

END-TIMES ISSUES



#86

Commandment #4 – Psalm 92

"The Song for the Sabbath."


GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

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Psalm 92

A psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.



- This psalm is thought to have been sung at the temple on each weekly Sabbath. Its message is about the nature of God and the consequences of our response to him.
- Since this psalm's message is so important, that it needed to be read (sung) on the Sabbath, it would be good for us to find out what it says... and to consider its message on *our* "Sabbath."

[Ancient Hebrew manuscript (Masoretic text), not necessarily opened to Psalm 92.]

2

Two preliminary considerations.

(Important for understanding the Old Testament.)

1. They understood that there was "something" after death.

- They didn't know much about what that "something" might be – except that it would be good for the righteous and bad for the wicked. Their understanding grew, as time progressed and God revealed more.
- Their greater focus was on one's need to serve God *now* – in this *present* life. They could trust God for whatever happened in the "afterlife." (This should be *our* focus, too.)

EXAMPLE: Something more could be expected after death.

- God promised Abraham that he would give the land of Canaan to *him*, not just to his *offspring*. He said it at least *twice*... Yet Abraham is *still* waiting for the promise to be fulfilled! (The New Testament *also* says this promise isn't yet fulfilled.)

3

"Now lift up your eyes from the place where you are, and look to the north and south and east and west, for **all the land that you see, I will give to (you)** and your offspring **forever**."

"And to **(you)** and your descendants **I will give the land where you are residing**—all the land of Canaan—as an **eternal possession**; and I will be their God."

Genesis 13:14b-15; 17:8 (BSB)

- Abraham died... and *God hadn't yet given the land to him*. Did God lie? Did Abraham have to come up with a way to "salvage" the situation, so as to "rescue" God from a failed promise? Did he have to say that God had somehow given it to him in a "figurative" way (since he obviously hadn't received it "literally")? Did Jesus "cancel" the promise?

[God] gave him **no inheritance** here, not even a foot of ground. But **God promised** to give possession of the land to Abraham...

Acts 7:5a (BSB)

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- What was Abraham's response? ⇒ *He trusted God!* If God didn't fulfil his promise *now*, he would do so *later*.

What would Abraham's deathbed response have been?

NOT THIS!

GOD DID **NOT** KEEP HIS PROMISE! I TRUSTED HIM IN VAIN!

YES THIS!

I TRUST GOD TO KEEP HIS PROMISE! IF NOT IN THIS **PRESENT** LIFE... THEN IN MY **FUTURE** LIFE!

- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all anticipated something in eternity!

[Abraham] was **looking forward** to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

All these people died in faith, without having received the things they were promised. However, they saw them and welcomed them from afar. And they acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Hebrews 11:10, 13a (BSB)

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☞ (The 2nd preliminary consideration.) ☜

2. Some Old Testament statements are written in such a way that they **cannot** apply 100% to the immediate situation (even though there is *some* degree of application).

- Such passages may have a *partial* application in the immediate situation, but 100% application in a different (future) situation.

EXAMPLES: Partial vs. 100% application.

- Two situations where this often holds true:
 - Certain prophecies.*
 - Situations where sin complicates the outcome.

* (This applies to some, but not all, prophecies.)

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EXAMPLE #1: Prophetic passages.

- David wrote the following, at a time when God had spared him from death. Yet when we consider the specific way he wrote it, *it could not be 100% fulfilled in him*. Temporarily? Yes. But ultimately, he *did* die and see decay.

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
nor will You let Your Holy One see decay.
Psalm 16:10 (BSB)

- Both Peter (Acts 2:22-36) and Paul (Acts 13:34-37) quote this passage and point out that David *did* eventually die and decay. *The passage wasn't 100% fulfilled in him.*

PETER:

Brothers, I can tell you with confidence that the patriarch David **died and was buried**, and his tomb is with us to this day.
Acts 2:29 (BSB)

(PAUL) →

PAUL:

For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep. **His body was buried** with his fathers **and saw decay**.
Acts 13:36 (BSB)

- However, this was also a *prophetic* statement, and it was 100% fulfilled, in Jesus!

But [David] was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that He would place one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades, **nor did His body see decay**. God has raised this Jesus to life, to which we are all witnesses.
Acts 2:30-32 (BSB)

But the One whom God raised from the dead **did not see decay**.
Acts 13:37 (BSB)

EXAMPLE #2: Situations where sin complicates the outcome.

