

PSALMS

Chapter 2

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” ⁷I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” ¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Ps 2† Author and date not stated (Peter and John ascribed it to David in Ac 4:25—possibly in accordance with the Jewish practice of honoring David as the primary author of the Psalter). A royal psalm, it was originally composed for the coronation of Davidic kings, in light of the Lord’s covenant with David (see 2Sa 7). Later, David’s Son and David’s Lord proclaimed the Messianic meaning of this psalm. As the second half of a two-part introduction to the Psalms, it proclaims the blessedness of all who acknowledge the lordship of God and his anointed and “take refuge in him.”—as does the godly piety that speaks in the Psalms. This psalm is frequently quoted in the NT, where it is applied to Christ as the great Son of David and God’s Anointed. (CSB)

Ascribed to David in Ac 4:25 (perhaps because the whole Psalter is associated with him). The context of the psalm may be David’s coronation or the coronation of one of Jerusalem’s other kings. The first strophe (vv 1–3) may hint at the later wars of David (cf 2Sm 8; 10).

Format: Vv 1–3, the nations oppose the Lord; vv 4–6, the Lord establishes His king; vv 7–9, the Son’s rule; vv 10–12, a warning. (TLSB)

The psalm begins with the turmoil of the nations and ends with the blessing of those who trust in the Lord. The psalm reflects a deep understanding of God’s covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:5-16). (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Psalm 2 is a prophecy of Christ, that he would suffer, and through his suffering become King and Lord of the whole world. Within this psalm stands a warning against the kings and lords of this world: If, instead of honoring and serving this King, they seek to persecute and blot Him out, they shall perish. This psalm also contains the promise that those who believe in the true King will be blessed.

This psalm flows from the First Commandment, in which God promises to be our God, who will help us in every trouble and will work all good for us—just as he has through Christ, delivered us from sin, death, and hell and brought us to eternal life. This blessing is what we pray for in the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer—that his kingdom come. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

The messianic psalms foretell important truths about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Only the four gospels (and perhaps Isaiah) give more information about the Savior than do the psalms.

The messianic psalms, while having a partial fulfillment in the works and lives of God's earthly kings, find their ultimate fulfillment in the life and work of Jesus Christ. (LL)

2:1–3 The nations rebel. In the ancient Near East the coronation of a new king was often the occasion for the revolt of peoples and kings who had been subject to the crown. The newly anointed king is here pictured as ruler over an empire. (CSB)

2:1 *Why ... ?* A rhetorical question that implies “How dare they!” (CSB)

The introductory interrogative “Why” expresses the irony of the tumultuous efforts against the Lord and his anointed. The psalmist was neither surprised nor worried by the rebellion of the nations. He expressed astonishment that the rulers of the earth even tried to counsel together against God. At the outset, the psalmist makes it clear that the nation's attempt is in vain. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

nations – Nations (goyim, a word usually bearing a hostile connotation) are involved in this; so are “peoples,” that is to say, persons of various nationalities. They may differ from one another and have little in common otherwise, but in matters of religion they have the common bond of hatred against the Lord. (Leupold)

The nations refer to the tribes around Israel, such as Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Phoenicians, and Philistines – all perennial enemies of Israel. These surrounding people were constantly fighting with Israel so that Israel's kings regularly had to drive them back into their territory. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

conspire – A primitive root; to *be tumultuous*:—rage. Let no one therefore fear, let no one allow himself to be terrified by these counsels, whose net result will show that they have been in vain. For they are undertaken not against man, as it seems, but against the Lord.” Thus right in the beginning he leads us from fear to hope and offers the comfort that the peoples and the nations will perish unless they abandon these counsels, because they plot against God and not against men. (Luther)

The verb “rage” can be used to describe something like the raging of the sea, but here it refers to the tumultuous meeting of rebels to plan an attack, a meeting going on at the coronation (and so the verb is put in the present tense, a characteristic perfect). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

plot – The rulers of this evil world, who disagree about so many things, find themselves united on one point – their opposition to God's rule. Acts 4:27 tells us that the conspiracy against Jesus which led to his death was the chief example of such plotting against God's king. Pilate and Herod hated each other, but they cooperated in Jesus' trial. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were bitter enemies, but they agreed on one thing – Jesus had to die. Such futile efforts to overthrow God's royal reign have continued throughout history. The Roman Empire tried to crush Christianity. Communist governments are working to destroy the church in their lands. The papacy suppressed the truth in the church. Communist governments are working to destroy the church in their lands. (PBC)

The parallel verb “plot, devise” clarifies this raging. The word is often used in a religious sense of meditation, here it means they were plotting a rebellion. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

This opposition, as all of us know, goes on still today. A successful film producer recently advised would-be writers that no movie can succeed unless its characters break at least three of the Ten Commandments! Sadder still, the young people to whom he spoke probably would have had trouble naming three commandments. (LL)

Quotes from Leonard Sweet's book, "Soul Tsunami" on the apathy and hostility toward Christianity at this time in history.

