

The Great King

Part I

Ps 93:1 1

The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.

² Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.

³ The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.

⁴ Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!

⁵ Your decrees are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore.

Psalm 94:1 2

O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth!

² Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!

³ O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?

⁴ They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast.

⁵ They crush your people, O LORD, and afflict your heritage.

⁶ They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless;

⁷ and they say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive."

⁸ Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise?

⁹ He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?

¹ LXX has a superscription: "*For the day before the Sabbath, when the land was first inhabited, the praise of a Song by David.*"

² LXX has another superscription: "*A Psalm of David for the fourth day of the week.*"

¹⁰ He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge--
¹¹ the LORD-- knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.
¹² Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law,
¹³ to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.
¹⁴ For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage;
¹⁵ for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.
¹⁶ Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers?
¹⁷ If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.
¹⁸ When I thought, "My foot slips," your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.
¹⁹ When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.
²⁰ Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute?
²¹ They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.
²² But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge.
²³ He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the LORD our God will wipe them out."

Psalm 93-94

WHAT KIND OF A GOD?

WHAT KIND OF A GOD is this God of the Bible? Many people say they believe in him, but what is he like? How does he reveal himself to be? What kind of power does he have? How and why does he exercise this power? Whenever the Bible talks about such questions, it is never simply to give us brute facts so that we can win on Jeopardy or so that we can present a philosophy paper at some academic society or show how smart we are on Facebook. It is always in the context of [our gods](#), [our weakness](#), [our world](#), [our lives](#).

Psalms 93-100 begin to unfold a great fact about God and many implications that come from it. Recall that the end of Book III (esp. Ps 88-89) left us with a troubling problem. [The king of Israel is gone](#); but God has promised them an eternal kingship. God appears to have abandoned them and forgotten his promises (we'll call them his "decrees") even though these promises are said to be eternal. How can anyone make sense of such seeming contradictions?

Psalms 90-92 opened up Book IV with at least one song from Moses, who gave words of encouragement that it isn't

as bad as it seems. These songs are meant as an introduction to the rest of Book IV, the majority of which is going to answer specifically why this is the case. The answer? Israel, you don't need a human king, because I never stopped being King. Everything we will see for the next few weeks has this at its heart.

We need to think for a moment about some basic ideas related to this. **First**, the claim is that of a **King**. The claim isn't that of President or Prime Minister or Premier. He is not voted into office by a democracy. He is not in office because you put him there. Nor can he be taken out if someone doesn't like him. He simply *is* the King. Kings are in power by birthright.

Second, **the origin of kingship** is important to understand as well, for in it we can learn much. All ancient peoples said that the kingship came down from heaven as it was bestowed upon a family by the gods. Men began ruling for the gods. Now, you might think this was just a clever way for one powerful person to justify a revolution to a bunch of ignorant superstitious plebes. But if you do, just remember that this is exactly what the Bible says happened with the monarchy of Israel.

If you go back far enough, you learn that the each nation called a particular god “king.” Sometimes that king could be deposed by another god. Yet, they believed that one particular heavenly being ruled over them at a time ... until the kingship was finally delivered to humans. Again, it is important here to remember that this is the way the Bible speaks as well. When the people wanted a human king, Samuel was grieved, but the LORD allowed it even though he said, “They have no rejected you [Samuel], but they have rejected Me from being king over them” (1Sa 8:7).

An important example here is **Baal**. The Canaanites called Baal “king.” For example, in their story of the ascendancy of Baal to this position, after he has defeated the god and former king “Sea” (Yam), his mother (Athirat) complains to his father (El) that, “**Baal is a king without a palace**” (KTU 1.4.iv). In a different place, they sing, “**our king is Valiant, Baal is our ruler (prince), there is none who is above him**” (KTU 1.3.v.32-33).

But there’s something else. Immediately after this the lines says, “**Groaning he cries to Bull El his father, to El the king who begot him**” (v.35). Suddenly, you have two kings. One is greater, the other is lesser. The thing to understand

here—and again this is important to really getting the best understanding of these psalms that we can, is that in their system of the gods, Baal is one of seventy sons of **El** who is called “Father.” These sons come about through procreation with his consort—the goddess Athirat (whom you may know as **Asherah** from the OT). El is the creator of mankind. Baal is not. Baal is his son. So El is the High King while Baal is the king of Canaan.

