



Title: Story and Song – Psalm 2

Text: Psalm 2

Date: June 19, 2022

Main Idea: Jesus is our True King

Personal Study Guide

READ ENTIRE TEXT: PSALM 2

Highlight – What stands out?

1. What words or phrases stand out to you as you read this text? Do any of the following catch your eye? Why do you think that is the case?

- a. Why do the nations rage?
 - b. Set themselves ... against the LORD
 - c. Against his anointed
 - d. He who sits in the heavens laughs
 - e. I have set my King on Zion
 - f. The **LORD**
 - g. O kings, be wise; be warned
 - h. Kiss the Son
2. Divide the 12 verses into 3 sections and provide a subtitle for each section. What are your subtitles?
3. Psalm 2 is quoted multiple times in the New Testament. Take a moment to look up these quotations and write the references down.
(Hint: If you have a study Bible or a Bible with scripture references in the margins, this will help you find them.)
4. What does the Psalm say God is doing while the nations rage, plot, set themselves, take counsel...?

5. Where do you see the topics of pride and humility in this Psalm?

Explain – What does this mean?

*Note: These introductory notes to the psalms will help as you study these first 8 psalms this summer.

The psalms can generally be divided into 3 categories:

- Orientation: Telling you what life is supposed to be like
- Disorientation: Telling you what life is like
- Reorientation: Telling you what life will be like after deliverance (future or present)

There are also different genres of psalms:

- Lament – the life that is struggling
- Thanksgiving – the life that is delivered
- Praise/Hymn – the life that is content

1. Based on these explanations above, what kind of psalm is this one? How would you explain your answer?

2. Psalm 2 is a coronation Psalm. In it, a Davidic king (Acts 4:24-26) is set on the throne in Israel according to the decree of the LORD. Who is the anointed one here? Look up Psalm 18:50, Psalm 89, and Matthew 1 to help explain your answer.

3. While Psalm 2 is understood to be a “current event” coronation psalm for a Davidic king in Israel, it is understood that the Psalm is prophetic. Read Acts 4:23-28 to help explain how this is prophetic.
4. In v. 10-12 the LORD’s invitation is to kiss the Son—the anointed—and to submit to his authority. What does that mean based on what is said in Acts 4:23-28?
5. Look at the first verse of Psalm 1 and the final verse of Psalm 2. What similarities do you notice? These two psalms are the introduction to the book of psalms. They set the stage for what is to come. How does Psalm 2 prepare you for what you know about the rest of the psalms?

Apply – How does this change me?

1. Where do we place ourselves as we read this Psalm? Do we see ourselves as the “nations who rage and the peoples who plot in vain?” against God’s anointed? In what ways have you tried to be liberated from God’s authority?
2. This psalm speaks to the overwhelming power and control that God has over our lives and the “ends of the earth.” How should the knowledge of God’s power and control affect our lives?
3. The psalm tells us to “serve the LORD with fear” and to “Kiss the Son.” It says that those that take refuge in him are “Blessed.” If man’s natural heart is to reject authority, to be our own person, be autonomous, how do we submit to God’s King, Jesus, and to the gospel?

Respond – What’s my next step?

1. The psalm says to be “wise” and to be “warned.” How do we get the wisdom that we need to submit to King Jesus, day-by-day in our actions, decisions, and plans? See Proverbs 3:1-12 and make a list of all the actions steps it mentions.

2. We see in the text that the world has been promised to God’s King. As we see current events unfolding in the world and we experience trials in our own lives, how do we keep this promise in our minds and hearts?

Commentary: Taken from “The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life” by Dale Ralph Davis

2

WORLD VIEW

PSALM 2

- 1 Why do the nations rage?
And why do the peoples keep plotting hopeless plans?
- 2 Why do the kings of the earth take their stand
and why do the rulers conspire together
—against Yahweh and against his Anointed King?
- 3 ‘Let us rip off their fetters
and let’s throw off their cords.’
- 4 The One who sits in the heavens laughs!
The Lord mocks at them!
- 5 Then he speaks to them in his wrath,
yes, he terrifies them in his hot anger:
- 6 ‘But **I** have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.’
- 7 Let me tell about the decree;
Yahweh said to me:
‘You are my son; I have begotten you this very day.
- 8 Ask me, and I will give nations as your inheritance,
and the ends of the earth for your possession.
- 9 You will break them with an iron rod,
you will smash them to pieces like a clay pot.’
- 10 And now, you kings! Wise up!
Accept instruction, you rulers of the earth!
- 11 Serve Yahweh with fear
and rejoice—with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son, lest he become angry
and you perish in your tracks,
for his wrath ignites quickly.
Oh, the joy of all who take refuge in him!

