

Psalm

The Divine Council

Now please turn in your Psalms 82. We're getting near the end of our Psalm series, and we're starting to see some of these themes that we've been introduced to earlier in the summer now start to come back around to each other. As a matter of fact, if you remember all the way back to Psalm two, remember SaeYoung preached on Psalm 2, the nations rage, but God in heaven laughs in derision. Kiss the son, lest he be angry. If you took that theology, the theology of Psalm 2, and then if you remember Psalm 78 back on Father's Day, the testimony of our fathers, and how history is all moving together towards God's good ends. If you put those two Psalms together, you'd get Psalm 82. Psalm 82, in many ways, is kind of the theology. It's the spiritual backdrop that makes Psalm 2 and Psalm 78 possible. So look in your Bibles to Psalm 78. Notice this is a Psalm of Asaph. One of the hymn writers and worship leaders, Levitical worship leaders in the time of the Old Testament. So this is one of his Psalms. It's a Psalm of Asaph. And he writes,

God has taken his place in the divine council in the midst of the gods. He holds judgment. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right and the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. They have neither knowledge nor understanding. They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, you are God's Son of the Most High. All of you. Nevertheless, like men, you shall die and fall like any prince. Arise, O God, judge the earth, for you shall inherit all the nations.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, this is probably one of the most obscure of the Psalms that we've read over the course of this series on the Psalms. Psalms 82 is. Psalm 82 is dealing with some themes that will not be obviously apparent, particularly to our modern minds. I would argue that this Psalm would have made more sense and been easier to understand at other times, maybe in most other times of human history, but in the last two hundred or two hundred and fifty years or so, Psalms like this one become more difficult. They're passages that we kind of breeze past. And it's not just Psalm 82. It's other sections like Isaiah 6 and Daniel 7 and Daniel 10, and the whole book of Habakkuk. Okay. All of these books are dealing with this reality that's in the Bible that we need to remember. Because while the Bible, when we read it, should make sense to us, the Holy Spirit is at work. He's illuminating the text. It does make sense to us. There are parts in the Bible that are strange, not because they are strange in themselves, but because they are strange to us in our modern Western ways of thinking. So what we have going on here in Psalm 82 is this. Let me just kind of paint the picture.

First of all, we have the psalmist pulling back the curtain of reality so that we can see into this other realm that exists. Okay? And this other realm, we can call it the spiritual realm. We can call it the heavenly realm. In the Bible, it's called the heavens. It's called the Council of the Lord. It's called the assembly of God, the assembly of the Lord. But it's always there no matter what. When you pull back the veil, the curtain of physical reality and you look into

the spiritual things, you're always in the same place, this heavenly throne room. Okay, so that's the first thing. I just want to pause at this. We see this throughout the Bible, places where the Lord comes together. He sits on a throne. In this case, interestingly, he's standing. We'll talk in a second about why that's significant. He's almost always depicted as sitting by that place that word there, the Hebrew where he takes his place in his assembly, he actually says where he takes his stand. He's standing up in the assembly. And around him are spiritual beings. who are not just counselors and consultants to the Lord, but they are also counselors and consultants. They are powers, spiritual powers that lie behind human realities. Okay. They are spiritual powers that hide behind human realities. Notice what he says here. It says he takes his place in the midst of the Elohim. And you see there in your ESV, it translates that gods with a lowercase g. Now let's be clear here. These are not gods like God is God. This is not a sudden polytheistic text in the middle of the Bible, but this is just referencing the fact that Elohim is a word both for God who is creator, but then he will also call the heavenly beings Elohim and Bene Elohim, that is sons of gods, or in this case, bene Elon, son of the Most High. Okay, so you just remember this. Sometimes humans are called sons of God. Israel is called the Son of God. Okay? Sometimes angels are called sons of God or sons of the Most High, and yet none of them can contest with God. That is the creator. Okay, so these are not gods in the sense that they are competitors for the throne of the Lord. No, they are creatures. They are not creators, and their power is delegated to them by the Creator God. Their jurisdiction is limited and their continued authority depends on their faithfulness to the Most High, as we see here in this passage today.