It is probable that these two are parallel (even identical) to Anu-Enlil (Babylon) and more well-known to Kronos-Zeus (Greece). For as one nation got taken over by another, their gods were converted. However, while Kronos has parents (Uranus and Gaia) and Anu has parents (Anshar and Kishar or also called Apsu and Nammu³), I can find no place where El’s parents are named. In this way, he is like the Biblical Heavenly Father who is also identified by the term “El” (Mighty).

³ The words are meaningful.

Babylon: Anshar = Whole Heaven; Kishar = Whole Earth; Anu = Sky Father; Enlil = Lord of Sky and Storms.

Greece: Uranus = Heaven; Gaia = Earth; Kronos = [Father] Time; Zeus = Lord of Sky and Storms.

Canaan: El = Mighty Father; Baal = Lord of Sky and Storm.

Two more things are important before finally looking at our songs. Attributes are ascribed to both El and Baal, but they are often not the same. El is called “Eternal.” Baal is not. El is King; but Baal is only a lesser king, ruling over Canaan as its prince. El is enthroned in heaven and earth. Baal however, must make his palace on Mt. Saphon.⁴ In other words, their attributes are not co-extensive. They are separate beings, different gods.

That said, consider the following quote I ran across this week in looking up a very different topic. “*God is not Odin All-Father. God does not wield thunderbolts like Zeus. God does not make the world by slaying Tiamat and dividing her carcass to form heaven and earth. God is not god [underline mine].*”⁵ Indeed. The entire point of the Bible is to make an infinite distinction between the gods of the nations and the God of Israel. This is what our Psalms begin to do today as they unfold this idea that God is King. Its implications are very personal, but even more, they

⁴ See Helen Genevieve Jefferson, “Psalm 93,” *JBL* 71 (1952): 156-57 [155-50].

⁵ Fr Aidan (Alvin) Kimel, “God is not Odin, God is not Zeus, God is not Marduk,” *Eclectic Orthodoxy* (Nov 20, 2013), <https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2013/11/20/god-is-not-odin-god-is-not-zeus-god-is-not-marduk/>

demonstrate some incredible things about the claims of Christians vs. all other religions.

Psalm 93

God vs. the gods

What does it mean that God is King? First, what we will see is that it means he is infinitely different from the other gods of the world. We get our first glimpse in a short little song, Psalm 93. **The very structure of the song** contains a truth about this. This is a thing that only authors and those who really like digging tend to even see. I imagine the Lord smiling that he put it there for some to discover. There are **45 words** in this song. Its poetic center is **vs. 3** which has **9** words, one of which is repeated **3 times**: Floods, floods, floods! On either side of this 9 word center are **18** words (vv. 1-2 and 4-5). Thus, 3 and 9 become the numbers that create a perfect symmetry in the song.⁶ In other words, the poem

⁶ 18 (9x2), 9, 18 (9x2). $3 \times 3 = 9$. For more interesting numerical analysis, including how the number 119 returns in these songs see Casper J. Labuschagne, "Psalm 93—Logotechnical Analysis," <https://www.labuschagne.nl/ps093.pdf> (along with his "Introduction to Book IV (Psalms 90-106)" linked in the paper.

reveals a simple perfection, which is perfect to relate the God it is about to describe.

Five things are mentioned explicitly in vv. 1-2 about Him: **Monarch**, **Majesty**, **Might**, **sovereignty**, and **eternity**. These are topics absolutely needed when you are undergoing trouble. For it is in these things that you begin to understand that God can handle anything. This very quickly leads us to consider our weakness and our world. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

“**The LORD reigns**” (Ps 93:1). Who? The name is Yahweh. To reign is to be King. Yahweh is King. As we saw, in Canaan, El or Baal are king, though not in the same sense. In Israel, Yahweh is King. He rules. He reigns.

Now, in the NT, God is said to be “**the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God**” to whom belongs “**honor and glory forever and ever**” (1Ti 1:17). This most certainly describes the Father. However, it also describes the Son. For there is one named King. He is Jesus, born **King of the Jews** in Matthew (2:2). **King of kings** in Revelation (19:16). So, you have one God but two persons described as Him. This is very different from any other nation's god or gods.

Second, he is “robed in majesty; the LORD is robed” (Ps 93:1). What is majesty? Human monarchs have these astonishing garments they put on that gives the impression to everyone around them that they are majestic. Rich beyond compare. Able to acquire anything they want. Nothing like you peons and peasants. Yet, as Matthew Henry writes, “The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God’s terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glow-worm compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God’s kingdom great and formidable? Yet let us not fear them, for God’s majesty will eclipse theirs.”⁷

This leads me to think of Isaiah. The great prophet got a glimpse of this early on in his ministry, and it is the thing that kept him going during many long decades of seeing no one listen to his message. “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isa 6:1). It is worth noting for a moment that John tells us who Isaiah saw. It was not God in his Essence. It was not even the Father. He says,

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 879.

Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him (**John 12:39, 41**). Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus. It was him clothed in a majestic robe that he saw.

Also, in the context, this majesty **made angels cry out**, “**Holy, holy, holy**” (**Isa 6:3**). It brought about the worship of the heavenly beings. Second, **it caused Isaiah to be undone**. For it exposed that he was not like this God. “**Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!**” (5). If this is the kind of God we worship, what does it say about the kind of worship we should give him? It should be full of joy and song, but not in a lighthearted, fluffy kind of way. This God causes people to want to die simply by looking at him.

Richard Philips⁸ points out in his sermon on Psalm 93 that the Lord Jesus had this very majesty at the beginning of his life on earth as the Magi came to worship him, throughout his life up to the end, for example at that moment when he was betrayed, and the accusers asked him who he was, he said, “I Am,” and they drew back and fell to

⁸ **Richard Philips**, “The Lord Reigns: Psalm 93” (9-18-2016), <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=918162255323>. Several of the ideas in this part of my sermon were inspired by listening to Philips. It's a great little sermon.

the ground (**John 18:15**). How much more majesty does he have in his resurrection and ascension at the right hand of the Father?

Third, Yahweh is mighty. “**He has put on strength as his belt**” (**93:1**). Notice that he puts strength on himself. No one gives it to him. It is his to take up. In the NT, strength is ascribed to Jesus so much that he is able to make others strong who are in him (**1Tim 1:12**).

Fourth, it is through this strength that he does incredible things as Absolute Sovereign. “**Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old**” (**Ps 93:1-2a**). It is probable that this word “established” (used twice), is the key thought of this part of the poem and that it links all things to itself. For the Hebrew poet, he would have known that it had a numerical value of 45, the same number as there are words in the song. This word relates to God’s throne and to his sovereignty. Sovereignty is something that many people don’t like or want God to have. They would rather be sovereign. So they foolishly think. Yet by it, the LORD “establishes,” not just Israel, but the whole world. This is something ascribed to the Lord Jesus in places like Hebrews 1:3, “**He upholds the universe**

by the word of his power.” This makes him infinitely greater than Baal. It makes him equal with, to use one of the OT’s names for God: El.

Fifth, he is eternal. “**You are from everlasting**” (Ps 93:2). We saw this in the Moses’ song. God has no beginning. He has no end. And yet again, in the NT, this is ascribed to the Lord Jesus. “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’” (Rev 1:7; cf. 21:6; 22:13). There is no king in the all the world who has ever been like this king.

God vs. the gods, Our Weakness, and our Wicked World

Now, the center of the poem also sees a shift in theme. “**The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring**” (Ps 93:3). **Floods** is obviously the key word here, mentioned three times. It makes us think of everything from the Great Flood to the Red Sea to wicked enemies like we find in **Isaiah 57:20**. “**But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt.**” The idea of a flood, and behind it wicked persons, is that of chaos and a

seeking to overthrow order. In this case, it is the order that God has established in this world.

They are lifting up. They are roaring. It reminds us of Psalm 2, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers (of the heavens?) take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed” (Ps 2:1-2). Does it not feel like this from time to time? Especially in far-away lands, where our brothers and sisters are persecuted in ways we can’t possibly dream of here? When powerful men seek to harm us simply because we are Christians, it is intimidating, frightening, and creates a sense of panic.

Look at how we react simply when the government sides with militant homosexuals to fine small Christian businesses out of existence: “The floods. The Floods! THE FLOODS!” The floods are coming! They will sweep us away. If you have ever been caught even in a foot of raging water, you know it can sweep you off your feet and you can become instantly helpless. How much more whole tsunamis of water dumping over someone to destroy them? It doesn’t matter if you are afraid of water or not. If a tsunami comes, you should be frightened. Or should you?

“Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!” (Ps 93:4). Three floods can only be overcome by **three** “**mightys.**” Earlier I mentioned Baal and El. Baal is the storm God, the God of thunder and lightning. Here, Yahweh is being ascribed power that is given to Baal. Farther to the east in Babylon, they had a creation story. In this story, the god Marduk kills the sea monster Tiamat with a bow and arrow of lightning and his great weapon the rain-flood as he rides his storm-chariot to victory. Curiously, he became associated with the planet Jupiter, which is the Roman version of Zeus, who is the Greek version of ... Baal.⁹

Why does this matter? Because throughout the Bible, including here in Psalm 93, those things associated with the gods are said to belong *only* to Yahweh. He is more powerful than the gods. We do not worship Odin or Baal or Zeus. Yahweh is not like them? He is mighty over them.

But let me show you two more ways just how amazing this is in the Holy Scripture from a Christian point of view as we finish Psalm 93. **First**, some attributes that are given to

⁹ I'm not saying Marduk is Baal, only that there are many curious overlaps in what identifies these gods.

gods like Baal or Marduk (sons of god) are given here to Yawheh. However, some attributes that are not given to Baal, but instead to El (the father-god), are here given to Yahweh. What this means is that Israel has a God who combines the attributes split off between father and son gods among the pagans. This is why our background information can be so helpful. Any Jew would have understood this.

Who is the biblical counterpart of El in the Bible? It is usually the God the Father. Who is the biblical counterpart of Baal? It is God the Son. But here, in this Psalm, **Yahweh**, which is a name they both have in the Bible, *possess all the attributes*. This is why the NT is so explicit in ascribing the things we all take for granted belong to the Father as also belonging to the Son. For the God of the Bible is Triune: One God in Three Persons. Psalm 93 is therefore talking about God the Father and God the Son. God is Yahweh. The Father is Yahweh. The Son bears the Name in his Person. No other religion in all the world even dares to think like this. Only the Biblical God presents himself in such a way. And if you worry about the Spirit not being here, have no fear. For it is the Spirit of God who clothes the Lord Jesus in

these very things in both Testaments. And he can only do that if he is himself God.

This leads me to the second point and the last point in the Psalm. “Your decrees are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forever” (Ps 93:5). “House” here refers to God’s temple, the thing that Isaiah saw. Again, El was said to have a house. And Baal was said to have built a house for himself. But was it holy? Not the way Yahweh’s is holy.¹⁰

Holiness sets the Biblical God apart from all other Gods. Holiness is pure, undiluted, moral goodness. There is no wickedness, no sin, no wrongdoing, no evil in Yahweh’s house. This is why his house is always filled by the Holy Spirit in the Scripture. This also sets God apart from all other kings—human or not—that have ever been. Zeus was a terrible, wicked god, full of passion and caprice. Pharaoh was a stubborn man bent on his own pride and self-exaltation. Yahweh is holy, set apart, utterly unlike any of

¹⁰ Dahood has the interesting translation, “In your temple the holy ones will laud you...” He comments, “Namely, the gods or divine beings composing Yahweh’s celestial council; they are the beney elim of Psalm 29:1 who are invited to sing Yahweh’s praises.” (Mitchell Dahood S.J., *Psalms II: 51-100: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 17, Anchor Yale Bible [New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008], 343). There are indeed many overlaps with Psalm 29 and 93. I’m not opposed to this translation at all. But I’m sticking with the ESV, to make a pastoral point, because the fact is also, God is holy.

his creation. And this, believe it or not, is what allows us to take comfort in his Monarchy, his majesty, his strength, his sovereignty, and his eternity. Such attributes in the hands of a despot or a dictator are frightening in the extreme. But when they belong to the Benevolent God, the Good God, they become the greatest source of comfort knowable.

It is into this that we then think of his “**decrees.**” “**Your decrees are very trustworthy.**” These decrees do not refer so much to his eternal decrees, such as the decree to create the world or the decree to create man or the decree to send Jesus. **They refer to those revealed decrees** that he gives through his word. It especially refers to his covenantal promises that ended Book III about things like an everlasting King who would sit upon the throne.

You see, there are reasons it is important to see this song as having Jesus in mind, for Jesus is the God of Israel, and in the NT when he takes on human flesh, he embodies and fulfills all of the covenantal promises given of old, but which sinful humans failed to bring to pass.

For example, do you remember when there was **a great storm on the Sea** of Galilee, and the disciples were in a boat scared to death because they were “**a long way from the**

land” and were being “beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them” (Matt 14:24)? Where was Jesus? He was exactly where he should be, just like he is depicted in Psalm 93. “After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray” (23).

