

Exegesis of Psalm 50

Biblical Studies

The Rev. Dennis Whalen
Lighthouse Lutheran Church
Freedom, PA 15042

INTRODUCTION

Over the last couple of months, I have completed the rewarding work of translating the Hebrew text of Psalm 50; I have examined the notes contained within the Critical Apparatus; and I have spent countless hours of work cross-referencing and contemplating how Psalm 50 fits into God's revealed Word to us. All of this effort has been worth it. I now know so much more about this Psalm than I did when I started. This paper is an attempt to organize and document the fruits of my labor so that others may also be blessed by its reading.

REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The Bible is God's inspired, written Word revealing to mankind His unfolding plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. Analyzing the redemptive-historical aspect of the Psalm assists in identifying how God dealt with His people at a particular point within His plan. When God's people heard His Word they looked forward to a promised land, seed, and blessing. They understood and believed in the fulfillment of that promise. As we read this Psalm in the context of its redemptive historical character, we look back and witness God speaking truth to His people, dealing with their shaken faith, and furthering His ultimate intent – redemption through the life, death, and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ.

Two key historical references contained within the Psalm assist in pinpointing when this Psalm was written: the mention of the author Asaph in verse 1 and the citation of Zion in verse 2.

The name Asaph appears many times throughout the Old Testament. At least three different men go by the name Asaph:

Nehemiah 2:8 refers to a man named Asaph who is the keeper of the king's forest. When Nehemiah was returning from exile in Babylon back to Judah, he desired timber from this forest. This timber would assist in the rebuilding of the gates of the fortress by the temple. These gates, as well as the city, were destroyed during the Babylonian assaults on the city. Nehemiah returned from exile sometime between 445 BC¹. Without question, this man did not author the Psalms that bear the name Asaph.

2 Kings 18:18 refers to Asaph, the father of Joah, the recorder. During the time when Sennacherib and his Assyrian forces invaded Judah, Rabshekeh called out to King Hezekiah with taunting words against God. The reference in this text is only a reference of Asaph as a father of Joah. The Assyrian invasion occurred approximately 701 BC². In addition, King Hezekiah ordered the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and Asaph (2 Chronicles 29:30). The occurrence of the name Asaph appears to be referencing a different person than the father of Joah. The Levites are to sing praises with the words of Asaph. The praises written to the LORD from this man appear to be on the same inspirational level as those of David. King Hezekiah is ordering the Levites to sing the Psalms. This man, the father of Joah, did not author the Psalms that bear the name Asaph.

¹ Raymond B. Dillard, and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 182.

² R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1970), 236.

A third reference to a man named Asaph is found throughout 1st and 2nd Chronicles. This man named Asaph descended from the tribe of Levi (1st Chronicles 6:39-43). In addition, Asaph is described in 1st Chronicles 15:19 as a singer and a player of the bronze cymbals. On the day that the Ark was first brought to Jerusalem, David assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord (1st Chronicles 16:7). Asaph is listed among the singers in the house of the Lord. Lastly, Nehemiah writes of this same man, Asaph, as a leader of the singers during the days of David. This man is also given the title “a seer”. Based on the previous evidence cited, this is the author of the Psalms, the Levitical descendent, Asaph, who was the leader of the temple singers and played the bronze cymbal. Since David’s reign was between 1010 BC and 970 BC³, this narrows the dating of the Psalm to a forty-year timespan.

Psalm 50 also refers to Zion in verse 2. 2nd Samuel 5:7 described David’s conquering of the Jebusite stronghold of Zion. This place became the city of David, Jerusalem, approximately 1000 BC. This information assists in narrowing the timeframe of the date of authorship. The earliest date that Asaph authored this Psalm is 1000 BC, the date of David’s conquest of Zion. The latest approximate date that Asaph authored this Psalm is 970 BC, the date of the death of King David. This date must remain an approximation, since Asaph may have continued to author Psalms after the death of King David⁴.

Throughout the Psalter, twelve Psalms bear Asaph’s name as author. These Psalms include Psalm 50 and Psalms 73 through 83. Why the Holy Spirit separated out Psalm

³ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴ Psalm 79 is another Psalm that cites Asaph as author. This Psalm also cites the destruction of Jerusalem. Since the destruction of Jerusalem occurs in the 586 BC, Asaph is prophesying. However, with the mention of the Temple, there is a likelihood that Asaph continue to write Psalms after the reign of King David, during King Solomon’s reign.

50 from the rest of Asaph's Psalms is unknown. One interesting point concerning authorship is this: while certain higher-critical scholars express doubt as to Asaph's authorship of Psalms 73 through 83, there is general agreement that Psalm 50 is an original Psalm of Asaph⁵.

In narrowing down the authorship and timeframe of the Psalm, certain events are identified that assist in identifying God's dealing with His people. God anoints David as King over all Israel. In turn, David defeats the Jebusite stronghold of Zion and called it the city of David (2 Samuel 5:9). During David's reign, he fights off an attack by the Philistines, brings the ark to the city of David, and God makes a covenant with David that his kingdom will endure forever. In return for the goodness of God, David begins to sin. David commits adultery with Bathsheba, deliberately schemes to kill her husband Uriah, and witnesses -- as punishment -- the death of his child. However, God uses all of this for His good to forward his redemptive plan. David returns to the Lord in worship after the death of his child. David's faith is restored and soon, Bathsheba gives birth to Solomon. God wrestles with His people, especially King David, during this span of time. God does not desire lip service from His people and He demands worship from their innermost being, their hearts. Even though God makes a covenant with David, that his kingdom would last forever, God is still angry at the way David lives his life. Thus, the Lord responds by taking away David's child. This act displays the seriousness of the Lord's wrath. He gives us life to worship Him and do His will. We are not here for the Lord, but the Lord is here for mankind.

⁵ C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Translated by Francis Bolton, Vol. 5. 10 vols, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 358.