All right. Like I said, just if you want to go look at other passages, if you say, this sounds quite strange to me, let me give you a couple of other passages. Isaiah 6. Remember when Isaiah is in the temple and the veil of reality is pulled back, and where is he suddenly? He's now in a heavenly throne room where God is there. And you have these angelic beings, including worshipers who are called seraphim or burning ones, or maybe serpents. We don't exactly know what seraphim means. If you remember, the serpents that bit the people in the desert were also called Seraph. They're called Seraph. Burning serpents. So it's possible that these are kind of serpentine, angelic beings who are worshiping the Lord. And what happens? The Lord is asking his entourage. He's asking his witnesses, what should we do in this case? As a matter of fact, as we see with Isaiah, and Jeremiah will later tell us clearly, one thing that prophets do is they go into that assembly of the Lord and they interact with the Lord in it. That's how you know someone's really a biblical prophet. Okay. He's been inspired by God to give the word of God as that he's been to the heavenly throne room, to this assembly of the Lord, and he has received his marching orders. If you haven't been there, says Jeremiah, then you're just a false prophet.

Okay, there's another story in I Kings 22 where we have the story about Israel trying to figure out if Israel and Judah should go out and battle together against Syria or Aram, and they consult with all of the prophets that are there, and they're all false prophets who are there. So they go find the one true prophet. And Micaiah, the true prophet, is there, and he comes and he tells them the truth, because he was in the divine assembly and he saw what happened there. Okay. And there again, you get Micaiah telling us about God sitting on his throne, consorting with these angelic counselors, and they're putting forward ideas about what they should do about Israel and Judah and the Lord listening to their proposals. And

then he picks one and he says, you go do it again. It's this picture of the divine assembly. Okay? We see it in Daniel 7, where the Ancient of Days is presented with this book and he opens it up and it says multitudes are there to watch him. So this isn't just a handful of heavenly beings. These are multitudes of heavenly beings. All of that is just to say this is not an abnormal text or picture that we find here in Psalm 82. Rather, it is a reality that stands behind the physical reality of this life. These passages are teaching us how it is that the nations rage. And yet God, who washes them, sits and laughs in derision and says, you better pay homage to my son and kiss the son, lest he be angry? How is it that the Lord is directing all of human history? There's all kinds of philosophies about human history and why human history goes the way that it does. Some people say it's a point and counterpoint, and they come together into a kind of synthesis. And that's what history is. It's just a series of these points and counterpoints coming together and finally moving towards some kind of grand conclusion. Some people hold to a more evolutionary model that you have cultures and humanities and religions evolving into some kind of utopia. And then of course, you have what we find in Macbeth, you know, the theory of history, which is that it's just nothing, right? It's just a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. Okay? There's nothing going on in history. But what we find here in the Scripture is that history is actually a physical manifestation of spiritual realities, that God is moving under his complete authority and sovereignty unto his good ends. That's what history really is. That's the proper biblical philosophy of history.

So here in this passage, we see three things. We see the *Divine counsel*. We then see the *Divine command*, and then we finish with *God's Divine claim* to all of the earth. So let's go through these three. Let's start with the Divine Council.

First of all, we get this picture of the Divine Council in which we learn that God conducts his reign and he judges creation. Notice that this is all of creation. This is not just Israel. This is not just God judging over his people, okay? He's not a jurisdictional god in that way. He judges it all because he made it all and he owns it all. He is conducting his reign and he is judging creation from his divine council, found in this heavenly throne room that we've been talking about. Okay. He conducts his judgment. He conducts his reign over all of creation from the Divine Council found in this heavenly throne room. Look at what it says. God has taken his stand, his place in the Divine Council in the midst of the gods. He holds judgment. Okay, this is, of course, a throne room, but it's also a courtroom. Okay. This is the Lord holding court in his courtroom. And he's doing what all good ancient Near Eastern Kings would do. He's judging you, remember? That's how we know that Solomon is a good king in Israel. One of the things we learn is that he wins battles. He makes a lot of money. But do you remember one of the a couple of the stories are about how well he judges cases, right. Because judging is a part of the kingly office in the ancient Near East. And so the Lord is standing up as King of the world. And he's judging in particular, he's judging the spiritual entities that represent human entities. Now, I want to be clear about something. This is where you've got to kind of loosen up your modern mind. There is not a hard distinction here between spiritual powers and earthly powers. Okay. You can have the king of Babylon, and then the king of Babylon can have spiritual powers behind him, and it's hard to distinguish between the two. When is he doing something that's just him and his physicality, and when is he doing something because of the influence of spiritual forces? Paul says it another way. When he's talking, he's talking in Ephesians to the Ephesians, who are

