

Psalm 14 • The Hope of God's Working

Introduction

In just seven verses, David manages to capture the essential contrast between what is taking place in the world between those who reject and ignore God and those who acknowledge and follow His Word and ways. As with all things worldly, it is temporal and at most can only experience temporary success, but always at the ultimate and permanent cost, while the faithful endure for that which is permanent in eternity. Ultimately, when it is finally realized that only God's standard will prevail, that same standard will work to the detriment and defeat of the wicked and the victory of the righteous.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;

There is no one who does good.

²The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men

To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.

³They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;

There is no one who does good, not even one.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: What is the biblical definition of a "fool"? What is this actually describing?

A: It is someone who stubbornly rejects the highest wisdom of God, which is the fear of God. This is exactly what is being expressed in v.1 by the statement, "There is no God".

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

— Proverbs 1:7

"And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.' "

— Job 28:28

The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

— Psalm 10:4

Q: What is the tangible proof of someone who does not fear or properly acknowledge God?

A: It is found in the quality of their deeds, their actions.

Q: What does it mean to "have committed abominable deeds"?

A: The Hebrew word for "abomination" carries with it the meaning of something which God abhors, detests and/or loathes. Some of the things God has specified as being an outright abomination to Him are sexual perversion (Lev. 18:22-30; 20:13), idolatry (Dt. 7:25), human sacrifice (Dt. 12:31), conducting one's business dishonestly (Dt. 25:13-16) and so forth. In this case, where it is further stipulated, "There is no one who does good", the treatment of others is particularly highlighted.

There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

— Proverbs 6:16-19

Q: What is the contrast provided in v.2 to what is presented in v.1?

A: God is looking down to see if there are "any who understand"—that is, living according to His Word and ways, but only finding the "corrupt"; He is seeing if there are any "who seek after God" but instead finding the "fool" who maintains, "There is no God".

⁴Do all the workers of wickedness not know,
Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
And do not call upon the LORD?
⁵There they are in great dread,
For God is with the righteous generation.
⁶You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted,
But the LORD is his refuge.

Q: What are the chief characteristics in v.3 which are repeated to affirm the spiritual condition of those in v.1?

A: Once again they are described as “*corrupt*” and none who do “*good*”.

Q: From what have they “turned aside”?

A: Instead of pursuing God’s Word and ways, they are engaged in a lifestyle of sin and disobedience.

Q: Why do these verses sound so harsh? What might be familiar with how extreme they describe the general spiritual condition on earth?

A: It is very similarly worded to the way God described the extreme condition on the whole earth just prior to the Flood in Noah’s day. This is the spiritual environment preceding the onset of the wrath of God.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

— Genesis 6:5

Application: *The world does not produce anyone or anything that will be **acceptable** to God, but only that which is **corrupt** and actually **rejecting** Him. The fruit of this world is not merely **unacceptable** to God, but **detestable** and **offensive**.*

[Read v.4-6]

Q: What kind of questions are these?

A: They’re rhetorical; they are expressing a fact rather than making an inquiry.

Q: What are the specific actions attributed to “the workers of wickedness”?

A: They “*eat up my people*” and “*do not call upon the LORD*”.

Q: How is this an expression of the previous specification that they are corrupt and do not fear God?

A: Because they don’t just refuse to acknowledge God, but persecute those whom God has specially chosen as His own.

Point: *In a strange way, those who claim not to believe in God betray that notion in their own lives by attempting to extinguish others who do believe in Him. If they truly thought there was no God, they wouldn’t care about believers and actually ignore them altogether.*

Q: Why might the phrase, “eat up my people as they eat bread” be referring not just to literal persecution, but even more so to spiritual corruption?

A: One of the roles of the biblical priesthood was to eat the bread provided in the course of offerings. It is a picture of a false priesthood—that is, false religion—engaging in spiritual deception. At the least it depicts these influences nourishing themselves by devouring God’s people.

Point: *Note that they may say they worship and follow God and even use His name and the terms associated with following Him, but in reality they “do not call upon the Lord” but someone or something else instead in a spiritual equivalent of “devouring” someone.*

Q: How is v.5 addressing their condition of foolishness as first expressed in v.1?

A: Whereas the fool acts as if he has no fear of the Lord, such ultimately experience “*great dread*” when they are finally faced with the reality of God. For example, this is what occurred in the Red Sea when the Egyptians realized God was fighting for Israel.

He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians.”

— Exodus 14:25

⁷Oh, that the salvation of Israel would
come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores His captive
people,
Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad.

Q: But with whom, specifically, does God stipulate He is found? How is this a contrast to the corrupt who commit abominable deeds?

A: "...the righteous generation". In other words, those who put His Word and ways into practice so as to perform those things which are both acceptable and pleasing to Him. It is not automatic inclusion based on ethnicity, but faith.

Q: What is the meaning of the contrast presented in v.6?

A: The "workers of wickedness" plan or intend as a potential act to frustrate or humiliate "the righteous", but God provides a safe haven so as to actually frustrate or humiliate the wicked. Their plans are turned back upon them, just as it happened to Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

Application: That which the world **intends** is ultimately **reversed** by God so as to be **experienced** by them.

[Read v.7]

Q: What is revealing about the underlying Hebrew word for "salvation"?

A: Depending on the context, it is also often translated as "victory".

Q: How is this a stark contrast to what was previously stated for the wicked?

A: Ultimately they will experience "great dread" (v.5), but the righteous will experience the final victory.

Q: What is the parallelism of "Jacob" and "Israel" referring to?

A: It might best be understood as, "the descendants of Jacob, who are the people of Israel, will be glad when He restores them".

Application: This is not just referring to the **spiritual** work of salvation in course of this life, but the ultimate **outcome** when final **victory** is achieved over the world and this life. It's both a **literal** promise for **literal** Israel, and a **general** promise to all God's people.