

Sermon October 11, 2020 Back to School with the Psalms Part 5: Psalm 2

Today we will take one whole Psalm and apply the principles laid out in Parts 1-4 of this series and see what we come up with. There are several categories or types of Psalms. One list is Psalms of Community Praise and Lament; Individual Praise and Lament; Penitential; Imprecatory; Ritual; Wisdom; and Royal/Messianic. To get a real feel for how Jesus is central to the Bible and just for the enjoyment of it, today we will look at a Royal/ Messianic Psalm – Psalm 2. I have divided Psalm 2 into 5 sections to help give a better flow as we take a look at the psalm.

Section 1

***Why do the nations rally together
and the peoples plot in vain?***

***²The kings of the earth take their stand,
and the rulers conspire together,
against Yahweh and against his Anointed, saying,***

***³“Let us burst their fetters
and throw from ourselves their binding ropes.”***

A quick note on the names for God used in this Psalm. Oftentimes religions purposefully restrict the use of divine names in their writings and speech. The idea is that the name is too holy and sacred to be uttered in our profane world. In ancient Israel it became custom never to say the covenant name of God – Yahweh, or other personal names of God. Instead, they called God “Hashem,” which simply means “the name.” Ancient Greek translations of the Bible also substituted LORD or Lord for the personal names for God - Yahweh and Adonai, respectively. Even today we see this principle in operation among the Mormons, where the name “Jesus” is often substituted with “Our Savior.” So, in the same way as calling our neighbor “Bob” instead of “that guy next door,” I will use the actual names for God written in the Psalm texts, as it would seem that is the intended use.

Right away in Psalm 2 we encounter the oral poetic style of the psalmists. Thoughts are simple, direct and to the point. They are, as we say, “short and sweet.” Nations assemble against the Lord. They want to do what is right in their own eyes, not what is right in the eyes of Yahweh. They want to be free from any accountability to the supreme being they know in their hearts must exist.

Several metaphors are used in this section – fetters and ropes. Unlike a prison wall where you still have an area in which you can move around, fetters severely limit movement. Fetters locked around the ankles make it difficult to walk at all. Ropes tie the upper body, limiting the function of the hands and arms. These people and nations are feeling very restricted by God. They have their own ideas about the meaning of life and what a full life

looks like. They want to walk a different path than what they feel God has laid before them. They want to do what is evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

The best way to be free from the rule of God is to exterminate God's leaders, dissolve all the administrative functions of his religion, and - as much as possible - eliminate or silence his followers. Of course, this master plan has its origins in the prince of this world, Satan. However, any one of us who choose his side and participate in his campaign against God will be held accountable and fall under the same weight of God's final judgement as explained later in the Psalm.

Section 2

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

***⁵ Then he speaks to them in his wrath,
and terrifies them in his anger, saying,***

***⁶ "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy mountain."***

The power of earthly nations compared to God is no comparison at all. God can wipe them out with one snap of his fingers. Like a six year old picking a fight with a professional wrestler, God *laughs* at the obvious outcome of the contest. But this match-up is more sinister. The nations have ungodly intent. They have exchanged wisdom for foolishness, good for evil, life for death. Therefore, God will oppose them and their plans. He holds them in *derision* on account of their evil intentions. Lastly, he engages them in his *wrath and anger*.

God has his own champion. He establishes his own king, whose throne is on Mt. Zion. Mt. Zion's earthly location was Jerusalem. Now it is in the hearts of believers. The divine counterpart is the throne room of God in heaven. Just what kind of king is this? What is the nature of his rule? These thoughts continue in the next section.

Section 3

***⁷ I will tell of the decree of Yahweh:
He said to me, "You are my Son;
I - today I have begotten you."***

Now God/ Yahweh speaks more on the nature of his chosen and anointed king. God says the king is his son. That feels right, as far as what we know about kings. This part about the king being God's son flows out of 2 Samuel, where God speaks to King David about the nature of his kingship and all who sit on Israel's throne in the future;

Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 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. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”
In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. 2 Samuel 7:11-17

Psalm 2 was used at the coronation of each of Israel's kings. There was a community consciousness of these verses spoken by God through Nathan. The king was God's chosen one to rule Israel. The king was God's son. While each earthly ruler established by God over Israel did indeed serve in God's name, they were all an imperfect foreshadow of the king to come – Jesus Christ, the Son of God and eternal king of the people of God. Jesus is the particular seed/descendant of David Nathan is especially speaking of in this prophecy. When is the “today” God speaks of when his chosen king becomes his son? It is none other than the day of Jesus' resurrection, as explained by Paul in Romans 1;

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and 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. Romans 1:1-4

Section 4

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

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

Since Jesus is the Son of God, he is naturally the heir to all that is the Father's. While he does have the claim to all the earth, the time for the fulfillment of that claim is yet to come. The last chapters of Revelation give us a vision of when the throne of God will descend

upon the earth and when the Son of God will take possession of his eternal kingdom. Chapter 11 of the same declares;

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” Revelation 11:15

Section 5

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

***¹¹ Serve Yahweh in fear,
and rejoice with trembling.***

***¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish on the way.***

***Surely His wrath is quickly kindled!
Blessed are all who take refuge in him!***

With all the above in mind, now the psalm speaks with a word to the wise. We are asked to consider the folly of selfish ambition and take new regard for the Lord, the one who is the high and mighty God. Amid all the plans of conquest and glory of man, Yahweh has chosen his king, his champion, who sits on the throne of his kingdom and will rule without defeat over all the earth. To take the side of the Son of God is blessedness. To oppose him is death. This harkens back to Psalm 1;

***Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:1-2***

We are also called to take heart in the way of the Lord. He has a plan. Much of that plan is already accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The day is surely coming when he will bring final defeat to all his – and our – enemies. He will rule as the good and holy king over all the earth for eternity, and we are included in that plan as we have been baptized into his royal family and have faith that God will do all that he has promised. God bless us as we take refuge in him and serve him. Amen!

Ron Bright, Pastor
Christ Lutheran Church
400 Barclay Avenue, Forest Hills, Pennsylvania