dealing with human authorities who are a problem for them. Do you remember what he says in Ephesians 6? You're not really dealing with humans. You're dealing with principalities and powers, spiritual warfare. And yet we ought not think that spiritual warfare is not evidenced in human interaction. Rather, the spirit in the physical world are intertwined. As a matter of fact, this is surely what Jesus is thinking of when he quotes this Psalm.

Okay, you remember in John 10:33-36, thereabouts, Jesus is being accused of heresy because he said, I am God. And they say, how dare you say you are God? And he quotes this psalm and he says this. Jesus answered them, *is not written in your own law*. So notice by the way, he's using the word law, Torah, to talk about the Old Testament, not just the first five books. I said, you are gods. Okay. He's citing Psalm 82. Is it not written in your law? I said, you are gods. If he, that being God, called them gods to whom the word of God came and Scripture cannot be broken, Jesus was an inherent right. He could have just said, oh no. Well that's old, that's all. Hundreds of years old. That has no bearing on us today. But notice what he says. Scripture cannot be broken. 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. Notice what Jesus is saying here. He's saying, we already know that God will call created beings gods of a kind because we have Psalm eighty two. He'll call the angelic beings. And I would argue also the humans, that those angelic beings are representing and empowering and influencing. He calls them gods because of the authority that has been bestowed on them by God. Jesus says, If God will call them gods, then why do you accuse me? Who not is not just a recipient of the word of the Lord, but. But I'm word incarnate, right? I'm the one who actually is not sent the word from God. I have been sent from God myself. I myself am consecrated for this work. Why do you take offense that I would call myself a son of God? You see his logic there? Jesus was very good at this, by the way. When they try to ask him questions that weren't real questions, they were kind of gotcha questions. Notice how he always responds with a question back. He says, well, let's take you on your own terms and let's go ahead and interrogate your your presuppositions. If you notice how he says that, let's go ahead and take a look. How do you then square your interpretation with your reading of Psalm 82? So these these forces that God is judging are spiritual forces, but they represent they represent human forces. We see this in Daniel ten. You remember in Daniel 10 where Daniel is praying and he's saying, Lord, have mercy on us. Bring about the end of the desolations of Jerusalem. The Lord says, it's not going to be seven, seventy years as you thought. It's going to be seventy times seven. So it's going to be four hundred and ninety thereabout, years before the restoration of Jerusalem comes. And then the angelic being tells him, I would have come to you sooner. Okay, this is in Daniel ten. I would have come to you sooner. But I was held back by the princes of Persia. I'm on my way to Greece. Think about what's going on in the background there. The Persian Empire has conquered the Babylonian Empire. And this angelic being who had been declaring to the princes of Persia, which most interpreters recognize are spiritual beings called princes, just as they are here at the end of this Psalm. These princes of Persia, who are also representative of the kings of Persia, are being told, I am now taking the power away from you. This is what the angelic being is telling them, and I am giving it on behalf. This is the Lord being the I here. I am going to give it now to Greece. And that's exactly what happens. But what happens? The Persian princes, those spiritual entities, they