Paul Tripp tells of a birthday party for one of the little girls in a kindergarten class he was once teaching. The girl's mother had decorated the room, provided favors, and so on, but one kindergarten boy—jealous because the gifts and main attention were not his—was well on his way to making an obnoxious nuisance of himself and a near disaster of the party. Then one of the mothers walked over and knelt down beside this lad, turned his chair so that he had to look directly into her eyes, and said, 'Johnny, it's not your party!' Funny how we can be so provincial (and sinful) that we can't see beyond our own nose and interests.

And Psalm 2 wants to correct this problem; it says to us, 'You need to get the big view of things.' That's why Psalm 2 is Psalm 2, just as in our previous message we noted why Psalm 1 was Psalm 1. The position of these two psalms at the beginning of the Psalter is deliberate. Psalm 1 deals with the most urgent individual matter; you must know where you are going and must be sure you belong to the congregation of the righteous. Psalm 2 says that you must know where history is going; you must see the whole show; you must understand that *the world has been promised to the Messiah*. So what do you see and hear in Psalm 2?

The world that hates

First, you see the world that hates (vv. 1–3). Here is a *hostile* world—nations rage, peoples plot, kings and rulers conspire against Yahweh and his Anointed King. Whether congresses or parliaments, whether democracies or dictatorships, the root attitude of nations and of the head knockers of this age is: 'We do not want this man to reign over us' (Luke 19:14). This is Psalm 1:1 to the second power and writ large; this is what it looks like when the counsel of the wicked and the way of sinners and the seat of scoffers goes international.

The early church tells us that the premier example of this rebellion occurred in the crucifixion of Messiah Jesus (Acts 4:23–31). The Jewish brass had threatened the apostles; they came back and reported it all to the gathered believers, who then gave themselves to prayer and quoted Psalm 2:1–2 in that prayer and filled in the blanks of the latest and foremost king and ruler—Herod and Pontius Pilate, 'along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel' (v. 27). And here the church declares that the hostile world Psalm 2 describes is also a *persecuting* world—'And now, Lord, look upon their threats ...' (v. 29). The hostility and enmity directed at Jesus is also, willy-nilly, directed at his people. And so the Psalm implies the Messiah's people will pay a huge price for belonging to him. This enmity may vary in intensity from time to time, but on the whole history runs red with the blood of Messiah's members.

It was so when the Communists took over China in 1949. Brother Yun of the underground church relates that in his home area of Nanyang, believers were crucified on the walls of their churches for refusing to deny Christ; others were chained to horses or vehicles and dragged to their deaths; a pastor was hoisted

by a rope and makeshift crane and then dropped to the ground when he would not renounce Christ—the first time didn't kill him, so they did it once more to finish him off. Such episodes clutter history's calendar and our current century is already awash in such brutality. It is, sadly, par for the course. Hatred for the Messiah spills over on Messiah's people.

Yet the psalmist implies that this rebellious world, this persecuting world, is nevertheless an *insane* world. That is the implication behind his fourfold, astonished 'Why?' in verses 1–2. That 'why' is the first word in the psalm and only occurs once, but it is intended to 'carry over' to the following clauses (hence my translation). He can hardly believe it! What suicidal nincompoops to be possessed of such livid rage toward the God who rules.

So what are we to make of this? Well, if you are going to get a 'world view,' you must start here. If you are going to get a right view of God's kingdom, you must first get an accurate view of the world. Whether its rage always shows up at full fury, this world nevertheless hates God, detests his Messiah, and despises Messiah's people. 'If the world hates you,' Jesus has told us, 'know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you' (John 15:18–19, RSV). Let the realism of the Bible's view infect your mind; be sure you understand what you can expect.

The throne that consoles

Secondly, you can see here the throne that consoles (vv. 4–6). Right off you see the divine reaction to world-wide human rebellion: 'The One who sits in the heavens laughs! The Lord mocks at them!' (v. 4). You get the picture? God is not fazed! The mighty politicians, the dictators in their military fatigues, the terrorists with their bomb loads strapped to their backs—God is unimpressed. If you have imbibed a western sentimental view of God as the great soupy softie in the sky, then you will not understand this picture of verse 4. In fact, it will likely 'offend' you. But the psalm implies that nations may strut out their nuclear bombs—it only convulses the Almighty in laughter! To think that a few swaggering sovereigns could destroy God's kingdom with such trifles! After you hear the kings in verse 3, you need to see this picture of the laughing God in verse 4, in order to get re-focused on the truth.