"In Sandra Loh's novel, 'Depth Takes a Holiday,' evangelism is equated with sexual abuse and body violation." PP 47-48

A recent Oxford publication puts the Christian dilemma in sharp relief. Ian S. Markham compiled for Oxford, 'A World Religions Reader.' Claiming to present each tradition in the best possible light, the author does so for every non-Christian tradition. But Christianity fares badly. His first chapter on Christianity is on secular humanism, which rejects all religion. His testimonies about Christianity are from lapsed believers who have rejected the Christian faith. His treatment of Christianity's treatment of women stresses Thomas Aquinas' negativity, while Islam's attitude toward women is stressed positively (nothing about polygamy, wearing the veil, opposition to divorce, etc.)." p. 48

"Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., in his 'New Yorker' article on 'Hating Hillary,' admits that he is religious himself but tries to keep quiet about it because at Harvard spirituality is considered one of those conditions that suggest some lapse of hygiene of those afflicted, as with worms or lice." P. 48

"Islam is the world's fastest growing religion of the 21st century. While Western Christianity accounted for 26.9% of the world's population in 1900 and peaked at about 30% in 1980, the Muslim population increased from 12.4% in 1900 to as much as 18% in 1980 with well over 1 billion adherents by the mid-1990's. The percentage of Christians in the world will probably decline to about 25% by 2025, the slack largely taken up by Muslims. Muslims are already poised to outnumber Jews in the United States and become the nation's second-largest faith by 2010." pp. 56-57

"US News & World Report, Time, Newsweek consistently choose the holiest Christian week of the year to present cover stories raising questions about what can be believed in the gospels and explore whether or not Jesus did what the Bible says he did." P.52

Other items...

New York City schools allowed Muslims an area to pray during Ramadan but allowed no language that talked about Christmas. Ft. Wayne Newspaper

The television channel "A&E" makes available (without cost to schools) educational programs about the Dalai Lama.

From "Christianity in an age of Terrorism"

...What is true of Islamic radical is also true of other terrorists. The coldhearted self-righteousness of Timothy J. McVeigh, the White Supremacists, the Peruvian communists known as the Shining Path, the Irish Republican Army, the Earth Liberation Front. P 40

Since the attack on September 11, 2001, polls show that Islam has a higher approval rating than ever. More than that, the number of conversions to Islam has skyrocketed. In the four months after 9-11, some 34,000 American converted to Islam. Islam is now the fastest growing religion in the United States. Of the six million Muslims in the United States, more than 30 percent of those who attend mosques are converts. This is becoming a phenomenon in the Hispanic community, with some 25,000 convert in New York and California. Latino Muslims seem to see themselves as returning to the Moorish heritage of ancient Spain. There is a veritable Muslim revival taking place in the nation's prisons. In the state of New York, between 40 and 60 percent of black prisoners have converted to Islam. Those who became Muslims immediately after the attack, though, were largely affluent white American, particularly women. PP 44-45

The ecumenical movement mutated into the interfaith movement. From this perspective, the evil of the terrorist consists in their "fundamentalism," their lack of tolerance for other religions. The answer is to affirm all faith as valid paths to God. P 64

In the Bible, Babylon typifies the kingdom of darkness. We meet this kingdom for the first time today at the tower of Babel. Headed by Satan, this kingdom rebels against the Lord and wars against His people. Babylon will finally fall forever one day (Revelation 18). But for now the conflict continues. As the darkness deepens, the light of God's grace shines brightly still. (Today's Light p 16)

In vain – The psalmist is amazed that this world's rulers dare to plot against God's anointed king. All efforts by people have failed in their plotting. In spite of them, the gospel marches on. (PBC)

emptiness; figuratively a *worthless* thing; adverbially *in vain*:— empty, to no purpose, (in) vain (thing), vanity. (QV)

