

Psalms 82:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

Analysis

How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?

Selah. God's rhetorical question indicts corrupt judges with devastating directness. **"How long"** (עד-מתִי/ad-matai) expresses divine patience approaching its limit. God has endured injustice, giving opportunity for repentance, but judgment draws near. This echoes prophetic refrains (Habakkuk 1:2, Revelation 6:10) crying out against prolonged wickedness.

"Judge unjustly" (תִשְׁפְטוּ-עַל/tishpetu-avel) contradicts the fundamental purpose of judges. Avel denotes perversion, injustice, unrighteousness—judging becomes its opposite when personal gain or favoritism corrupts verdicts. Judges called to execute God's justice instead perpetrate injustice, a damnable inversion.

"Accept the persons of the wicked" (פְנֵי-רְשָׁעִים תִשְׁאֹו/penei-resha'im tis'u) means showing partiality based on status rather than truth. Literally "lifting up the face," this phrase denotes favoring certain parties—the wealthy, powerful, or connected—while denying justice to the poor and powerless. Deuteronomy 1:17 and 16:19 explicitly forbid such partiality. **"Selah"** punctuates this damning question, demanding contemplation of judicial corruption's gravity.

Historical Context

Psalm 82 depicts God presiding over a divine council, judging those appointed to judge (whether human magistrates or angelic beings delegated authority—

scholarly debate continues). Throughout Israel's history, judicial corruption plagued society. Prophets repeatedly condemned judges who took bribes, favored the rich, and oppressed the poor (Isaiah 1:23, 10:1-2; Micah 3:11; Amos 5:12). The psalm reflects covenant lawsuit (riv) tradition where God prosecutes His people's leaders for covenant violations.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What modern forms of 'accepting persons'—showing favoritism—do you witness or participate in, and how can these be confronted?
2. How should the certainty of divine judgment over human judges inform Christian engagement with legal and political systems?
3. In what ways might you be guilty of 'judging unjustly' in your own sphere of influence or authority?

Interlinear Text

רַשְׁעָם יְמִינֵי עָלָיו תְּשִׁפּוּן מִתְּמִתָּה עַד

H5704

H4970

How long will ye judge

H8199

עַל יְמִינֵי

H5766

מִתְּמִתָּה

H6440

רַשְׁעָם יְמִינֵי

H7563

סֶלָה תְּשִׁאָה

and accept

H5375

Selah

H5542

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 1:17 (Judgment): Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man;

for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

Proverbs 18:5 (Righteousness): It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

Galatians 2:6 (Parallel theme): But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

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