

Psalm 2

Psalm 2: Psalm 2 is attributed to David (in Acts 4:25), and is called the second psalm (in Acts 13:33). The introductory rhetorical question, “Why do the heathen rage” (verse 1), is shown in the following verses to be a question of incredulity: Why do the nations attack God’s anointed king when their attack is doomed to failure? Historically, “his Anointed” (verse 2), referred to David or to any of his descendants who were experiencing opposition (compare 1 Sam. 24:6); prophetically, it refers to the Messiah who, as Son of David, also experienced opposition (Acts 4:25-27). The fact that God “shall laugh (verse 4), at the world’s opposition to the Anointed One presages their calamity because the Lord has installed His “King upon ... Zion” (verse 6). And adopted Him as His “Son”; therefore, the nations may be taken as an “inheritance” at the son’s request (verse 8). Every Davidic ruler was an adopted son (2 Sam. 7:14), but the real significance of the promise is fulfilled only in Christ, the eternal Son of God (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). The wise alternative is to submit to this Son (verses 10-12).

Verses 1-12: Sometimes Psalm 2 is said to share with Psalm 1 in the role of introducing the Psalter (compare “blessed” in 1:1 and 2:12). Also, it seems that which the function of Psalm 1 is to disclose the two different “ways” for individuals, Psalm 2 follows up with its application to nations. This psalm is normally termed “royal” and has had a long history of messianic interpretation. Although it has no title, it seems to bear the imprint of David’s hand. As such, it fluidly moves from the lesser David through the Davidic dynasty to the Greater David, Jesus Christ. Psalm 2 progressively shines its poetic spotlight on 4 vivid scenes relating to the mutiny of mankind against God.

1. Scene One: Human Rebellion (2:1-3);
2. Scene Two: Devine Reaction (2:4-6);
3. Scene Three: Divine Rule (2:7-9);
4. Scene Four: Human Responsibility (2:10-12).

Psalm 2:1 "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

“Why” sets the tone of the psalm, one of astonishment at the senseless rejection of God’s rule. This psalm is meant to be read in connection with Psalm 110, fulfilled both in David’s time and at the time of the people’s rejection of the Messiah (Acts 4:25-26). “Imagine” communicates the activities of a people who complain and are discontent.

“Imagine a vain thing”: This is the irony of man’s depravity, devising, conspiring, and scheming emptiness (compare Psalm 38:12; Prov. 24:2; Isa. 59:3, 13).

All who were not followers of God were thought of as heathen. At the time this was written, if you were not an Israelite, you were thought of as a heathen. Today it is according to who is speaking. The Arabs believe all people besides them are heathen. The Christians believe that those who have totally rejected Jesus as their Savior and Lord are heathen. The list could go on and on. In all of the lessons we have done, the idea is to apply these Scriptures to our present circumstance.

I believe that, even though the penman of this Psalm was speaking of some local problem, he was also speaking of all down through the ages when the heathen would rage. Ungodly men and women have never had peace within them. Rage in the Scripture above, means to be tumultuous. Ungodly people believe to settle anything should be through fighting. Most of the things imagined never come about. This Scripture brings to mind the way it will be just before the return of the Lord. Men's hearts failing them, for fear of things that are coming upon the earth. Heathens are really those who have rejected Jesus Christ as Savior. We will see this very thing in the next few verses.

Psalm 2:2 "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, [saying],"

Against ... against": The nations and peoples, led by their kings and rulers (verse 1), direct their hostility toward the Lord and His anointed one. The consecrated and commissioned mediatorial representative referred to David in a near sense and Messiah, i.e., Christ, in the ultimate sense (compare Acts 4:25-26).

Psalm 2:3 "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

Their bands ... their cords": Mutinous mankind, instead of understanding that these are God's love-bonds (Hosea 11:4), view them as yoke bands (Jer. 5:5).

Not only did Herod and Pilate try to do away with Jesus, but even many rulers in our day have gone totally against the teachings of Jesus in the Bible. So many decisions made in the courts of our land are directly opposed to the teachings in the Bible. We can look back and point a finger at the people involved in the crucifixion and total rejection of Jesus nearly 2000 years ago. But I say, where are our leaders who will stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ today? Are we a nation of God fearing people, or have we compromised too? This chapter of Psalms is a prophetic chapter. This is all about Jesus Christ the Lord (Messiah). To look back to verse one and connect it to this; the entire world who do not know God, are raging and imagining bad things about God.

Verse 3 above says it all. Worldly people do not want to serve a holy God. One more very important thing to notice is that, these rulers and counsel [set themselves] against the Lord. God has given us a free will to serve Him or to turn against Him. They have chosen to turn against Him. Ungodly leaders have a tendency to have ungodly subjects. When people are not subject to God, they have no morals, and the whole society turns to evil. This seems to me to be what this above Scripture is saying. Pornography, filthy books and movies, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, drugs, and alcohol are all products of a society out of fellowship with God. Who will stand up and say, it is enough? We must repent and serve God.