As the disciples were frantically baling water, behold, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea (25). Then they realized his majesty. “They were terrified, and said, ‘It is a ghost!’ and they cried out in fear” (26). Then they realized his might, his strength, his sovereignty, and his eternity. For when he got into the boat, the wind ceased, and they confessed him to be the God of Psalm 92, “Truly you are the Son of God” (33).¹¹ Then they realized his holiness and goodness and kindness. For he said to them, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid” (27).

Friend, when you feel the waves of life crashing over the top of your boat, and you are afraid, when you hear the roaring of the floods wailing out causing you panic and fear, do not look to the storm, look to the God of the storm. Sing Psalm 93 and believe. Don’t be like Peter who walked out

¹¹ Anyone in those days would have recognized the parallel between Yahweh and Baal, the son of El in Psalm 93. Thus, such a confession makes perfect sense. They understood passages like Psalm 93 perfectly.

to Jesus on the water when the Lord invited him, but then saw the waves, became afraid, and began to sink. Sing to the LORD, “Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know His voice Who ruled them while he dwelt below.” Everything that has been promised (his decrees) can be relied on, because Jesus has come and fulfilled them one and all, proving himself to be God in the flesh, dead and raised to life for you.

Psalm 94 and the Judgments of God

But friend, perhaps you don't trust in this God nor know him. Perhaps you do not recognize his kingship or truly understand what this means. Psalm 93 is **only the beginning** of a series of songs about Yahweh as King. Scholars have noticed that there are several mini-units of songs that in some ways belong especially to one another. Psalm 93 and 94 are one such unit (we will see later another in 96-98).

Psalm 94 is a psalm teaching us about **this King's right and obligation to punish evil and destroy the wicked**. How else can order be established with such Floods and Waves seek to tear his kingdom apart? If God is not also Just as

King, then he is not fit to be King at all. Thus, Psalm 94 becomes a song of great warning that you must fly to Christ to still the waves, lest you be covered in them to your own destruction.

I break it into **six parts**. The first is an introduction. “**O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!**” (Ps 94:1-2). Vengeance is an attribute that, again, can be good or bad. People who have done something wrong don’t like the idea, because it means someone is coming after them. Thus, they cry and moan about God saying he is a God of vengeance. “**What a terrible, mean God that is.**” No. It’s just that you don’t want him to pay you back for all your sins against him. To those who are pure in his sight, however, and who know the kinds of things that have been done against Him, justice is a balm to their wounds. For it means God will be vindicated. Evil will not win.

After the introduction, we hear **the justification for such vengeance**. “**O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?**” (Notice the repetition “how long ... how long. It is similar to vs. 1’s God of vengeance

... God of vengeance and in 93, the floods ... the floods ... the floods and mightier ... mightier ... mighty). “They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast. They crush your people, O LORD, and afflict your heritage. They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; and they say, ‘The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive’” (Ps 94:3-7).

The Bible teaches us very clearly that **there is right and wrong**. Especially evil is when the most helpless among us are trampled. God absolutely abhors this. And why do people do it? Because they are so full of themselves that they actually tell themselves that God doesn't see it. Thus, both in their actions and their attitudes, in what they do to others and what they think about God, they are wicked. And because he is King, God will not tolerate this forever.

The third part is a **warning**. This warning is meant to turn wicked people away from their sin to forgiveness with the Lord. It is the center of the poem. “**Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the LORD—**

knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath” (8-11).

The song turns to creation and its obvious implications. It is very much like the more modern **Argument from Design**. The idea is that if you have design, you have a Designer. You don't want into an art museum and think that a tornado caused this. Everyone knows this about museums and about God, except of course, the philosophers who are too smart for their own good. But here, the argument is bent towards making the wicked person beware so that he will repent.

Those who think the LORD doesn't see are the dullest of people, not the sharpest and smartest among us. They are fools and they do not know wisdom. If God made the ear, it is meant to teach us that there is Someone greater than us who not only made us, but himself hears. If he made the eye, it is because he himself sees. These images refer to **God's omniscience**. He knows everything. There is nothing that can be done anywhere, even in the deepest part of the earth or the darkest corner of some hidden place where God doesn't know what you are doing. The very fact that you

have ears and eyes proves it. These are not accidents, but works of art the likes of which no one can duplicate.

If **God hears and sees**, then **he also disciplines** the nations (we can think here about the importance in this regard of remembering our discussion of their gods). He does this **first**, to teach man knowledge that he is there and that he rebukes us for our arrogance. Here, the idea is corporate, not individual. He takes down entire nations in order to prove to those inside them that there is a God in heaven who is holy.