Psalm 50 contains several references to antecedent Scripture. Although most of these references are detailed in the verse-by-verse commentary, it is important to identify two very important ones in this section concerning redemptive-history: covenant and sacrifice. The redemptive-historical overview focuses on the covenantal language found throughout the Old Testament. These words, “I will be your God and you will be My people”, identify God’s covenantal love for His elect. Psalm 50 carries this theme forward. God, in an act of love toward His people, reminds them that His covenantal love desires obedience. The assembly still sacrifices animals, but in doing so they are only fulfilling God’s requests in an outward, rote manner. The ritualistic sacrifices are carried out, but the hearts of His people no longer love their God with all their heart, soul, and mind. This is a serious breach of the covenant. The redemptive-historical approach forces a twenty-first century Christian to not only look backward, but also comprehend God’s ultimate purpose in these expressions of faith. Christians today understand that the sacrificial system was a temporary ceremony that pointed to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for the removal of sin. God desired, not the external practice of sacrifice from His people, but a heart of praise toward their Creator.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Psalm 50 contains the details of a covenantal lawsuit against God’s people. Although many of the Psalms contain language that refer to God as the Judge (i.e. Psalm 75, 82), this Psalm is unique in the picturesque language used to describe the courtroom scene. In addition to the vivid courtroom scene, the evidence presented identifies the lack of heartfelt obedience from His people. The Psalmist writes that, even though God

commanded sacrifice, He does not desire it. This lament from God is found as a theme in other Psalms as well (i.e. Psalm 40, 69, 51). Other Old Testament books such as Proverbs 21:3 and Hosea 6:6 identify God's true desire are mercy and steadfast love (covenantal love) rather than sacrifice. The New Testament writers also elaborate on this theme. When Christ was eating with the tax collectors (Matthew 9:13), Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6 concerning God's true desire. Again, when Christ was plucking from the grain fields on the Sabbath, the Pharisees questioned Him concerning His following of the Law. Jesus again quotes from Hosea 6:6 that God does not desire an outward fulfillment of the Law, but a heart of mercy (Matthew 12:7). The author of the book of Hebrews also writes concerning sacrifice, but the author quotes from Psalm 40. In Hebrews 10:5, 8, the author writes that Christ's sacrifice was "once for all" and the reason given is from Psalm 40, "sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices you have not desired, you have not taken pleasure in them".

The Psalm is structured into three parts. The first part (verses 1-6) describes the Almighty God summoning court and subpoenaing His witnesses as well as those who stand on trial. In this scene, the accused are those making sacrifices – the people of God. The witnesses are heaven and earth, which is a symbolic manner of citing all of creation. God Almighty, the Judge, sits on His throne in heaven and looks down on His creation. Vivid images of fire and storms point the reader back to the image on Mount Sinai when God gave the commandments to Moses. The imagery paints a terrifying and frightful scene.

The second part (verses 7-21) describes the evidence against the accused. Within this second part, there appears to be a separation between God's people. Verses 7-15 are the accusations against people within the assembly that go through the motions of sacrifice, but do not have a heartfelt desire for the Lord. God, the Judge, tells the people that everything is already His. Does He really need their sacrifices? The answer, of course, is, "No!" The sacrificial system was put into place for their benefit and not His. If His people only go through the motions then they will not understand the promised gift and sacrifice of Jesus Christ when He comes. In verses 16-21, God addresses a different group within the assembly. This group is the people that recite the laws of God and receive His covenant, but they act like pagans. Although they are counted among the assembly, they are thieves, adulterers, deceivers, and slanderers. They have not acted like children of the covenant.

The third and last part (verses 22-23) announces God's verdict on His people. The verdict is that God will tear to pieces all those who forget Him and that there will be no one to rescue them. However, this Psalm is prophetic in that this verdict is not the final judgment. This prophetic literature indicates a judgment based on how the people are acting at this time. God is merciful and slow to anger. This Psalm is a wake-up call to His people. The final verse of this part of the Psalm indicates that God's people who sacrifice thank-offerings honor Him and God will show that person salvation. The author of the book of Hebrews indicates that a true sacrifice of thank-offerings comes from the fruit of lips in praise to God (Hebrews 13:15).

The most prominent literary device used in this Psalm is the striking image of God Almighty calling all of His Creation to court. He does not require evidence to decree judgment over our souls because He is all knowing. The evidence is used for our benefit to convict our souls and break the stone fortresses that have been built up. His people hide in darkness and convince their minds that God cannot see their wicked ways. This imagery cuts to the core of human sinfulness. God not only sees their sacrifices, which He commanded, but He also calls out their heart. God not only sees their profession of covenantal community and recitation of His laws, but He also sees their actions in the dark against their neighbor. In some ways, the people described in verses 7-15 have forgotten to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5), whereas the people described in verses 16-21 have forgotten to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

The translation of Psalm 50 below is a quite literal rendering from the BHS text. This translation is used throughout the verse-by-verse commentary:

- 1 psalm of-Asaph Almighty-God God Adonai he-speaks and-he-summons earth out-of-sunrise-of sun to its-setting
- 2 out-of-Zion perfection-of beauty God he-shines-forth
- 3 he-comes our-God and-not he-will-be-silent fire-of-to-his-face it-devours and-ones-around-him she-storms greatly
- 4 he-summons to the-heavens out-of-above and-to the-earth to-judge His-people
- 5 gather! to-me my-consecrated-ones ones-making my-covenant by sacrifice
- 6 and-they-proclaim heavens his-righteousness for God one-judging he selah

- 7 hear! My-people and-I-will-speak Israel and-I-will-testify against-you God your-God I
- 8 not for your-sacrifices I-rebuke-you and-your-burnt-offerings at-before-me forever
- 9 not I-need from-your-stall bull from-your-pens goats
- 10 for to-me everything-of animal-of forest wild-beasts on-hills-of thousand
- 11 I-know every-of bird mountains and-creatures field with-me
- 12 if I-were-hungry not I-would-tell to-you for to-me world and-all-in-her
- 13 do-I-eat? flesh bulls and-blood goats do-I-drink
- 14 Sacrifice! to-God thank-offering and-fulfill! to-Most-High your-vows
- 15 and-call-upon-me! in-day trouble I-will-deliver-you and-you-will-honor-me
- 16 and-to-the-wicked he-says God what? to-you to-recite my-laws and-you-take my-covenant on your-lips
- 17 and-you you-hate instruction and-you-throw-away my-words behind-you
- 18 if you-see thief and-you-join with-him and-with ones-committing-adultery your-lot
- 19 your-mouth you-use for-evil and-your-tongue you-harness deceit
- 20 you-sit against-your-brother you-speak against-son-of your-mother you-give slander
- 21 these you-did and-I-kept-silent you-thought to-be I-was just-like-you I-will-rebuke-you and-I-will-accuse before-your-eyes

- 22 consider! now! this ones-forgetting God lest I-will-tear-you-to-pieces and-there-is-none one-rescuing
- 23 one-sacrificing thank-offering he-honors-me and-prepares-me way I-will-show-him to-salvation God

The Judge enters and calls the court In-Session

Verse 1 psalm of-Asaph Almighty-God God Adonai he-speaks and-he-summons earth out-of-sunrise-of sun to its-setting

מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה דִּבֶּר וַיִּקְרָא אֶרֶץ מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד-מִבְּאֵר¹:

The first verse begins with the inscription of its author. מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף is translated “psalm of-Asaph”. Although some of the Psalms latter ascribed to Asaph (73-83) have been questioned by higher critics⁶, it is generally agreed that Asaph, the leader of the temple singers, wrote Psalm 50. The next three Hebrew words are particular, אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים. Each word is a name of God (Almighty-God, God, and Adonai) and the three together only occur in one other place in the Old Testament (Joshua 22:22). As the Holy Spirit paints the courtroom scene through the writings of Asaph, one name is simply not enough. The true God of Israel, called by three holy names, is approaching the bench for judgment. This surely would have the attention of the readers and listeners of the Psalm.