Psalm 2:4 "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

God laughs at the very idea that people think they can oppose His will (37:13).

All of man's power is as nothing with Almighty God. Even the next breath that we take, is by permission from Almighty God. The Father has given this power to Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;" " And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

For a mere human being to come against the Father or His Son is absurd. God does not even bother to try to straighten them out, He just laughs that they would be so foolish. To have them in derision, means He would laugh them to scorn. To reject Jesus (God's Son), seals your doom. This is one thing God will not forgive.

Psalm 2:5 "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

“Then”: After mocking them with the laughter of divine contempt, God speaks and acts from His perfectly balanced anger.

There is a time when God's wrath will come into His face. Then it is too late. God is patient as we read above, but there is a time, when He will speak in His wrath. What a terrible thing to feel the wrath of God. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved from the wrath to come.

Romans 5:9 "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The word vex in this instance, means to tremble. It would certainly be the time to tremble, if the wrath of God was vented against you. We know that the soldiers which came to get Jesus fell backwards just at Jesus answering them. The power in the voice of God is beyond our understanding. The voice of God speaking to the children of Israel from the mountain, frightened them so that they begged Moses to talk to God for them. God was not even angry then. Think how unbelievably frightening the voice of God would be, if He were angry.

Psalm 2:6 "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

“Have I set”: their puny challenge (verse 3), is answered by this powerful pronouncement. It’s as good as done: His king will be enthroned on Jerusalem’s most prominent hill.

God will put whoever He wants to in authority, anytime He wants to. No power on earth can keep Him from doing what He wishes. This is possibly, looking forward to Jesus Christ who will be Lord of lords and King of kings. Zion is symbolic of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is not only King, but Lord as well. Of course there is a literal Zion, but I believe this is speaking of His church.

Psalm 2:7 "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou [art] my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

“I will declare the decree”: The installed mediator now recites the Lord’s previously issued enthronement ordinance.

“Thou art my Son”: This recalls (2 Sam. 7:8-16), as the basis for the Davidic king. It is also the only Old Testament reference to the Father/Son relationship in the Trinity, a relationship decreed in eternity past and demonstrated in the incarnation, thus a major part of the New Testament.

“This day have I begotten thee”: He expresses the privileges of relationship, with its prophetic application to the Son, Messiah. This verse is quoted in the New Testament with reference to the birth of Jesus (Heb. 1:5-6), and also to His resurrection (Acts 13:33-34), as the earthly affirmations.

When was Jesus “begotten”? Answering this question involves understanding the meaning here of the word “day”. As God lives beyond time, He cannot be limited to a 24-hour period. This word means an eternal day. Jesus did not become the Son of God at a point in time; rather He has eternally been in the process of being generated as the Son in God’s eternal day. There has never been a time when Christ was not the Son of God. On several occasions during His ministry on earth, the Sonship of Christ was particularly emphasized, in the Incarnation (Luke 1:35), in the Baptism (Matt. 3:17), and in the Resurrection (Rom. 1:4). These events did not make Christ the Son of God, but only proved that He already was. As the Christian thinks of the present ministry of Christ, he recognizes this also as an opportunity to appreciate Christ’s unique relationship with the Father (Heb. 1:1-4; compare John 1:51).

This leaves absolutely no doubt at all that this is speaking of the Lord Jesus. Just as the voice came from the heavens at Jesus' baptism, and said, “This is my beloved Son”, we see Jesus here as King.

Matthew 3:17 "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We can also look at the voice from the heavens at the transfiguration.

Matthew 17:5 "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Psalm 2:8 "Ask of me, and I shall give [thee] the heathen [for] thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth [for] thy possession."

A very small part of the heathen was the inheritance of David, and therefore the Messiah only can be spoken of in this verse. Before Messiah "all kings" were to "fall down; all nations to do him service" (Psalm 72:11; compare Isa. 49:22; 60:3-4; Matt. 28:19).

"And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession": The whole world, not only the Jewish nation, but the Gentiles also, as this phrase is almost universally used in the Old Testament (as

Psalm 19:4; 22:28; 46:10; 65:5; Isa. 40:28; 45:22). And so, these words declare the great amplitude of the kingdom of the Messiah.

We see in this, the power and authority that Jesus has. All of the inhabitants of the earth have been bought and paid for by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (God's Anointed). The Scripture from (Philippians 2:10), leaves no doubt how far reaching this power and authority of Jesus is. What Adam and Eve lost in the Garden of Eden, Jesus purchased back on the cross. Whether we know Jesus as our Savior and Lord or not, we are His property. He can either save us, or condemn us to an eternity in hell when we stand before him on judgement day. Jesus is the Judge. We are His creation and He purchased us with His blood at Calvary.

1 Timothy 4:10 "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

Jesus made salvation available to all mankind. Not all will accept the salvation He offered.

