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'YOU ARE GODS' PSALM 82:6 AND JOHN 10:34 EXPLAINED

The Worldwide Church of God during Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's lifetime taught that it is our human potential to ultimately become "God-beings", as sons in the Family of God. That teaching is based on many scriptures in both, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Two verses where this is stated especially clearly are Psalm 82:6 and John 10:34.

In this article we'll examine both of these verses in detail.

PSALM 82:6

This verse reads as follows:

I have said, Ye [are] gods; and all of you [are] children of the most High. (Psalm 82:6)

Let's examine this verse in its context. Psalm 82 is quite short ... it only has 8 verses. So we'll look at the whole Psalm.

VERSE 1:

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. (Psalm 82:1)

If we leave the various names for God untranslated, then this verse reads:

ELOHIM stands in the congregation of EL; He judges among the ELOHIM.

First of all, notice that this verse introduces God Himself as "ELOHIM". "The congregation of the mighty" is "the congregation of EL", "EL" being another name of God. This ("the congregation of EL") is a clear reference to THOSE WHO WILL BE IN THE FIRST RESURRECTION and will then be "EL" or "ELOHIM". Notice also that it is "THE CONGREGATION of EL" ... the Hebrew word edah" that is used here means a company or assembly or multitude or congregation. There is a LARGE GROUP of individuals who are referred to as "EL"!

Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy about Jesus Christ and it says:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

The Hebrew "Immanuel" literally reads: "WITH US IS EL", meaning "WITH US IS GOD". Referring to Christ, God ... "shall call his name WITH US IS EL". So "EL" is a name for God. Understandably it is also at times used to refer to idols (i.e. false "gods").

Back to Psalm 82:1

The verb "judges" is the Hebrew word "shaphat", here used with the qal-stem. With this stem it means to act as law-giver, governor or judge. Remember that in O.T. Israel the judges were the ones who governed and judged the nation.

So let's put all of Psalm 82:1 together now:

ELOHIM stands (has positioned Himself) in the congregation (large grouping) of EL (the resurrected God-beings); He judges (governs and rules) among (in the midst of) the (resurrected) ELOHIM.

VERSE 8:

This Psalm concludes by again calling God "ELOHIM" in verse 8.

Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations. (Psalms 82:8)

This reads:

"Arise, O ELOHIM, judge (govern and rule) the earth; for you shall inherit all nations." (Psalm 82:8)

This is precisely what Christ will do at His second coming. Now consider: this Psalm starts off with calling God "ELOHIM" and it concludes with calling God "ELOHIM". THIS IS THE CONTEXT! Now WHY would the author in this brief context suddenly switch the meaning of this word to refer to human judges ... and UNJUST ones at that?

The word "ELOHIM" is used 2606 times in the Old Testament; and in all but 5 places it refers to God (or false gods) and godly powers. Of the 5 places where it is translated as "judge/s", 4 are in the context of the Old Covenant (i.e. Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:8 [2 times]; Exodus 22:9). Outside of the making of the Old Covenant the word "ELOHIM" is translated exactly ONCE (out of 2606 occurrences!) as "a judge" ... and that is in 1 Samuel 2:25. And this translation isn't really correct. Notice this verse.

If one man sin against another, THE JUDGE shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. (1 Samuel 2:25)

This reads:

"If one man sins against another, ELOHIM shall judge him: but if a man sin against YHWH, who shall intreat for him? ..."

The word here translated as the verb "judge" is not the word "shaphat", which we saw earlier; here the Hebrew word used is "palal". And "palal" doesn't really mean "to judge"! It is used 84 times in the O.T. and translated in the KJV as follows:

pray = 74 times

made = 3 times

intreat = 1 time

judge = 2 times

prayer = 1 time

thought = 1 time

supplication = 1 time

judgment = 1 time

The word means: to intervene, to intercede, to interpose, to pray. It is used in this passage with the piel-stem, which expresses intensive action. Note also that the one time "palal" is translated as "intreat" is in this same verse ... 1 Samuel 2:25!

In this verse the high-priest Eli is speaking to his rebellious sons and he says:

"If one man sins against another, ELOHIM shall 'palal' (pray, intreat, mediate, etc.) for him: but if a man sin against YHWH, who shall intreat ('palal'!!) for him? ..."

Moffatt translates 1 Samuel 2:25 as follows:

"If one man sins against another man, God will mediate for him, but if a man sins against the Eternal, who can intercede on his behalf? ..."

The Interlinear Bible, published by Hendrickson Publishers and edited by Jay P. Green, Sr. translates this verse as follows:

"If a man sins against a man, then God shall judge him. But if a man sins against Jehovah, who shall pray for him? ..."

In both of these translations, the word "ELOHIM" is translated as "God" and not as "judge"! While Moffatt is consistent in translating the 2 occurrences of the verb "palal" as "mediate" and as "intercede" respectively, the Interlinear follows the KJV approach of translating the first occurrence of "palal" as "judge", while conceding that a few words later it has to mean "pray" (i.e. intercede).

It should be clear by now that in 1 Samuel 2:25 the word "ELOHIM" refers to God and not to a judge. Consider also that for Eli, who as a high-priest filled the role of a judge in Israel, to have used the word "ELOHIM" to refer to himself, or to someone holding the office he was holding at that time, would have been somewhat presumptuous. ELI WAS REFERRING TO GOD!

