

## Psalm 2

### *The Reign of the Lord's Anointed*

- <sup>1</sup> Why are the nations in an uproar  
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
- <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand  
And the rulers take counsel together  
Against the LORD  
And against His Anointed, saying,
- <sup>3</sup> 'Let us tear their fetters apart  
And cast away their cords from us!'
- <sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
The Lord scoffs at them.
- <sup>5</sup> Then He will speak to them in His anger  
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
- <sup>6</sup> 'But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion,  
My holy mountain.'
- <sup>7</sup> I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.
- <sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.
- <sup>9</sup> You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
You shall shatter them like earthenware.'
- <sup>10</sup> Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;  
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
- <sup>11</sup> Worship the LORD with reverence  
And rejoice with trembling.
- <sup>12</sup> Do homage to the Son,  
That He not become angry,  
And you perish in the way,  
For His wrath may soon be kindled.  
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

*The Book of Psalms:* The Book of Psalms is the songbook of Israel. It has 150 songs of different genres. It is divided into five 'books' within the larger Book. David, the poet, singer, and king, is the composer of most of the songs in book 1.

*Psalms 1 and 2:* The first two Psalms serve as an introduction to the entire Book of Psalms. They are connected poetically – see below.

### Historical and Cultural Background

- *Psalm 2 Extends Psalm 1:* Notice the parallels and contrasts.

<i>Connection</i>	<i>Psalm 1</i>	<i>Psalm 2</i>
On what do you meditate?	'In His <i>torah</i> he meditates day and night' (1:2)	'The peoples devising (same word) a vain thing' (2:1)
Who sits? Who laughs?	'Nor sit in the seat of scoffers' (1:1)	'He who sits in the heavens laughs' (2:4)
Which way?	'For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.' (1:6)	'Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way' (2:12)

- *The Song That Crowned the Kings:* Psalm 2 was sung at the coronation-anointing of every king from the House of David, since God promised King David a dynasty (2 Sam.7). In Luke's writings, Psalm 2 is quoted three times, each time connected with prayer, triggering the expansion of God's kingdom. God quoted it over Jesus at his baptism, as a coronation-anointing (Lk.3:22); Peter (Acts 4:24 – 27) and Paul (Acts 13:30, 34, 37) said Jesus fulfilled it (cf. Rev.6:16 – 17).