2:2 kings – They are usually the ones who are so self-sufficient that they are not minded to let anybody instruct them. Besides, they are the ones who are usually the guiding spirits of any concerted efforts to oppose the good Lord (Leupold)

LORD... his Anointed One. To rebel against the Lord's Anointed is also to rebel against the One who anointed him. (CSB)

Anointed One. One consecrated by having oil poured on his head (e.g., David was anointed king by the prophet Samuel; 1Sm 16:13). (TLSB)

The English word "Anointed," the Hebrew word "Messiah," and the Greek word "Christ" all mean the same thing. They all refer to the anointing with oil by which an Israelite priest or king appointed by God was installed into his office. The title, "The Anointed," could be applied to any of the Old Testament high priests or kings. However, in this psalm the Lord's Anointed is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (PBC)

David was anointed king of Judah and was thus God's anointed one. He is the representative on earth and a type (picture) of the coming Messiah. (LL)

LORD... his Anointed One. To rebel against the Lord's Anointed is also to rebel against the One who anointed him. (CSB)

For the surrounding nations to attempt to throw off the authority of the anointed king would be to try to overthrow the plan of God. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

2:3 *burst...bonds...cast away cords.* To them to be under Israelite control was like being in bonds and ropes; thus they came rushing together to plot their strategy of braking free. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

In the Near East there were lords (suzerains) and servants (vassals). The poet, in hyperbolic language, portrays the kings of earth as breaking away from their required allegiance to the King of kings. Thus the yoke of God's kingship is not merely rejected; it is insolently thrown off (Jeremiah 2:20). The kingdoms of this earth are by nature oppressed to the rule of God and his Messiah. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

2:4–6 The Lord mocks the rebels. With derisive laughter the Lord meets the confederacy of rebellious world powers with the sovereign declaration that it is he who has established the Davidic king in his own royal city of Zion (Jerusalem). (CSB)

2:4 *enthroned...scoffs* – He “laughs,” He “derides” them. He has not been moved even to rise from His throne. A title is here given Him, “the Sitter in the heavens,” A good practical comment by Luther: “What a great measure of faith is necessary in order truly to believe this word: For who could have imagined that God laughed as Christ was suffering and the Jews were exulting? So, too, when we are oppressed, how often do we still believe that those who oppose us are being derided by God, especially since it seems as if we were being oppressed and trodden under foot both by God and men?” (Leupold)

The Lord is not perturbed by the turmoil among the nations. On the contrary, a scornful laugh comes from his throne. The scene in heaven gives the reader assurance that God is “a mighty fortress,” unassailable by forces of the flesh and blood. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

God, in His infinite splendor, is not so far removed from creation that He is unaware of human deeds. Ever mindful of His creation, He mocks those who have the audacity to circumvent His laws and plans as Creator. Luther: “Let us laugh at raging Satan and the world (yes, even at sin and our conscience in us). Truly, because the punishment of the godless is delayed up to now, it is certain that God is also laughing, God, who is in heaven and cannot be driven from there by impious men. Therefore He rightly laughs at their vain attempts. We may think that we would also laugh if we were seated in such a high place and a fortress so fortified.... But these thoughts reveal our lack of faith. For all of us who believe in Christ are most truly in that same heaven in which the Lord dwells, if not in the flesh, nevertheless in faith and in the Word” (AE 12:25). (TLSB)

He who controls whatever takes place below with absolute power according to the plan His wisdom has devised, which brooks no hindrance in execution. He will do, but what He does continually. He laughs at the defiant ones, for between them and Him there is an infinite distance; He derides them by allowing the boundless stupidity of the infinitely little one to come to a climax and then He thrusts him down to the earth undeceived. (KD)

2:5 *anger ... wrath.* God's anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

Both words “wrath” “anger” (s.v. Ps. 37:1) have to do with heat, i.e., a burning anger and a heated rage. Here again the writer uses anthropomorphic language (idioms) to describe God's

wrath in terms of flaring nostrils and burning rage. The point is that the declaration from God will be angry condemnation, and they will be terrified. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Hebrews 10:31 “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”

He will not always be so tolerant. Wicked opposition calls for action. When his hour has come, he will let his anger blaze. (Leupold)

This climax, the extreme limit of the divine forbearance, is determined by the situation as in Deut 29:19, cf. Ps 14:5; 36:13, which is a “then” referring to the future and pointing towards the crisis which then supervenes. Then He begins at once to utter the actual language of His wrath to his foes and confounds them in the heat of His anger, disconcerts them utterly, both outwardly and in spirit. Arab, means originally to let loose, let go, then in Hebrew sometimes, externally, to overthrow, sometimes, of the mind, to confound and disconcert. (KD)

