



Watchman Prayer Alert

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. – Isaiah 62:6

The Pernicious Lie

“Blasphemy!” They shrieked.

“Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’? If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside— what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse Me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”

Jesus Himself phrased this question and posed it to the Jews who were ready to stone Him. (John 10:34-36) In this passage Jesus quoted from Psalm 82:6, which says, “I said, ‘You are “gods”’; you are all sons of the Most High.”

These two verses make it sound like we as mortal humans can ascend to divine status. As perfected mankind can we climb through the ranks to become gods ourselves? Art, religion and literature all perpetuate this idea. This is a common theme in art dating back centuries to the ancients. The mural on the ceiling of our own capital dome in Washington DC called the “*Apotheosis of Washington*” depicts George Washington reigning as a god. (NOTE: Apotheosis means the elevation of someone to divine status.) A couple of clean cut Jehovah Witnesses may knock on your door and tell you that you too can become a god. And, this idea is perpetuated in popular fiction novels. This concept threatens to swallow us.

How can God in scripture declare that we humans are gods when at the same time He strictly forbids worship of other gods? Why would Jesus quote this verse in His own defense? Personally, this is a verse I would prefer to ignore, because taken in the context of the entire Word of God, it truly smacks of blasphemy. Why would God allow this phrase in canonized text when He knows that this idea has been our Achilles’ heel from the very beginning? When Satan tempted Eve, he told her she would be like God knowing good and evil. We were severely punished for Eve’s aspirations to become like God.

On the flip side, we understand that we were made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). We all have a spark of the



divine within us, for He breathed on us (John 20:22). Jesus died that we might be grafted into the vine and be one with God (John 15:5-8). Paul says we are adopted as sons (Ephesians 1:5). We are sons of God (Romans 8:14).

Mysteries

A divine tension exists here that defines our relationship with our Creator. As difficult as it is for me to wrap my head around this concept, we must open a discussion and attempt to reconcile the pieces of this puzzle as presented in the whole of scripture.

The pernicious lie from the beginning persists today. We hear it all around us. We can become like God. We are masters of our own destiny. We control our own lives. Humans have so much untapped potential. We could bend space and time to our will, if we could only learn to harness our true ability and focus our thoughts. If we were united, our combined thoughts could physically reshape our world. From the many, one! Was this what God truly intended for us? Is this the real meaning of our verse in question?

Closer Look at Psalms

Let’s look more closely as the two verses we already quoted. Take a minute and read all of Psalm 82. If you put these phrases in the context in which they were written, what stands out to you?

The most obvious point in Psalm 82, which we tend to gloss over, is the very next phrase. *“I said, ‘You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High.’ But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.”* (Psalm 82:6-7)

The irony is that these declared gods are mortal and will all perish. Was the first half of the paragraph a mocking and the second a dose of reality? God taunted, “Ha! You are gods, but you will still die.” How can we be gods if our life is so easily extinguished?

When reading the entire chapter in context, we see the theme of judges and judgment. In verse 1 God sits in judgment of the *“rulers.”* This word that is translated *“rulers”* here is the same word that is also used for *“God”* in verse 1 and for *“gods”* in verses 5-6. Verse 1 declares that God judges all other rulers and gods. The last verse is also a call for God Almighty to judge the kingdoms of the earth. Even if you are a god, you must recognize (v. 8) that all the nations belong to God Almighty.

Verses 2-5 juxtapose the codes of judgment that God employs against the corrupt judgment of mortal gods. God will be fair, defend the orphan and the weak, protect the poor and oppressed, and rescue the needy from the wicked. Contrast that with the unjust rulers who exist without knowledge and understanding, walking blind in the dark.

What kind of god is that? Not only are the earthly *“gods”* mortal, they also have an incomplete picture and are groping in the dark. So, the psalmist may be using irony to point out the fallacy of our divinity.

Or, he may be using another definition of the Hebrew word for *“god.”* The word also means judge or ruler. For example, God told Moses that He made Moses *“like God to Pharaoh.”* (Exodus 7:1) In this instance God did not convey divine status on Moses. He simply appointed Moses as His agent acting in His stead. Moses was a judge who carried out the divine will of God. It could be that God said, *“You are gods”* because He was also making the hearers His agents.

Closer look at John

Now, read through John 10:22-39 and note any observations in light of Psalm 82.

It seems to me that the Jews are acting as judges, mortal rulers and agents of God, speaking on behalf of God. In short they are making themselves out to be

gods as defined in Psalm 82 that Jesus quoted. Jesus is equating the Jewish rulers with the unjust gods of the psalm.