- People in the Old Testament could recognize that there were blessings associated with doing good (rather than with doing evil) – and many passages affirm this. (We will see this in Psalm 92.)
- However, the presence of sin in the world complicates this affirmation. We often see situations in which things seem *backwards*; and the righteous may be tempted to reach this *wrong* conclusion:

AFTER 9 VERSES OF DESCRIBING THE WICKED AS PROSPERING →

Behold, these are **the wicked—always carefree** as they increase their wealth. Surely **in vain I have kept my heart pure**; in innocence I have washed my hands. For I am afflicted all day long and punished every morning.
Psalm 73:12-14 (BSB)

- In spite of this apparent contradiction**, passages that describe the blessings of following God remain true. They are not "wishful thinking" or "motivational slogans," intended to move people's conduct in a specific direction. They are *promises* – true in at least two ways:

① On a **GROUP level**: They represent the **normal expectation**, when you compare a group that follows the true God to one that doesn't. (Many proverbs are in this format.) When all other factors are the same, it will be more likely for those following God to experience blessing, and those rejecting God to *not* experience it.

Since no group is following God 100%, there will be situations that seem inconsistent: ④ Evil people within the group may experience good, because they are living among those who are following God (or they have successfully gotten-away with taking advantage of others). ⑤ There is random "time and chance" that will cause an individual's situation to be better or worse than what might be expected. ⑥ There is normally a time-delay, so that blessings (or judgments) do not *immediately* occur. Sometimes, the *next* generation experiences them more than the *first*.

② On an **INDIVIDUAL level**: Such passages describe the ultimate result of **one's conduct**, looking *beyond* this present life-situation. There is often injustice in this present life; but there is a coming Day of Judgment/Justice, when all these things will be made right. Even in the *Old Testament* they knew this.

THIS CONCLUSION WAS REACHED BY THE PSALMIST WHO ALMOST GAVE UP IN DISCOURAGEMENT. →

My flesh and my heart may fail, but **God is** the strength of my heart and **my portion forever**. Those far from You will surely perish ...
Psalm 73:26-27a (BSB)

When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. For **God will bring every deed into judgment**, along with every hidden thing, whether good or evil.
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (BSB)

- At physical death**, the *righteous* do not stop living. Rather, their life *continues*; and they can look forward to a renewed (resurrected) physical body. At that point, all those "blessing" passages will prove to be 100% true.
- It's the *wicked* – people who are *already* spiritually dead – who will lose *everything*.

START WITH AN OVERVIEW

A brief look at Psalm 92.

- When studying a passage, it is good to read it through, looking for the general focus and flow of thought, literary patterns, things emphasized or repeated, etc.
- This psalm can be divided into several logical sections, with the climax being verse 8:

But You, O LORD, are exalted forever!
Psalm 92:8 (BSB)

- There is a basic pattern in the way the psalm "flows."

Praise to God for the greatness of his works!
The wicked – their prosperity is temporary.
 * **God** is exalted forever! *
The wicked – their destruction is forever.
Praise to God for the way he blesses his people!

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VERSES 1-3

It is good to praise the LORD,
and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High,
to proclaim Your loving devotion in the morning
and Your faithfulness at night
with the ten-stringed harp
and the melody of the lyre.
Psalm 92:1-3 (BSB)

- Praising God on the Sabbath (or Day of Worship):** This is the most fitting thing we could do on the day set-apart for God! It can involve singing, and it can be accompanied by musical instruments; but the focus of this praise is the *words* used to express it.
- "Your name"** is not just a label. It represents God and all he is. God's names – there are many – often imply how we should respond to him.
- His loving devotion and faithfulness:** This is "commitment love" – not a fickle emotional love, but an act of the will and the mind. No matter what happens in our lives, God's love and faithfulness continue.

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⇒ **How should we respond to this?** We can praise God in *all* situations!

- Even after the horrible destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah stated: *If it weren't for God's great love, this well-deserved devastation would have been even worse!*

Because of the LORD's **great love** we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your **faithfulness**.
Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)

- Many people have taken passages like this, put them to music, and used them to express their praise to God for the *goodness* of what he has done.

There is so much involved in the word translated as "loving devotion" (BSB) or "great love" (NIV). It encompasses: love, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, mercy, commitment, loyalty to a covenant.

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VERSES 4-5

For You, O LORD, have made me glad by Your deeds;
I sing for joy at the works of Your hands.
How great are Your works, O LORD,
how deep are Your thoughts!
Psalm 92:4-5 (BSB)

- Focusing on what God does** – His deeds and works are *glorious* – and this includes *everything!* He created us; he saves those who are willing to follow him; he accomplishes his purposes throughout creation. More than that, *all* creation is a reflection of his glory and goodness! Only *sin* clouds our ability to see of all this.
- His thoughts** – his plans, designs – are far beyond the scope of our comprehension! As God reminds us...

