Psalm 50

A Psalm Of Asaph

The first of twelve psalms ascribed to Asaph, who was of the tribe of Levi and was appointed to to lead the choir at the command of David. The son of Berechiah, he was also viewed, in Hezekiahs’ day, as a prophet. Although some of the psalms attributed to him could not have been authored by him because of the date of their appearance. For by the time they were written, Asaph would have been dead. Therefore, they must have been written by his descendants, or were dedicated to his memory. No matter, our Lord placed him in connection with them all as he inspired their authorship, for he is the true author of all scripture.

The main theme of this psalm is judgment. During his earthly ministry, our Lord taught a universal judgment upon all men. He spoke of the great day when the wheat would be separated from the tares. Of that day, we read in this psalm. We will examine it in four parts.

First, we see ***The Scene of this Judgment (vs.1-6)***. Oh, what a terrible scene it is. In verse 1, the judge is introduced. We are immediately confronted with his ***power***. He is the “mighty God, even the LORD”. This great judge is set forth as all powerful. The word “elohim” is here mentioned, which means, the supreme God. It is also that plural name of God, which signifies the Holy Trinity. The word for LORD is Jehovah. It signifies the “self-existent one”. He is here displaying his might over the entire earth, which he made, and which by him consists, by summonsing it. We are then confronted with his ***perfection***. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.” Though the word perfect is here attributed to Zion itself, we understand that it is only so because God is in it. The judge is perfect. He shall not slam the gavel with one wrong opinion or one bad decision. He shall render perfect judgment, from which no evil shall escape, and no good go unnoticed. As Abraham asked, when he interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” Surely he will. Next we see his ***presence***. At his appearing he shall be accompanied by great sounds for, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence”. His voice shall thunder once again as it did on Mount Sinai, as it did by the river Jordan, and as it was heard on the Mount of Transfiguration. He shall be heard by all, that all may fear. He will also be accompanied by fire. Our text says, “…a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.” Paul speaks of this fire in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8 where we read, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:” This fire shall burn up those things built upon wood, hay, and stubble. This fire devours before him. Everything unholy is consumed by the flame of his holiness. It is “tempestuous round about him”, meaning his presence causes those who witness him to shudder and shake. No wonder Paul, when speaking of the judgment seat of Christ said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” As we examine the scene of this judgment, we must also take into view the ***people*** that are judged. In verses four through six we find that these people are a covenanted people, covenanted together with God by sacrifice. That sacrifice is none other than that of the substitutionary death of the only begotten Son of God. We covenant with him by this sacrifice when we receive faith in him and place our trust in his shed blood for the remission of sins. The first part of our psalm is summed up in the last phrase of verse six, “…for God is judge himself. Selah.”

Secondly, we see the ***Subject of this Judgment (vs.7-15)***, worship. The Lord calls for the attention of his people and exhorts them to listen as he testifies against them. He reminds them of his authority to do so when he says, “I am God, even thy God.” First, there seems to be a ***commendation of their worship***. In verse eight, he says, “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.” These pious Jews had been diligent in their outward expressions of religion. They had fulfilled the commands of God in the physical sense and for this he would not reprove them. We must be diligent in our obedience to the commands of God, but we must not let them become a drudgery or a burden. God is most concerned about the attitude of the heart. These Jews appeared to be very zealous toward the things of God, but this was because of the great weight they had allowed these rituals to bear in their lives. It is a blessing to know that when we get to the judgment “every man shall have praise of God.” It is impossible to live a life of faith and never please God at all. Next, there is the ***condemnation of their worship***. Here, God states his dissatisfaction with the motivations of the service rendered by his people. He declares he does not need these sacrifices for his own benefit, for they cannot take away sin, but rather desire to be worshipped by his people from their hearts. These acts of sacrifice did in no way give God anything he didn’t already possess. The cattle of a thousand hills are his, how shall they think that to offer one to God would be of any benefit to his stature. If it were possible for God to thirst, having made every drop of water on the planet, would he need men to supply him with drink? Absurd! Oh, how easily we are puffed up in thinking we have something to offer God that he hasn’t given us! Paul said it like this to the Corinthians, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Now the Lord offers ***counsel about their worship.*** In verses fourteen and fifteen God lays out the type of worship that is acceptable to him. He asks of them ***praise***, “Offer unto God thanksgiving”. Oh, that men would praise the Lord! He is worthy of more praise than shall be given him throughout all eternity. “By him therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of our lips.” God wanted the sacrifices to be offered out of a thankful heart, not out of obligation. 1 Jn. 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” He asks of them ***persistence***, “…pay thy vows unto the most High”. Child of God, serve with gladness and be not weary in well doing. Pay your vows to God, for it is better never to vow a vow, than to vow a vow and break it. God is faithful to us, let us also be faithful to him. He also asks for their ***petitions***. He says in verse fifteen, “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” Our dependence upon God in time of trouble is considered by him a form of worship. We worship him with our firm reliance upon him to meet our needs. We display this reliance by making our petitions known unto him. The ultimate goal of worship is expressed in this verse as well. He is to be glorified. The word here means to “make heavy”. We are to decrease and he is to increase. Let us endeavor to make Jesus as big as we can in our daily walk and worship of his holy name.

Thirdly, we see the ***Seriousness of this Judgment (vs.16-21)***. In this portion of the psalm, we find Gods’ address to the wicked. It is a sad reality that even among the true people of God, there lay some who are deceived. They look and some time act like God’s people, but they are in reality the children of their father the Devil. We find in Matthew 13 the parable of the tares among the wheat. We read of a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept the enemy came and planted tares among his wheat, which was not evident until the harvest. We find, however, that the angels come and separate the wheat from the tares and the tares are cast into the fire. Such is the idea of this psalm. We find the ***division*** in verse sixteen. God here addresses the wicked as intruders who have no right to declare his statutes. They do not belong in the congregation of the righteous. The Lord knoweth them that are his. Then we see their ***defilement*** in verses seventeen through twenty. Here God lists their sins in detail. At the judgment there will be no escape. Every deed will be brought into view, whether it be good or evil. How serious that our Lord keeps a record of the sins of the wicked. Next we find the ***delusion*** of these wicked ones. In verse twenty-one he says, “…thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself”. Such is the attitude of the average person today. Modern evangelism has attempted to bring God down to mans level. Men see God as one who is too loving to pass judgment upon them. “Surely”, they say, “God wouldn’t send a person to hell.” The fact is God doesn’t send men to hell. Men go to hell because they harbor wrong views of who God is and refuse to submit to him as the thrice holy, supreme God of the universe. Men feel justified in their sin because God in mercy keeps silent about their deeds for a time, but let it be known that God will not allow sin to go unpunished. Notice he said, “I **will** reprove thee”.

In conclusion God gives a simple, yet strong warning to all who read this psalm. “Now consider this,

ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.”

Let us order our conversation aright in making our calling and election sure.