Sinclair Ferguson (in his book *Deserted by God?*) mentions how the onset of anger may cause some symptoms of depression to disappear. He tells of a nineteenth century London physician, a certain Dr. Williams, who was sought out by patients suffering from mild depression. He sometimes referred them to a premier consultant living in Scotland. Patients making the several days' journey by coach arrived only to soon discover that no such doctor existed. They spent their return journey scheming how they would vent their spleen on Dr. Williams. They were furious—but no longer depressed! Something else held their attention.

That is the effect verse 4 should have on the faith-full psalm reader. You hear the scary bravado of verse 3, but then you re-focus with the view of the laughing King in verse 4.

And there is also divine action in contrast to human decision (vv. 5–6). You may see it best by hearing! Place the words of the rulers of this age in verse 3 side-by-side with the Yahweh's words in verse 6: 'But I [the pronoun is emphatic] have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.' They say, 'Let us ...' and Yahweh says, 'But I...'. When he mentions 'my king' he is referring to the one called 'his anointed' in verse 2. (For the record, I do not think that he refers here to any conceivable king of David's line; I think this psalm has its eyes on the final, culminating king of that line, the Messiah par excellence). So he mocks their puny rebellion (v. 4) and he has already installed the King who will rule the world (vv. 5–6).

And yet there's a bit of a 'kicker' here, for there is a certain divine 'weakness' in the face of this united human power. Yahweh has installed his king 'on Zion, my holy hill.' Of course, he is speaking of his choice of his covenant king, David, and David's line of kings that culminates in the Messiah himself. But look where he begins! The first reference in the Bible to Zion is in 2 Samuel 5:7, the stronghold of Zion that David took from the Jebusites. This 'Zion' was a puny 11 acres of real estate on the southeastern ridge of Jerusalem. Yahweh plants his kingdom there—and it will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). But he begins his visible kingdom in this world on a tiny, banana-shaped hill in a provincial backwater called Judah. God plants his kingdom in weakness, but because God plants it, it will prove undefeatable. It's a fascinating combination: weakness and invincibility.

And when God's servants are at their best they are aware of it. Australian missionary Dick McLellan has given us a case in point in his fascinating book, *Warriors of Ethiopia*. He tells of 42 evangelists from the Wolaitta tribe in southwestern Ethiopia who wanted to take the gospel to other tribes in the Gofa region. These men moved their families to Gofa, rented land, built houses, planted crops, had their new neighbors in, gossiped the gospel to them. Some of them received the Savior. Prayer houses were built where they met for fellowship and worship. But too many changes took place: converts no longer went to witchdoctors, no longer paid the priest's tax to the Orthodox priests, no longer slipped bribes to government officials for needs or favors. So ... a police lieutenant arrested the evangelist Atero, chained his wrists together and clamped his ankles together in heavy iron rings so he could only hop but not walk. He paraded Atero in front of the market-day crowd and let it be known that this was what would happen to any who followed the 'new religion.' He ordered Atero, 'Go back to Wolaitta ... and take your Jesus thing with you! We don't want your Jesus here!' Then McLellan says that Atero hopped forward and said: 'O Sir, listen. Please listen. I can go but the Gospel will stay. By the power of God I planted Jesus in Gofa. He is planted in the hearts and souls of the Gofa people. I can go but Jesus will stay.' As if Atero says to one of the 'rulers

of this age', 'There are some things you can change but some that you can't—some are irreversible, even for those with power.' I planted Jesus in Gofa. I can go but Jesus will stay! And God's kingdom may look pretty flimsy, planted in little Zion. But God has planted his kingdom there and that will stay—and no one can do anything about it.

So you live in a world that hates. But you lift your eyes and see the throne that consoles. I rather like the way the Jerusalem Bible translates verse 4a: 'The One whose throne is in heaven sits laughing.' It's the same message as in Revelation 4: there is a throne—and One who is sitting upon it. Keep your eyes there. Sometimes that's all that will keep you sane.

The decree that determines

Thirdly, you need to hear the decree that determines (vv. 7–9). I also need to explain a detail of the text in verse 7. Most English translations refer to the 'decree of Yahweh/the LORD.' However, the accents in the traditional Hebrew text indicate that 'Yahweh' is the emphatic subject of the verb 'said.' So ... we have another speaker beginning in verse 7; he is going to tell us about the 'decree.' It was Yahweh himself who spoke this decree to 'me.' The 'me' is the anointed king, the Messiah.

