



Psalm 2 God's - Promise to His Anointed

Introduction

When the people of God sing Psalm 2, they remind themselves of how God made David and his descendants to be kings in order to enable them to fulfil the very purpose for which Abraham was called, i.e. to bring blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:1-3). Thus it can be called a royal psalm with authorship attributed to David. The pious Israelite realises that his hope of blessing is now irrevocably tied to the house of David, as confirmed by 2 Samuel 7:12-16, and so he prays that God will keep the king pure.

At a time when the Gentile kingdoms that are part of the Davidic Empire seek to throw off Israelite rule, this psalm recalls the promises made to the Davidic king at his coronation and notes that the Gentiles will find lasting joy only as subjects of this king. With its prospect of a worldwide rule for the house of David, the psalm also looks to the future, when the Davidic Messiah will indeed accomplish this; in fact, the scope of such an accomplishment calls for a ruler who is more than a mere man as, of course, became true in Jesus of Nazareth.

Psalm 2:1-3 - The Gentile Kings in Revolt.

In vv.1-2 several kings of Gentile peoples who are vassals of the Davidic king propose a revolt to throw off Israelite rule; in v.3 they speak their goal. The first part of this psalm was quoted by disciples as they gathered in thanksgiving following the release of Peter and John: **<<it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant: "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah">>** (Acts 4:25-26).

- ¹ Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?

Psalm 2:1

Why do the nations conspire or rage The Psalmist seems genuinely mystified. 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 plot: <<*If they plan evil against you, if they devise mischief, they will not succeed*>> (Psalm 21:11).

- ² The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and his anointed, saying,
- ³ ‘Let us burst their bonds asunder,
and cast their cords from us.’

Psalm 2:2-3

The rulers take counsel together. Since the time of Babel, men continue to band themselves together against God. They feel that two or more men united against God have a better chance than one man set against God.

Under the instructions of God, Samuel anointed both Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) and David (1 Samuel 16:13), setting them apart as king, whose task was to rule Israel and to embody covenant faithfulness. The word Messiah comes from transliterating the Hebrew word for anointed, and the word Christ comes from translating anointed into Greek. For the Gentiles to rebel against the heir of David is to rebel against the Lord who installed him: <<*The Father and I are one*>> (John 10:30), and: <<*Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’>> (John 14:9). It is also to cut themselves off from their only hope of knowing the one true God. In Acts 4:25-26, the early Christians saw the persecution they faced as the same kind of foolish rebellion.*

Let us burst their bonds asunder. Those who oppose the Lord and his anointed think of God as a bondage-bringer. This attitude is evidence of spiritual insanity because God is a bondage-breaker, not a bondage-bringer.

Psalm 2:4-6 - Heaven’s Perspective on the Revolt.

Since the Lord is not dismayed, neither do his people need to be. In fact, God laughs at the rebels and declares his firm purpose to establish the throne of David as he has promised.

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

Psalm 2:4

He who sits in the heavens laughs. God looks at the way man plots against him and he laughs. God is not afraid or confused or depressed about the opposition of man. God laughs at it. He laughs because he sits in the heavens. He sits as the Great King on a glorious throne. He is not pacing back and forth in the throne room of heaven, wondering what he should do next. God sits in perfect peace and assurance. It is not merely an earthly throne he occupies; it is the throne of heaven with authority over all creation. What does heaven have to fear from earth? Paul clearly stated this in Athens: <<***The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things***>> (Acts 17:24-25).

The Lord has them in derision. Through the centuries many have opposed God and his Kingdom in Jesus Christ. Each one of these opponents shall be frustrated and crushed. A famous example of an opponent of Christianity was the Roman Emperor Diocletian (245-313 AD). He was such a determined enemy of Christians that he persecuted the church mercilessly, and fancied that he had defeated Christianity. He struck a medal with this inscription: 'The name of Christianity being extinguished.' Diocletian is dead and gone, a footnote on the pages of history. The fame and glory of Jesus Christ continues to spread over all the earth. The Lord has them in derision!

- ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
⁶ 'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.'

Psalm 2:5-6

He will speak to them in his wrath. God laughs in heaven, but he does not remain inactive. He laughs but he does not only laugh. Before he acts against defiant mankind, he first speaks to them first: <<***The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance***>> (2 Peter 3:9). This shows the great mercy of God. He has every reason and every right to simply act against defiant man. Love and mercy compel God to speak a word of warning before he acts.

I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. God wants defiant man to know that he has established a king. The defiant men closest in view in the psalm are kings and rulers, notably David and then Solomon, and God especially wants them to know there is a King greater than they are, Jesus the Christ. God's King is established, i.e. set, and established in Jerusalem or Zion.

My holy hill is a reference to the Temple Mount that throughout the period of the kings was the most holy place on earth, for it was God's chosen city: <<*Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name*>> (1 Kings 11:36). It is the place where Jesus was crucified, raised to life, and ascended back to heaven from; and it will be the site to which he will return.

