

THE PSALMS

Series: Selected Psalms Phase 2

Psalm 50: The Imminent/Irreversible Judgment of God. Psalm 50:1-23

Today's Study: Psalm 50:1-6 Part A: Solemn Representation of the Scenes of God's Impending Judgment.

INTRODUCTION

1. Highlights from Psalm 49

(a) An Address to Everyone in The World. **Psa. 49:1-4.**

- (1) Universal and Urgent Message That is Imperative to Be heeded. Psa. 49:1-2.
- (2) Understanding the Essence and Depth of What is Being Communicated. Psa. 49:3-4.

(b) Anxiety Must Be Overcome, Even Though Surrounded by Evil Perpetrators. **Psa. 49:5-12**

- (1) Main thought of the Message Lies in This verse. Psa. 49:5
- (2) Might or Money, Irrespective of How Much Cannot Redeem One Soul. Psa. 49:6-9

(c) Associate the Facts, Compare the Fate of the Foolish and the Righteous. **Psa. 49:13-15**

- (1) Folly of the Vain, Godless Man. Psa. 49:13
- (2) Fate of the Self-reliant in His Godless Lifestyle. Psa. 49:14
- (3) Favor of God Upon Those Who Serve Him! Psa. 49:15

(d) Assure Yourself Child of God, Do Not Be Disheartened by the Evil Who is Rich and Self-reliant. **Psa. 49:16-20.**

- (1) Fearlessness Encouraged, Despite the Wealth and Power of the Godless Rich. Psa. 49:16
- (2) Final Days on Earth, The Glory of the Godless Wealthy Will Cease. Psa. 49:17
- (3) Fading and Culminating of One's Earthly Honor Will Finally Be Realized! Psa. 49:18-19
- (4) Forceful Reminder of the Lesson Taught in This Psalm. Psa. 49:20

2. Introduction to Psalm 50

(a) Title/Author

The title of the psalm is *"A Psalm of Asaph"*. This psalm claims to be a psalm of Asaph, it is the first of the twelve psalms ascribed to him. These psalms ascribed to Asaph are: Psalms 50 and 73 to 83; they were either written by Asaph himself, a descendant, or composed in the style of his guild . . . (*"guild": company, group, etc.*) of musicians who served in the temple. Some scholars believe that Psalm 74 and 79 might have been written by his descendants.

Asaph was a Levite, a son of Berach (1 Chron. 6:39; 15:17). He is a prominent figure in the Bible who was a prophet, poet and musician (2 Chron. 29:30; Neh. 12:46). He was appointed by **“the chief of the Levites”**, at the command of David, with two others, Heman and Ethan, to preside over a part of the sacred choral services of public worship (1 Chron. 15:16-19). They had charged particularly of the worship as conducted with **“cymbals of brass”** (1 Chron. 15:19).

“A Psalm of Asaph”: Some scholars say it should read as **“for Asaph”** which could possibly mean either the psalm was composed by Asaph, or that it was composed especially for him, David or by someone else, and that it was committed to him to be set to music, or to be sung by the band of musicians over which he was appointed to preside.

The assumption is, that it was composed by Asaph, as this is the most natural explanation of the title, and as there is nothing in the circumstances of the case to render this fact uncertain.

(b) The Occasion

We do not have any information relevant to the occasion on which the psalm was written. There is nothing in the title to indicate the occasion on which it was written, nor is there anything in the psalm itself which would connect it with any known events in Jewish history. There are no local references, there are no names, mentioned, there are no circumstances referred to, which enable us to determine the time of its composition.

(c) The Purpose . . . Barnes notes:

“The ‘object’ of the psalm seems to be to set forth ‘the value and importance of spiritual religion as compared with a mere religion of forms.’ It is one among numerous portions of the Old Testament which shows that the Jewish religion ‘contemplated’ and ‘required’ spirituality in its worshippers, and that it was not designed to be merely formal.

There was, indeed, great tendency among the Jewish people to rely on forms of religion, and it must be admitted that there was not a little in their modes of worship which went to foster this, unless there was constant vigilance on the part of the public teachers of religion.

At the time when this psalm was composed, it would seem that there was a general reliance on the mere ceremonies of public worship; that much of the spirituality of religion had vanished; and that under the forms of religion and connected with a descent and even scrupulous attention to them, there was a great, if not general prevalence, of moral corruption among the people. See Psalms 16-21.

