

PSALM 14

A PORTRAIT OF UNGODLY MEN

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INTRODUCTION: The inspired superscription attributes this psalm to David. Psalm 14 gives a portrait of the ungodly man, or the entire human race in its fallen condition. It has two particularly appropriate applications: 1) the whole human race gathered in rebellion against God at Babel (Gen11:1-9), and 2) the entire human race immediately following the rapture of the Church and before the start of the Tribulation. Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are virtually (but not exactly) identical.

- [1] "The fool¹ hath said in his heart, **There is no God**". This is the fundamental presupposition of an unbeliever. Just as Genesis 1:1 opens without a defense of the existence of God (i.e., presuming His existence), the "fool" asserts "There is no God" as a presupposition; he offers no defense of this assertion, because Romans 1:18-20 makes clear he does not have one. This assertion arises from the "heart" of the unbeliever, such that it is a moral decision (not a logical one); the unbeliever "[suppresses] the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom1:18). The "fool" asserts there is no God, because he does not want there to be a God (to whom he is accountable).

The psalmist characterizes the mind of unbelievers as "corrupt" (i.e., they do not think properly; cf. Rom1:21-22), and their "works" as "abominable". An abomination is a particularly heinous behavior that offends a holy God (Cp., Prov15:9). Here, "there is none that doeth good" is an assertion of the universal depravity of man. Note that Psalm 14:1-3 is selectively quoted/paraphrased in Romans 3:10-12.

- [2] "The LORD looked down from heaven" may be more generally applicable (Cp., Ps33:13), but it certainly applies specifically to humanity at the time of the Tower of Babel (cf. Gen11:5). Such a universal state of depravity will again exist during the 7-year Tribulation period (cf. Rev6:15-16; 9:20-21; 16:9,11). The phrase, "the children of men", encompasses all the members of the human race (i.e., both Jews and Gentiles). Here, to "understand" is equated to "seek[ing] God" (Cp., Job28:28; Prov9:10).
- [3] The LORD's evaluation of humanity is that all are lost, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (i.e., there is not a single exception). Note that the Lord Jesus Christ asserted, "There is none good but one, that is, God" (Matt19:17). Cross reference "filthy" with Isaiah 64:6. The quotation of Psalm 14:1-3 in Romans 3:10-12 is preparatory to the conclusion, "that every mouth

¹ In Scripture, wisdom and foolishness are set in contradistinction to one another (cf. Prov10:1; 1Cor3:19). A "fool" is an unwise person. He is not ignorant, and may indeed be extremely intelligent, but he makes unwise decisions. The Hebrew word translated "fool" is Nabal (Cp., 1Sam25:3).

may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom3:19).

Textual Note. It is common for modern text critics and N.T. scholars to assert that the N.T. quotations of the O.T. come from the Septuagint (a.k.a. LXX; i.e., a translation of the Hebrew O.T. into Greek alleged to have been produced in Alexandria in the 3rd century BC). The evidence offered for this claim is that such quotations usually (or often) agree word perfect with the Greek text of the LXX. However, there is substantial evidence that what is known today as the LXX was actually produced after the N.T. had been written, and that the N.T. quotations were actually taken from the N.T. and inserted into the text of the LXX to obtain perfect agreement; this becomes apparent in the numerous places in the LXX where such N.T. texts were improperly inserted. Psalm 14 includes one of those improper insertions (see TABLE 1. Example of LXX Quotation from the New Testament).

- [4] This verse has in view a time in which God has His "people" on the earth, who are distinct from the ungodly "fool[s]" (v1) and persecuted by "all the workers of iniquity". These "workers of iniquity" are distinguished from "my people" in that they "call not upon the LORD"; their contempt for the LORD manifests itself as a contempt for His "people". This is probably a reference to the antisemitism that always exists, but which has exploded in these last days.
- [5] At the time when "God" intervenes on behalf of His people, to judge "all the workers of iniquity" (v4) during Day of the LORD, the coming 7-year Tribulation, they will be in "great fear" (Cp., Isa13:6-16; Rev6:15-17). The "generation of the righteous" with whom God identifies will be the believing remnant of the nation of Israel (cf. Rev12:17).
- [6] During the Tribulation, the "poor" is a designation of those who believe in the LORD and refuse to worship the Antichrist. Doing so will make them unable to "buy or sell" (Rev13:17) and make them targets of the False Prophets program of extermination (Rev13:15). In contrast, the rich will be those who have identified with the Antichrist and participate in his economic system (Cp., Rev18:3,15,17,19),
- [7] The psalmist longs for the "salvation" for Israel that will come from the LORD. The timing of it is connected to the return of the nation of Israel from "captivity" (cf. Isa11:11-12; Ezek36:24-28; Matt24:31). Note that "Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad" is synonymous parallelism. Thus, in that day "Jacob" and "Israel" will be equivalent designations for the nation².

² After the LORD gave Jacob his new name Israel (Gen32:28), both names continued to be used in Scripture as designations for the nation of Israel. However, Jacob is used when the nation is characterized by iniquity and unfaithfulness to the LORD (e.g., Jer30:7), whereas Israel is used when the nation is characterized by righteousness (e.g., Jer31:33).

TABLE 1. Example of LXX Quotation from the New Testament.

Romans 3	Psalms 14 (Hebrew - KJV)	Psalms 14 (LXX - Brenton)
¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: ¹⁴ Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.	¹ The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. ² The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. ³ They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ⁴ Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord.	¹ The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They have corrupted themselves, and become abominable in their devices; there is none that does goodness, there is not even so much as one. ² The Lord looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that understood, or sought after God. ³ They are all gone out of the way, they are together become good for nothing, there is none that does good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. ⁴ Will not all the workers of iniquity know, who eat up my people as they would eat bread? They have not called upon the Lord.