Psalm 2:7-9 - The Davidic King Speaks.

The king recalls what God had said at his coronation. Lying behind this is the promise that the line of David will be sure forever before the Lord (2 Samuel 7:16), and that the obedience of the peoples will come to the ruler from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), together with the very purpose for choosing Abraham and his offspring.

7 I will tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, 'You are my son;
today I have begotten you.

Psalm 2:7

The decree of the Lord. That is, the divine oracle spoken when the king took his throne at his coronation.

He said to me. Although many suppose that this psalm is for the crowning of a king, the past tense indicates that the king recalls the oracle at a later time of trouble.

You are my Son. In 2 Samuel 7:14, God says that he will take the heir of David as a son. The people as a whole are called the 'son of God' <<*Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, 'Let my son go that he may worship me.' But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son"*>> (Exodus 4:22-23), <<*the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself*>> (Psalm 80:15 NIV), and: <<*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son*>> (Hosea 11:1), and the king is called the 'son of God' because he represents and embodies the people: <<*I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth*>> (Psalm 89:27). Hebrews 1:5 brings Psalm 2:7 together with 2 Samuel 7:14: this shows that the argument of that book assumes that Jesus is the messianic heir of David, i.e. the Son of God, into whom God has also folded the priestly office. This is acknowledged throughout the Gospels, including: <<*Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, 'You are the Son of God!'*>> (Mark 3:11), <<*The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called*

Son of God'>> (Luke 1:35), and: <<*Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'*>> (John 1:49). In Acts 13:33, a speech of Paul, and Romans 1:4, Paul portrays the resurrection of Jesus as his coronation, his entry into his Davidic rule.

Today I have begotten you. The Lord's anointed recalls what God the Father spoke to him, identifying him as the Son of the Father and emphasising his standing as begotten of the Father. Begotten is also an important idea, as a contrast to being created. Jesus was not created; rather he created everything that was created; refer to John 1:1-4 and Colossians 1:16-17. Begotten describes a relationship between two beings of the same essential nature and being, but humans create things of a different essential being and nature than themselves. A man may create a piece of art but he begets a child.

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

Psalm 2:8

I will make the nations your heritage. Nations here refers to the Gentiles, including those in revolt (v.1). The primary messianic picture of the OT is of the heir of David who will lead his people in bringing the light to the nations, by making them his subjects; this is how the nations of the earth will find blessing for themselves in him: <<*and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice*>> (Genesis 22:18), and: <<*May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. May his foes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust. May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts. May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service*>> (Psalm 72:8-11); thus in Romans 1:5 Paul looks forward to the obedience of faith among all the nations.

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

Psalm 2:9

You shall break them with a rod of iron. The Lord's anointed has such power over the nations that they are like clay pots that he can shatter with a blow from a rod of iron. This shows why it is so foolish for the nations to defy the Lord and his anointed. There is no reason and no benefit to their defiant opposition.

Break translates the Hebrew word *tero'em*. The Septuagint or Greek OT renders this as rule; this comes from using the same Hebrew consonants with different

vowel sounds, i.e. *tir'em*. The Greek word is also translated as rule in Revelation 2:27, 12:5 and 19:15.

Psalm 2:10-12 - Advice to the Gentile Kings.

The kings must understand that the ruler whom they reject is not just another human ruler but is God's own appointed king for the sake of the whole world. Therefore they serve their best interest by submitting to David's heir.

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

Psalm 2:10

O kings, be wise. After the words of warning from the Lord's anointed, the psalmist counsels the rulers of the earth to give up their foolish defiance of the Lord: <<*When they are given over to those who shall condemn them, then they shall learn that my words were pleasant*>> (Psalm 141:6), <<*By me kings reign*>> (Proverbs 8:15a), and: <<*I will cut off the ruler from its midst, and will kill all its officials with him, says the Lord*>> (Amos 2:3). Refer also to the comments made on v.2.

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
with trembling ¹² kiss his feet,
or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way;
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Happy are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 2:11-12

Serve the Lord with fear. The call here is for reverential fear for the Lord is the creator of all things and is the Almighty: <<*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction*>> (Proverbs 1:7).

Kiss his feet is also translated as kiss the Son, where Son or *bar* is Aramaic in form, leading some to offer other translations, such as purely, or even to suggest large-scale repairs to the Hebrew text, e.g. to make it say his feet. However, the Aramaic-sounding term is well-suited to a Gentile audience, i.e. the kings in revolt. The Lord or Son is the heir of David (v.7). The kiss denotes religious homage, and the Davidic king deserves it: <<*You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet*>> (Luke 7:45). It is possible that the he and him of this verse refer to the Lord, although it is more natural to find a reference to the Son, who acts in God's name. He is therefore the one in whom the faithful take refuge.