As the Creator takes His seat as Judge over His people, God summons all of the Earth, from sunrise to sunset. Psalm 113:3 utilizes the same phrase while giving God praise. The Psalmist writes, “Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time and forever. From the rising of the sun to its setting...” (Psalm 113:2-3). Clearly, Asaph is using imagery to demonstrate that God is the Creator of *all* the Earth and *all* that is on the Earth. In this courtroom, God commands His handiwork to appear before Him.

⁶ The discussion of the authorship of Psalms 73 through 83 is out of the scope of this paper. However, the Hebrew manuscripts indicate that each of these Psalms are “... of Asaph” (@sal), which is enough evidence to prove authorship.

There is one item in the Critical Apparatus to investigate. The text in question is עַד. The note contained within the Critical Apparatus is “nonn Mss Ḳ̄^A יַעַד”, which is translated as “some/several Hebrew manuscripts [LXX, codex Ambrosianus] contain יַעַד which are translated ‘and-to’. According to this note, some Hebrew manuscripts would translate the last part of this text to “...and-he-summons earth out-of-sunrise-of sun and to its-setting”. There is no warrant to justify this change of the Hebrew manuscript. In addition, the change would not alter the meaning of the text at all.

Verse 2 out-of-Zion perfection-of beauty God he-shines-forth

מִצִּיּוֹן מְכַלְל־יָפִי אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ: ²

God is judging from Zion. Zion was the city of David, the beloved King of Israel. This reference may focus the attention of the Israelites to Jerusalem, where God desired to dwell among His people (2 Samuel 7:1-17) in the Temple. This reference may also be prophetic in nature and refer to the Zion that is to come. These types of references can be found not only in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, but also among the New Testament writers as well (Matt 21:5, John 12:5, Rev 14:1). In either case, wherever God dwells there is perfect beauty.

In addition to Psalm 50, God’s “shining forth” is also referenced in Psalm 94. Psalm 94 details God as the avenger of righteousness. Similarly, God is summoning His court to pronounce a judgment upon His people concerning righteousness. Psalm 94 continues in verse 2 to call God, “Judge of the Earth”. It is difficult to miss the similarity between these two Psalms.

The description of perfect beauty shining forth conjures up images of the Shekinah Glory, God's visible presence, that appeared to the Israelites as a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night (Exodus 13:20-22).

Verse 3 he-comes our-God and-not he-will-be-silent fire-of-to-his-face it-devours and-ones-around-him she-storms greatly

יֵבֵא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵל-יִחְרֵשׁ אֵשׁ-לְפָנָיו תֹּאכֵל וְסָבִיבוֹ נִשְׁעָרָה מְאֹד: ³

Verse 3 leads the reader and listener back to Mount Sinai. God will not be silent and the references to the “fire of His face” and the “surrounding storms” paint a vivid picture of that moment in time when Moses went up the mountain and came into the sight of His people to deliver the Law (Exodus 19:11-25). The fire and storm are images of God's wrath and presence among His people. Even latter prophets, such as Isaiah and Amos, use words such as fire and storm when speaking of God's judgment: Amos writes in his book “So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah and it will consume her citadels amid war cries on the day of battle, and a storm on the day of tempest” (Amos 1:14). Isaiah uses similar language, “From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire” (Isaiah 29:6). An Israelite would understand, in Psalm 50, that God is entering His throne room to pronounce judgment upon His people. He is compassionate and slow to anger. He has been quiet and merciful upon His people, but their time is running out. The Judge is about to speak.

There are two items in the Critical Apparatus to discuss. In the first, the text אֱלֹהֵינוּ is called into question. The Critical Apparatus note indicates “pc Mss אֱלֹהֵינוּ”, which is

translated “a few Hebrew manuscripts [Syriaca] end with the ים suffix”. In other words, a few manuscripts have the words “our God” translated as “your God”. There is no warrant to justify this change of the Hebrew manuscript. In addition, the change to the text would not alter the meaning at all. The second item in the Critical Apparatus pertains to the text וְשֹׁעֵרָה. The Critical Apparatus note indicates “mlt Mss נסע”, which is translated “many Hebrew manuscripts are translated ‘he-pulls-out’ or ‘he-tears-out’”. The note here is questioning the Hebrew word meaning, “she-storms” and considers a different Hebrew word meaning “he-tears-out”. Again, there is no warrant to justify this change. One can see how the imagery used for God being “stormy” or “tearing out” is similar in their understanding. Both indicate wrath and fury.

Verse 4 he-summons to the-heavens out-of-above and-to the-earth to-judge His-people

וְקָרָא אֶל-הַשָּׁמַיִם מֵעַל וְאֶל-הָאָרֶץ לְדִין עַמּוֹ: ⁴

The Almighty judge is not finished calling His witnesses to the courtroom. The heavens above are summoned to participate as well. It is possible that the summoning of Earth in verse 1 and the summoning of the heavens in verse 3 represent the literal assembling of the people of Earth and the angels of heaven⁷. Regardless of which understanding the Israelites had, they certainly understood that God was convening His court. Verse 4 is also clear as to the purpose of this court, God is about to judge His people.

⁷ The summoning of heaven may be God’s entire assembly that would include not only the angels, but also the saints. God is calling forth all of His people for this dramatic courtroom scene.

The summoning of heaven and Earth for judgment is used elsewhere in the Old Testament. In particular, Hanna's prayer indicates a summoning for judgment, which is similar to its use in Psalm 50. In 1 Samuel 2:10, Hannah prays, "Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; Against them He will thunder in the heavens, The LORD will judge the ends of the earth". Isaiah will also use similar terminology in the beginning of his vision concerning Judah. Isaiah writes to a rebellious nation, "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 1:2).

There is one item in the Critical Apparatus to note. The text מֵעַל contains the note "id Gn 27,39 49,25; 1 c Ms מִמַּעַל", which is translated "the same Genesis 27:39, 49:25; read with Hebrew manuscript 'from above'". This note simply desires the translation of "out-of-above" to be translated as "from-above" just as it is in Genesis 27:39 and 49:25. The note seems to be a legitimate recommendation for the text, but it does not change the meaning at all.

Verse 5 gather! to-me my-consecrated-ones ones-making my-covenant by sacrifice

אִסְפוּ-לִי חֲסִידַי כְּרַתִּי בְרִיתִי עֲלֵי-זָבַח: ⁵

The verse begins with an imperative, "Gather!" This command goes out across His Creation. God demands His faithful and devout people, His people that sacrifice and made covenant with Him, to assemble in His heavenly courtroom. In the realm of redemptive-history, God is calling the Israelites who sacrificed during the days of the tabernacle or the early years of the temple.

