

# The Reign of the Messiah

## Psalm 2

Whereas Psalm 1 describes the individual's way with God—either blessed and planted or cursed and scattered—Psalm 2 reveals the plight of nations. Nations rage against God and perish, or they learn wisdom, kiss the Son, rejoice, and are blessed by Him. Over half of Psalm 2 is quoted in the New Testament, providing us with divine commentary on its meaning and direct relevance to the here and now. The reason that the world thinks Jesus is irrelevant to everything outside the walls of evangelicals' hearts is because we have not understood and believed this psalm.

### Raging Nations

The first word of Psalm 2 is *Why?*, and it pervades whole psalm. Everyone knows in their bones there is a God (Rom. 1:18ff.), and therefore the only rational action is to find out who He is and honor Him. It makes no sense to rage against Him. In order to condemn or oppose anything, you need an objective standard that exists above you and applies to all. If you're opposing the ultimate being, you can only do so by appealing to the ultimate standard that in fact comes from Him. It's like disputing the length of an inch with a ruler. This is why all opposition to God is actually an attempt to be God. All sin is insane, but this is the summit. The raging, plotting, and planning against the Lord and His anointed (messiah) in verses 1-2 is quoted in Acts 4 and then explained: "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" (vv27-28). David wrote this Psalm (Acts 4:25) and it was fulfilled in the plotting against and crucifixion of Jesus. In an effort to break the bonds and cast the cords of God away, the kings, rulers, and governors accomplished God's purposes (v3). The sovereignty of God does not eliminate human freedom or responsibility, but rather establishes both. He creates us as free creatures who act according to our own wills, but because He is God and exists outside of time, knowing the end from the beginning, everything happens according to His will. As an author, the more Shakespeare writes, the more Hamlet does in the story. God is the storyteller and His characters are flesh and blood. The apostles' conclusion to God's foreordination was not "Oh good, and whatever happens next is also determined by God and therefore it doesn't matter what we do." They prayed to God for boldness in the face of threats, and for signs and wonders to confirm their word (Acts 4:29-30). Let the nations rage—count on it—and be bold with the truth anyway. Rage, anger, and violence as a control tactic should not work on God's people.

### Laughing Lord

When we think of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, His betrayal with a kiss, scattered disciples, false witnesses at the kangaroo court, the flogging and agony of the crucifixion, and darkness and despair, the last thing that occurs to us is the laughter of God. We would think it blasphemous to suggest if it wasn't blasphemous to deny: "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision" (v4). It's not that the angels in heaven were dancing as Jesus was being crucified, but God intended the irony and laughed as those who fulfilled His plans tried to thwart them. This is the wisdom "which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). God spoke to them in anger and distressed them in His displeasure: "Yet have I set My King on My holy hill of Zion" (vv5-6). By necessity of being God, He always ruled the world, but through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus was coronated as savior of the world. That's what changed at Calvary. God has

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always been the God of death and resurrection, the one who thought it would be funny to begin His priestly nation with a 100-year-old man and 91-year-old woman who eventually got the joke (Gen. 17:17-18; 21:5). But the death-resurrection motif centers at the cross. This is the turn, reversal, surprise, and ultimate eucatastrophe, all the things that make for deep laughter. The laughter of God in Psalm 2 contrasts with the laughter of the mockers in Psalm 1:1, as well as with those who mock Jesus in His ministry, while He was in custody, and on the cross (Matt. 9:24; 27:29-31, 39-44). There is a faithful way to pity the wicked, and an unfaithful one, and there is a faithful way to laugh at the wicked, and an unfaithful one. Jesus prays for those who are crucifying Him, and He joins the Father in triumph, making a public spectacle of the principalities and powers who murdered Him (Col. 2:15). Even our sense of humor—especially our sense of humor—is to be shaped by Scripture.

### Ruling Messiah

Yahweh speaks to the anointed one, “Me”, on the day He begot Him (v7). Preaching in Pisidian Antioch, Paul quotes this verse explaining it’s about Jesus’ resurrection from the dead: “And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’” (Acts 13:32-33). The messiah is supposed to defeat the enemies of God and His people, and usher in a reign of peace and prosperity. He’s not supposed to get murdered while all His leaders run away. But Jesus did not establish merely an earthly kingdom. If He was doing that then His servants would fight. Instead He established a heavenly kingdom by dying for the sins of the world (Jn. 3:16-17). What happened as a result of His death? “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (v8). The Father invited the Son to claim the nations for His inheritance. What do you think He did? There is a sad and all-too-common way of interpreting this verse that amounts to Jesus saying either “Thanks anyway” or “I’ll hope a few folks from every nation follow Me.” Jesus came to save the world, paid for the sins of the world on the cross, rose from the dead, claimed what was His, and then sent His disciples out to proclaim it—to disciple the nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus doesn’t hope He will inherit the nations and then suggest that maybe some kings would think about joining Him when they get time. Verse 9 is quoted in Revelation 19:15-16, describing Jesus’ rule and wrath, and in Revelation 2:25-27 where the saints in Thyatira who overcome will be given the power over the nations.

### Wise Kings

This is the part of Psalm 2 that makes us nervous. Is it advocating a theocracy where kings either become Christians or get smashed by those who have (vv9-10)? Remember Jesus told the soldiers who believed in Him not to extort or falsely accuse, and to be content (Lk. 3:14). He told them *not to do violence*. The kingdom of God is proclaimed through preaching and love, and the audience includes kings and judges, who are instructed to be wise (v10). They are to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling, to kiss the Son lest He be angry and they perish (vv11-12a). The point is to bestow God’s blessings on those who trust Him (v12b). Kings and nations that won’t listen to God will perish because sin doesn’t work. When we believe and proclaim this gospel, God blesses it and draws the nations to Himself.