In the composition of the psalm, therefore, the author represents a scene of solemn judgment; describes God as coming with pomp, and amidst these solemn

scenes, shows what will be found to be true piety; what will meet with the approbation, and what will incur the disapprobation of God."

THE EXPOSITION

The Imminent/Irreversible Judgment of God Psalms 50:1-23

A. Solemn Representation of the Scenes of God's Impending Judgment. Psalm 50:1-6

1. Summons to the World, God is Speaking! Psalm 50:1

"Hear this, all peoples; Give ear, all inhabitants of the world." (Psalm 50:1 NKJV)

(a) Notice the names of God that Asaph used to introduce Him as the Supreme judge. (v. 1):

(1) **"Mighty One"** (NKJV) . . . **"Mighty God"** (KJV)... (**El Elohim**): *this emphasizes God's absolute power and supremacy, highlighting His role as the ultimate judge who summons the earth to hear His divine verdict.*

(2) **"LORD" (Yahweh, Jehovah)**: God's personal, covenant name through which He reveals Himself and relates to His people.

As in Psalm 50:1, **"LORD"**, refers to God, the **"Mighty One,"** who speaks and summons the earth, signifying His authority and impending judgment.

(3) **"God, the LORD"**: reinforces God's unique and sovereign status as the Creator and ruler of the universe. **"LORD"** or **"Yahweh"**, He is the **"The God of gods, the LORD!"**

(b) The idea conveyed here (Psalm 50:1) is, that He who speaks is the true God; the Supreme Ruler of the universe (noted above). It is "that" God who has the right to call the world to judgment, and who has power to execute His will.

(c) **" . . . From the rising of the sun to its going down."** (Psalm 50:1c NKJV)

(1) This signifies the universal and encompassing nature of God's call and judgment encompassing all of humanity and the earth.

Beloved, God's summons and judgment apply to the entire world, not just a specific region or people.

(2) Barnes notes:

"The call is made to all the earth; to all the human race. The scene is imaginary as represented by the psalmist, but it is founded on a true representation of what will occur – of the universal judgment, when all the nations shall be summoned to appear before the final judge. See Matt. 25:32; Rev. 20:11-14."

2. Sacred revelation of God in Blazing Light of Glory! Psalm 50:2

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth." (Psalm 50:2 NKJV)

(a) **"Zion"**: The place where God was worshipped and where He dwelt (Isa. 2:3; 1Peter 2:6; etc.)

- (1) Refers to Jerusalem the city of David, and the people of Israel, often used to symbolize God's presence, glory, and hope of future redemption.
- (2) God will appear from Zion, the place where His presence was once manifested, in the blazing light of perfection and beauty. (Psa. 50:2b; 48:2; Lam. 2:15).
- (b) **"... God will shine forth."** (Psa. 50:2b NKJV) ... Barnes notes:
"The meaning here is, that the great principles which are to determine the destiny of mankind in the final judgment are those which proceed from Zion; or those which are taught in the religion of Zion; they are those which are inculcated through the church of God. God has there made known His law; He has stated the principles on which He governs, and on which He will judge the world."

3. **Settled and Unchangeable, God Will Come Like a Consuming Flame. Psa. 50:3**

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him." (50:3 NKJV)

- (a) Coming of God is certain – He will judge appropriately. (Psa. 50:3a)
"Our God shall come, . . ." (50:3a NKJV)
 - (1) This phrase signifies the coming of God, not just in a general sense, but with a specific purpose and authority. It suggests an imminent judgment or intervention.
 - (2) The established fact is, **God will judge the world**, and this was known, understood, and believed by the Hebrews (Jewish people). See Psa. 9:8, 17-20; 10:12-18, NB Vv. 16-18; Prov. 11:23; Ecc. 12:14; Rom. 2:1-10, NB Vv. 2-3; Rev. 20:11-15, NB v. 12.
 - (3) The New Testament has stated the fact that this judgment will be done by the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who will gather the nations before Him, and pronounce the final or ultimate sentence on mankind. (**Matt. 25:31-46, NB Vv. 31-33**; Acts 10:34-43, NB v. 42 17:31; John 5:22; etc.)
- (b) **Character of man will be judged.** (Psa. 50:3b)
"... and shall not keep silent; . . ." (50:3b NKJV)
 - (1) This phrase (Psa. 50:3b), emphasizes that God's arrival will not be a quiet or subtle one. He will speak, declare His judgment, and make His presence known.
Emphasis here, is on God's active and decisive presence, not silence or passivity.
 - (2) God will come forth and express (communicate, convey, demonstrate, etc.) His judgment on the conduct of mankind.
 - He seems now to be silent. No voice is heard. No sentence is pronounced. But this will not always be the situation.
 - The time is coming when He will manifest Himself, and will no longer be silent as to the conduct and character of people, but will pronounce a sentence, fixing their destiny according to their character.