God's word is mighty. As Creator, a single utterance from Him created something from nothing. This world and the entire universe sprang forth from His excellent word. Everything He created was created with a word and everything He created was good, perfect, and exactly as He desired it to be. God's word was given to the prophets so that they reveal to His people His perfect word. The Word of God would become flesh and walk among His people. The Word would feel their pain and temptations and eventually, graciously give up His life as a sacrifice for them. The word of God is powerful and perfect. When God issues an imperative command, such as "Gather!" His people will be gathered instantaneously before Him.

There are two items in the Critical Apparatus. In the first, the text וַיִּקְרָא contains the note "יִי suff 3 sg", which is translated "[LXX, Syriaca] suffix 3rd person singular translated 'to-you'". The note indicates that instead of God commanding His faithful devout people be gathered "to-me", God commanded the gathering "to-you". Although the Septuagint and the Syriaca contain this different wording, the Hebrew manuscript not only trumps these later translations, but also makes better sense. God is commanding His people to appear before Him, the Judge! The second item pertains to the text וַיִּקְרָא and notes "יִי יִי", which is translated "[Targum secundum, LXX, Syriaca] uses a different plural ending". Again, simply because the Septuagint and the Syriaca contain different wording does not make a solid case for changing the wording of the Hebrew manuscripts.

*Verse 6 and-they-proclaim heavens his-righteousness for God one-judging he
selah*

וַיִּגִּידוּ שָׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ כִּי־אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט הוּא סֵלָה: ⁶

This verse is the ending of the first division of this Psalm. The Judge has entered His mighty courtroom and seated Himself on His throne. He has summoned heaven and earth before Him as witnesses and they proclaim, or support, His claim of righteousness. He has commanded the gathering of His people, the people of the covenant. The court is now in session and the prosecutor is about to bring the evidence before the accused. Selah, the Hebrew word meaning “pause” or “break” is very appropriate at this point in the Psalm. Can you sense the tension in the air? The readers or listeners of this Psalm are on the edge of their seats awaiting the Judges next move. Lightning, fire, and storm surround the Mighty LORD. In spite of the tension, the Holy Spirit works through Asaph, and the author demands a pause.

The Critical Apparatus contains two notes for this verse. The first pertains to וַיִּגִּידוּ. The note is “Ì (Í) ἀναγγελοῦσίν = וַיִּגִּידוּ,” which is translated “[LXX, (Syriaca)] use verb form which is indicative future active 3rd person plural – translated ‘they-shall-announce’ or ‘they-shall-proclaim’”. The Septuagint wording indicates that the proclaiming will take place in the future. This would slightly change the meaning of the text. However, the Hebrew manuscripts do not support this alternative wording. Therefore, there is no warrant for this alteration. The second item for אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט contains the note “מְשַׁפֵּט 1” אֱלֹהֵי ut Sir 35,15 cf Ms אֱלֹהֵי”, which is translated “read ‘God from-he-judges’ as Sirach

35:15 compare Hebrew manuscript 'God". The recommended translation may be appropriate, but it does not change the sense of the text.

The evidence against the accused is presented

Verse 7 hear! My-people and-I-will-speak Israel and-I-will-testify against-you God your-God I

7 - שְׁמַעְהֶעָמִי וְאֶדְבַּרְהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶעֱיֶדָה בְּךָ אֱלֹהִים אֶלְהֵיךָ אָנֹכִי:

As prosecutor, God calls His first witness to the stand -- Himself. Who better to testify against His people than an all-knowing, all-powerful God? An interesting note here is that the God of the people, the people who have been gathered, is stating, "I am your God and today I testify against you". Compare this verse with Job 15:6 where Eliphaz the Temanite condemn Job and say, "Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; and your own lips testify against you". Certainly, only man can look to the outward actions and the words spoken when testifying against another. God, however, can look into the heart and that is what is on trial in this courtroom. The first defendants on trial are His people who have externally met His demands.

Verse 8 not for your-sacrifices I-rebuke-you and-your-burnt-offerings at-before-me forever

8 לֹא עַל-זְבָחֶיךָ אוֹכִיחֶךָ וְעוֹלֹתֶיךָ לִנְגְדִי תִמְיֵד:

God speaks to His people and tells them that they are not being judged based on the things they have done. God commanded sacrifice and burnt offerings and His people did just that. However, what the people lacked was the heart He desires. Both the Old and New Testaments expand upon this theme. In the Old Testament, the prophet Hosea prophesies against Israel and Judah. "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,

and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6). Hosea continues that “but like Adam, they have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt faithlessly with me.” (Hosea 6:7). In the New Testament, Matthew writes on this very theme. When the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with the tax collectors, Jesus said to them, “But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:13). God does not desire sacrifice, but steadfast, covenantal love from His people. It is only fitting that He is the only Judge capable of testifying against His people’s lack of love.

Verse 9 not I-need from-your-stall bull from-your-pens goats

9 לֹא-אֶקַח מִבֵּיתְךָ פָּר מִמִּכְלֵאֲתֶיךָ עֲתוּדִים:

God issues a rhetorical question to His people, “Do I need the bull from your stall or the goats from your pens?” Outside of God’s covenant community, the pagans often sacrificed animals to their gods in order to appease their gods’ hunger pangs. The true God asks this question to His people to see if they truly understand why He commanded sacrifice. He has no need for their bull or goats.

One other interesting note is God’s demonstrative use of bull and goats. The Day of Atonement was a special holy day in the life of Israel where the blood of a bull (for the sin offering) and the blood of a goat (for the burnt offering) was sprinkled on the horns of the altar for the atonement of the people of Israel. This special day was the only day in the year in which the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:1-34). Asaph writes this Psalm to reveal true salvation of God (verse 23). God requires His people to

perform His commands concerning sacrifice, not because He desires sacrifice, but because He is preparing them for the atonement to come in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 10 for to-me everything-of animal-of forest wild-beasts on-hills-of thousand

כִּי־לִי כָּל־חִיתֵי־יַעַר בְּהֵמוֹת בְּהַרְרֵי־אֱלֹהִים: ¹⁰

God replies to His own rhetorical question. Does God need bulls and goats from His people? Absolutely not! God requires nothing since everything is already His. In this verse, God points out that every animal of the forest and the wild beasts (cattle) on a thousand hills are His. What need does God have of a bull? What need does God have of a goat? This verse is as important to readers today as it was over 2000 years ago. What need does God have of \$20 in the offering plate? What need does God have of \$200 in the offering plate? The answer is, “None!” Yet, God requires His people to give generously to Him (Deut 15:10), especially when that which is being offered is His already and we are simply His stewards.