The Day of Wrath, which will make an end to the whole world is here referred to. On that day God will speak to his enemies in his wrath. (Stoekhardt)

2:6 *holy hill*. The site of the Jerusalem temple (see 2Ch 33:15); see also 3:4; 15:1; 43:3 (“holy mountain”); 46:4 (“holy mountain”). (CSB)

Zion often describes the Temple Mount, where God dwelt among His people and where they sought Him; by extension, it can include Jerusalem, Israel, and God’s people here and in eternity (i.e., the Church) (TLSB p. 844)

The Davidic king ruled in Zion, God’s chosen dwelling place (cf. 132; Deut. 12:14, 18; 14:23; 15:20). God had sanctified the city by his presence; therefore, Zion was his “holy hill.” Israel knew that God could not be limited to a hill or a temple but rather his kingship extended from heaven a “the throne” to the “whole earth” as his footstool (1 Kings 8:27; cf. Is. 66:1). Yet in a special and narrow sense Zion, the “holy hill,” was his “footstool” (1 Chr28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Lam. 2:1; Mt. 5:35). (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

2:7–9 The Lord’s Anointed proclaims the Lord’s coronation decree. For NT application to Jesus’ resurrection see Ac 13:33; to his superiority over angels see Heb 1:5; to his appointment as high priest see Heb 5:5. (CSB)

2:7 *decree* – God’s announcement of a king (e.g., the prophet Nathan announced David’s appointment as Saul’s successor; 2Sm 7:5–17). This was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. (TLSB)

Son...father – In the ancient Near East the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings, who ruled by his authority and owed him allegiance, was expressed not only by the words “lord” and “servant” but also by “father” and “son.” The Davidic king was the Lord’s “servant” and his “son” (2Sa 7:5, 14). (CSB)

Cf 2Sm 7:14. Justin Martyr: “His generation would take place for men” (*ANF* 1:244). Melancthon: “He is by nature the Son into whom the substance of the Father has been propagated” (Chemnitz, *LTh* 1:88). Chemnitz: “In Hebrew the word is *yalad* ... to beget from the essence” (*LTh* 1:101). (TLSB)

As believers in Christ, we are all begotten (fathered) by God through adoption into his family. Because Jesus is eternal, second person of the Trinity, his being begotten by the Father did not occur at a specific place or time, like our conception and birth. Jesus has been both true God and God's Son forever. He did not become the Son of God at the time of his earthly birth in Bethlehem or at any other time. David is the shadow; Christ is the reality. (LL)

The psalm is quoted in the NT with reference to Jesus, the Messiah (the Christ), in Hebrews 1 with exactly the same sense that the psalm has in using this language about the Son of God ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on High, he then quoted this psalm: "Today I have begotten you," as along with lines from the Davidic covenant. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

2:8 *your inheritance.* Your domain—as the Promised Land was the Lord's "inheritance" (Ex 15:17; see Jos 22:19; Ps 28:9; 79:1; 82:8). (CSB)

The kingdom will extend through all the lands to the lands most remote regions. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

ends of the earth. Ultimately the rule of the Lord's Anointed will extend as far as the rule of God himself. (CSB)

God's sovereignty extends to the ends of the earth (cf. 72:8-11). Already in his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God made it clear that his concern was beyond the land of Canaan (cf. Gen 22:17-18; 26:4; 28:14; cf. Mal. 1:5). The universal rule of God derives from the authority granted by God to rule with great power over the nations. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

2:9 According to Rev 12:5; 19:15 this word will be fulfilled in the triumphant reign of Christ; in Rev 2:26–27 Christ declares that he will appoint those who remain faithful to him to share in his subjugating rule over the nations. (CSB)

rule – Luther: "For he slays our will in order to establish his own will in us." (Leupold)

The Father has committed to the Son all things, also the Judgment, because he is the Son. What the Psalmist reports here takes place on Judgment Day, the Day of Wrath, referred to already in verse 5. God the Father appears as the Judge of the world, but Judgment is committed to Christ. All those that oppose his government and reject him he will break in pieces on that Day. (Stoeckhardt)

With an iron scepter...pottery – Synonyms for strength and weakness. (TLSB)

