

GOD, THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH
Psalm 75

Intro: My text is verse 7.

— This was not a new revelation of God at the time that this Psalm was written. As early as the 18th chapter of Genesis we find Abraham referring to God as "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. 18:25b).

Even before that the Lord told Abram when He was confirming His covenant with Abram that his descendants would be in bondage for four hundred years, but after that time the Lord would judge them, and bring His people out. See Gen. 15:14. We know that was fulfilled at the time of the exodus from Egypt.

In the chapter after that, Genesis 16, Sarai was complaining because she was despised by Hagar after Hagar conceived. And her complaint to Abram her husband was, "The Lord judge between me and thee" (v. 5b).

In the song of Moses which we have in Deut. 32, one of the lines in that song said, "For the Lord shall judge his people."

— Jephthah spoke of the Lord as "the Lord the Judge." We find that in Judges 11:27. He himself was a judge of Israel for six years. Cf. Judges 12:7.

There are other passages that I could cite to show that the people of Israel in the OT looked upon God as a Judge.

I think that it is true that we have two ideas when we think about a judge. One arises from our legal system in which we have many judges. They are men or women who pass judgment in a court of law. If two people are having legal troubles, they go before a judge. If a person has committed a crime, he is brought into court, and stands before a judge who will decide what to do with him if he is guilty.

— The other idea that we have when we as Christians think about God as a Judge has reference to the final judgment. We know that we are all going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We know that there is a great white throne before which "the dead, small and great" will stand before God, and there they will be judged. See Rev. 20:12. We believe that hell is a place of eternal judgment.

— We do believe that God judges sin continuously, sometimes with death, sometimes with illness, and in various other

ways. But we generally associate judgment with penalties for sin, both now and also hereafter.

And so when we think of judgment, we usually think in terms of punishments. In fact, in our minds a judgment is most often a punishment for wrongdoing.

This idea is, of course, present in Scripture. However, the thought that God is a Judge is much greater than the things that I have mentioned so far. And so it is important for us to get in our minds the Scriptural idea that we need to understand when we say, as our text says, "But God is the judge...."

I. THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF A JUDGE.

A. The meaning of the word itself.

The Hebrew dictionary will tell us that the basic meaning of the verb, to judge, is that of setting something upright, or to erect something. The work of a judge was to correct some wrong, to solve some problem. This suggests the idea that the work of a judge is designed primarily to be positive and helpful, not just punitive (or for punishment). Sometimes good comes when punishment is given, and that would certainly be in harmony with the idea of judgment in Scripture. But think of a judge as one who is there, first of all, to help, not to harm.

B. A judge was often the head of a government.

All of us know that after Joshua's day the men and women who headed up the government of Israel were called judges. We have an entire book of the OT devoted to that period in Israel's history.

This meant that the judge was a governor, often with the authority of a king. The word judge is linked in Scripture to that of a ruler, a prince, or a chief in government. The judge was a magistrate who was to lead the people, protect the people, and to punish them when that was necessary. A judge was a sovereign possessing what we could practically say was unlimited human authority.

Keep all of these points in mind because I want to relate these to the Lord in a moment.

C. The word judge suggested that he was one who did the right thing.

The judges in Israel were not perfect. But their leadership

was to be as nearly perfect as it could possibly be. They were to be righteous men, or women, themselves. And their leadership, their judgments, were also to be right--right in God's sight. They were not to make foolish decisions. They were never to be partial. They were not to be bribed.

The kings of Israel were also judges. Absalom won the hearts of the people of Israel away from his father, King David, by acting as a judge for them. Solomon was a judge, a very wise and godly judge. And the book of Proverbs gives us some wonderful illustrations of his judgments, having to do mainly with the lives of his people.

Judges today are bound to make their decisions according to the law. Judges in Scripture were bound in their judgments to the Word of God!

D. The judge was expected to be an active leader.

He determined how things would go, how they would be done. He did not just react to others, but he was responsible to keep people from doing the wrong thing before it ever got started. He did not leave things to chance, or to "fate," or to whatever people might want to do. He not only corrected what was wrong, but, even more, he prevented wrongdoing by giving his people the proper guidance ahead of time. His will was the thing that the people had to be concerned about. When Caesar decided to tax all of the people in the Empire, the people had to go where he said, and to pay what he demanded. His decisions were not necessarily good, but I refer to him to help you to understand the work of the judge.

Now let us apply this to the Lord.

II. "GOD IS THE JUDGE."

The Hebrew text actually says, God is Judge, but the idea is that expressed in our Authorized Version. God is not just One of many judges; He is Judge, the Judge!

Now let me apply to Him all that I have said about judges generally.

A. As Judge our God is concerned about getting things right that are wrong, and only punishes with that in mind.

Therefore, it is for our comfort that God is called "the Judge" in Scripture. This is one of His titles which is designed to give us hope, encouragement, and peace. We only need to fear God in the sense of dreading what He might do IF

we are doing the wrong thing. But we need always to fear the Lord in the sense of obeying Him and worshipping Him because, as Solomon said, this is "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). A person is a fool who ignores the place that God has in His own universe.

- B. As Judge our God is the head of all of the governments of the world.

Is this not what Abraham called Him, "the Judge of all the earth"?

Every nation has its leader. He might be a president, a king or a queen, a dictator, or something else. But above them all, the King of all kings, the Judge of all judges, is the Lord God of heaven and earth. Our President has the highest position in the United States of America, but God is head over our President. Saddam Hussein boasts of his great power, but he is under the authority of the God of heaven and earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The nations are nothing in comparison with God. He alone is "the Judge of all the earth"--all of it! He always has been, and He always will be!

It is God who has parcelled out territory to every nation on the face of the earth, but "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa. 24:1). And when Saddam Hussein spilled all of that oil into the Persian Gulf waters, he defiled that which belongs to Almighty God.