The Critical Apparatus contains a note on the text בְּהַרְרֵי־אֱלֹהִים. The note is “Ì (Í) εν τοις ορεσιν και βοεσ ; prp אל ב' vel א' בְּהַרְרֵי א'”, which is translated “[LXX (Syriaca)] ‘on the mountains/hills of oxen’; proposed on the mountains/hill of God”. Since this note is only present in the Septuagint and the Syriaca, but none of the Hebrew texts, there is no warrant to justify the change of words.

Verse 11 I-know every-of bird mountains and-creatures field with-me

יָדַעְתִּי כָּל־עוֹף הָרִים וְזִוְי שָׂדֵי עֲמָדָי: ¹¹

Continuing from the previous verse, God tells His people that all of the birds of the mountains and the creatures of the field are with Him. He does not need His people to bring to Him animals in sacrifice. He does command that they do so, but He does not need them. Walk through the mountains and the fields and attempt to count the birds and creatures. The task is impossible for us to complete. There are so many birds in the air, the trees, the bushes, and the brush. Can one possibly count the small creatures hiding in the fields? God does not need His people to bring Him animals just for Him to have animals. God has given His animals to us so that we may look after them accordingly and provide them as a sacrifice when He commands.

To look at this from a modern perspective, God does not need our offerings of money and charity. He already owns all of the money in the world. He has given generously to His people so that they will be proper stewards of their gifts. God does not desire our gifts of money, time, and talents simply because He desires a showering with gifts. God desires our offerings to come from a heart filled with love of Him.

The Critical Apparatus contains two items of interest. The first item is for the text **הַרְיִים** and with a note of “**Ī (Í©) του ουρανοῦ ; 1 שָׁמַיִם vel מְרוֹם**” which is translated as “[LXX (Syriaca)] the heaven; read ‘heavens’ or ‘Merom’”. The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word as “heavens” in Greek and the note supposes that the Hebrew word might be the word for “heavens”. The reasoning is because the same construction of words is used in other places throughout the Holy Scriptures, most notably in Genesis 1:20. In this verse, the Hebrew word for “the heavens” describes where the birds fly. Of course, the older Hebrew manuscripts describe the birds, not in “the heavens”, but “of

mountains”; therefore, the Critical Apparatus does not make a solid case to change the Hebrew text.

The second item is for the Hebrew word וַיִּזְרַח, and the note is “pc Mss וַיִּזְרַח cf 80,14^b; Ἰ και ωραιότης; Ἰ *whjwt et animalia*”, which is translated “a few Hebrew manuscripts ‘and-also’ compare 80:14; LXX contains “ripeness of fruit” or “bloom of youth”; Syriaca contains *whjwt et animalia*”. I do not see the difference between the Hebrew manuscript and the “few manuscripts”. The suggested change may be a slight pointing difference between the two, but does not seem to change the overall meaning of the text. As for the Septuagint and Syriaca alterations, the suggestions merely hint that God knows all “the blooms of the field” instead of the “creatures of the field”. Although this translation changes what is being compared, it does not change the fact that God knows everything. The Critical Apparatus does not make a solid case to change the Hebrew text.

Verse 12 if I-were-hungry not I-would-tell to-you for to-me world and-all-in-her

אִם-אֶרְעֵב לֹא-אֶמַּר לָךְ כִּי-לִי תֵבֵל וּמְלֹאָהּ¹²

God’s mockery of His people continues. He asks His people, “If I were hungry I would not tell you.” The people during this time, especially the pagans, would bring their gods food to appease their gods’ hunger pangs. When the gods’ bellies were full, their wrath would be subdued. The Israelites were aware of these practices and, perhaps, offering sacrifices to God in an attempt to “buy Him off” and appease His anger toward them. God never intended sacrifices to serve this purpose. God does not need His people to bring food to Him.

Verse 13 do-I-eat? flesh bulls and-blood goats do-I-drink

הֶאֱכַל בֶּשֶׂר אֲבִירִים וְדָם עֲתוּדִים אֶשְׁתֶּה:¹³

Another rhetorical question is asked to His people, “Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?” God asks His people whether they truly believe that He is the Almighty God and Creator of all or if they believe He is just another deity. God established the sacrificial system not for Him to eat and drink, but for His people’s benefit. God rightly ordained the sacrifices to prepare and teach His people about the coming Christ.

Verse 14 Sacrifice! to-God thank-offering and-fulfill! to-Most-High your-vows

זָבַח לְאֱלֹהִים תּוֹדָה וְשִׁלֵּם לְעֵלְיוֹן נְדָרָיִךְ:¹⁴

God issues two imperatives to His people: Sacrifice and Fulfill. The sacrifice God commands is a sacrifice of thanksgiving. This type of sacrifice would be included in the peace offerings established in Leviticus. The sacrifice would include unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour mixed with oil. The thanksgiving offering was shared between the one offering the sacrifice and the one sacrificing. We may certainly look from our perspective back on this prophetic word from God and view the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper; a sharing of the sacrifice between the one offering and the priest, Jesus Christ. In addition, the book of Hebrews is the most direct hermeneutic for us to interpret this verse. Hebrews 13:15 uses the same Greek phrase *θυσίαν αἰνέσεως* found in the Septuagint’s translation of Psalm 50:14. Hebrews 13:15 interprets the “sacrifice of praise” as “the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name”. The fulfillment of vows is also commanded. These two imperatives

certainly remind the reader of the men in the boat with Jonah. Jonah tried to flee from God on a boat destined for Tarshish. While Jonah was aboard the boat, a great storm on the sea tossed the ship. The men pleaded with their gods to intervene, but nothing helped the situation. When the men noticed Jonah was asleep, they asked him to pray to his God. Jonah told them who his God was and the men became afraid. Jonah told the men to toss him off into the sea and His God would calm the waters. The men did as Jonah suggested and the seas calmed. I believe the men were converted at this very point. They immediately offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows⁸, just as Psalm 50 is instructing the reader to do. When you offer the thanksgiving of praise from your lips to God, do you tremble inside? Do you understand that the One to whom you speak can toss you around effortlessly like a ship on the ocean? Do you have the faith that these men on the boat had when they almost lost their lives, but were saved by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Verse 15 and-call-upon-me! in-day trouble I-will-deliver-you and-you-will-honor-me

וְקִרְאַנִי בְיוֹם צָרָה אֲחַלְצֶךָ וְתִכְבְּדֵנִי¹⁵

God adds another imperative to the list. Not only does He instruct His people to “Sacrifice!” and “Fulfill!”, but He instructs His People to “Call upon Me!”. The people onboard the ship with Jonah called upon Jonah’s God (and now, their God, too). In Jonah 1:14, the men on board the vessel cry out, “We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.” They earnestly prayed to the Lord! Psalm

⁸ Jonah 1:14, 15

50 instructs the reader that if you call upon God, He will deliver you from trouble. In turn, when God completes this gracious and merciful act, you must honor Him.