don't want to have the power wrested from their hands. So what are they doing? They're resisting the angelic being. They're holding him back for a time. It's a fascinating little insight. You want you want to say, okay, wait a minute, Daniel. Ask more about that part. I want to know about that part. Okay. But we don't get more. We just get these little glimpses. So think about it this way. On the outside, we see Philip of Macedon building his army. We see Alexander the Great growing in military might and prowess, taking Greece from a relatively small nation state to an incredible global empire. That's what it looks like on the outside. On the inside. In the spirit, behind the veil, in the spiritual heavenlies, you have the spiritual beings in charge of Persia having the power wrested from them and declared to Greece. Can you see how these are working together here? So the Lord is standing up in the midst of the heavenlies, and he is going to these whom he has called gods and sons of the Most High, to whom he has given authority and power to be behind the geopolitical realities of the world. And he's saying, how long will you mess it up? How long I gave Babylon, I gave them power over Assyria. Go back and read Habakkuk. Habakkuk says, look, there's injustice all around me. The Lord says, don't worry, I've got the Chaldeans. Chaldeans. You can just say Chaldean equals Babylonians. In the Bible, I'm raising up the Chaldeans. And Habakkuk goes, they're terrible. Why are you raising them up? And the Lord says, don't worry, I'll judge them too if they break my law. You see, the Lord is at work, not just moving around the powers of the world, but he is also judging and holding accountable the spiritual entities, the rulers, rulers, the principalities and powers who only have their authority because God has given it to them. So this indictment applies directly to the spiritual authorities, but its ethical force, its spiritual force, extends even to every human being who exercises authorities, kings and presidents. Okay. Now, it's easy to talk about this when we're talking about Babylonians and Persians and Greeks, right? Let's now apply it today. It's still true today. Kings, presidents, judges, magistrates, pastors, elders, employers, parents all possess delegated authority. That's what Romans 13 means. Even Caesar Nero got his power. Okay, Romans 13 from the Lord, who delegated that power to him, and he will be held accountable for it. You see, history both at the macro level and the micro level, is really an earthly theater in which God displays his judgment upon heavenly and human authorities. And what we see here is the Lord standing up. Why is he standing and not sitting down when you're sitting down as a judge? This is what most interpreters take this to mean. When you're sitting down, you're hearing the case, you're deliberating on the case, you're hearing the evidence. But when you declare your verdict, when you actually go about the work of applying your verdict, what do you do? You stand up, you stand up and you step forward. He's taking a stand against the injustice of the rulers to whom he has delegated this authority. Okay, so that's the divine counsel. We started with the Divine Counsel. This is the arena. It's the theater in which God is conducting his reign and judging the events of creation.

Now we move on to the divine command. Okay. Divine command, this is verses three through five. Divine authority is communicated right through this divine command. It is communicated to created beings who are at once empowered in the events of history and held accountable for their treatment of those under their care. You might say, how are they judged? Are they judged by how well they bribe the Lord Most High? Nope. That's not how they're judged. That's not how the Lord works. He doesn't sit around waiting for offerings from the other gods who he has made so that he can be pleased with them. That's not how

he judges them. Notice where does value and purpose fall? It's how they care for those who are under their responsibility, particularly those with little to no power to defend themselves. In this court case, the spiritual and earthly authorities that God has delegated power to are indicted on this allegation that you have mistreated and not cared for the poor, the needy, the orphan, the widow, and the sojourner. Look what he says. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy. Do you see the order there? Give justice. Maintain the right. Okay. The good. The straight rescue. Deliver. It's not just that you don't oppress. Okay. God is calling these spiritual and human authorities to actively pursue the well-being of those who are in need.

