



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 2

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Introduction

- This psalm tells us who would appear as adversaries to Christ
- And like many psalms, the theme of Psalm 2 is emphasized in the final verse
- We can disobey God and perish, or we can surrender to Him and be blessed
- Psalm 1 begins with *Blessed* and Psalm 2 ends with a *Blessed*
- The time of David's reign and its warlike events may have suggested the imagery of this psalm, but the described scenes and the subjects presented can only find a fulfilment in the history and character of Jesus Christ



Introduction

- The psalm itself does not identify its author, but Acts 4:25-26 clearly attributes it to David and Acts 13:33 identify its number
- This psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament, where it is applied to Christ as the King, the great Son of David and God's Anointed (Acts 4:25,13:33; Hebrews 1:5,5:51)
- Jewish and Christian traditions alike consider Psalm 2 as Messianic



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Plot of the Nations Against God's Anointed 2:1-3
- God's Punishment 2:4-5
- Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9
- Submit to Jesus Christ 2:10-12

The Plot of the Nations Against God's Anointed 2:1-3



- We have, in these first three verses, a description of the hatred of many against God and His Son
- The psalmist begins with a question and he seems genuinely puzzled and perplexed
- The nations have no *reason* to rage against God, and they have no *benefit* in raging against Him
- Their opposition against God is nothing but a *vain thing*
- It has been supposed that David composed this Psalm after he had taken Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and made it the head of the kingdom; 2 Samuel 5:7-9

The Plot of the Nations Against God's Anointed 2:1-3



- So, we may suppose that this Psalm was written to celebrate the taking of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of all the kings and chiefs of the neighboring nations
- However, we find from the use made of this Psalm by the apostles, Acts 4 that David symbolized Jesus Christ; and that the Psalm celebrates the victories of the Gospel
- As we read in Acts 4:27-28, “*For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*”

The Plot of the Nations Against God's Anointed 2:1-3



- Vain indeed to prevent the spread of the Gospel in the world
- To *plot*, Against Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords
- *The kings of the earth set themselves*, There is always a warfare between the world and the Church, in which kings are quick to take a side, most often on the worldly side
- They are called *of the earth* because of the way of hatred and scorn, and to show their foolishness in opposing the God of heaven
- The kings can either be those mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:6-8; or rather Herod the Great, and the other Herod, and Pilate, and others with or after them who opposed Christ

The Plot of the Nations Against God's Anointed 2:1-3



- David's enemies instigated each other in their opposition to him
- And the Jewish priests, elders, and council instigated false witnesses to accuse the Messiah
- Pilate to condemn Him, and the people to demand His crucifixion
- The devil instigated kings and nations to persecute, imprison, torture, and put to death, in a variety of ways, His apostles, evangelists, and other followers
- *His Anointed*, Against His Messiah
- But as this signifies the anointed person, it may refer first to David, as it does secondly to Christ

The Plot of the Nations Against God's Anointed 2:1-3



- The words of the kings and rulers are to urge one another to reject the bondage of authority
- Wicked men always feel God's rule and His Law are chains
- This attitude is evidence of spiritual foolishness, because God is a bondage-breaker, not a source of any bondage
- As the Jews said in Luke 19:14, *“But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’”*



God's Punishment 2:4-5

- *who sits in the heavens*, Whose Kingdom rules over all and Is above all might and power
- God *sits* in perfect peace and assurance
- *shall laugh*, Words spoken after the manner of men but must not be taken in a literal meaning
- God laughs because He *sits in the heavens*
- It isn't an earthly throne He occupies; it is the throne of heaven with authority over all creation
- What does heaven have to fear from earth?
- He shall completely despise their insignificant attempts



God's Punishment 2:4-5

- He shall beat down their pride, diminish their malice, and defeat their plans
- God "*laughs*" at the vain and pointless efforts of man to escape from the control of His laws and throw off His dominion (Psalm 37:13,59:8)
- It is impossible that these endeavors should succeed
- Each one of these opponents shall be crushed
- A famous example of an opponent of Christianity was the Roman Emperor Diocletian (reigning 284-305 AD)



God's Punishment 2:4-5

- He was such a determined enemy of Christians that he persecuted the church mercilessly and imagined that he had defeated Christianity
- Diocletian is dead and gone, a footnote on the pages of history. The fame and glory of Jesus Christ is spread over all the earth
- Men must obey God willingly, or else unwillingly
- There is a limit to the divine patience
- He will not always look on in silence
- If they persist in their foolishness, He must speak, and His word is power



God's Punishment 2:4-5

- Christ does rule; Christ does reign; He sits a King in heaven and is acknowledged as the King of Kings
- In vain was all the opposition of the Jews, in vain persecution after persecution by the Gentiles
- God has established His Church, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
- Through the centuries, many have opposed God and His Kingdom in Jesus Christ
- God laughs in heaven and He doesn't remain silent
- Before He acts against disobedient mankind, He first *speaks* to rebellious humanity



God's Punishment 2:4-5

- Love and mercy compel God to *speak* a word of warning before He acts
- In the midst of all their plots and confidence of success; *Then He shall speak to them in His wrath* — That is, severely rebuke them, not only by His prophets and other messengers in words, but by dreadful judgments
- God is opposed to sin, and will express His opposition as if He felt angry, but it will be in the most calm manner, and not as the result of passion
- He most justly avenges, by the subjection of all creation to His service