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so **My ways are higher** than your ways
and **My thoughts** than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:9 (BSB)

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⇒ **How should we respond to this?** Like the Apostle Paul did!

- God's ways and thoughts go *beyond* human comprehension!

O, the depth of the riches
of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments,
and untraceable His ways!
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been His counselor?"
"Who has first given to God,
that God should repay him?"
For from Him and through Him and to Him are all
things.
To Him be the glory forever! Amen.
Romans 11:33-36 (BSB)

← **BASED ON ISAIAH 40:13**

← **BASED ON JOB 41:11**

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VERSES 6-7

A senseless man does not know,
and a fool does not understand,
that though the wicked sprout like grass,
and all evildoers flourish,
they will be forever destroyed.
Psalm 92:6-7 (BSB)

- Senseless, fool** – In Scripture, these are *moral* issues. (They do not refer to the absence of intellect.) These people are spiritually *dead*, influenced by sin, and ruled by their fleshly nature (instead of being ruled by the Spirit).
- Wicked, evildoers** – This refers to ALL unsaved people – even if we (as humans) consider them "good" people; and even if they are friendly, religious, and constantly helping others.

Most people do not like to hear this. We tend to forget that, because of *sin's influence* on our thinking, we *don't* see moral issues the way God does. (We might even *condemn* God, when he doesn't do things according to our faulty moral standards.)

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⇒ **How should we respond to this?** Learn to see things *God's* way – not "infinitely," but "correctly," according to what God has revealed in his Word.

- ✓ When we see the wicked (or *any* sinner) prosper, we need to remember that it is only *temporary* – even if they are friendly and charitable sinners, and even if we don't call them "wicked."
- ✓ Their prosperity demonstrates how the general influence of sin in the world causes things to *not* work the way they should.
- ✓ In eternity, the contrast will be clear. *They* (the wicked) will receive what they have *earned* (based on the way *God* sees their works). And *we* (who follow God) will receive what *grace* (*undeserved* kindness) has made possible and accomplished in our lives.

Most people like to ignore these verses.

They don't want to accept what God says about the wicked. When writing songs, they *skip over* such verses. But *destroying* the wicked is as much a manifestation of God's nature as is *rewarding* the righteous. To deny this is to reject the God of the Bible. *It is to choose an idol.*

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VERSE 8

But You, O LORD, are exalted forever!

Psalm 92:8 (BSB)

- **This climactic statement in the center of the psalm** contrasts the eternal exaltation of God to ① the *temporary fortunes* of the wicked (previous verses), and ② the *eternal destruction* of the wicked (next verses).
- The conduct of the wicked has *no* effect on God. Our God – the God they stand up against – will crush them to complete (and permanent) destruction. God may tolerate them, but it is only so that he can demonstrate the righteousness of his judgment (v. 7).



⇒ **How should we respond to this?** This is the God we serve. It is yet another reason to praise him for his greatness. He is *righteous*; and he will not let *unrighteousness* have the victory.

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VERSES 9-11

For surely Your enemies, O LORD,
surely Your enemies will perish;
all evildoers will be scattered.

But You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox;
with fine oil I have been anointed.

My eyes see the downfall of my enemies;
my ears hear the wailing of my wicked foes.

Psalm 92:9-11 (BSB)

- **Perish, scattered** – They will be subdued and scattered, like chaff (or dust) in the wind.
- **Surely... Surely** – In some translations: "Look! Look!" Expressing the *eagerness* of righteous people to see the righteousness of God prevail.
- **Exalted... downfall (etc.)** – The basic principle: God blesses the righteous. ["Horn" – a symbol of strength; "oil" – perhaps a symbol of joy or victory.] *In contrast*, the fate of the wicked is so certain, that the psalmist can say he sees/hears it happening.

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⇒ **How should we respond to this?** This, and the rest of the psalm, point to the blessings that the righteous receive. But these blessings are reserved for those who *love God*, not for those who *love blessings*. (God knows people's motives.)

- ✓ Love for God is our #1 obligation in life – not love for "a good life" (or even for "a good eternity").
- ✓ For those who *do* love God, there *are* blessings (even in this present life). Yet trials may occur that prevent certain blessings from being present. Under such circumstances, our response will show whether it was *God*, or the *blessings*, that we actually loved.
- ✓ Just as the *wicked* may temporarily prosper in this present life, so also the *righteous* may temporarily *not* experience *material* blessings in this present life. But the key word for both is "temporary." In all this, our *spiritual* blessings remain with us.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **ble**ssed us in the heavenly realms **with every spiritual blessing** in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

22

VERSES 12-15

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.