Now, let's let's unpack this for a second, because I've heard reformed people get this wrong. You believe many of us believe we all. Hopefully we all believe here, right? We are all sinners in need of grace. And so when someone says justice, they go, well, if justice is done, then I'll be killed. I'll be thrown into the fire. That's justice. I don't want justice. Okay. That's true in terms of divine justice on sin. However, here's the thing you need to remember you're also made in the image of God in biblical human justice. In other words, when the Bible talks about human justice, it talks about all humans should have afforded to them the dignity that is allowed to those that is owned by those possessed, by those who are made in the image of God. Okay. So if you want to think about how is it that that, that we should be just, you should think this is this person being allowed the dignity afforded, the dignity that is owed to someone made in the image of God. Okay. If you think about all of the justice that we see in the law books, the Old Testament, right? If someone steals from you. Okay. That's undignified to you, right? They are not acknowledging this idea that we find all the way back in Scripture, which is the importance of property. Property is a part of the biblical ideal. Okay. It's a part of your image bearing ness that you have property that you are filling and subduing the earth, and that means that you are stewarding well. What has been given you? If someone does not honor that, they are dishonoring your image bearing ness. Okay. When you are sexually impure, when you commit adultery, when you commit sexual assault, you are undignified yourself and others as those who are made in the image of God. When you take a life, you are undignified. You are not treating with dignity and honor those who are made in the image of God. That's it. I mean, it's not hard. Okay. This is just kind of a basic standard line. Are they being treated in a way that honors their being made in the image of God? Now, here's what the Lord says. I'm going to put a thermometer right in your midst. I'm going to put a diagnostic tool so you can know if you're doing this because it's hard, right? We all know the human spirit. It's easy for me to show dignity to someone. I can get something from, right? I mean, think about it, you guys. I can think of this happening two or three times over the last week. Someone gives me a gift and I am overly grateful. Not just because of a spirit of gratefulness, but because I'm also thinking, you know, they might give me more stuff later, right? You know, I want to make sure they feel good about this transaction because I could get more from them. Just think about the way that you treat a person who has something they can offer you, versus someone who doesn't have anything they can offer you. The Bible, the Hebrew term for this, I've mentioned this before here, but I just love the phrase because I think about it a lot. It's vivid. It's the lifting up of faces, okay? The lifting up of faces. When you look at a crowd, are there some faces that you put a little higher than others? You go, oh, I know you. Yeah. Oh yeah you can. Yeah. You have some money. You have some resources. You your

person I want whose social approval I want you lift up some faces. There are other people you ignore. They've got nothing to offer me. You probably don't even see them. That's what the Old Testament Bible is talking about. And that's what Jesus, your Lord, talks about almost more than anything else. Okay. Are you lifting up faces? Are you showing partiality? Look at how the Lord judges them. Here. He stands up and he says, you have not been caring for those who have nothing to offer you. That's the diagnostic tool. The fatherless, the needy, the destitute. They've got nothing to give you back. And that's how I know if you really are honoring those who bear the image of God. So he steps forward and he gives them this judgment. You should be doing that. And so we see that authority here. The authority that's given by God is kind of like an umbrella, isn't it? Have you ever thought about this? Authority? If you've had authority as a family member, as a member of a church, in a company, perhaps. Or maybe. Maybe you served in the military. You really clearly have authority. Their authority is like an umbrella, okay? If it's used properly, it can protect many people. It can protect you. You can hold out a big umbrella, and it can cover over a lot of people and give them protection. But what happens when you turn the umbrella upside down? All of a sudden it stops protecting people from the rain. And what does it start doing? It starts gathering rain and authority for yourself, right? An authority delegated by God can be the same thing. You can use the authority given by God in order to protect those who are in need. Or you can turn the umbrella around and you can use it to gather benefits for yourself. And the Lord is saying to these spiritually spiritual beings, these Elohim, these bene alien sons of the Most High. He's saying to them, you've been using authority the wrong way. All right. Psalm or excuse me. Verse five identifies an even deeper problem here. It's not just that they haven't been doing what they ought to do. Notice what it says here. They have neither knowledge nor understanding. They walk about in darkness. Have you ever looked at the events of human history? Again, it can be easy to study old things. It can be a little easier than studying new things. But we can look back on ancient history. We can look at how Nebuchadnezzar behaved and some of the decisions he'd make. I can say, man, it's like he's stumbling around in the dark. Look at the mid twentieth century. You look at World War II and World War I and the events going on there. And sometimes you go like, Lord, who is who is running the show on this, who's, who's making up these decisions, who's making their decisions? I just listened to an audio book, Andrew Roberts, Winston Churchill biography. It's incredible. It's long. It's the sort of decisive Churchill biography and commentary for that matter. It's amazing to hear how many of the main events of World War II were just kind of guesses, how little they knew about what was going on, how much, how much. Roosevelt and Churchill disagreed, and they both kind of had decent ideas, but they were just going in opposite directions on so many things. And yet somehow, again, I think we see how in Psalm 82, somehow the Lord moved things towards a good end. Okay. But so often world leaders, even spiritual influences can be described as stumbling around in the dark without knowledge or understanding. Their failure is a failure of discernment. It's not a lack of access to information, but rather their moral commitments have distorted their perception. We see examples of this throughout the Bible. Think about Rehoboam, who has a bunch of good wise counselors in First Kings 12. He listens to them. He knows exactly what he ought to do. But then what does he do? He goes and he talks to his friends instead. And because he wants his friends' approval and he wants to be the young king who's got young ideas, he goes with what they say and it leads the nation into slavery. Think about Pontius Pilate, okay? The interaction between Jesus and Pontius Pilate is