(c) **Coming like a flaming fire – cleansing and judging as necessary.** (Psa. 50:3c)

“... A fire shall devour before Him, . . .” (50:3c NKJV)

(1) This thought (Psa. 50:3c), signifies God’s powerful and awe-inspiring presence, often associated with judgment of the wicked and purification of His people, as He approaches to judge His people.

(2) The imagery of “*fire devouring before Him*” (50:3c), is a powerful metaphor for God’s holiness, judgment, and the potential destruction of sin and wickedness.

(3) The imagery presented here (Psa. 50:3) of God’s arrival with “*fire*” and “*storm*” (**tempestuous**), also noted in the events at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19), emphasizes the solemn and awe in-inspiring nature of God’s presence.

Exodus 19:16, 18:

Verse 16 NKJV: *“Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thundering and lightings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.”*

Verse 18 NKJV: *“Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quake greatly.”*

(d) **Clothed with majesty, He is the righteous judge.** (Psa. 50:3d)

“... And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.” (50:3d NKJV)

(1) The imagery of a “*fire*” and “*tempestuous*” surrounding is reminiscent of theophanies, or divine appearances of God, described elsewhere in Scripture, like the event at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-25, NB Vv. 16-19).

It describes God’s majestic and awe-inspiring arrival, marked by a consuming fire and a powerful storm, symbolizing His judgment and power.

(2) We noted before the association of the setting here, Psa. 50:3, with God’s descent on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19, NB v. 16) and to the storm accompanied by thunder and lightning which beat upon the mountain when God descended on it to give His law.

The account is designed to represent God as clothed with appropriate majesty when judgment is to be pronounced upon the world.

(3) The “*tempest*” or “*storm*” further intensifies the scene, portraying God’s power and potential for chaos and destruction, associated with His judgment.

4. **Subpoena Issued in Heaven and On Earth. Psa. 50:4**

“He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, that He may judge His people: ...” (50 :4 NKJV)

Note some brief introductory comments on verse 4.

God calls upon the heavens and the earth to witness His judgment of His people, emphasizing the solemnity and fairness of His actions, and the gravity of their

covenant relationship. He is a righteous judge who holds His covenant people accountable.

This verse, Psa. 50:4, highlights the accountability of God's people to Him and the seriousness of their covenant relationship.

The verse portrays God as the supreme judge, holding authority over both the celestial and earthly realms.

(a) **Entire world will be summoned! No one will be exempted!!**(Psa. 50:4a)

"He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, . . ." (50:4a NKJV)

(1) It will be a call made both in heaven and on earth! By summoning the heavens and the earth, God is calling all of creation to witness His judgment, and meant to be observed by all creation.

(2) **"He shall call to the heavens from above, . . ."** (50:4a NKJV): The meaning here is, not that He will gather those who are in heaven to be judged, but that He will call on the inhabitants of all worlds to be His witnesses, to bear their attestation (confirmation, etc.) to the justice of His sentence.

(3) **". . . and on the earth, . . ."** (50 v. 4a NKJV): To all the inhabitants upon the earth; **"to the whole universe."**

He makes this universal appeal with the confident assurance that this final judgment will be approved; that the universe will see and admit that it is just.

(4) The entire universe is His to command. When Moses assembled Israel, he began a song with the words: **"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth."** (Deut. 32:1)

- Note also Isa; 1:2, ... observe how Isaiah began his indictment.
- See also Micah 1:2 ... note how he begins his message to Judah.

(b) **Event (The Period of Judgment) – will be momentous and appropriately conducted.** (Psa. 50:4b)

". . . that He may judge His people." (50:4b NKJV)

(1) The phrase **". . . that He may judge the people:"**, signifies that God will evaluate the faithfulness of His covenant people, Israel, to the covenant established at Sinai.

(2) The sequence noted here (50:1-5) – that it is **coming with fire and tempest and the universal appeal** will be preparatory to the judgment of His people, or in order that the judgment may be conducted with solemnity and propriety.

(3) The idea conveyed here is, that an event so momentous should be conducted in a way suited to produce appropriate impression; so, conducted, that there would be a universal conviction of the justice and impartiality of the sentence.

