



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 14

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title of this psalm is *"To the Chief Musician, by David"*
- The dedication to the Chief Musician stands at the head of fifty-three of the Psalms
- With some variations, this psalm appears again as Psalms 53
- The most noticeable variation consists in the change of Jehovah, which was mentioned 4 times in this psalm, into Elohim which was mentioned only one time in Psalm 53
- In the beginning the Psalmist describes the wicked contempt of God and laments the people who have rejected God
- To give the greater weight to his complaint, he represents God Himself as expressing it



Introduction

- This psalm might be a personal lamentation of David's and it could have been written when Absalom rebelled against him
- And/or, it was generally written when Godly people were experiencing some sort of oppression
- However, there is no mention of neither the kind of oppression nor the identity of the oppressors
- Toward the end, David comforts himself and others with the hope of an answer, which he assures himself God will very soon provide, although, in the meantime, he groans and feels deep distress at the discontent which he sees



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3
- God's Punishment of the Wicked 14:4-6
- David's Longing for the Lord's Salvation 14:7

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- David looked at those who denied the existence of God and concluded that they are *fools*
- *Fool* is the opposite of 'wisdom' in its highest sense
- The word *fool* in Hebrew is 'Nabal' and it is from a root meaning "to wither"
- *The fool* Is a person who has a problem in his or her heart more than in the head
- This word is used here to denote moral rather than intellectual meaning
- *The fool* does not take God into account as he goes about living and is therefore morally insensitive (1 Samuel 25:25; Isaiah 32:4-7)

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- *There is no God*, This is not to be understood of a hypothetical denial of the existence of God; but rather of a practical disbelief in His moral government
- *The fool* may or may not really be an atheist, and he is not necessarily ignorant, but he lives as though there is no God
- The fact that some men insist on denying the existence of God does not erase God from the universe
- This conclusion leads *The fool* to disregard the revelations God has given of Himself, attention to which are essential for wise living (Proverbs 1:7; Romans 1:22)

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- *in his heart*, He says in his secret thoughts, or within himself, what he is afraid or ashamed to say with his lips
- He wishes that God is absent for fundamentally moral reasons
- John 3:20 explains it this way: *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed*
- St. Augustine comments on *There is no God* and says, “Therefore it is, has said “in his heart;” for that no one dares to say it, even if he has dared to think it.”

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- *They are corrupt*, David here considers the result of denying God
- *The fool* gives himself over to corrupt living and deeds that are vile in the sight of God
- Denying God leads men into *corruption* and *abominable works*
- As David considered the sin of the God-denier, he looked out over the humanity and concluded that *there is none who does good*
- He did not mean that there is no human good in this world, but that fallen man is so fallen that he does not by instinct do *good*
- David observed, there is no one who does what is good in the sight of God on his own (unmoved and without help by the Spirit of God)

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- While man may wish to forget about God, God never forgets about man
- He is always observing man, looking *down from heaven upon the children of men*
- *The Lord looks down from heaven, To search out the truth*
- Corruption having reached such a height as it had, God, is represented as looking down from heaven with a special object - to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God
- God knows all things without any inquiry; but the words are spoken after the manner of men

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- The words remind us of God *came down* from heaven to *see* the fools of those building the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:5) and what were people doing in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:21)
- *To see if there are any who understand, who seek God, He will not punish blindly*
- He who is looking down knows the good, is quick to discern it, would be delighted to find it
- But as He searches the hearts of men His search is fruitless
- All human beings have turned aside from the wise way of fearing the Lord (Genesis 6:5-6, 11:1-9)

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- When God finds *none who does good*, it is because there *are* none
- It isn't as if there were some and God couldn't see them
- David here observes and remembers that man is truly, profoundly, deeply *fallen*
- They have become corrupt morally
- David's use of *there is none who does good* suddenly broadens the scope beyond the atheist to include everyone
- Not one solitary individual does good in the sight of God on his own initiative and in his own strength (Romans 3:23)

David's Assessment of Those Who Reject God 14:1-3



- *They have all turned aside*, From God and the rule He has given them to walk by
- From truth into error, and from duty into sin; from the paths of wisdom and righteousness
- They are altogether become immoral, vile, and wicked before God
- It is for this reason that no one can be acceptable to God on the merit of his own works
- All need the goodness (righteousness) that only God can provide for us

God's Punishment of the Wicked

14:4-6



- These three verses are not mentioned in the Hebrew version, but in the Septuagint translation, and some other translations derived from it such as the Coptic version
- This applies to what was mentioned in Romans 3:13-19
- The exclamation is put in the mouth of God; He Himself speaks
- Can it be possible that none of these evil-doers is aware of the results of evil-doing?
- Do they think to escape Divine retribution?
- Are they so senseless as not to perceive the consequences of their wrong-doing?