People need this discipline and rebuke, because without it, their thoughts are “**but a breath.**” In other words, they are vanity. This is **Ecclesiastes-Wisdom** language. Our sins are so stupid, because their pleasures won't last. Foolish, wicked people who go after the helpless, they are not remembering that to God, it is as if they are already dead and judged. We remember Moses's great song Psalm 90 here. Our days are nothing. Our thoughts are vanity. And anyone who thinks they will get away with rebellion is a fool.

The **fourth section** continues the theme of discipline, but with a twist. You see, the problem is that everyone deserves discipline and rebuke from God. There is no man who has

not sinned. But “Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law, to give him rest from days of trouble” (12-13a). God gave many laws, and the purpose of those was to keep us from doing senseless things that would have consequences. **When you are caught in sin, it has consequences**, even in a world as postmodern as ours and that says there is no such thing as right and wrong, it is unavoidable. Just ask any of the seemingly hundreds of famous people who have now lost jobs and face jail time for their perverse sexual behavior against others in recent months. *This is happening to people who hang out with and tell themselves that there is no such thing as right and wrong.* Yet, the flood gates have opened and this abyss of moral relativism that they all keep shouting from the rooftops isn’t showing itself to be so, is it? The Floods! Who will save us from the floods?

When you hear and you heed God’s law by doing what he tells you to do, you have rest from days of trouble. Even if you didn’t heed, but you heed his discipline, **the Day of Trouble will not find you**. For you have been saved from God’s wrath through the glorious works of Jesus Christ, the King whose promises we already saw have been made sure.

There is a way of forgiveness, for the worst of sinners and for those who continue to need forgiveness. Jesus is always there ready to forgive.

But those who will not heed the Word **dig a pit for themselves** (13b). They are not his people. God has a people who are forgiven of their sins are no longer counted among the wicked. Instead, they are his, and he will not forsake them or abandon his heritage (vs. 14). This is “inheritance” language is from **Deut 32:9** and **Ps 2:8**, and it belongs to the Son.

Because they are his, “**Justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it**” (15). I take this to mean that those who have been trampled down like mud in the streets will be vindicated, and those who previously were fools, walking in ways to consume God’s people will now walk in justice themselves, for God will open their dull ears and blind eyes and they will hear and see and be changed. For this is the blessing of discipline that is heeded, of hearing and perceiving the law of God. In other words, there is some kind of conversion taking place here by the power of God’s Word.

However, like the laments of Psalm 88-89 still teach, there are wicked people who seem to get away with everything and will never repent. And God's people seem powerless. So, in the fifth section begins, “Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers?” (16). The “me” here is the Psalmist. Any one who has been violated, especially any Christian, knows the feeling of these words. Who will stand up and do what is right? They both feel and usually are helpless.

Then, the King comes. “If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. When I thought, ‘My foot slips,’ your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up. When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul” (17-19). Spurgeon says, “Blessed be God, we are not left to that condition yet, for the Almighty Lord is still the helper of all those who look to him. Our inmost soul is bowed down when we see the victories of the Lord's enemies—we cannot brook it, we cover our mouths in confusion; but he will yet arise and avenge his own cause, therefore have we hope.”¹²

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 88-110*, vol. 4 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 146.

Finally, the last section of the song. “Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the LORD our God will wipe them out” (20-23). The song ends with these words of future comfort. And here we need to remember that this kind of judgment has been put into the hand of the Living Christ who comes again to Judge the Living and the Dead. We saw this especially in Psalm 52 and again in Psalm 74-76. We see it again here. And it reminds us that because we have such a powerful, sovereign, mighty King, one who has defeated the Flood that causes our fears, that he will also one day finally subdue all his enemies, putting them under his feet. One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. They will do this because he is the King. As King, he has the absolute right to do whatever he wants. This King wants justice for his people, and for righteousness to reign in his kingdom.

That kingdom is here now in his church, and his people are called to live pure and holy lives in it. For they have been subdued by the loving grace of a King who has rescued them from their sins. That kingdom will come in the future, in a fullness that no eye has seen or ear has heard. It will envelope the entire world and cosmos, as God brings all things under his feet. Therefore, you need to make sure you are in this kingdom and that this King considers you one of his. Trust in Jesus the King of Kings, Lord of lords, and God of gods. Find refuge in him alone. Trust in no other princes or presidents or potentates to save you. For they are but a breath, as you are. And very soon, all that will remain is the Throne of God and his glorious, eternal kingdom. Make sure you are in it.