(4) The judgment is not merely punitive (penal, disciplinary, etc.) but also corrective, aiming to restore the people to a right relationship with God. The verse, Psa. 50:4, is not just judgment of condemnation but a call to true righteousness and faithfulness.

5. Saints/The Covenant Makers Stand Before God. Psalms 50:5

"Gather My saints together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (50:5a NKJV)

(a) Saints – the beloved of the LORD will be gathered unto Him. (Psalms 50:5a)

"Gather My saints together to Me, . . ." (50:5a NKJV)

- (1) The phrase, Psalms 50:5a, indicates a summons or calling of God's people, often interpreted as a call for judgment or gathering of His elect.
- (2) A similar language has been used by our Savior (see Matt. 24:31): The idea is that God will bring the people or assemble them together.
- (3) The word **"saint"** as used here, Psalms 50:5a, refers to those who are sincerely God's people. Included in the objective of the judgment is to assemble in heaven those who are sincerely His friends; or as the Savior expresses it in Matt. 24:31, His **"elect"**.
- (4) The gathering of the saints . . . a partial quote made by Matthew Henry:
*" The design of the preaching of the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the children of God (John 11:52). And at the second coming of Jesus Christ all His saints shall be **"gathered together unto Him"** (2 Thess. 2:1) to be assessors with Him in the judgment; **for the saints shall judge the world** (1 Cor. 6:2)."*

(b) Set apart through a solemn and abiding covenant. (Psalms 50:5b)

" . . . Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (50:5b NKJV)

- (1) The phrase, Psalms 50:5b, emphasizes the covenant relationship between God and His people, established through sacrifice. The sacrifices are seen as a sign of their commitment and a means of atonement.
 The concept of covenant and sacrifice is central to the Christian faith, reminding believers of God's grace and the price He paid for our redemption.
- (2) The idea here (Psalms 50:5) is, that they are the professed people of God; that they have entered into a solemn covenant relationship to him, or have bound themselves in the most solemn manner to be His, that they have done this in connection with the sacrifices which accompany worship, that they have brought their sacrifices or blood offerings as a pledge that they have committed themselves to be His and will be sincerely His.

(3) Note the following two quotes:

(a) Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible (comments on verse 5)

"Unbelievers will one day stand before God in judgment (Rev. 20:11-15), but God summons in this psalm is to His saints – the people who have entered into covenant, this was the Jewish people (Ex. 24:1-8). Under the new covenant, it is all who genuinely repent and receive Jesus Christ as Savior by faith (Heb. 8:13-9:15). All who know the LORD will be gathered and judge by Him. The order to gather God's people is most likely given to angels, in accordance with the words of Jesus (Mark 13:27).

(b) Part of Barnes comments on Psalms 50:5b:

“ Nothing more solemn can be conceived than a “covenant” or “pledge” entered into such a manner; and yet nothing is more painfully uncertain than the process of a judgment will be necessary to determine, in what case it is genuine, for the mere outward act, no matter how solemn, does not of necessity decide the question whether he who performs it will enter into heaven.”

6. Standard of His Judgment is Righteousness! Psalms 50:6

“Let the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself is judge. Selah (50:6 NKJV)

(a) Declaring the principles characterizing God’s judgment. (Psalms 50:6a)

“Let the heavens declare His righteousness, . . .” (50:6a NKJV)

- (1) **“Let the heavens declare His righteousness, . . .”**: They shall make it known or they shall make announcement! This is referring to the **“heavens”** – the heavenly inhabitants – will bear witness to the justice of the sentence, or will approve the sentence (Note again Psalms 50:6 and compare Psalms 97:6). Some scholars note that this phrase, Psalms 50:6a, suggests that the angels are called upon to witness and attest to God’s just nature.

(2) Spurgeon notes:

“Celestial intelligences and spirits of just men made perfect, shall magnify the infallible judgment of the divine tribunal. Now they doubtless wonder at the hypocrisy of men; then they shall equally marvel at the exactness of the severance between the true and the false.”

