

Psalm 2

Good morning! Please open your Bibles to Psalm 2.

We are continuing to think about the Psalms...

- The Psalms give us the language of prayer (praise, lament, ...)
- The Psalms teach and instruct us
- The Psalms are about Jesus – about the Messiah.

This morning is going to feel a bit different. I'm not going to preach a sermon, per se; this is going to feel more like teaching through a Psalm. Sometimes, we want to share a meal with you, other times we want to invite you to cook with us. One of our goals for this series is that you would be better able to read and understand the Psalms on your own. And so I want to help us cook together this morning. That means that instead of sitting back and listening intently (like you normally do...), I'm asking that you sit forward and look with me at the text (p418). I want you to help me, ok?

And we'll tackle this Psalm by basically following the principles of Bible study.

Observe → Interpret → Apply

Observe the context, details, and main emphasis for the original audience

What did it mean for them?

Interpret in light of the whole canon/Bible

What does it mean in light of Christ?

Make a summary statement of the main textual claim.

Apply the passage to our context today

What does God want us to do?

What is something we saw last week from Psalm 1?

What images did the psalmist use? What is the main idea?

I want to suggest to you that Psalm 1 & 2 are together an introduction to the whole book. From Psalm 1, we see that there are these two ways to live – two paths that a person might follow. One is found by delighting in the law of the Lord by the person

who meditates on it day and night. That person is rooted deeply, like a tree by streams of water. He or she bears much fruit and isn't uprooted or killed by the trials of life (the leaf does not wither). That person is blessed – that's how the Psalm starts.

But the wicked are those who get increasingly comfortable with the ways of the world. They scoff at the law of the Lord and will not stand on the day of judgment.

And the Psalmist is implying to us – which way should we choose? The way of blessing and flourishing through the word of the Lord? Or the way of scoffing and rebellion which leads to judgment?

Psalm 2 will continue this theme of the choice that's before us. Which way will we choose? But the Psalmist will give us some more detail about what it looks like to reject the Lord or to follow Him.

Read Psalm 2:1-12

Let's pray...

Intro

Our world is always in chaos, isn't it? It seems like every day there is some new story of a tragedy or eruption of violence in some part of the world.

Where do we see the nations raging today?

-war (Ukraine, South Sudan, North Korea...)
-gun violence

-sexual confusion and rebellion (abuse, trafficking...)
-military power and intimidation

Why do they rage?

That's the question that the Psalmist begins with...

And he describes what kind of raging is happening. It's a rage against shackles, against constraints, against their bonds. Hebrew scholars will tell us that the idea here is rage against ownership, against the idea that the kings aren't really in control themselves.

Which invites the question – who *is* really in charge? Who is the true king?

And that's the question that we need to ask ourselves – who is really in charge of our lives? I'm not asking who you *say* is in charge, but who is really in charge?

In any given room, sometimes there is the one who appears to be in charge, but then there is the real leader. You may have a title, but the people will follow someone else. I had that experience my junior year on the basketball team. I was the captain, but my senior teammates really looked to this other guy for leadership.

Where do we look for leadership and guidance? Who/what will be our king?

One way we can identify our answer is by asking ourselves, where do we turn in times of trouble? Where do we find shelter from the storms of life (like hiding from a tornado)? What do we look for when we need security?

That's the big question over this Psalm. Who is the true king? Who is really in charge?

Observe

What does this mean to the original audience?

The Characters

Who is speaking in this Psalm? What point of view does it use?

There are four different voices in this Psalm.

Four different people are speaking; who wants to name one of them?

Narrator/Prophetic Voice – v1, 2; v4,5; v10-12

The kings of the earth – v3

The Lord – v6

The Son – v7

The Context

How does the context of this Psalm inform how we understand it?

Context is King!

It is near the beginning of the book of Psalms and it lacks a superscription like most of the other Psalms, so that helps us recognize that this is intended to be read as an introduction to the whole book, along with Psalm 1.

Also, if we read it carefully, we see that Psalm 2 is similar to Psalm 1 in some key ways.

