

PSALM 14

I. BIBLICAL TEXT

Folly and Wickedness of Men

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

1 *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. 2 The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. 3 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. 4 Do all the workers of wickedness not know, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord? 5 There they are in great dread, for God is with the righteous generation. 6 You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, but the Lord is his refuge. 7 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores His captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad.*

II. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

B. AUTHORSHIP

DAVID—ATTRIBUTED IN HEADING

C. OCCASION

UNKNOWN SITUATION

BUT SIMILAR TO PSALM 12—WHEN GODLY PEOPLE HAVE VANISHED

D. THEMES

- FOOLS DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE GOD
- GOD'S OBJECTIVE JUDGMENT—ALL HUMANS ARE SINNERS
- HOW GODLESS PEOPLE MISUNDERSTAND REALITY
- SALVATION WILL COME TO THOSE RIGHTLY RELATED TO GOD

E. STRUCTURE

- SEVEN STANZAS—EACH VERSE IS A STANZA

F. OUTLINE

- GODLESS PERSONS ARE FOOLS—v1
 - o Result—sinful behavior
 - o Situation—leads to two questions

1. Is anyone godly—which can be answered only by God

2. Why are people so foolish—as to be godless

- GOD'S PERSPECTIVE—**vv2-3**
 - Question—is anyone godly?—**v2**
 - Answer—**v3**
 - They all are godless
 - They all are sinful
- MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE FOOLISH—**vv4-6**
 - Question—don't they know the consequences—**v4**
 - Of sinful behavior—against my people
 - Of not acknowledging God
 - God sides with the righteous—**vv5-6**
 - Bringing great dread on the godless
 - Foiling godless plans to shame the afflicted—God is his refuge
- RESPONSE OF THE RIGHTEOUS
 - Plea of hope—**v7a**
 - For salvation to come to Israel—the righteous/afflicted
 - For the Lord will restore His captive people
 - Belief in certain deliverance—**7b**
 - The Lord will restore His captive people
 - They will rejoice and be glad

G. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. **Psalm 53**—almost mirrors **Psalm 14**
 - a. Variation = **vv5b-6** of **Ps 14**—vs—**v5** of **Ps 53**
 - b. **Psalm 14**—addresses general situation
 - How the wicked will not put to shame the righteous
 - c. **Psalm 53**—addresses national crisis
 - The enemy of Israel—will be scattered and put to shame
2. **Rom 3:10-12**—quotes and paraphrases **verses 2-3**

III. EXPOSITION

1 *The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good.*

- GODLESS PERSONS ARE FOOLS—v1
 - o Result—sinful behavior
 - o Situation—leads to two questions
 - Is anyone godly—which can be answered only by God
 - Why are people so foolish—as to be godless

1. The **fool**—[who is godless]

a. Hebrew = **nabal**

Meaning = withered—without sap

Senseless—falling down—fading away—coming to nothing—disgraceful—dishonorable

b. **Example—Nabal—Abigail’s husband—I Sam 25:25**

Aggressively perverse—thoughtless—ungrateful—stupidly defying David

2. The **pronouncement** of the fool

a. *There is no God*

God = Elohim

There is no creator God

b. Practical Atheism

Like **10:4**—the wicked says ‘there is no god’

Not philosophic atheism—but living as if there is no God

In **Psalm 10**—the wicked who do not ‘believe’—speak about God

Forgetting and not seeing—**10:11**

Not requiring accountability—**10:13**

c. Meaning

The creator God—*Elohim*—is not present

Implication—there is no accountability to Him

3. Godlessness reveals itself two ways

a. Opposing His laws—sinful rebellion—vv2-3

b. Oppressing His people—vv4-6

4. The nature of this ‘atheistic’ foolishness

a. Not intellectual weakness or mental stupidity

Instead—stubborn refusal to acknowledge God

Delusion of the heart

The fool has said—*in his heart*

Self-deluded

Rom 1:22—*Claiming to be wise, the become fools*

b. Materialists

Godly and spiritual things are not worthwhile

All that matters is this world—and its matter

c. Defiant attitude

1. Strongly defiant

These are *not* adjectives—but **verbs**

Acting corruptly = **shachath**

Acting abominably = **ta’ab**

Double verbs—alongside each other—intensifies nature of badness

2. With three **outcomes**

To **self**—has acted *corruptly*

Hebrew word used first in **Gen 6:12**

Describes state of humankind—just before the Flood

Often used in OT—to describe apostasy of Israel

To **God**—they are abominable = offensive

To **fellow humans**—they act sinfully—no one does good

5. Godless foolishness—explained by other texts

Ps 10:4ff—they gamble—that God doesn’t hear/see—and won’t punish them

Job 21:7-15—they become impatient with authority

Rom 1:18ff—the commit intellectual and moral suicide

2 The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. 3 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

- **GOD'S PERSPECTIVE—vv2-3**
 - Question—is anyone godly?—v2
 - Answer—v3
 - They all are godless
 - They all are sinful

1. The Lord—is present—and responds

Change in terminology—to 'Jehovah'