fascinating to me, partly because of the casual air with which Pilate is treating everything. And yet you also see this every time I read it. I remember as a child reading it and being like, every time I read it, I think maybe Pilate will make the right decision. This time it seems like he's right there. He's right there. He knows the right answer. He knows it's envy. He knows Jesus has done nothing wrong. He even knows you kind of get the sense he has this he senses. There's this legitimacy to Jesus claims in some way, and yet he swayed by the shouts of the people, what what Psalm eighty two is telling us is this even when we look around the events of our day, when we look at Ukraine, when we look at Iran, when we look at South America, when we look at the United States of America, we have to remember this. There are these spiritual forces that are at work now. They are not God, right? God is God. He is the one who controls. He is the one who is ultimately moving everything to his just end. And yet, there are more forces at work than just the ins and outs of realpolitik. You see, the Lord is at work bringing about order even in the midst, even in the midst of blind lack of discernment amongst spiritual influences and global leaders. Notice the result, by the way, and we see this a good bit in the Old Testament. The result is that even creation groans. It says the earth is shaken. You ever notice that there is, again, this kind of continuity between God's justice and the natural realm? Okay. When God's justice comes to bear in the world, you'll get earthquakes and floods and blood moons. By the way, when his great act of redemption happens, we get a new star in the sky. Creation reflects the spiritual realities. I wonder. I can't hear me. I'm not positing anything particular about history right now. But I wonder when we get to heaven, when we look back and go, oh man, it was right in front of us. Remember all that stuff that was happening that was just reflecting this? spiritual events that were behind the natural causes of the world. Because when God's justice is turned back, the earth itself trembles, right? This is Paul's creation theology. Creation itself is under the burden of sin and is trembling under it, and is longing for a time when it will be restored and it will no longer be under these false spiritual entities, but rather will be under the revealed sons of God in their glory. Right? That's what Paul says. Creation waits with earnest expectation that language is the language of a woman in labor, waiting with earnest expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. Okay. Again, like I told you, this is an obscure section. This is an obscure doctrine to our modern ears. And yet, let me tell you, brothers and sisters, it doesn't mean it's not true. I think one day we will look back and we will say, oh man, it was right in front of us and we just couldn't see it. What we're seeing here is that God has a claim to the whole world. And that brings us to verse six through eight. The Lord has a claim to all of authority in heaven and on earth, and he will bring justice to bear on every figure of authority who abuses the power granted by him. He says, here I have said, this is what Jesus is quoting in John 10. You are God's sons of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless. And by the way, this is why I think this means you're not just talking about humans, you're talking about spiritual entities. Because what does he say? Nevertheless, like men, you will die. Yes, you behave like gods, but like men, you will die. Their exalted designation makes their sentence even more dramatic. They are members of the Heavenly assembly, even called sons of the Most High. Yet their position does not make them immune or invulnerable to the judgment of God. They too, like all of creation, are created. The authority that God delegates is an authority that only God can remove. Those who behaved as though they were gods and creators will discover that they are indeed just creatures. And we see this in revelation, right? In terms of the spiritual beings, we know that those spiritual beings that are in rebellion against God and influencing