*meditate – same word from Ps 1:2 and Ps 2:1

*the way – the way of the wicked perish Ps 1:6 and Ps 2:12

*blessed – Ps 1:1 and Ps 2:12

Part of the context is to also notice that this is a royal Psalm. That observation doesn't come from the structure of the Psalm, but from its content. The subject matter is royalty or kingship. So we will need to recognize that and make sure that we interpret it in light of all the other psalms and teachings on kingship in the Bible.

Another good practice for observing a passage is to look for repeated words or other key words that are influential.

- The nations v1, 8
- Kings/rulers/anointed v2, 6, 10
- The Lord v2, 4, 7, 11
- Fury/wrath/anger v5, 9, 12

We would do well to remember that God is a warrior. We ought not to be embarrassed by the doctrine of God's anger. God is angry at sin and unrighteousness.

The Argument / Structure

First Section

Psalm 2:1

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?

It's not a question for information. It's a rhetorical question – how ridiculous can you get?

Psalm 2:2

2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,

The kings and rulers are setting themselves and conspiring together. They are 'sitting in the seat of scoffers,' we might say in application of Psalm 1.

And they are doing so *against* the anointed – “messiah” used in other places to describe the king / the priest / the prophet. This is really an act of rebellion against the king.

And to rebel against David or the king is to rebel against God. To rebel against the Davidic king is to rebel against God. And if God has established the king, there is none that can overthrow him.

We might think of Acts 4 – in the midst of persecution, they pray this Psalm and remind themselves, no one can overthrow God)

Psalm 2:3

3 “Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”

How is it that the rules or law of God feels constraining to us?

What are some of the laws of God that people don't want to obey?

- sexual sin
- using our words (gossip, slander, lies, flattery...)
- returning good for evil
- pride

Second Section

The kings and people of the earth don't want to obey the Lord, and what is his response?

Psalm 2:4-6

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.

My sons will try to wrestle with me and they'll talk smack. That is, they'll make threats and boast about how they're going to beat me. And I just laugh at them because I don't go easy on them and I can still easily beat them (for now). That's what's going on here. It's funny to the Lord that the kings of the earth would boast of their power.

5 Then 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.”

The Lord not only laughs at their rebellion; He intends to terrify them. And He will say in verse 6, “I (emphatic), have set (installed, ordained, coronated) my king (the anointed one) on the hill in Zion (Jerusalem).”

Zion – Jerusalem, the place of the temple, the place where the ark and the palace both were together

Third Section

Now we will hear from the Son, the King who has been set in Zion. Perhaps these were words he would have spoken during the coronation ceremony, we’re not totally sure.

Listen to what is said,

Psalm 2:7-9

7 I will tell of the decree:

The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

The king now says, The Lord has made me a Son and promised me victory over the nations. I will rule over them, breaking their rebellion.

I will break them like a potter would break a piece of clay when He is unhappy with how it turned out. I will dash them in pieces. It’s a promise of victory for the king, the Son of David.

Fourth Section

What then, are the people to do? What is the response that the Psalmist calls for?

Psalm 2:10-12

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss 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.

It's a call to serve the true king. Do not rebel any longer, take refuge in Him or you will face his wrath.

So what is the message for the original audience?

Section 1 – why are the nations in rebellion against the Lord?

Section 2 – The Lord laughs and says, I have set the true king in Zion

Section 3 – the king declares, yes, the Lord has promised me victory over the nations

Section 4 – therefore, turn from your rebellion and obey the king

So that's the message that the Psalm is getting at for the original audience, at least in part. I say that because we are not done with our study yet. We need to see how this Psalm fits in the overall story of the Bible – and that's what the original audience would need to do as well.

Interpret

Now we move to interpretation. What does it mean in light of the whole Bible?

Now we need to ask, given what we've observed about the Psalm and its meaning for the original audience, how does that fit with the rest of the Bible? How do other passages and biblical authors understand the message of this Psalm?

So specifically for this Psalm, we ought to ask, "How does the idea of the Anointed one, the king, show up in the overall storyline of the Bible?"