In old age they will still bear fruit;
healthy and green they will remain,

to proclaim, "The LORD is upright; He is my Rock,
and in Him there is no unrighteousness."

Psalm 92:12-15 (BSB)

- **Trees** – These specific trees have characteristics that represent longevity, fruitfulness and strength – blessings of many kinds.
- **God, the "Rock"** – The defender/protector of the righteous.
- **To proclaim...** We will *agree* with God's judgments and blessings – for they are expressions of *righteousness*. For God to do otherwise would require him to become *unrighteous* – a complete contradiction of his own nature.

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⇒ **How should we respond to this?**

- ✓ **The #1 blessing** we can experience is to be in God's presence – in his "house." We can experience this blessing now, though we do not see him physically (Matthew 18:20). In the future, we will be blessed with actually being able to see him (i.e., Jesus) – at his return, and in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 1:7; 22:4).
- ✓ God does not *want* the wicked to perish (2 Peter 3:9). *Neither should we*. But if they don't repent, judgment *must* come (2 Peter 3:10). This is the *Good News*: "God offers us an *undeserved* opportunity to repent, so that we don't have to perish!"
- ✓ We who choose righteousness over wickedness are *promised* that we will spend eternity with the *righteous* God, in the place that is characterized by *righteousness*. Nothing wicked will ever be there.

But in keeping with **his promise** we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, **where righteousness dwells**.

2 Peter 3:13 (NIV)

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Psalm 92 and us?

- This psalm shows us that it is good to praise God because of his righteousness – a righteousness that necessitates his *intolerance* of wickedness. Yet God, in his patient love, *does* tolerate the wicked *for a while* – as he gives them an opportunity to repent.
 - For those who choose the way of righteousness, there are blessings without measure. *Some* are experienced now (in this sinful world); *all* will be experienced in eternity (in the home of righteousness).
- Today (in the New Testament era), we know that it's Jesus Christ who makes this change in our lives possible. But even in the Old Testament era, it was possible because of what Jesus was *planning* to do, when he would come to earth (⇒ dying to pay for our sins, and then being resurrected to life to give us new life).
- Some people like to select certain verses in this psalm and ignore the rest (as they do throughout the rest of Scripture). But the entire psalm is an expression of God's nature – and the day of worship ("Sabbath") is a wonderful day to acknowledge it!

- Though parts of this psalm may be ignored by people *today*... this psalm has been a blessing to *many* saved people down through the ages.

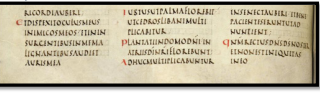
This psalm has been a part of "Christian life" throughout the centuries.

Psalm 92 (translated into Latin) from the Utrecht Psalter, a hand-written manuscript; from around the year 830.

The hand-drawn picture represents God's people rejoicing in the house of the Lord, and the wicked perishing outside the wall.



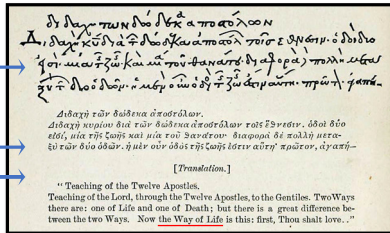
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Even when not quoted, the "righteous vs. wicked" theme of the psalm is found in Christian writings, down through the centuries.

From "The Didache: The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles" – probably written soon after the lives of the apostles (exact date uncertain).

The hand-written first lines from a copy of the Didache, made in the 11th century. The title and the introduction of the "two ways" (the righteous vs. the wicked). The text mentions the "way of life."



The "way of death" is introduced in chapter 5:

"But the way of death is this..." [followed by a list of sins].

More importantly, the psalm's message matches the message of the New Testament!

- The "greatness of God" concept is mentioned throughout the New Testament.
- So is the "righteous vs. wicked" concept, as seen below:

The righteous vs. the wicked... (Some random examples.)

- JESUS – Matthew 7:13-14; 24:31-46; John 3:16-18, 36.
- PETER – 2 Peter 3.
- JOHN – 3 John 1:11; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1-15.
- PAUL – 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Colossians 3:5-10.
- JUDE – Jude 1:7, contrasted with 20-21.
- BOOK OF REVELATION – Revelation 20:11-15.

OUR MISSION:

- To make it our goal to acknowledge *all* that God is.
- To speak *truthfully* about God, righteousness and wickedness.

Even if the world (and many church-goers) oppose us.

Reading Psalm 92 was a reminder for the people of Israel, who met at the temple on the Sabbath.

What do you do, to remind you of these things?

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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