

“Religion” can mean “any system of faith and worship,” including false ones. The world was/is filled with religions but only one is true—the biblical one, now nicknamed Christianity. This may sound arrogant, narrow-minded, and judgmental, but it is true because God really is and God truly reveals Himself to us verbally in Scripture and supremely in Jesus Christ.

All but biblical Christians practice false religions. Scripture calls us to proselytize them and them to repent and worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no [one] who does not have [their] own god or gods as the object of [their] highest desire and trust, or as the basis of [their] deepest loyalty and commitment. . . . The same truth is valid even for thinkers denying such a divinity, for such a denial would in practice merely consist in transferring an identical dignity and function to another object—[whether] “nature,” creativity, . . . “reason,” progress, or [whatever]. Even such apparently “godless” ideologies are theologies (Barth, *Evangelical Theology*).

Psa 96 summons everyone justly to this one true, biblical religion (read aloud).

Everyone, worship Jehovah alone, our Creator and Judge!

Straightforward structure and movement. Three major parts (at vv. 1, 7, 11), each with two subparts (call/cause to worship). Three calls (to everyone, everyone, creation) to worship Jehovah with causes/reasons (He is Creator, Judge of all people stated 2x) for each. Only true of Him → idol worship must cease right now to worship Jehovah alone (1C: Exod 20.3). The high-level repetition of major ideas (duty of worshipping Him alone as Creator and Judge) is very emphatic and forceful. Resistance to this sovereign LORD is wicked treason deserving eternal punishment. Ultimate resistance to Him is also impossible because He is omnipotent Savior-King!

I. Everyone, Worship Jehovah Alone, for He Is Our Creator (1-6)

- ★ Call to praise (1-3). 1) Who is called? “All the earth” (1b), “the heathen/nations,” “all people(s)” (3, hist. Gentiles, now non-Christians). 2) Called to what? First, “sing” with words (1-2a, 3x) = musical theology rendered vocally (e.g., psalms). Product is “a new song.” “A new song does not indicate a recent song, but a song that responds to a recent experience of God in action. It is a song that extols a fresh appreciation of the Lord’s activity, a song of thanksgiving focusing on a specific divine intervention” (NAC). Second, “bless” (praise), “shew forth/tell,” “declare” (2b-3), all are essentially preaching/testifying that exalts God by describing Him (“His glory,” e.g., v. 6 of His royal excellence) and “His wonders/marvelous works” (e.g., “his salvation,” 2b). Such praise is too rare!
- ★ Cause of praise (4-6). 1) His superiority to other “gods” (4), as the wicked regard them. False “gods” are not to be feared at all (2 Kgs 17.35; Isa 8.13). 2) His unique identity as Creator (5), while the “gods” are but “idols,” pictures/statues representing a supposed

deity (mockery in Psa 115.4-7) but they actually worship demons (LXX: “For all the gods of the heathen are demons;” 1 Cor 10.20). “The heavens” magnificent beyond comprehension, yet the Lord made them! 3) His royal excellence (6), “honor/majesty/strength/beauty” all exalted terms infinitely below His actual greatness.

II. Everyone, Worship Jehovah Alone, for He Shall Judge Us All (7-10)

- ★ Call to praise (7-8). “Give unto the LORD” (7-8a, 3x) “the glory due unto His name” (8a). We do not *increase* His glory (infinite, absolute, eternal, immutable). We *celebrate* His glory. Likewise “bring an offering” (8b) is unlike idol worship (cf. Psa 50.12-15).

Idolatry was easy. In the ANE system, faithfulness was all about feeding the gods. It wasn’t about ethical behavior. If you had an idol, the rules were simple—feed it and then go and live your life the way you want to. This was a huge contrast to the hundreds of laws [Jehovah] would give His people (copied).

- ★ Cause of praise (9-10). 1) More universal language: “all the earth” (9b), “among the heathen/Gentiles/nations” (10a), “the world” (10b), “the people(s)” (10c). Theme: one true religion for all. 2) Rationale: Jehovah (reigning King of kings) shall (future) establish the world, judge everyone (10). Though involving dreadful punishment for some, this is incredibly positive because it is the triumph of the righteous God over all evil (He denounces and throws down) and the salvation of all His people from all our miseries forever and ever. It looks forward to Paradise Restored, even better than the beginning (pre-fall Eden), enjoyed by a countless multitude from all the nations. Powerful reason to praise!

III. Let All Worship Jehovah Alone, for He Shall Judge Us All (11-13)

- ★ Call to praise (11, 12). 1) Dramatic poetry, inanimate objects personified and called to swell the anthem of praise to Jehovah! Three pairs: “Heavens/earth [merism]; sea/fullness [also comprehensive]; field/trees [all in the field, trees being conspicuous participants; Isa 55.12].” 2) Emphatic quality of this praise: JOY (“rejoice, be glad,” 11a; “be joyful/rejoice,” 12).
- ★ Cause of praise (13). The climactic “coming” [decisive divine acts in history] of “the LORD” “to judge the earth” (end the injustice, set things right) “with righteousness/His truth,” unlike the sinful kings of this world whose good reigns have at most very limited success and whose evil reigns are corrupt, making things worse.

Psa 96 at first, historically, was almost completely confined to Israel. Only later would its call to worship Jehovah be heard and heeded around the world, as today. How did this come about in redemptive history?

Answer: Christ’s first coming to save Jews AND Gentiles! Mark 16.15, 16; Acts 1.8; 17.6; 28.28. Psa 96 is therefore prophetic gospel about the salvation of God’s elect in all ages. The NT explicitly reveals that Christ is the God coming to judge as Psa 96 predicts (John 5.22, 23; Acts 17.31), the true God who alone must be worshipped instead of idols (1 Jn 5.20, 21). Ω