If we zoom out from Psalm 2, we remember that kings were promised and expected to come from Israel.

Abraham – kings shall come from you

Judah – your descendants shall rule with a scepter that will not depart from your hand
So there is this expectation that God would put His king on the throne.

But then look at verse 7. We kind of glossed over this earlier.

Psalm 2:7

7 I will tell of the decree:

The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

What is this decree that the King is speaking about?

Well, if we zoom out again, we would see that the idea that the king would be a Son to God comes from the covenant promise that God made to David in 2 Samuel 7.

There King David was promised with a covenant that He would have a Son who would reign forever.

2 Samuel 7:12-14,16

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **14** I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. ...**16** And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

This is the decree mentioned in v7. The Lord has said to the king, that He will be His Father. The king will be the Son of God.

The idea behind Sonship is that he will do what the Father does. That’s the way the world worked back then. If your father had an occupation, then you would almost certainly do that same occupation.

How many of you sons or daughters do what your parents did?

I filled printer cartridges and worked on printers 😊

If we fast forward to the New Testament, there are a couple times when this phrase ‘you are my son’ shows up.

Anyone want to take a guess?

It shows up at the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:17) and at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5).

So the NT authors understood this Psalm to be speaking about something greater than just the earthly king in Jerusalem. It's really about Jesus.

The translators give us a hint that they agree with us in Psalm 2. Did you notice some of the capitalized letters? Verse 2, 'Anointed'; verse 6, 'my King'; verse 7, 'my Son' – all have capital letters because the translators think this is talking about Jesus.

And then notice the phrase, "today I have begotten you." Again, we don't have time to fully unpack each time this phrase is used in the NT, but when it's used, it's applied to the resurrection of Jesus. We might think it refers to the incarnation, when Jesus took on flesh, but it's not mainly used that way. It's applied to the resurrection of Jesus.

For example, the apostle Paul will use this language of the Son being begotten from Psalm 2 to speak about the resurrection of Jesus from the grave after his crucifixion.

Acts 13:32-33

32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, **33** this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'

Jesus fulfills Psalm 2 through His resurrection. He is the true Son of God and Son of David who will rule over the nations.

The resurrection confirms that Jesus is the true king who has been given all of the power. Again, listen to Paul's words in **Romans 1:4**,

And [Jesus] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

By rising from the grave, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power. Death could not stop him as it has stopped every other earthly king. Jesus cannot be defeated.

All of Jesus's life was leading to the resurrection & exaltation.

We love when the hero is revealed to be powerful or beautiful, don't we?

Like makeover shows – we love to see that people were really beautiful all along. We

love when Cinderella is revealed to have true beauty that was previously hidden.

Like Captain America – training as a runt, until revealed as the powerful soldier

That's what Psalm 2 is about. It's about the coming Messiah whose glory and power was hidden for a time, but has been raised from the grave and will be king over the nations.

He will reign forever over the ends of the earth. And that's where verse 8 goes,

Psalm 2:8

8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

Jesus will rule over the nations. After his resurrection, Jesus will say that all authority has been given to Him. So we are to make disciples of all the nations. In Acts 1:8, Jesus says that His disciples will be His witnesses to the 'ends of the earth.' (same phrase from Psalm 2)

But there is a surprise here, as there often is in the biblical storyline. The Lord doesn't exalt His Son in the way people might expect. The king is set in Zion through His crucifixion. His coronation was with a crown of thorns and a robe of purple used to mock Him. Jesus is lifted up only after He is brought low.

Yes, Jesus is ruling now, but His reign is not yet fully realized. At the end of the New Testament, in the book of Revelation, three times, the author will say that Jesus will rule with a rod of iron in fulfillment of Psalm 2. (Revelation 19:15; 2:27; 12:5)

You see, Jesus currently rules, but His rule is not yet complete. It's what theologians will call the already and not yet kingdom. It's already here, but not yet fully here.

People will sometimes point to the difference between D-day and V-day in World War II. Historians generally agree that, for all intents and purposes, World War II was decided in the Battle of Normandy (referred to as "D-day") that began on June 6th, 1944.