The parallel figure is the simile "like a potter's vessel." This figure may be based on the Egyptian custom in which the name of each city under the king's dominion was written on a little votive jar and placed in the temple of his god. then, if the people in the city rebelled, the Pharaoh could smash that city's little jar in the presence of the deity. Such a symbolic act would terrify the rebellious – not that the city had much chance of withstanding the Pharaoh in the first place. The psalmist may be drawing on that imagery to stress how easily the king with all the authority of heaven behind him, will crush the rebellion swiftly. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

dash them to pieces like pottery. See Jer 19:11. (CSB)

In Mesopotamian texts, a king's rule was often likened to the act of smashing pottery. Thus, "break" here means to rule. (TLSB)

2:10–12 The rebellious rulers are warned. (CSB)

2:10 *kings...rulers* – He addresses his exhortation to the kings and judges because the people they lead would hardly be as hostile as they are but for the leadership that directs them into this dangerous course. (Leupold)

True wisdom demands that we also be mindful of the necessity to prepare for the last day. (Stoeckhardt)

It should be the first care of kings to advance God's glory. (TLSB)

The wise response includes both a spirit willing to receive God's revelation about the anointed and his kingdom and a joyous spirit of submission to the Lord (v. 11). The Lord expects his creatures, and especially the leaders of the nations, to make a wise response to the impending day of his wrath. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

The irony is that one expects kings and judges to possess wisdom already, but in this case they are woefully deficient. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

2:11 *serve* – To serve Christ, then, is not to put on a hood or to be preoccupied with Mosaic ceremonies. But it is rather an entirely spiritual thing, not in the way in which the monks speak of something being spiritual which takes place only in the heart. But it is a spiritual service which originates with the Spirit. For whoever speaks the words of the Spirit is rightly said to preach, teach, and speak spiritually. Thus one is also said to live spiritually who is busy with holy deeds, that is, who does what is prescribed in the Ten Commandments. So the head of a household lives spiritually when he governs his own home through faith in the Son of God. Truly, spiritual obedience is to do through faith in the Son of God what you are ordered to do by God's command. There you have what it means to serve this King. It is not to enter a monastery, as the monks are wont to do, nor to choose these deeds or those, but to behold this King, to listen to Him, and afterwards to do what you have heard. (Luther)

rejoice. Hail the Lord as King with joy. (CSB)

trembling. Awe and reverence. – No human being need ever experience God's wrath (CSB)

God's mercy and protection cause His subjects to rejoice. At the same time, His righteousness shakes the disobedient. (TLSB)

Jesus paid the full price for our sins. Yet some in stubborn pride refuse to receive his gift of eternal life. They insist on living the way they want to live, ignoring the friendship and peace God wants to give them. They trample the blood of Christ under foot and insult God's love. They rightly deserve God's wrath. He is not capricious in being angry with them. (LL)

This service does not imply that one is laid with fetters. On the contrary, such service means freedom. (Stoeckhardt)

Serve the Lord with reverent fear; rejoice with trembling." (LB)

2:12 Kiss. As a sign of submission (see 1Sa 10:1; 1Ki 19:18; Hos 13:2). Submission to an Assyrian king was expressed by kissing his feet. (CSB)

A subject acknowledged the dominance of a king by kissing the hem of his garment or his hand. (TLSB)

Submit to Christ's rule while there still is time. Only those who trust in him will be blessed in time and in eternity. (PBC)

The kiss goes back to the traditional greeting still used today in the Mid-East. Only friends and allies could get close enough to a great king to greet him in this way. Ally yourself with this king! David is saying. (LL)

Second Peter 3:9-10 states, "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*"

Flare up in moment – The irreverent are subject to the king's wrath. (TLSB)

Take refuge – To acknowledge and surrender to the one whom God, in His infinite wisdom, has chosen to rule. (TLSB)

him. The Lord. (CSB)

Ps 2 Those who plot against God's elect incite God's wrath. The Lord, not human beings, anointed Israel's king and elected this nation for His plan of salvation. Ultimately, the Messiah—the Anointed One—was born from the nation of Israel. God preserved Israel so that through the offspring of one of David's descendants, Mary, the Savior of humankind was born. Those who "take refuge in Him"—i.e., trust in Him for their salvation—are truly blessed. • Lord Jesus, despite our miserable and constant rebellion, You rescue us from sin. Lead us to embrace Your gracious rule with joyful hearts. Amen. (TLSB)