the world as principalities and powers against his reign and against his global authority, that they will finally be held culpable for what they've done. Okay. So let's be clear. This is not like a yin and a yang thing where they're just kind of doing the other side of the coin. Okay? These are enemies of God, and they will be judged. They will be thrown into the lake of fire. They are personal. They have a leader. His name is Satan and they will all be thrown into the lake of fire. Okay? They will be judged. They will finally die like men. Okay? You thought you were gods, but you'll die like men. That's when that will be fulfilled. But I want to be clear here. We need to recognize that this is also true for all human authorities as well. You see, all human authorities will ultimately be held accountable for how they use the authority that was delegated to them. How did they steward it? Okay. This is true for Christian and non-Christian leaders. Let me even just push down on this even a little bit further. If you are a non-Christian leader and you use your power to, um, for oppression and abuse, you will be judged maybe in this life, you might make it to the end of this life and not experience that discipline in a, in a clear way. You are, in a way, living out your judgment because you're alienated from God. But you will be judged in the final judgment, and you will be judged according to what you have done. But here's the thing. I think we can all say that and go, okay, right. Yeah, that fits well with what I know. But let me say something that hits a little bit closer to home for Christian leaders. Okay, brothers and sisters, if you have been given authority to delegate and you've been delegated authority to steward for the glory of God, then you too, even though you are beloved of the Lord, you are saved in Christ. You too may be disciplined for your use of that delegated authority unto abuse. Okay, first of all, I'd say this. If you are using it unto abuse and oppression, then you ought to go back and repent because it may question the authenticity of your faith. You may end up being one of those who said, Lord, Lord. And he says, I never knew you. Look at, look at how you led. Okay, you might be deluding yourself unto judgment. However, even if you are, you've been united with Christ. Okay, just hear. Hear me. Okay. This is just a doctrine of sanctification applied to leadership. Okay. You have been united with Christ. You are now as righteous as Christ. You've been reckoned as righteous as Christ. Guess what? The Lord disciplines those he loves. Hebrews eleven. Hebrews eleven. If you're an abusive or oppressive leader, you should not be surprised when the Lord comes and he disciplines you because he's not satisfied to leave you as an abusive and oppressive leader, he's not satisfied to have in his name. Okay? People abused and oppressed. Oftentimes we hear about these high profile leaders being brought up on charges. I know not all charges of abuse and, uh, and oppression and, and toxic environments and all that stuff. I know that those aren't all legitimate, but there are those that are legitimate. And when that happens, we often say, well, that's the end of his story. And just remember this. It may actually be the beginning. It may be the beginning of his next stage in sanctification. If you find yourself in that situation, give thanks to God. If you find yourself being disciplined, give thanks to God. It is not only a sign that he loves you, it is another opportunity that you have to be conformed to the person of Christ. Notice how Psalm eighty two ends with this arise, arise, O God. I don't know what Asaph's experience had been up till now, but he seems to be praying as one who has been oppressed. He says, arise, Lord, stand up. Come and bring your justice to bear on earth. And yes, that verse, that phrase arising, is echoed later at the end of the book of revelation, on which the whole book, the whole Bible ends with John the Apostle crying out, come! Come, Lord Jesus. Maranatha! That's what that means in Aramaic. Come, Lord. See, the Psalm does not ultimately hope for a somewhat better empire to replace the old empires. It

longs for the universal reign of a righteous king. Jesus Christ, of course, is the answer to that prayer. At the cross, you disarm the rulers and the authorities and put them to open shame. In his resurrection, he sloughed off the power of the greatest enemy and empire that is death. As a matter of fact, he now has every authority in heaven and on earth put under his feet. So when you see that King, the heavenly King, stand up and take his place in the heavenly throne room, we can know this. That's now Jesus Christ. Okay. It was always Jesus Christ, but it's risen, Jesus Christ, sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He is the King to whom all the nations and all the spiritual authorities bow down. He's the one who arises to bring about his justice over the face of the earth. As a matter of fact, that's the grounding for our Great Commission. You notice that in Matthew twenty eight before he says, go out and disciple the nations. What does he say? All authority. I'm not going to send you to one nation that I do not have authority over. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. The historical judgments of the nations are therefore just anticipations of Christ's final victory. Persia fell, Babylon fell, Assyria fell, Greece fell. Rome fell. Nazi Germany fell. the Soviet Union fell. It's all just an anticipation of the kingdom that will come, that will never pass away. The world's final hope is not better rulers or stronger institutions. Those are good things. Let's just be clear about it. If you have been given authority over those things, exercise that authority well. But notice that is not our ultimate hope. Our hope is in the return of the King who cannot be corrupted, who can't be deceived, who can't be intimidated, who won't give in to the opinions of the elite who can never be overthrown. Every other authority is delegated. Every ruler is accountable. Everyone. Every rebellious power will be judged. Every nation ultimately will come and become the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.