This is when the Allied had a decisive victory over Germany that rendered its defeat inevitable. But it took another year for Germany to surrender (known as V-Day). Between D-Day and V-Day, the victory the allied forces had *already* in principle won was *not yet* realized as an actual fact.

The kingdom is like that. Jesus is the king now but the kingdom isn't yet here in all of its fullness as He will one day.

So here's my shot at summarizing the meaning of this text in light of the whole Bible: Despite the opposition and rebellion of the nations, God has sent Jesus as His Son to be exalted as King through His resurrection. Jesus now rules over the nations, and one day he will fully and finally defeat every enemy.

Apply

Now then, what are we to do? What should our response be?

Psalm 2:10

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

He speaks directly to the kings and rulers of the earth. (if you ever get an audience with a king, you can read Psalm 2 to them) The psalmist writes, don't murmur among yourselves anymore, don't grumble at the true king, now it's time to listen and be warned. Of course, this applies to us as well today – we ought to heed the words here.

Psalm 2:11-12

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss 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.

There are four commands here:

1. Serve the Lord with fear

This is the command to obey. We are called to obey King Jesus. Rather than casting off the cords of ownership, we must serve the king. That's the only way to true freedom and life. To follow the Lord is to find him to be a shelter which gives freedom from the storm, not harsh enslavement.

Tim Keller

*"The Psalms, in a sense, give you the permission to pour out your complaints in a way that, probably if it wasn't for the Psalms, we might think inappropriate. But, on the other hand, the Psalms demand that you bow in the end to the sovereignty of God in a way that modern culture wouldn't lead you to believe."*¹

We get to voice our prayers to God but we do not get to sit on the throne ourselves. God is absolutely sovereign and is to be obeyed. His rule is absolute.

2. Rejoice with trembling

Secondly, we are told to rejoice with trembling. This is a call to joyful fear. Be glad! There is a true king, and yet be warned; He is not to be trifled with.

So when we hear of wars or rumors of wars, when you read about Ukraine or China and Taiwan or North Korea or Afghanistan or Yemen...or when we hear Supreme Court decisions as we will in the coming weeks, or you read about stories of abuse or people hurting others...we should mourn for the brokenness and the pain and devastation that happens with the kings of the earth rebel against Jesus and harm those who bear His image.

And yet we take heart, He who sits the heavens laughs. They cannot defeat Him. No matter how dark the night seems, dawn is coming and King Jesus will set all things right.

3. Kiss the Son

The third command is to kiss the Son. In other words, we are to show honor to Him, to love Him.

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-to-pray-the-psalms>



“kiss” – not a romantic kiss or even the kiss of a friend, but like a kiss of fealty, given by a servant to a higher power; you might imagine kissing the hand or the ring or the feet of a king. It’s a sign of loyalty and reverence and gratitude.

We must lay down our arms and pledge our allegiance to the Son.

4. Take refuge in Him

This fourth command is a call to take shelter in the King. That’s the only way to be spared the wrath of God that is coming to the world. God is slow to anger, but when His wrath comes, it will seem as though it comes in a hurry.

-like the faster and faster beeping of ‘catchphrase’

What is your faith step today?

Perhaps you need to turn from your worry and anxiety about the troubles of tomorrow. God has set the true King on the throne, and He will reign forever.

Maybe you need to stop rebelling against the Law of God. You think you will find freedom if you cast away the rule of God and determine right and wrong for yourself. Maybe not everywhere – but when it comes to this one thing; that’s where you get to decide. And you’re trying to free yourself from God’s rules. Friend, turn today. Rejoice with trembling at the command of God and you will find true freedom.

Or maybe you need to finally lay down your weapons and serve the King. Stop trying to free yourself from His rule. Be wise, serve the Lord with fear. Trust in Him alone to rescue you. Kiss the Son – that is the only way to be saved from the wrath to come.

But if you kiss the Son, you will find Him to be a gracious and loving King. And you will flourish like a tree planted by streams of water. You will be blessed if you take refuge in Him.

Let us pray...

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The 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

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