

Psalm 50

Title: God Judges His People

Author and Date: Asaph

Key Verses: Psalm 50:4-7

Type: Didactic (Instruction)

Outline

- A. The Judge's call (verses 1-6).
- B. The Judge's trial (verses 7-21).
- C. The Judge's sentence (verses 22-23).

Notes

Title: "A Psalm of Asaph." Asaph was one of three choral leaders among the Levites (1 Chron. 6:39; 15:17-19; 25:6), the chief minister before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4-7, 37), and a seer (2 Chron. 29:30). He served in the time of David (Neh. 12:46). Twelve psalms are attributed to Asaph: Psalm 50 and Psalm 73-83.

Summary: Psalm 50 is a didactic psalm which instructs concerning the divine judgment of God upon his people, Israel (verses 4, 5, 7, and 16). God, the Mighty One, summons the whole earth to witness (verses 1-4) the judgment he will bring against his people (verses 5-6). God brings two charges against his people. First, God judges his people for their insincere formalism – they bring their sacrifices to God not themselves (verses 7-15). Second, God judges his people for their hypocritical lifestyle – they profess one thing and practice another (verses 16-21). The final two verses form a conclusion to the psalm. God promises to punish the wicked and save the righteous (verses 22-23). This psalm is similar in content to that of the prophets (like Isaiah and Amos) who expose Israel's insincere worship and hypocritical living.

Verse 1: God's coming in judgment is mighty and awesome (verses 1-3). For God's coming in judgment see Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4-5; Amos 1:2; and Micah 6:1-2. For the "Mighty One, God, Jehovah" see Joshua 22:22.

Verse 4: The focus of this particular judgment of God is upon "his people", Israel (see verse 7).

Verse 5: God made a covenant with Israel by sacrifice at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:5ff).

Verse 6: For the meaning of "Selah", see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verses 8-13: Israel is being reproofed for their empty, superficial, formalistic worship (see the notes on Psalm 40:6). They are not being reproofed for *what* they brought (verse 8), but for *how* they brought it. They brought their sacrifices with an empty routine and in a formalistic way. They simply went through the motions of sacrifice. They brought *what they owned* to God but they didn't bring *themselves* to God. This is insincere!

Verses 12-13: A spiritual being like God needs no material sustenance. Worship is about what *man* needs, not what God needs.

Verses 14-15: Israel is counseled to bring *themselves* to God. They need to come with thanksgiving, paid vows, and calling upon God. God wants *the person* not just *the possessions*. God wants a sacrifice of the heart and the life of the individual. "Offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving" is also found in verse 23.

Verses 16-17: Here, the wicked in Israel *profess* one thing (you take my covenant in your mouth) and *practice* another (you cast my words behind your back). They *talk* God's covenant (verses 16-17), but they do not *walk* God's covenant (verses 18-19). This is hypocritical!

Verse 21: Some of the Israelites thought that God did not care about their wicked behavior (Eccl. 8:11). They mistook God's silence (his longsuffering and patience) for indifference. They thought God's silence was his tolerance of their sin. The psalmist says that God does in fact speak (see verse 3) and he will reprove the wicked.

Verses 22-23: These verses summarize the teaching of the whole psalm: a warning to the wicked (verse 22) and a promise to the righteous (verse 23). God wants a heart-felt sacrifice of thanksgiving, not insincere formalism (summarizing verses 7-15). God wants an ordered life of obedience, not hypocritical profession (summarizing verses 16-21).

Questions

1. Who speaks and what does he do (verse 1)?
2. How is God's coming described (verses 2-3)?
3. Why does God call to the heavens and earth and who does he gather together (verses 4-5)?
4. What do the heavens declare and why (verse 6)?

5. What does God not take from Israel (verses 7-9)?
6. Why does God not want animal sacrifices from Israel (verses 10-13)?
7. What does God want from Israel that is not an animal sacrifice (verses 14-15)?
8. What do the wicked among Israel do with God's covenant (verses 16-17)?
9. What wicked actions are described (verses 18-20)?
10. How does God sometimes react to the actions of the wicked (verse 21)?
11. Why should the wicked consider what the psalmist is saying (verse 22)?
12. Who receives the "salvation of God" (verse 23)?

Applications for Today

1. God's coming is terrible and awesome (verses 1-3). What is God (Heb. 12:29)? How will Jesus come again (2 Thess. 1:7-8)?
2. God gathers his people for judgment (verses 4-6). Who will be gathered for judgment at the end of time (Mt. 25:31-32; Rev. 20:12)? Who will be the judge (2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:31)?
3. What we bring to God already belongs to God (verses 7-13). What belongs to the Lord (Psa. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26)?

4. The real (true) sacrifice that God wants is *the person* not just *the possession*. God wants *the obedience* of man not just *the oblation* of man (verses 14-15, and 23). What does Paul teach about what God wants and needs (Acts 17:24-27)? What part of the worshipper must accompany each act of worship: singing (Eph. 5:19), giving (2 Cor. 9:7), praying (Acts 12:5), the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:28-29), and preaching (Acts 16:14). What are Christians (Rom. 12:1-2)?

5. It is wrong to profess one thing and practice another (verses 16-17). What does Paul say about this in 2 Timothy 3:5 and Titus 1:16? What problem among the Jews does Paul address in Romans 2:21-23?

6. It is just as wrong to consent with wickedness as it is to engage in wickedness (verse 18). What does Romans 1:32 say? What are Christians not to fellowship (2 Cor. 6:14ff; Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:22)?

7. We must guard ourselves against sins of the tongue (verses 19-20). What did Paul say about the tongue in Ephesians 4:29 and 5:4? What did James say about the tongue in James 3:9-10? What did Peter say about the tongue in 1 Peter 3:10?

8. Many people think that God is just like them and that he ignores their wicked behavior (verse 21). What happens when sentence against evil-doers is not executed speedily (Eccl. 8:11)?

9. The "salvation of God" comes to the person who is willing to order his way according to God's word (verse 23). What must one do to be saved (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:21,38,41; 16:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:20-21)?