However, with His very next breath, Jesus clearly relates Psalm 82:6 to Himself. His argument is this. If God declared that you rulers are gods, then why are you offended when the One who God sent into the world says that He is God’s Son?

Jesus doesn’t stop there, though. He goes on to cite His good works. *“Don’t believe Me unless I do the works of my Father, but if I do them, ... believe the works.”* Half of Psalm 82 was talking about the very works of God that Jesus was using in His defense.

- God defends the weak and the fatherless.
- God upholds the cause of the poor and oppressed.
- God rescues the weak and needy.
- God does not defer to the wicked or acquit the unjust.

Does that sound like the life’s work of Jesus? In one brilliant rebuttal, Jesus both accused His opponents of groping in the dark without understanding or knowledge, and validated His own position as God by the work that He had done with the poor, neglected underdogs of His society.

The First Commandment

Consider the magnitude of God for just a minute. Who is He really? Meditate on this:

“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, or with the breadth of His hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? Who can fathom the Spirit of the Lord, or instruct the Lord as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten Him, and who taught Him the right way? Who was it that taught Him knowledge, or showed Him the path of understanding? Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. ...Before Him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by Him as worthless and less than nothing. With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken Him?” (Isaiah 40:12-18)

As the first of all the commandments, which God ordained for His people, He commanded, *“You shall have no other gods before Me.”* (Exodus 20:3)

Becoming our own god (ruler or judge) would violate this primary mandate from God Himself.

Repeatedly throughout His word, God declared, *"I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me."* (Isaiah 44:6, 45:6, 18, 22, 46:9, 47:10, 48:12) God explained, *"My glory I will not give to another."* (Isaiah 48:11) There is no other way to interpret these words. Either God is my only God, or He is not God at all. If we humans are gods, then we violate the prime directive. If I am a god, then how can I reconcile these verses declaring God Almighty to be the one and only God?

Who are You, O Man?

Job, in his grief and pain, contended with God. With his finite mind, his complaints made perfect sense. Then God answered Job. (This is my abbreviated version.) *"Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct me! Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth? Who set its measure? On what were its bases sunk? Or who enclosed the sea with doors when bursting forth it went out from the womb? Have you ever in your life commanded the morning and caused the dawn to know its place? Have you entered the storehouses of snow? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season and guide the bear with her satellites?"* (Job 38)

How limited is our ego-centric view of the universe? Jesus told us, *"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."* (John 15:6) Our connection with God IS the magic sauce. Without Him, we are nothing. With Him, we move mountains. Can we really claim divinity? We could, but shortly thereafter we will be presented with our own mortality.

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom." (Isaiah 40:28) There is only one God. I am not God. I am not a god. And, dear friends, neither are you.

Before we lift an isolated verse from the Psalms out

of context and define a theology around it, we best ponder long and hard on the consequences of such an act that is in direct violation of the prime directive from the Master of the Entire Universe.

The Expanse

Late in the evening on a clear night with a moonless sky in the rural regions, take a look at the twinkling hosts, count the stars and name each one. Can you even list all the constellations?

Stand on the shore of the one of earth's oceans and ponder the vast expanse beyond your view and outside the reach of your control. How significant do you feel?

Picture yourself in the emergency room bent doubled writhing in agony as the waves of horrendous pain swallow your future again. Can you heal yourself?

Using your only your spoken word, attempt to create life (or just bend a spoon). How potent are your thoughts?

Watch the trajectory of a hurricane as it treks across the open waters, makes landfall wherever it wills and wreaks havoc on the works of mankind. Can you stop the carnage?

Walk into a cave, and in total darkness when you cannot see your hand in front of your face, remain calm. Can you picture your place in the universe?

Wrestle a mammoth alligator with your bare hands. How powerful are you now?

Just look into the eyes of a grief stricken widow and absolve her pain? Do you have that ability?

Now try to say, "I AM GOD." I dare you.

We are finite, limited in knowledge, in vision, in space and in time. Why would we ever want to be God? What could possibly possess us to fathom that divinity would even be possible or desirable? Is it not infinitely better to know who we are and where our place is?

We are adopted and cherished sons and daughters of God Almighty who have complete access to His throne room to make our requests at any time, day or night. What could be better?

**Now to the
King eternal,
immortal,
invisible, the
only God, be
honor and
glory forever
and ever.
Amen.**

-1 Timothy 1:17