The Critical Apparatus contains two notes for this verse. The first is for the Hebrew word אֶחָדְכֶם. The note for this word is “Ī pr cop”, which is translated “LXX put before copula (linking verb)”. This simply means that the Septuagint supplies a linking verb in a different area than the translated Hebrew. However, the Hebrew does not contain linking verbs, so this is a translational interpretation and does not change the overall meaning of the text. The second item is for the Hebrew word וַתִּכְבְּדֵנִי. The note for this word is “Ī (Heir) + διαψαλμα = סְלָה”, which is translated “LXX (Vulgate) + musical interlude (Hebrew: סְלָה) = סְלָה”. This note is referring to the Septuagint and Jerome’s Vulgate, which supplies another musical interlude, or *Selah*, at this point in the text. The Hebrew text does not indicate a *Selah* at this point and, this does not change the meaning of the text at all. Therefore, there is no reason to pursue this recommendation or believe it to be worthy.

Verse 16 and-to-the-wicked he-says God what? to-you to-recite my-laws and-you-take my-covenant on your-lips

16 וְלִרְשָׁעִים אָמַר אֱלֹהִים מִה־לֶּךָ לְסַפֵּר חֻקֵי וְתִשָּׂא בְרִיתִי עָלֶיךָ:

God now desires to address the wicked. Some commentators believe that God is addressing a different group from the group of people above. However, look at what God says about the wicked. He says to the wicked “... you recite my laws and you take my covenant on your lips.” God is addressing the wicked among His assembly. This is

not much different from today. Our churches are filled with a mixed-multitude of people. All are considered a part of the church, but some will not be welcomed into heaven. Jesus taught His disciples that many will say, "...did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name cast out demons and in Your name perform miracles?" (Matthew 7:22). Jesus declared these men to be lawless and unknown to Him (Matthew 7:23). These people lurk in today's churches as well and they were lurking among God's people when Asaph wrote. We will see what God has to say to them.

The Critical Apparatus contains two items for this verse. The first is on the Hebrew phrase **וּלְרָשָׁע אָמַר אֱלֹהִים**. The note is "frit gl", which is translated "perhaps gloss (translational note)". A potential gloss note is of no concern since there is no merit to support the note. The second item is on the Hebrew word **לְסַפֵּר**. The note is "Í whjw' = 'וּלְסַפֵּר", which is translated "[Syriaca] whjw' = and-to". This note simply states that the Syriaca contained a conjunction, which does not alter the meaning of the text.

Verse 17 and-you you-hate instruction and-you-throw-away my-words behind-you

17
וְאַתָּה שָׁנֵאתָ מוֹסֵר וְתַשְׁלֵךְ דְּבַרִי אַחֲרָיִךְ:

God continues to list the external actions of these wicked people among the assembly. Remember, in the first description of His people on trial, the external actions during worship looked good, but their hearts were not with God. In this description, God details the external actions taken against other people. Thus, God's first testimony is against those that do not "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and might" whereas the second testimony is against those that do not "Love their neighbor as themselves".

Some within this assembly may be a part of one group or another. Some may be a part of both groups.

In this verse, God indicates that these people hate His instruction and throw away His words. Certainly, the wise counsel of a father to his son is recalled, “And you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof!” (Proverbs 5:12). Surely, each of us know of members of the church or within the denomination that cast the Word of God behind them and put forth their own logic and reasoning “...in the name of God.” Watch out for these men, for they are listed among the wicked and God has a warning for them.

Verse 18 if you-see thief and-you-join with-him and-with ones-committing-adultery your-lot

אִם-רָאִיתָ גָּנֵב וַתֵּרֶץ עִמּוֹ וְעַם מְנַאֲפִים חִלְקָדָּי: ¹⁸

God continues His list of external sins against neighbor by listing thievery and adultery. These two sins are also against two of God’s Ten Commandments to His people. “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14) and “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15). In addition to the violation of these commandments, the Psalmist points out the company these wicked ones keep. Outside of the assembly, these wicked ones convene with thieves and adulterers. Although we are unable to read into the hearts of men, we are able to ascertain the desires of one’s heart by the company that they keep.

The Critical Apparatus contains two items for this verse. The first item is on the Hebrew word וַתֵּרֶץ. The note is “Ì (Í©) συνετρεξεσ = וַתֵּרֶץ”, which is translated “[LXX (Syriac,

Targum Secundum)] ‘you-run-with’ or ‘you–run-together’”. The Septuagint and the Syriaca equate the Hebrew word for “and-you-join” with the Greek word for “run-with”. The difference is minimal and does not change the meaning of the text. The second item is on the Hebrew word מְנַאֲפִים. The note is “Ī (Í©) + ετιθεισ = שְׁמַת”, which is translated “[LXX (Syriac, Targum Secundum)] “you-put-into-place” = “you-set” or “you-appoint””. This note simply indicates that the Septuagint adds the Greek word for “serve” to the translation. In this translation, the Septuagint would read “...and with the adulterers is your portion and you serve”. Again, the same general sense of the text is retained between the Hebrew and the Greek translation. However, the Critical Apparatus does not make a significant argument to change the Hebrew text for either note.

Verse 19 your-mouth you-use for-evil and-your-tongue you-harness deceit

פִּיךָ שֶׁלַחַת בְּרַעַה וְלִשׁוֹנְךָ תִצְמִיד מְרִמָּה: ¹⁹

God again brings forth the testimonies during the cross-examination process. To the witnesses, God accuses the wicked among the assembly of loose tongues. The tongue is mentioned in the Old Testament 89 times. David utters his last words when the Spirit of the Lord was on his tongue (2 Samuel 23:2). When Job was verbally attacked by his friends, Job’s reply was a simple one, “Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern calamities?” (Job 6:30). The book of Psalms speaks of the tongue more than any other Old Testament book. The tongue flatters (5:9), is full of mischief and wickedness (10:7), and devises destruction (52:4). One almost wonders if the tongue should be cut out before we use it to anger our God. However, just as the Psalms tell of

the misguided use of the tongue by the wicked, the Psalms also paint the vivid pictures of the virtuous use of the tongue. The tongue pleads for help in evil times (12:5), does not slander (15:3), declares the righteousness of God (35:28), utters wisdom and speaks justice (37:30), and joyfully sings of God's righteousness. Even in this verse, it is apparent that the tongue is only a reflection of the heart. Wicked people will use the tongue to speak wickedly of God and of His people. Righteous people will use the tongue to praise God and speak well of His people.