## Questions

1. In v.1 – 3, the Psalm begins with a plot of rebellion.
  - a. Like the gripping story of *Star Wars Episode 1* where the Sith are trying to overturn the Republic.
  - b. There is an uprising, where nations and people, kings and rulers are trying to push God off His throne. They are trying to push ‘the LORD’ off His heavenly throne, and ‘His Anointed,’ which is the King that God has anointed and appointed to rule, off his earthly throne. Their perception is that God keeps them in chains. Just because they say that doesn’t mean that’s the reality. In fact, God’s perspective is quite different.
2. God’s response is in v.4 – 6.
  - a. Apparently, God thinks there is something amusing about what these kings and peoples are doing. He thinks it’s ridiculous not only what they’re doing, but what they’re perceiving, so He ‘laughs’ and ‘scoffs.’ And in His anger, what does He do? Notice that God does not say, ‘I am going to invade those other realms.’ He does not say, ‘I will execute a regime change in other lands.’ He is simply saying, ‘I have installed My King upon Zion.’ Who is that? And why is that important?
3. Then the perspective of the song shifts in v.7 – 9.
  - a. It is no longer the narrator speaking, but the earthly king of Israel, who is the counterpart of God in heaven.
  - b. The king of Israel is supposed to respond:
  - c. This is the place where we get the song *You Said*, which says, ‘You said, Ask and you will receive whatever you need...Ask and I’ll give the nations to you; Oh Lord, that’s the cry of my heart.’
  - d. This is also one of the places where we must get our understanding of intercessory prayer: it’s based on the idea of the king asking God for his rightful inheritance. Just as a human father gives his son (and daughters) an inheritance, so God calls the king of Israel His Son at the king’s coronation, so that He can bestow on the king an inheritance. In this case, the inheritance is the nations in v.8. God invites the king to ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.’ The king is invited to ask God, that is, to pray. So you can bet that Jesus, as the last and final and ultimate king of Israel asked God for the nations. And you can bet that his Father gave them, is giving them, and will give them to Jesus as an inheritance.
  - e. Jesus then involves us. He says in John 16:23 – 24, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything *in my name*, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.’ Jesus is not throwing out a name-it-and-claim-it approach to prayer. ‘I pray that I would win the lottery!’ We all know that Jesus is not saying that. But what does he mean? Well, what was Jesus’ goal? What does it mean to pray *in his name*? It means to call the whole world to himself because that is the prayer he prays. That is the prayer the Father encouraged Jesus to pray.
4. This means that the Father, Son, and Spirit are more committed to people coming to Jesus than we are. Why then do we pray? We participate in that divine conversation.
  - a. Why does he want this? Because God wants to break the nations and shatter them.
    - i. It sounds violent, but it’s violence that is not directed to people as people. He does not break or shatter *people*. He breaks and shatters nations: ideologies, what Benedict Anderson called ‘imagined communities.’
    - ii. The best way to understand it is by saying that he will do violence to the world map in some sense. Jesus rearranges and relativizes group loyalties, not people per se.
    - iii. Think about how helpful that might be in a conflict zone, or the U.S. with regards to racial group conflict. Think about how helpful it has been if you study the Mennonite Christians and the Catholic Worker order. They’ve been great peacemakers in international conflict. They’ve gone to Iraq, Darfur in Sudan, Chiapas in Mexico, Kosovo, and other hot spots to work out reconciliation in Jesus’ name.
    - iv. God wants to unify the world under His appointed king, compared to other rulers who want to claim some people’s allegiance for themselves, or compared to the individualist who wants to pull himself or herself away.
  - b. Let me tell you one recent story of what I learned about intercessory prayer. Last year, 2007, started with more drug dealers in our neighborhood. For some time, there had been a group of men who hung out at a house diagonally across from us. They would hang out on the front steps, sometimes playing loud music. The amazing thing is that they were always there: morning, noon,

and night; weekday or weekend. Didn't these guys have real jobs to do? I had tried to go over and get to know them, with the hopes of ultimately sharing Jesus with them. But they never seemed really interested in me. Our concern with the increased activity was for some of the younger teenagers, who were becoming influenced by them. And secondly, because of them, more cars drove by, sometimes way too fast, as apparently they wanted to get out of there quickly in case they were being observed. It wasn't safe for kids to play on our street because of the car traffic. So we began to call the police, everyday. We went to the police station itself to talk about the problem. We bugged the owner of the house to handle this problem. Finally, in early June, the drug dealers moved out of the house, only to move nearby. They started to regather two houses down the street. Since it was the summer, all of my housemates decided that we would gather at 7:00am outside in the community garden every weekday to pray. We asked God to bring transformation and healing to those guys and our neighborhood in general. As people were going to work in the morning, there we were praying, and we'd offer to pray for them. What happened was a bit of a miracle. We developed a friendship with a guy named Azibe, also Haitian. He did not know Jesus, but he was actually trying to help some of those drug dealers stay clean. He was a bit naïve, but he also started coming to our house church gatherings on Sundays. He and I also met up for a few weeks to study the life of Jesus and discuss it. Often, he would take what he was learning back home and talk about it with some of the guys. Since we talked a lot about Jesus' forgiveness and reconciliation, he would talk about that. Although the other guys didn't want to come over, too, they apparently listened. There were probably two occasions when Azibe stopped some violence from breaking out. And on another occasion, some of the guys gave Azibe some money to drop into our church offering basket. I said, 'Well, okay, but is this drug money?!'

