

## Psalm 82 – Bible Study Notes A Warning to Unjust Judges

Primary Focus: God’s indictment of the unjust judges.

Background Info: Likely written by Asaph during the split monarchy. Legal judges throughout the Israel and Judah ruled unjustly and contrary to God’s command.

Basic structure:

- I. God takes the stand as the righteous judge (v. 1)
- II. God indicts Israel’s judges (vv. 2-7)
  - A. God describes their failure as judges (vv. 2-5)
  - B. God’s ruling and final sentence against the judges (vv. 6-7)
- III. Psalmist calls for God’s justice on all the earth (v. 8)

### Verse 1 – God takes the stand as the righteous judge

This pictures a courtroom with God as judge and Israel’s judges as the defendant. The tone is intended to instill fear in the hearts of all of Israel’s judges.

#### Life Questions

Why would God’s judgement cause fear? Who should have this fear?

### Verses 2-7 – God indicts Israel’s judges

God describes their failure as judges (vv. 2-5)

They failed to protect the “weak” and “needy” in society. Rather, they ruled in favor of the wicked and oppressors.

Verses 3-4 – Two descriptions of the same basic theme.

Verse 3 – Weak are afflicted; fatherless are destitute.

To “vindicate” is to “do justice.”

Verse 4 – Weak and needy being oppressed by wicked people.

To “rescue” is to “deliver.”

These two groups need to be protected by the judges.

Verse 5 – The result of the judges’ failure.

The people do not understand God’s laws, justice, or love.

“in darkness” – pictures someone unable to see where to go; they are lost.

“foundations... are shaken” – depicts instability; lack of conformity to God’s rule.

Verses 6 – God recalls his appointment of the judges.

“gods” (*elohim*) – literally, “strong ones.”

God appointed the judges as his representatives and instruments of justice.

They receive their authority from God, hence the terms “gods” and “sons.”

Verse 7 – God indicts and sentences those whom he appointed.

Indictment: guilty as charged.

Sentence: death just like other men and rulers

“men” and “princes/rulers” contrasts with “gods” and “sons” in v. 6.

**Life Questions**

Describe the weak and needy in the world today. How does the church resemble the judges of Israel? What is the church's job in light of this passage?

**Verse 8 – A call for God's justice to be spread to all the earth**

The psalmist pictures God's justice extending beyond Israel.

The whole world will be judged because all the earth belongs to God.

**Life Questions**

How does the cross depict God's judgment of the earth? In light of this psalm, what is the greatest need in the world today? What should we do about it?