**THUS: OUTSIDE OF THE MAKING OF THE OLD COVENANT THE WORD 'ELOHIM' IS
NEVER USED TO REFER TO JUDGES!**

In the whole Book of Psalms the word "ELOHIM" is used 365 times in 325 different verses, and NEVER

does it refer to human judges!

Now back to Psalm 82.

In verse 1 a statement is made ABOUT God, but nobody is addressed in this verse. From verse 2 down to verse 7 human beings are addressed, and verse 8 is addressed to God.

Psalm 82:2 reads:

How long will ye judge ("shaphat") unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. (Psalm 82:2)

Here we find someone addressed directly, not by referring to them by their title, but by describing their actions (i.e. "judging unjustly"). Unjust human rulers are taken to task by God for their unjust dealings. The next two verses spell out the right behaviour ... how they SHOULD rule and judge:

Defend ("shaphat") the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid [them] out of the hand of the wicked. (Psalm 82:3-4)

Now comes verse 5, which is the key to what follows. Verse 5 reads:

They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course. (Psalm 82:5)

THESE UNJUST RULERS LACK UNDERSTANDING! They don't know something! They don't understand something! But exactly WHAT is it that they don't understand?

They don't understand the things God spells out in the very next verse, the incredible human potential to become "gods".

I have said, Ye [are] gods (ELOHIM); and all of you [are] children (BEN) of the most High (ELYON). (Psalms 82:6)

This verse clearly spells out the destiny, to become gods; and it spells out the way of achieving this destiny, by being born as the children of God!

Human rulers who misuse their offices and deal unjustly clearly don't understand this aspect of God's plan for mankind. And because they don't grasp the incredible future God is offering us and thus continue in their wicked ways, therefore verse 7 is the inevitable result for them.

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. (Psalm 82:7)

This removal of all unjust human rulers takes place at the second coming of Christ, which is referred to in the next verse.

Arise, O God, judge ("shaphat") the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations. (Psalm 82:8)

In summary: this Psalm is about unjust human rulers in general (rather than a limited group of "judges") who don't understand the incredible potential God has in mind for mankind, and that their rule is going to be replaced by the returning Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul said precisely the same thing as Psalm 82 to the Corinthian Church.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, [even] the hidden [wisdom], which God ordained before the world unto our glory: WHICH NONE OF THE PRINCES OF THIS WORLD KNEW: for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

In the next verse Paul refers to the potential that Psalm 82:6 spelled out. Paul puts it this way:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

It seems clear to me that Paul's inspiration for writing this section to the Corinthians was influenced by his understanding of Psalm 82.

Any claims that "Psalm 82 is untranslatable" are clearly wrong! I have now "thoroughly explained this Psalm in context", as I was requested to do. Now let's examine Jesus Christ's reference to this Psalm.

JOHN 10:34

Let's notice the context:

After Christ had said: "I and [my] Father are one" (John 10:30), the Jews wanted to kill Him (John 10:31). When Christ challenged them for a reason for this (John 10:32), they replied that it was because He claimed to be God (John 10:33).

So here is the situation: To support His claim to being the Son of God, Christ now presents a meaningful quotation from the Book of Psalms (which the Jews officially accepted as divine revelation from God!). Here's the verse ...

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (John 10:34)

The reasoning Christ used is very simple. It goes like this:

SINCE in the Book of Psalms God already pointed out that you mortal human beings have the potential to become "Gods" ("ELOHIM" in Hebrew and "THEOS" in Greek) EXACTLY WHAT is so strange or unreasonable about My statement that I am the Son of God, something Psalm 82 tells you that you too have the potential of becoming?

This is the reasoning Christ was using. Just read the context of John 10:34. It is quite clear.

Notice:

After presenting a meaningful quotation in John 10:34, Christ now proceeds to reason from this premise.

John 10:35 starts with the word "IF". John 10:35 presents an INDISPUTABLE FOUNDATION ... it is "indisputable" because "the scripture cannot be broken". On this indisputable foundation John 10:36 then builds a logical deduction. Here's the next verse.

If he called THEM gods ("THEOS"), unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; (John 10:35)

Christ said here that the word "THEOS" is used in scripture to refer to some human beings. "THEOS" never refers to mortal, unjust judges. "THEOS" means GOD!

Notice also: it is precisely because people would question such a claim that Christ followed this statement with "AND THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN"! He knew they didn't believe what Psalm 82:6 really means, any more than the churches today believe this. There is no more emphatic way to make this statement, than to follow it with "and the scripture CANNOT be broken"!

Now the next verse, the logical deduction:

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God ("THEOS")? (John 10:36)

The word "THEOS" is used once in each of these 4 verses (i.e. John 10:33-36) and it means the same thing every time. By claiming to be "the Son of THEOS", Christ was claiming to also be "THEOS", which claim the Jews clearly understood. And by stating that the scripture calls other human beings "THEOS", Christ meant that when human beings become "sons of God", then they also become "THEOS" ... God!

In John 10 Christ drew the same equation as in Psalm 82:6 ... to be a "son of God" is to be "God".

See Psalm 82 again:

"You are ELOHIM" means: "you are sons of ELYON" !!

And John 10:

"I am the Son of God" means: "I am God" !!

This should suffice to clarify the meaning of John 10:34 and of Psalm 82:6.

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