

Psalm 53: As though there is no God



Psalm 53 (52) : see Psalm 14 (13) (Mode 2. 5...31 / 4...32)

This is an impassioned reflection on the folly and corruption of those who do not acknowledge God, and a statement of faith that the Lord is on the side of the oppressed.

If we fail to acknowledge the true God we will create our own. In this case it is untrammelled power exercised by those who show no concern for the poor. Verse seven is a plea that the Lord will restore his people, composed, it would seem, by someone writing from exile [from Samaria (721BC), or Jerusalem (598BC)?

Psalm 14 is almost identical with Psalm 53. Verses 5-6 are somewhat different, and where Psalm 14 has 'The Lord', Psalm 53 has 'God'. Perhaps Psalm 53 came from the Northern Kingdom and Psalm 14 is an adaptation made for the temple in Jerusalem.

Fools tells themselves

‘There is no God.’

‘In the pride of their countenance the wicked say, “God will not seek it out”; all their thoughts are, “There is no God” ... Why do the wicked renounce God, and say in their hearts, “You will not call us to account”’?(Psalm 10:4,13).

‘They say, ‘The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive’(Psalm 94:7).

‘You say: What does God know?’(Job 22:13).

‘His anger does not punish, and he does not greatly heed transgression’(Job 35:15).

They are corrupt. They do dreadful things.
Not one of them does good.
God looks down on Adam's descendants
to see if any are wise, if any seek God.
They have all gone astray,
they are all depraved;
there is no one who seeks God,
no one who does good.

‘The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart’(Genesis 6:5-6).

Romans 3:10-17

There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one'(10-12).

'Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive'(13a = Psalm 5:9).

'The venom of vipers is under their lips'(13b = Psalm 140:3).

'Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness'(3:14 = Psalm 10:7).

'Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known'(15-17 = Isaiah 59:7-8).

Those evildoers,
do they know nothing?

‘They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk around in darkness’(Psalm 82:5).

‘They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their
eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds
as well, so that they cannot understand’(Isaiah 44:18).

They devour my people like so much bread.

They never pray.

‘You who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin off my people, and the flesh off their bones; who eat the flesh of my people, flay their skin off them, break their bones in pieces, and chop them up like meat in a kettle, like flesh in a cauldron.’

(Micah 3:2-3)

See how they tremble with fear
as never before.

God scatters their bones.

They are shamed, for God rejects them.

If only a saviour would come from Zion.

If only God would restore the fortunes of his people!

Then Jacob would rejoice,

Israel would be glad.