Verse 20 you-sit against-your-brother you-speak against-son-of-your-mother you-give slander

תִּשֵׁב בְּאַחֲיֶיךָ תְּדַבֵּר בְּבֶן-אִמֶּךָ תִּתֵּן-דָּפְיִ: ²⁰

The last item in God's list of accusations against the wicked among the assembly is the sin of slander. The Hebrew word translated as "slander" is a hapax-legomenon (a word occurring only once). In Psalm 50, the use of the word indicates one who finds a blemish or fault in their mother's son. In other words, one who bears false-witness. The commandments given by God to His people at Mount Sinai listed the sin of bearing false-witness (Exodus 20:16). This is just another example of the sin against neighbor.

The Critical Apparatus contains two items for this verse. The first item is on the Hebrew word תִּשֵׁב and the note is "בִּשְׁתַּת קַרְפּ", which is translated "proposed 'you-feel-shame'". This note indicates that the Hebrew word meaning "you-sit" was probably a different word meaning "you-feel-shame". However, the Septuagint has, interestingly enough, translated this into Greek as "you-sit". Therefore, because of the Septuagint's rendering and because the Critical Apparatus does not bring any proof to the claim, this note is

not justified. The second item is on the Hebrew word בָּבֶן with a note of “Ms 11 וּבֶבֶן”, and which is translated “Hebrew manuscript [LXX, Syriaca] ‘and-against-a-son’”. The note indicates that a conjunction appears before the words “against-son-of”. Whether there should be a conjunction or not does not matter. The meaning of the text would not change with its addition.

Verse 21 these you-did and-I-kept-silent you-thought to-be I-was just-like-you I-will-rebuke-you and-I-will-accuse before-your-eyes

אֱלֹהִים עָשִׂיתָ וְהַחֲרַשְׁתָּי דְּמִיתָ הַיּוֹת-אֶתְהִיָּה כַּמּוֹדֵד אוֹכִיחֶךָ וְאֶעְרַכְךָ לְעֵינֶיךָ: ²¹

This itemized list of accusations against the wicked are proof that they hate God's instruction and throw away His words (50:17). The prosecutor has presented the evidence to the Judge and the evidence is perfect. The prosecutor has read the list of sins directly from the hearts' of the people. No one may argue against the evidence.

God makes a statement to His people that resonate through today, “you thought I was just like you”. Even amongst the pews and fellowship halls, wicked men deceive with their tongue and slander their neighbor. While this is occurring, they think, “God will surely not know what I am doing”. Among the workforce, on the job, and at home on the Internet people think, “God will surely not know what I am doing”. The wicked take God's omniscience and omnipresence away from Him and they make Him out to be just like we are. However, God is still all knowing and all around us. God not only witnesses firsthand what the people *do*, but He also knows what people *think*. God is silent only because of His mercy. Soon, His silence will be over and He will pronounce a sentence upon His people. This is true even for us today. We cannot hide our sins from God and

someday, we will be held accountable for the actions we have taken and thoughts we have had. God has now presented the evidence before His people. It is now time for the Judge to announce the verdict.

This verse has three Critical Apparatus notes. The first item is on the Hebrew Word הָיִיתָ. The note is “Iθ’ (Í) αἰνομωτα = הָיִיתָ; 1 frt הִיּוּ”, which is translated “[LXX, Theodotion (Syriaca)] ‘lawlessness’ or ‘sin’ = הָיִיתָ; read perhaps הִיּוּ ‘you-become’”. The second item is on the Hebrew word וְאֶעֱרַכָּהּ. The note is “Í w’ sdwr ’hjn = הָרָה; frt 1”, which is translated “[Syriaca] w’ sdwr ’hjn = _____; perhaps read”. The third item is on the Hebrew word לְעֵינַיִךָ. The note is “2 Mss Í לְפָנֶיךָ”, which is translated “2 Hebrew manuscripts [LXX] ‘before-your-face’”. All three notes recommend the use of a different reading or word in place of the one currently in the Hebrew text. However, there is no proof that this change is warranted.

The verdict is announced – but there is still time to repent

Verse 22 consider! now! this ones-forgetting God lest I-will-tear-you-to-pieces and-there-is-none one-rescuing

בְּיַנּוֹנָא זֹאת שְׁכַתִּי אֱלֹהִים פֶּן־אֶטְרַף וְאִין מְצִיל:²²

God has another imperative for His people. Remember the prophetic picture of the courtroom and Judge painted by the Holy Spirit through Asaph. This vivid imagery should cause you to tremble. Asaph, in this verse, paints another lucid image. The ones that forget God will be torn to pieces and no one will rescue. In Hosea’s prophetic word concerning the impending judgment on Israel, the prophet uses similar language. Hosea

writes, For I will be like a lion to Ephraim And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver.” (Hosea 5:14). God speaks judgment through both Asaph and Hosea and warns His people. However, both of these announcements are warnings. God alone is the Judge and once His verdict is announced and the gavel crashes down, there will be no deliverance. God is offering to His people a chance to repent from their wicked ways and turn to Him.

The Critical Apparatus contains one item for the Hebrew text זֹאת. The note is “> pc Mss”, which is translated “more than a few Hebrew manuscripts”.

Verse 23 one-sacrificing thank-offering he-honors-me and-prepares-me way I-will-show-him to-salvation God

זִבְחַת תּוֹדָה יִכְבְּדֵנִי וְשֵׁם דְּרֹךְ אֲרָאֵנוּ בְּיִשְׁעֵי אֱלֹהִים: ²³

The final verse of the Psalm is one of hope. The Almighty Judge indicates that the one who sacrifices thank offerings to Him honors Him. Already mentioned from the book of Hebrews are the sacrifices of praise that His people offer to Him (Hebrews 13:15). His people will continue to offer Him sacrifices, but the sacrifices will come from their heart. When we pray today we must pray from a sincere heart that loves the Lord. Sincere praise encompasses the whole Trinity. The only One capable of rescuing His people in this fallen world is Jesus Christ. However, our sinful hearts do not know Him and we turn away from Him. The Holy Spirit breaks are hearts of stone so that the Word is made effectual in our lives. After we are converted, we love our Lord, Jesus Christ with our whole heart. In turn, when we stand in front of the Father, He will look at our hearts

and see a heart that is clean and white as snow. We will also love our neighbor as ourselves. As Christians, our old selves die and we are born anew. We will worship and live as people in this world, but not of this world.

Additionally, Jesus Christ will return again at the Consummation. This verse indicates that we are to “prepare the way”. Normally, when “prepare the way” is discussed it refers to John the Baptist. Interestingly, this verse sheds a different light on the Malachi 3:1 text. Suddenly, His people are called to “prepare the way” and the Great Commission Matthew 28:16-20 comes to mind. When we prepare His way, God will show us the salvation of God.