God's Punishment of the Wicked

14:4-6



- They are sure to find out to what their wickedness is leading them
- The wicked one is not only ignorant of any wisdom, and his denial of God's existence in his practical life, and his not asking for God's help and his counsel, and the corruption of his deeds, but he also feels a lot of hatred towards his brother
- Hatred of God and corruptness of life are the motive forces which produce persecution
- They eat up the church of God by provoking the saints, by torturing them and murdering them for no other reason than being God's men
- They work with no fear of God and ignore His law

God's Punishment of the Wicked

14:4-6



- Devouring God's people has been a usual thing and as regular as the daily meal
- Men who having no knowledge of divine things, enslave themselves to become workers of iniquity and seek to amuse themselves with devouring the poor and despised people of God
- The enmity of the wicked against God's believers is addressed to God Himself
- *And do not call on the Lord?*, They are guilty, not only of total injustice toward men, but also of vile sin and contempt of God, denying His providence, and wholly neglecting, if not despising, His worship

God's Punishment of the Wicked

14:4-6



- *There they are in great fear*, In the midst of their evil-doing, while they are devouring God's people - a sudden terror seizes on them
- *There*, In the place, or upon the spot, where they practiced these offences, God struck them with a *great fear*
- God's people cannot be attacked without provoking Him
- They are in Him, and He in them; He will assuredly come to their relief
- As strong as they may wish to deny it, they live under the cloud of knowing that *they are battling against God*, and can therefore never win

God's Punishment of the Wicked

14:4-6



- David turns to the atheists and no longer uses the third person to speak of them
- He uses the second person to speak to them
- David here announces to the *workers of iniquity* previously mentioned – that they may work against the *poor*, but God has a refuge for them that cannot be broken
- They are fighting against God and will never succeed
- The psalmist refers to the confidence which the afflicted people professed to have in God for their deliverance
- The word *poor* does not refer only to their economic status

God's Punishment of the Wicked

14:4-6



- These are men who are afflicted and needy because they're being metaphorically eaten like bread!
- The evil doers of this world, laugh at the righteousness of the believer
- But there is a day when their laughing will cease
- These poor, righteous, people of God will find protection and safety in the Lord but the atheists will find *fear*
- Both coming from the Lord
- The figure of God as the refuge of His people occurs also in Psalm 46:1,61:3,62:7-8,71:7,73:28,91:2,9

David's Longing for the Lord's Salvation 14:7



- This verse is a concluding prayer for the deliverance of Israel
- David yearns for the salvation of Israel and he wants it to come out of Zion
- David *knew* that the Lord was a refuge for His people and that the workers of iniquity would never win
- Yet that was hard to see at the present time, so David expressed his great longing that God would bring the victory and deliverance He had promised to His people
- *captivity* is used here in a general sense, speaking of any time or situation where God's people are oppressed and bound

David's Longing for the Lord's Salvation 14:7



- David anticipates the coming deliverance and calls the people of God to be joyful in consideration of it
- After he has rebuked the wicked ones, he concludes the psalm with a look that full of hope for God's help and His Salvation
- For God is the Savior of His church 'the spiritual Zion'
- These words do not appear to be intended of any mere temporal salvation of Israel, whether from the rebellion of Absalom, or any other adversity brought upon them as a punishment of their sins
- Many of the church fathers have understood this verse as referring to the salvation of mankind by Jesus Christ



Discussion

- How does this Psalm define a fool?
- To what extent has sin corrupted our world?
- What is the unbeliever's attitude towards one who believes in God?
- Why might those who deny God's existence purposely refuse to believe?



Discussion

- In what ways is Psalm 14:7 prophetic?
- What are some of the arguments you have heard that assert that God does not exist? What are the most intimidating questions you have faced? Do you have an answer that is coherent and sensible?