1 Corinthians 10:26 "For the earth [is] the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

Psalm 2:9 "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

"Thou shalt ... thou shalt": The supreme sovereignty of "the King of kings" is pictured in its subjugation might. The shepherd's "rod" and the king's scepter" are the same word in the original. Shepherding and kingly imagery often merged in ancient Near Eastern thought (compare Micah 7:14).

"Rod of iron" is the scepter that represents kingship, iron being symbolic of strength (Rev. 2:26-27; 19:15). The phrase "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" illustrates the strength of the king over the nations; in comparison to him, they are like fragile pottery.

One of the reasons the Jews did not accept Jesus as Messiah, was because they were expecting a mighty warrior such as David, who would conquer their enemies for them. Jesus, when He comes back to the earth this time to reign for the 1000 years, will be that Lord and Master that they were looking for then. His rule will be absolute. Those who do not do the will of God will be destroyed. The Potter has power to destroy His creation, if it is not pleasing unto Him. I believe this Scripture above just shows His absolute rule.

Verses 10-12: The tone of these verses is surprising. Instead of immediate judgment, the Lord and His Anointed mercifully provide an opportunity for repentance. Five commands place responsibility on mutinous mankind.

Psalm 2:10 "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth."

“Be wise ... be instructed” are favorite words in wisdom literature. Kings should act prudently and with discretion. This begins with reverencing God and submitting to His authority.

Psalm 2:11 "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

If ye will not serve him (i.e. honor and obey him), from love, do it from fear. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). And rejoice. Do not be content with “fear”. Go on from fear to love, and so to joy.

“Rejoice”: Do not esteem his yoke your dishonor and grievance. But know that it is a greater glory and happiness to be the subjects of this King, than to be emperors of the greatest empire. And accordingly rejoice in it, and bless God for this inestimable grace and benefit.

With "trembling": Not with a fearful looking for of judgment, but with modesty and humility. In which sense this word, when joined with "fear" as here, is used (Phil. 2:12), and stands opposed to pride, haughtiness, and arrogance. Men should so rejoice in Christ as to have no confidence in the flesh, or assume any degree of glory to themselves. Or have any rejoicing in themselves, but wholly in Christ, giving all the glory of what they have to him.

We see from this that to fear the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom. The kings and judges of this world are subject to a higher Power. They may rule over the little people on the earth, but there is someone higher than they are. All mankind, whether kings or judges, or presidents, or any other holders of high office in the earth, must answer to Almighty God. To fear God, is the only fear we are to have. This fear is more of a reverence. When we fear Him enough to serve Him, there will be a rejoicing that will come with knowing we are saved. Even though we rejoice at knowing we are saved, there is a fearful awareness of His power and greatness.

Psalm 2:12 "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish [from] the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed [are] all they that put their trust in him."

“Kiss the Son”: This symbolic act would indicate allegiance and submission (compare 1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kings 19:18). The word for “Son” here is not the Hebrew word for “son” that was used in verse 7, but rather its Aramaic counterpart (compare Dan. 7:13), which is a term that would especially be suitable for these commands being addressed to “nations” (verse 1).

“Perish from the way”: These words pick up the major burden (of Psalm 1).

To kiss the Son, is an acceptance of Him for who He is. Abraham had faith, and his faith was counted to him as righteousness. We also find that without faith, it is impossible to please God. There is only one Way to everlasting life, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ. We read in Jesus' own words:

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

We must also note that in the verse above, it speaks of trust. I believe that a mature Christian, who has been acting in faith, will get to the point of resting in Jesus that can only be attained by trusting the lord in every aspect of their lives. To trust means, I have absolute confidence in the actions of God in my behalf.

Psalm 2 Questions

1. Who does verse 1 say rages?
2. What else do they do?
3. Who do the Arabs believe are heathen?
4. Who did the Israelites (when this was written), believe were heathen?
5. Who do the Christians believe are heathen?
6. What does rage, in the Scripture, mean?
7. What is the state of mind of the worldly, just before the Lord comes back?
8. The kings of the earth set themselves against whom?
9. Who were 2 specific people who tried to do away with Jesus?
10. How do those in authority today come against Jesus?
11. What question does the author ask rulers of our day?
12. What one word describes the message in chapter 2?
13. Ungodly leaders have a tendency to have _____ subjects.
14. Name a few things that are products of a society out of fellowship with God.
15. What does verse 4 say God is doing?
16. What makes it possible for us to take our next breath?
17. What does (have them in derision) mean?
18. Who will not feel the wrath of God?
19. What happened to the soldiers who came for Jesus, when He answered their question?
20. Who can God put in authority?

21. What is Zion symbolic of?
22. Name 2 times when a voice came from heaven and said; This is my beloved Son.
23. Who did Jesus buy and pay for at Calvary?
24. What does 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 10 mean?
25. What was one of the reasons the Jews did not accept Jesus as their Messiah?
26. How are we to serve the Lord?
27. Who must earthly judges and kings answer to?
28. What is meant by (kiss the Son)?
29. Who is the Way?