Jehovah is responsible for creation—the 'Lord God'—in **Genesis 2**

More personal and intimate account

Breathed life into man

Created *woman*—from man

Personal—covenant God—of Israel

2. The Lord's perspective

Only God can objectively judge the true state of humankind

He has looked down—from heaven

Literally = 'bowed Himself over'

Perspective of most of the psalm—**vv2-6**

Changes in the last verse—when God's people have their say

Three similar situations—when God looked down—to see the human condition

Before the Flood—God surveyed humankind—**Gen 6**

Tower of Babel—the Lord came down to survey the situation—**Gen 11**

Before destroying Sodom—**Gen 18**

3. Object of Jehovah's viewpoint = 'sons of men'

Literally—**children of Adam**

All humankind—posterity of Adam

Members of a fallen race—descended from Adam

Jehovah's personal relation with all creation

As covenant God of Israel—Jehovah—not just as Elohim (creator God)

Relates to all creation—and humankind—in personal way

Caring and concerned for every person—all of Adam's race

4. The questions

Does anyone *really* understand?

True understanding— **sakal**

Being prudent and insightful

Contrasted with foolishness and self-delusion

Does anyone *really* seek God?

Seek = not just to look for—but **darash**

Seeking for a purpose—to have a relationship with—to worship

Even God as *Elohim*—who—[implied] should be evident to every person in creation

5. The pronouncement of God

Verse 3—begins the words of Jehovah begin here

Conclusion—all humankind is guilty

All persons have *turned aside*

Literally—departed—vanished

Similar ideal to **12:1**

There—a different verb—the godly have ceased/disappeared

All persons are *corrupt*

Literally—tainted—spoiled

Arabic cognate = soured—like spoiled milk

Morally tainted

Job 15:14-16—*What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He who puts not trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight; how much less one who is detestable and corrupt, man, who drinks iniquity like water.*

Nobody does good good—evil

6. Problem—what about the **righteous**—where are they?

Similar to **12:1**—are there really no more 'godly' persons present?

Two possibilities

Hyperbole—one's *impression* of the general state of all humankind—like **12:1**

Difference—in **12:1**—gives the perspective of the psalmist

In **14:3**—this is God's judgment—which is absolute!

Accurate description of human nature—from God's view

Everyone is indeed corrupt—and practically godless

Before being regenerated by God

7. Not just an OT problem—but perennial state of humankind

Has looked down—perfect tense

Completed action—with continued results

Suggests—ongoing present activity—and He continues to look down

So—the pronouncement that follows—is a perpetual one

vv2-3 repeated in **Rom 3:10-12**

Partly quoted—partly paraphrased—in different order

Rom 3:10-12—*There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good. There is not even one.*

4 *Do all the workers of wickedness not know, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord?* **5** *There they are in great dread, for God is with the righteous generation.* **6** *You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, but the Lord is his refuge.*

- **MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE FOOLISH—vv4-6**
 - Question—don't they know the consequences—**v4**
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1. **Verses 4-6**—Psalmist's words—on God's behalf

2. General attitude

Complacency in disobedience

Indifference to God—not ignorance about His existence and judgment

The height of folly—reflected by the nature of the rhetorical question

Have they lost their mind?—Are they out of their wits?

They have **no sense**—no awareness—of true reality

3. **No sense**—of **ethical responsibility**—v4

They consume other people—use them for their own good

Like immoral rulers of Israel

Mic 3:3—*Who eat the flesh of my people, strip off their skin from them, break their bones and chop them up for the pot and as meat in a kettle*

While *they eat bread*

Possibly—secular rulers filling their stomach—at the expense of others they consume

Possibly—priests eating bread brought by others—while abusing them

3, **No sense**—of awe and **worship** of God—v 4

To call upon the Lord = to worship God

4. **No sense**—of **dread**—v5

They have a “**no fear**” attitude

In reality—they are—in a situation of great ‘terror’

Implied—but they are not even aware of this

Because—of their *lack* of relationship with God

God is with the righteous generation

Elohim—**creator** God—whom they do not seek—v2

Not just as Jehovah—He relates to people beyond the covenant!

Implied—God is *not* with them—because they oppose the righteous

5. **No sense**—of **accountability**—v6

They try to shame the afflicted

Those who take [wise] counsel—make [wise] plans

The afflicted—are the very ones whom the Lord protects

Psalmist returns to covenant language

The Lord—**Jehovah**—is their refuge

Setting the stage for Israel to be glad—in **verse 7**

7 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores His captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad.

- RESPONSE OF THE RIGHTEOUS
 - Plea of hope—v7a
 - For salvation to come to Israel—the righteous/afflicted
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1. Salvation comes out of Zion

Psalmist's intent—might be literally—the mount in Jerusalem

But more likely—Zion = heaven

Ps 9:11—*Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion*

2. Who are the 'restored'?

The Lord restores His **captive** people

Some scholars think this is a later psalm—during/after exile

The Lord restores the **fortunes** of his people

More comprehensive perspective—fits earlier composition—by David

3. Response of God's people

Similar to ending of previous psalm

See **Psalm 13:5-6**

4. Deliverance—obvious Messianic theme and tone of **verse 7**