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Psalm 50 contributes to many of the doctrines of the Reformed faith. For instance, on the Nature of God, verses 1 through 6 focus on the Almighty Judge. God is the Judge of His people. Even in the opening verse, one word for God is not enough. The Judge is named in three words, “Mighty One”, “God”, and “Adonai”. In these first verses, God summons His Creation; the earth and the heavens, to be witnesses. God calls His people into the courtroom and no one may refuse His calling.

Verses 7 through 15 contribute to the Doctrine of Worship. In these verses, we are not called to simply comply with the outward laws of worship. In these verses, the people of God did exactly what they were commanded to do, but they did not do it with a heart for the Lord. God does not desire sacrifice, He commands it, but does not desire it. God desires our heart during worship to love Him and keep His commandments.

Verses 16 through 21 contribute to the Doctrine of Christian Life. In these verses, the people of God took His covenant upon their lips and yet lived like the heathen in the world. They stole, committed adultery, lied and deceived, and bore false-witness against their own kin. They claimed citizenship within the Kingdom, but acted as though God could not see their wicked ways.

The Psalm is a prophetic witness and warning to what will occur to the assembly if they continue to act as they do. Verses 22 and 23 contribute to the Doctrine of Eschatology, citing that those who forget God will be torn to pieces. One cannot help but to think of the weeping and gnashing of teeth waiting for those that do not have a heart for God. In addition, those who sacrifice thank offerings, that is, fruit of the lips that give thanks to His name, He will show the salvation of God to those who love Him.

The Psalm also adds to the Doctrine of Covenanting with God. God desires the whole heart from His people and not robotic gestures. In Psalm 50, God repeats that He delights in steadfast love rather than sacrifice.

Lastly, the Psalm adds to the Doctrine of the Plan of Salvation. According to verse 23, the one sacrificing thank offerings honors God. To this one, God will show him to the salvation of God, which is in Jesus Christ.

PROPOSITIONS

The truth this Psalm delivers is that, in both worship and daily life, God ultimately judges outward obedience as well as the inward heartfelt love of Him from His covenantal people. Although much of this has already been heard through the annals of redemptive

history, this Psalm crystallizes God's desire for steadfast love from His people. Our obedience toward God's commandments throughout the Old Testament is meaningless to Him if we do not bring loyalty and faithfulness to Him first. This proposition is still with us today. Offerings and tithes are meaningless to God if they are not presented with a heart for the Lord.

Although Psalm 50 is not quoted directly in the New Testament, verses and themes are alluded to. For instance, Matthew 6:26 mentions the Father taking care of all the birds in the air. In addition, 1 Corinthians 10:26 references Psalm 50:12 when Paul mentions that "for the earth is the Lord's and all it contains". Hebrews 13:15 address the sacrifice of praise to God.

What contribution does this Psalm make to Biblical Doctrine? In order to worship God as well as live a righteous life pleasing to Him, you must start from a heart that truly loves Christ. Is this contribution unique to Scripture? Perhaps not, but the vivid imagery made by the Holy Spirit through Asaph the seer certainly paints the judgment scene in a distinctive and exceptional manner.

Lastly, looking back over the body of work produced by this exegetical task, I cannot help to think of Hebrews 12:23.

^{NAU} **Hebrews 12:22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect,²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

This verse sums up a Christian view of Psalm 50. God is the final authority and Judge over all of His Creation. However, we have not come to Mount Sinai. We come with

Jesus Christ to Mount Zion. We walk hand-in-hand with the mediator of a new covenant. We are made perfect by the sacrifice in Christ's blood. The courtroom scene is still present and should still stand in awe at the Judges royal courtroom, but instead of pleading a defense, Christ tells the Father that He died for me and He died for you. The Father then pronounces His sentence, "Innocent!"

SERMON OUTLINE

- Subject:** What is this text about?
Answer: God judges the heart of His people in their worship of Him as well as how they live their daily lives.
- Complement:** What does the text say about the subject?
Answer: God desires a sacrifice and offerings from the heart of His people.
- Exegetical Point:** In both worship as well as daily life, God ultimately judges the outward obedience as well as the inward heartfelt love of Him from His covenantal people.

Can I speak to all parts of the text through the Exegetical Point? Yes

Explain (What does it mean?)	Prove	Apply (So what?)
Asaph Court scene Judge Zion Fire/Storm Summon Earth Heavens Sacrifice/Offerings Bull Goats Flesh/Blood Covenant My people My statutes My covenant Wicked Discipline Thievery, Adultery Deceiving, Slander I will tear you apart Deliverance/Salvation I will rescue you		As a chosen people of God, you must offer your sacrifice of prayer from a truly repentant heart, and then Christ will deliver you to salvation. How you live your life as well as how you worship your Lord, start from a heart that truly loves Christ. Your acts of worship and daily life must come from a heart that truly loves Christ. In order to worship God as well live a righteous life pleasing to Him, you must start from a heart that truly loves Christ.
Homiletical Point:	In order to worship God as well live a righteous life pleasing to Him, you must start from a heart that truly loves Christ.	

I. INTRODUCTION

Illustration: How do you get your kids/sibling to do something? Manipulation!
Explanation: Why are you here today? Obligation? Parents? Guilt?
Application: In order to worship God as well live a righteous life pleasing to Him, you must start from a heart that truly loves Christ.

II. You must remember that God alone is Judge of His Creation and it is His right to judge His people. (Psalm 50:1-6)

Explanation: God is unlike any earthly judge. He reads the heart. He is perfectly good. There is a godly fear among His Creation.

Illustration: Perry Mason, Ironside, Nightcourt, Judge Judy, Judge Joe Brown
Application: Do you fear/respect God's judgment over your life?

III. As such, God judges your heart, not your actions, as you worship Him. (Psalm 50:7-15)

Explanation: Old Testament requirements – gone; New Testament requirements Sacrifice, Offering (money) – he owns it all

Illustration: What are you doing here today?

Application: You will never be able to do enough in worship to appease God.

IV. In addition, God's judges your heart, not your actions, as you live your life. (Psalm 50:16-21)

Illustration: Dog testing the boundary – some of us aren't much different

Explanation: God told us what is acceptable "Love God...Love neighbor"

Application: You already know in your heart what is acceptable to God.

V. Therefore, it is His right to condemn those that forget Him. (Psalm 50:22)

Explanation: To forget is to "wipe out the memory of" God – His Law

Illustration: Are you pardoned for running a red light? Having no King.

Application: When you have no King, you have no one to represent you.

VI. More importantly for you, it is also His right to save those who praise, honor, and know Him from their heart as well as their head. (Psalm 50:23)

Explanation: When Christ is your King, you will be represented by the Son.

Illustration: Acting like a citizen of the Kingdom.

Application: When you accept Christ as your King, you will become a new person.

VII. CONCLUSION: For this reason, you must thank the Holy Spirit, who gave you the head and heart knowledge to worship Jesus Christ, so that you may worship and live your life in a way that is pleasing to the Father.

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