(b) Divine justice will characterize His judgment. (Psalms 50:6b)

“ . . . For God Himself is judge. Selah” (50:6b NKJV)

- (1) The verse, Psalms 50:6, reinforces the idea that God is not just a just judge, but the ultimate judge, the One who renders just verdicts.
- The judgment is not committed to mortal men, or even angels. Creatures, even the most exalted and pure, make mistake (s) in such assignment of judging the world.
 - In order for that judgment to be correct, it must be founded on a perfect knowledge of the heart, and a clear and complete understanding of all the thoughts, the motives, the words, the deeds of all people.
 - All that is necessary to effectively perform such a task, are all found in God; He has a perfect knowledge of all that has ever occurred, is occurring on earth.
- He knows the motives and feelings of every creature and with Him there is absolute purity and impartiality; therefore, His judgment must be such that the universe will see that it is just.

(2) Spurgeon comments on Psalms 50:6b as follows:

“This is the reason for the correctness of the judgment. Priests of old, and churches of latter times, were readily deceived, but not so the all-discerning

Lord. No deputy-judge sits on the great white throne; the injured Lord of all Himself weighs the evidence and allots the vengeance or reward.

The scene in the psalm is a good poetical conception, but it is also an inspired prophecy of that day which shall burn as an oven, when the Lord shall discern between him feareth and him that feareth not."

- (3) The immediate point in the passage before us is, that the fact that **God** will preside in the judgment, such demonstrates that the acts of judgment will be **right**, and will be as the heavens – the universe – will approve; such that all the world will proclaim them to be right. **There is no higher evidence that a thing is right, and that it ought to be done, than the fact that God has done it.**

Summary of Psalm 50:1-6

Psalm 50:1-6, depicts God as a mighty judge, appearing from Zion with great glory and power, summoning the entire earth to witness His judgment; **He calls upon the heavens and earth to hear His accusations against His people, particular those who offer vain sacrifices while living in sin, highlighting that true worship requires a righteous life not just ritualistic offerings**, the heavens declare His righteousness as He prepares to judge His people.

LOOKING AHEAD: Summary of Psalm 50:7-23 (Part B Psalm 50).

Psalm 50:7-23, is a strong rebuke against hypocritical worship, where God declares that He does not need animal sacrifices from people who live in sin; He desires genuine obedience and a heart of thanksgiving over rituals, **essentially saying that He is not interested in their offering if their lives do not reflect true devotion to Him; the passage concludes by emphasizing that those who offer sacrifices of praise and live righteously will be shown God's salvation.**

1 Samuel 15:22 NKJV

"So, Samuel said: Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."

Psalm 51:17 NKJV

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise."

Psalm 84:11 NKJV

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly."

PSALM 50 PART A

Review Questions

1. To whom has Psalm 50 being ascribed and how many psalms he wrote, list them?

2. Briefly note some biographical information about Asaph.

3. Complete the following:

A paragraph taken from Barnes comments on the "Purpose of Psalm 50."

"The 'object' of the psalm seems to be set forth 'the (a) _____ and (b) _____ of spiritual religion as (c) _____ with a (d) _____ religion of forms.' It is one among (e) _____ portions of the Old Testament which (f) _____ that the Jewish religion (g) _____ and 'required' spirituality in its (h) _____, and that was not designed to be merely (i) _____."

4. Briefly explain the meaning of the names of God as used in Psa. 50:1.

5. What very important and fundamental truth is noted in Psalm 50:1 about God?

6. Note some outstanding features relating to ***“Zion”*** . . . some have been noted in our lesson.

7. What facts are observed in the phrase: ***“Our God shall come . . .”*** (Psa. 50:3a)

8. What fact is emphasized in the phrase: “. . . **and shall not keep silent . . .**” (Psa. 50:3b)

9. What very important message is noted in the phrase: “. . . **a fire shall devour before Him, . . .**” (Psa. 50:3c)

10. Reference was made in our lesson to the word “theophanies”, . . . briefly explain its meaning and give scriptural reference.

11. Choose the correct answer

One sentence taken from the introductory comments on Psa. 50:4

This verse, Psa. 50:4, highlights the accountability of God’s people to Him and the

_____.

- (a) surety of their everyday victory.
 (b) satisfaction guaranteed despite continued hypocrisy.

- (c) seriousness of their covenant relationship.
- (d) separation from their enemies anticipated.

12. Briefly note two of the important messages conveyed in Psalm 50:4.

13. What is indicated in the phrase, ***“Gather My saints together to Me, . . .”*** (Psa. 50:5a); give another example where similar language has been used, briefly explain.

14. Explain the message communicated in the phrase: ***“ . . . Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”*** (Psa. 50:5b)

15. What important fact noted in the phrase: ***“ . . . For God Himself is judge.”*** (Psa. 50:6b)