There are three keynotes in this decree about the Messiah's reign. The first is *legitimacy*: 'You are my son; I have begotten you this very day' (7b). Yahweh has appointed him to rule and has installed him (I believe that 'begotten' in v. 7 is equivalent to 'installed' in v. 6). He is the rightful king. Then there is the *scope* of his rule in verse 8 ('nations ... ends of the earth')—his will be an international, world-wide kingdom. It is all to belong to Jesus. And then he indicates the *force* of his rule in verse 9: 'You will break them with an iron rod, you will smash them to pieces like a clay pot.' Why, we might think, I was just beginning to warm to Christ's kingdom and then, suddenly, it turns vicious. But you must understand verse 9 in light of verse 3. When the time comes to fully enforce his kingly rule, Christ will not be welcomed with open arms. He comes to a God-hating, Christ-defying world. The kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ does not come because the world welcomes his reign and evolves into the kingdom of God, but it comes because Christ imposes his reign by force on rebellious people. So get the picture the decree gives you: The appointed King (v. 7) with world-wide sway (v. 8) to be established in overwhelming force (v. 9). That is the decree that is controlling history.

Marvin Olasky tells of the latter years of newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst. His house guests had to abide by a strict rule: 'Never mention death in Mr Hearst's presence.' That may have been harder than you think. One can forget oneself when talk is flowing (if it ever did there). You would have to walk on conversational eggshells, pretending you were at a convention of Christian Scientists! But that was the 'decree'—and it controlled life and talk apparently in the Hearst household.

And in this psalm, Yahweh's decree controls history. The will of God for Jesus' life is in verses 7b–9. This is the word that determines what will take place and prevail in the history of this world. The certainty of this decree needs to infect your world and life view. It should color the way you look at politics and world conditions. You may not know what to make of them always—but you know where history is headed; you know what the decree is and how it will control and shape everything. It's what keeps God's people glued together during the present age.

The gospel that calls

Finally, you must hear the gospel that calls (vv. 10–12). Here it is as if the psalmist himself speaks but clearly it is the Lord's invitation. God is so utterly unguessable! He addresses kings and rulers—apparently the very same kings and rulers described in verse 2! They are given an opportunity for mercy. The rebels are called to make the only reasonable response (vv. 10–12a). There are two incentives: there is a danger to avoid (lest the Son become angry and you perish in your tracks, 12b) and a joy to experience (12c). The New Berkley Version has nicely captured this latter note and I have 'cobbed' its rendering: 'Oh, the joy of all who take refuge in him.' Both danger and delight are held out to move them to repentance.

So what must they do? 'Serve Yahweh.' That is, become slaves of Yahweh. Not especially an appealing option to kings and rulers. And they are to 'kiss the Son,' Yahweh's appointed Messiah. I don't think the Hebrew text is as difficult here as some of our translations pretend and I don't think we need to have allergies over the fact that the word for 'son' here is Aramaic instead of Hebrew. The kiss is the sign of submission. When a near eastern king reported the subjugation and homage of a conquered king he would say 'what's-his-name, king-of-whenever, came and kissed my feet.' And even we rebels who run around without a crown on our heads face the same demand (and opportunity): give your total submission to the Son.

The symbolism may vary, the reality remains. I mentioned Dick McLellan earlier. He tells of a witch-doctor named Onisa and a slave called Gebre who arrived at his missions home wanting to know if he—McLellan—was Jesus. They had heard a garbled mix of rumor and error and arrived with their questions at a time when terrific storms had done much damage to homes in that area of Ethiopia. But a native evangelist arrived at McLellan's place and so missionary and evangelist spent two days and most of three nights making clear the gospel story and the truth about Jesus to these two seekers. Onisa and Gebre both believed and came to faith in Christ. To acknowledge and confess that faith they stood before a small group of believers. Then they held their right hands high and renounced Satan, blood sacrifices, evil practices and all their sin. Then, McLellan reports, they raised both hands high and said, 'Having renounced Satan and believing in my heart that Jesus is the Son of

God Who died for me, I take Him as my Saviour with two hands. I will never deny Him.' To give both hands was a sign of complete surrender. It's the same as to kiss the Son. And that is Yahweh's kingdom word to you today: Kiss the Son, take his Messiah-king with two hands.¹

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [*Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life: Psalms 1–12*](#) (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 27–36.