I am very thankful that we have a strong army, a strong air force, a strong Marine Corps, a strong Navy, a strong Coast Guard. And I believe that God works through means. But if God is pleased to continue to give us the victory over there, let us remember that the glory belongs to Him, not to us. The weakest nation on the face of the earth could defeat us IF GOD IS NOT WITH US, FIGHTING FOR US, GIVING US THE VICTORY!

The Lord is the Judge of all the earth.

But let me go on.

- C. The Lord as our Judge always does the right thing.

Human judges, human kings and presidents, are not always right, nor do they always do the right thing, the righteous thing, the thing that pleases God. But the Lord our Judge has never failed to do the right thing. That is all that He does. Even His judgments against men and nations are always

right. This is also meant for our encouragement personally and nationally. Things may not seem right at the time. In fact, it might appear that the Lord is against us when we look at a trial itself. But it is always for our good.

— And this leads me to the last thing that I pointed out about judges:

D. Our Lord is Judge is taking the lead in seeing that His will is carried out.

Let me remind you again today that our God is sovereign. He often works through things that are terrible wrong in themselves, things for which He is not responsible, but He would not be God if things took Him by surprise, or if things were beyond His control. I can tell you today that God is at work. He is at work among the nations. He is at work in the hearts of people. He is at work in my heart, and in your heart. He is working all things out according to His own will. He has purposes which He is accomplishing. He is still on the throne of the universe. If all nations were to join together in rebellion against God, that would be no problem to Him in the least. In fact, that very thing is going to happen. When Satan is set free after the millennium, he is going to lead a world-wide rebellion against God and against His people. What will happen? John stated it very simply because it will be simple to God. He wrote, "And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20:9b). And the end of the story will come when "great voices in heaven" say as we read in Rev. 13:15b,

The kingdoms of this world
are become the kingdoms of our Lord,
and of his Christ;
and he shall reign for ever and ever.

How our hearts should be blessed in the contemplation of these truths!

But now let us look at:

III. THE MESSAGE OF PSALM 75.

Like so many of the Psalms, we do not know exactly when this Psalm was written. The predominant idea seems to be that it had to do with the Assyrians' attack against Israel.

— God seems to be the Speaker in verses 2 and 3. Verse 3 tells us that it is the Lord, the Judge, who bears up the pillars of the earth. That is, He is the One Who supports the foundations of the earth so that it is not destroyed.

Verse 6 tells us that man's promotion, or exaltation, to places of leadership among the nations does not come from any direction on the earth, "but the Lord is judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Saddam Hussein will hold his position in Iraq only as long as the Lord lets him hold it. And when that time is up, Mr. Hussein will come down!

The same is true of all world leaders. God has blessed us as a nation far beyond what any other nation has ever experienced, with perhaps the one exception of Israel. But that may very well be coming to an end, too. Our nation is in deep trouble. We have internal troubles which seem to have no solution. It is only if we turn to God, if we recognize that He is the Judge, if we humble ourselves before Him and begin to praise Him for His Son, and for all of the blessings we enjoy, that there can be any hope for us.

This is a message that needs to be sounded and resounded throughout our nation from border to border, "God is the Judge, God is the Judge!" Our destiny as a nation is in His hands, not our own. Therefore, let us pray that the Lord will pour out a spirit of repentance on all of our hearts, and that we might in these days, facing the terrible troubles that are all about us, seek the blessing and mercy of Him who is "the Judge of all the earth."

Remember that the Lord does not favor any nation because of what that nation is. He does not judge us favorably because we are Americans, and not Iraqis, nor because people are Jewish instead of being Arabs, nor for any other distinction that we can draw. God judges between those who are righteous, and those who are not righteous. He has in every nation those who fear Him. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). But the only way we can be righteous is through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. People do not turn to God as nations, but as individuals. Let us make sure that things are right between us and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: We are in a good place today to get started. We are going to observe the Lord's Supper. We are doing this because the Lord wants us to do it. We are doing it to remember our Lord Jesus Christ and His death for us on the Cross of Calvary. We are being brought back to the very heart of our faith when we remember our Lord and His death.

But this is also to be a time of judgment, isn't it, before "the Judge of all the earth." We must not violate the sacredness of this time with the Lord. We are to judge ourselves. And Paul said that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" by the Lord. And so God has

appointed us judges over our own hearts, to search our hearts in His presence and in the light of His Word, so that we can confess and forsake anything in our lives that would disqualify us from observing the Lord's Supper.

- Is your heart right with the Lord? Are you conscious as you sit there that there is sin in your life which needs to be cleansed and forsaken? Don't try to cover it up. David prayed in Psalm 19, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." And then he prayed, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me...." (Psa. 19:12b, 13a). Pray David's prayer in Psalm 139:23, 24, and his prayer in Psa. 19:14. We need a revival at Trinity Bible Church. And there could be no better place for it to start than at the Lord's Table. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who is now with the Lord used to say, and I know he was right, that if we are going to see a revival, it will start in the hearts of the Lord's people.

Our nation is in the Lord's hands. And we are in the Lord's hands. Victory in the Middle East does not mean that we are right with the Lord. It only means that the Lord is extending our day of grace a little longer. Let us pray that our hearts will be open to what the Lord is saying to us in these days. He is "the Judge," "the Judge of all the earth." "By Him actions are weighed," as Hannah said so long ago.

- See 1 Sam. 2:3. It is to Him that we owe our first allegiance. We are to be submissive to Him, to honor and obey Him. No one is greater than He, not even the combined powers of all the nations. Some day all knees will bow recognizing that our Lord is the Lord. Let us make sure that we are doing that now, and that we are living in submission to the authority of the Triune God.