5. So the Psalm warns the kings and judges of the world about this in v.10 – 12.
  - a. Illus: One of favorite stories is *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. When my kids were little, every day we let them read a portion of the story, and at bedtime, we read a portion to them. One of the most interesting plot lines is Aragorn becoming the human king that unites the fragmented kingdoms again. He does this not by hostile takeover, but by winning people's trust. Boromir at the beginning says, 'Gondor has no king. Gondor needs no king.' But at the end of his life, he says, 'I would have followed you.' The king of Rohan also decides to acknowledge Aragorn as his king. The one man who refused Aragorn, Denethor the Steward of Minas Tirith, wanted to keep power. And the Steward, because of his resistance and hopelessness, went mad and died due to insanity. But the rest of the tribes of men were joined under Aragorn in a renewal of the older kingdom.
  - b. This is one major touch point of what is called Christian political theology. Kings and rulers have to allow people to worship in the Christian faith. That by itself sets a limit to the power of kings and rulers. Secondly, Christian faith puts a limit on kings and rulers because they cannot force people to come to Christian faith. They have to tolerate other beliefs to some degree.
  - c. Illus: But let me give an illustration of what God could do. There are no guarantees, of course, but it helps to think about the past just a reminder of God's power and how students back then interacted with Him. In the late 70's Tufts Christian Fellowship was known for caring for people. One year, there was a fairly high profile student who suffered a major accident. It left him handicapped, in need of assistance in his day to day living. One of the leaders in the fellowship back then prayed about this, and prayed about how to reach the campus. He wound up befriending this guy, and after becoming decent friends, asked if he wanted to room together. I guess he said, 'Hey, I think it'd be cool to live together, and if you need some living assistance, I know some people who could help.' Meanwhile he rallied the whole fellowship to serve this guy with the handicap. They all laid down their lives to love this guy. A Jewish student named Daniel Joshua Abrams ('77-'81) watched all this happen. As a result of seeing Jesus' love expressed, he became a Christian. The only problem was that Abrams is the son of one of the most prominent rabbis in Boston. It became a major issue and the Boston Globe published a big article about this. So the name of Jesus went forward!

## Praying for the Nations

So, that is the song that we call Psalm 2, the coronation song of the Kings of Israel. For our purposes, it is one of the foundations of intercessory prayer. What is Jesus praying? This prayer. God even encouraged him to pray it by reminding Jesus of it when he was baptized. He quoted Psalm 2:7, 'You are My beloved Son.' So when Jesus heard that, he would have thought, 'I do ask you, Father, give me the nations as my inheritance.' That's probably what was on his mind during his 40 days in the wilderness, because Satan plays on exactly that theme. But Jesus *prays* about it. And look what God does. God brings to Jesus disciples, crowds, and a whole movement. We don't usually think about it that way, but that is the reality.

### Psalm 2 and the Growth of Ministry:

Who is God using?	Jesus (Luke 3:23ff.)	Peter and the Jerusalem disciples (Acts 2:1ff).	Paul and the Antioch disciples (Acts 13:1ff.)	Us!
Where is Ps.2 quoted?	Luke 3:22	Acts 4:25 – 27	Acts 13:33	Here and now!
Why is it quoted?	God anoints Jesus as king	Disciples take courage in the face of opposition	Paul shows that God is committed to Jesus' kingship	To remind us that God wants to reach all people
Who prays?	Jesus	Disciples in Jerusalem	Disciples in Antioch (13:1ff.)	This fellowship / church
What does God do?	God brings Jewish disciples to Jesus	God brings many Jews and a few Gentiles to Jesus	God brings Jews and many Gentiles to Jesus	God will bring Jews and Gentiles to Jesus

In effect, Psalm 2 seems to serve a special function. It reminds Jesus, then Peter and the Jerusalem disciples, and then Paul and the Antioch disciples to ask God for the nations. When they pray, God advances His kingdom. So in just a moment, we're going to sing *You Said* (again?) to remind us.