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- God wants disobedient mankind to know that He has established a King
- The rebellious men closest in view in the psalm are kings and rulers, and God especially wants them to know there is a **King** greater than they are
- While they are proposing, He has settled the matter
- God's will is done, and man's will agonizes and fumes in vain
- God's Anointed is appointed
- The words are uttered by God, and must refer to the Anointed One of verse 2

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- This Anointed One God has set up as King upon Zion, His holy mountain
- Here it points to Christ and not to David
- Christ is set up for ever as King in the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-7,22:1-5)
- *My King*, In a singular manner His kingdom is not by succession from former kings, nor by election of the people, as other kings have, but by My special and extraordinary destination; and who rules according to My will
- *My holy hill of Zion*, Over my church and people

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- *I will declare the decree*, The anointed king now speaks Himself
- *declare*, All people may take notice of it
- Jesus Christ "declares," a "decree," made by God the Father in the beginning of all things, and communicated by Him to the Son, whereby He made known the relationship between them, and the Son with sovereign power over the universe
- The Lord's Anointed recalls what God the Father spoke to Him, identifying Him as the Son of the Father and emphasizing His standing as *begotten* of the Father
- Jesus was not created; rather He created everything that was created (Colossians 1:16-17)

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- *Begotten* describes a relationship between two beings of the same essential nature and being
- St. Augustine comments on the word *Today* and says, “Although that day may also seem to be prophetically spoken of, on which Jesus Christ was born according to the flesh; and in eternity there is nothing past as if it had ceased to be, nor future as if it were not yet, but present only, since whatever is eternal, always is; yet as “today” intimates presentiality, a divine interpretation is given to that expression, “To-day have I begotten Thee,” ... the eternal generation of the power and Wisdom of God, who is the Only-begotten Son.”

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon an eternal decree of God the Father
- A very small part of the nations were 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; Isaiah 49:22,60:3-4; Matthew 28:19)
- *And the ends of the earth for Your possession,* (Isaiah 52:10; Jeremiah 16:19; Micah 5:4; Zechariah 9:10; Acts 13:47)
- The Son of God the Anointed holds the nations as His inheritance
- He will rule over all nations and all judgment is committed to Him (John 5:22)

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- Revelation 11:15 describes an exciting consummation of this inheritance: *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*
- *You shall break them with a rod of iron,* A figure for the severity of the reproach that awaits rebels
- The Son of God has such power over the nations that they are like clay pots that He can shatter with a knock from a *rod of iron*
- This shows why it is so foolish for the nations to challenge and disobey the Lord and His Anointed

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- There is no *reason* and no *benefit* to their rebellious opposition
- This was in part fulfilled when the Jews, who persisted in unbelief, were destroyed by the Roman power
- And in the destruction of the pagan power when the Christian religion came to be established
- But it will not be completely fulfilled till all opposing power and principality be put down
- It is said that these words of verse 9, and those of the next clause, "cannot describe the mild rule of Christ"

Jesus is the King, the Son of God 2:6-9



- But those who object forgot that Christ, though "the Prince of Peace," "came to send a sword upon the earth" (Matthew 10:34)
- As the appointed Judge of men, He takes vengeance on the wicked, while He rewards the righteous (Luke 3:17; Matthew 25:46)
- Even, St. John, in the Apocalypse, declares that *"out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations and He Himself will rule with them with a rod of iron"* (Revelation 19:15,2:27,12:5)

Submit to Jesus Christ 2:10-12



- *Now therefore, be wise*, After the words of warning from the Son of God, the psalmist counsels the *kings* of the earth to give up their foolish disobedience of the Lord
- He calls them to surrender to God, giving Him proper reverence
- Understand your true interest while you have time for repentance and submission
- *Or kings ... judges of the earth*, But he speaks of and to kings and rulers only
- 1st, Because they most need the warning, as they trust their own power and greatness; and think it is below them to submit to Him

Submit to Jesus Christ 2:10-12



- 2nd, Because their authority and example would have great influence on their people and inferiors
- In this submission, they can *rejoice* – yet with appropriate *trembling*
- *with fear*, A general direction to all men
- With reverence of His great and glorious majesty
- Serve Him as servants should their master
- If we serve God well, we cannot be but happy
- *Kiss the Son*, This primarily has in mind the kiss of submission, where a dignitary receives the humble kiss of an inferior

Submit to Jesus Christ 2:10-12



- Kissing was the token of subjection and friendship
- It hints at the *affection* God wants in relationship to Him
- As all judgment is committed to the Son, the Jews and others are exhorted to submit to Him, to be reconciled to Him, that they might be received into His family, and be acknowledged as His adopted children
- The slightest stroke of the iron rod of Christ's justice is sufficient to break in pieces a whole rebel world
- Every sinner, not yet reconciled to God through Christ, should receive this as a most serious warning

Submit to Jesus Christ 2:10-12



- Those who disobey God are *smashed and destroyed*, but those who depend on Him are *blessed*
- All who do this are happy (Psalm 1:1); all are safe in time and in eternity
- This great truth is stated everywhere in the Bible
- To encourage the children of men - weak, and guilty, and helpless to put their trust in the Son of God
- The psalmist leaves the choice with everyone: perish or blessed?

Discussion



- Thinking of the “near” or immediate historical setting, why would the nations and people be in an uproar?
- What might the “vain thing” be?
- Why does God laugh at these rulers?
- Note that in spite of man’s rebellion, God continues working out his plan. What is that plan?



Discussion

- What are the main points of this psalm?
- What do you learn from this psalm about God's sovereignty? How does knowing God is sovereign help you face life's challenges?