affects the social "foundations of the earth" negatively.

3 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



Psa 82:6 I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;

Psa 82:7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince."

Third thing to note which is clear to anyone: Whoever they are, **they are not human beings**. The divine punishment that they will "die" "like men" can only mean they are *not* men.

Turn to chapter ten in the Gospel of John. In verse twenty-four, the Jews ask Jesus if He is the Messiah. Answering them, He says in verse thirty, "I and My Father are One."

Joh 10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

Joh 10:32. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

Joh 10:33. 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."

Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I SAID, "YOU ARE GODS" '?"

Joh 10:35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

Joh 10:36 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'?"

The Jews wanted to stone Jesus for claiming to be God. In His defense, He quoted from Psalm 82.

Jesus's quotation of Psalm 82 is not an argument for His deity if He and the Jews thought that the "gods" in Psalm 82 were merely human judges. Think about it. How could Jesus claim to be God by comparing Himself to human beings?

4 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



We've talked about the Hebrew word, *elohim*. Turns out, it is not a name for Almighty God. Other beings are called *elohim* in the Bible. It describes any being who is what we call supernatural:

- 👤 Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim, and the 'good' angels are *elohim*.
- 👤 Satan, the fallen angels, demons, "principalities... powers... the rulers of the darkness of this age... spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Ephesians 6:12) are *elohim*.

Because Almighty God is supernatural, and dwells in that normally unseen realm, He, too, is an *elohim*. But note: While the Almighty God is an *elohim*, **no *elohim* is the Almighty God.** They are part of His creation.

One very important point that people are failing to take into account in today's turmoil is that there are supernatural beings involved in human affairs. Many of them are wicked influencers. Any discussion that does not recognize the supernatural is senseless. One pastor compared it to rearranging the furniture in a burning house.

Psa 82:1 A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

Asaph had a long run as one of the lead worship guys. He worshipped in the Tabernacle, but also in Solomon's Temple.

(Sort of like us, at the "Y" and then here!).

This "divine council" is directly mentioned, or it is alluded to, in other passages: Psalm 89:5-7, and Daniel 7:9-10 (for example).

5 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



I'm not sure if it was a "divine council" meeting, but you get a hint at what our Almighty God's "place" is among these *elohim* when you read the first two chapters of the Book of Job.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (1:6-8).

Satan was identified as one of the "sons of God," in that God created him. It is a common designation for angels. God, the Almighty God, God in Three Persons, is Sovereign and infinitely superior.

In Psalm 82, as in Job, God sits in judgment over the *elohim*. One thing He judges them for are their dealings with human beings.

Psa 82:2 "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?
Selah

I should tell you that the mainstream, evangelical interpretation of this psalm is that the "gods" are really human judges, or government officials, whom God holds accountable. Jesus let us know, by His use of the Scriptures, that they were supernatural.

OK, but in what sense do these wicked *elohim* "judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?"

6 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



Book of Daniel... Chapter Ten. Daniel had been praying, and had received a heavenly vision he did not understand. God dispatched His angel, probably Gabriel, to speak with Daniel. He was delayed:

Daniel 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

Gabriel, then the mighty archangel, Michael, were "withstood" by what could only be another *elohim*, called the Prince of Persia.

Wicked *elohim* have some limited rulership over human governments; or at least they interfere with human beings:

- 👤 Ancient Persia had a wicked *elohim* prince.
- 👤 In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we read that Satan once had a throne in the city of Pergamum.

The Almighty God grants them free will, but oversees them, and moves His plan forward through history by His providence.

Jump to... Psa 82:5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

The wicked *elohim* haven't the purity or the power of God. Their "knowledge" and "understanding is not only insufficient, it comes from a place of moral "darkness." The result: The very "foundations of the earth are shaken."

Want an example? Early on, in Genesis, God established the foundation of all human societies: Marriage - which He instituted as monogamous,

7 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



heterosexual, and binding for life. Those “foundations” are certainly being “shaken” today.

I came across an article in the Washington Times where the writer said, “If I wanted to destroy a society, I would destroy the family, the fabric of society. I would tear apart the nuclear family, that produced stable children.”

Human societies will continue to be influenced by wickedness. Satan is, after all, called “the god of this world.” This world was described by the apostle John as being in darkness, with Jesus its only light.

We’re not saying judges and government officials are possessed. But those who do not know Jesus are prone to wickedness by nature. Add to that the influence of *elohim* and you can understand why unrighteousness is rampant on the earth.

Psa 82:6 I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;

Psa 82:7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”

The *elohim* held a majestic place in God’s creation. We read of Satan, “You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked” (Ezekiel 28:14).

Some exercised their free will to disobey God. They therefore will be judged alongside human beings. They, too, will be thrown alive to spend eternity in conscious torment. In fact, we’re told that the Lake of Fire was prepared especially for them.

Psa 82:8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

8 of 12

Psalm 82

“My God’s Better than Your gods”



- 👤 Reading the Revelation, you understand that in the Great Tribulation God “judge(s) the earth.”
- 👤 Next, in the Millennial Kingdom God “judges the earth.”
- 👤 Next, at the Great White Throne God “judges the earth.”

You also read, “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (11:15).

We win! That is huge. And we win with our giving no special attention to the wicked *elohim*. We don’t need to identify territorial spirits; or engage in any direct warfare against them.

We simply live-out a simple, normal Christian life. A Daniel-like life of obedience and living sacrifice.

#2 - There Is God Who Establishes A Society’s Righteousness (v3-4)

What happens when we leave God out of our redo’s of society? In the Book of Romans, we read, “And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (1:28-32).

9 of 12

Psalm 82

“My God’s Better than Your gods”



Chip away at the biblical foundations for human society and you end up in a Romans One death spiral. I think there is abundant evidence to support that our great nation has been in this downward spiral for quite some time.

As believers, we are empowered by Jesus to address any social crises by two things, at least: Worldview, and Mission:

- 👤 Our Worldview is John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
- 👤 Our Mission is to take that message into the world of lost men and women: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

I'm not sure who first said, "The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart," but it is profoundly true. Hearts must change. Only God has the power to change them. And that power, we are promised, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Whether it's your marriage or a monarchy, a relationship with Jesus is the answer.

Early Christian rocker, Larry Norman, had a song, *Why Don't You Look Into Jesus, He's Got the Answer*. As Stan Lee would say, "Nuff said."

10 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



Psalm 82 expresses one of God's foundational principles for human society: Compassion.

Psa 82:3 "Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Psa 82:4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

In the context of the psalm, these are the areas in which the wicked *elohim* - guys like the Prince of Persia - were influencing mankind.

Their influence was to withhold justice from the weak and the fatherless, to eliminate the right of the afflicted and destitute, to abandon the weak and the needy, and to deliver them to the hand of the wicked.

We are to have compassion upon all, and especially the weakest, the most destitute, the most needy.

Too simplistic, you say, for the complex problems of modern societies? The Jewish legal system was quite complex. Not to Jesus. He was asked if He could summarize the law into one commandment.

Mat 22:37 Jesus said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

Mat 22:38 This is *the* first and great commandment.

Mat 22:39 And *the* second *is* like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

It sounds so profound, so powerful in church; yet out in the world, it is dismissed as overly simplistic, wishful thinking.

11 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"



Remember your worldview... Commit to your Mission... Do it all with
Compassion.

12 of 12

Psalm 82

"My God's Better than Your gods"

