

Psalm 2—Revolt of the Nations

According to Acts 4:25, David wrote Psalm 2, and he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 2 is quoted by Christ's disciples in Acts 4 in order to explain why Peter and John had been arrested and commanded not to preach the Gospel again. On a larger scale, Ps.2 also explained why Herod, Pilate, and the Jewish religious leaders had all conspired together to have Christ crucified. These leaders had never gotten along before, and rarely agreed on anything. They were the most unlikely union of leaders imaginable, yet they had come together to crucify Christ.

In Paul's great sermon at Pisidian Antioch, found in Acts 13:14-48, Paul quoted Ps.2:7 as referring to Jesus, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten you". Paul was stating that Jesus' incarnation and resurrection fulfilled the Old Testament promises of redemption and forgiveness that they were all looking for. Paul also attested to David as the inspired author of Ps.2.

David's writing had both a near term view of his time and a far view of the coming of Christ. David understood himself to be uniquely empowered and chosen by God. His authority was from God, as he was God's mediator on earth, yet he was opposed by many of his own people along with the other nations against him. Ultimately, God was speaking through David referring to the rebellion of mankind against God, and the rejection of the Messiah, the Son of God. The Jewish leaders along with the leaders of the Gentiles formed an unlikely alliance to oppose God's redemptive plan for mankind. They vainly and foolishly sought to set up their own kingdom to replace the true Kingdom of God. Psalm 2 announces that the Gentile world along with Israel will only find fulfillment and lasting joy as subjects of the king that God will send into the world, a ruler who will be more than a mere man---the Son of God.

It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World

Remember that wild zany movie made in the early sixties with all the famous comedians-Jonathon Winters, Sid Caesar, Milton Bearle, Mickey Rooney, etc? The plot was about all the various unique people who just happened to come together on the highway to witness the accident and death of a bank robber whose last words were where he buried all his money. They were all different except one character trait common to all humans—they were selfish and greedy. Jimmy Durante played the part of the dying guy whose "hook" was very much like the devil's; "You can be rich, have it all, live like a king." The underlying message was to stop living the straight and narrow way, don't follow the rules, instead with an opportunity like this, just don't tell. The police came and the lying, conniving, and paranoia began. For the rest of the movie all the characters spin out of control, and in the end even Spencer Tracy (the police captain) becomes crooked. It started out as just a white lie, then they all united against the law, next thing you know they are all warring with each other—they couldn't share, couldn't agree, and the whole thing became a furious competition that none of them were qualified to win. The whole world went MAD. They thought there was something out there that was better; if they

just knew something else, had something else they could be a king, so they listen to Jimmy Durante (the devil), and they enter into a lifetime of chasing something that's not there with the consequences of anxiety, anger, frustration, depression, and repressed guilt.

I hope you noticed that somewhere in my description I jumped the fence and started talking about life on planet earth. Of course that was what that movie was all about---real life. The whole world is out there chasing some dream that they think will bring them happiness, yet God created us to be fulfilled by serving and glorifying Him. The human race is very busy in an intense competition to do everything and anything but serve and glorify God.

What would cause Sid Caesar to get in a 1917 Sopwith Camel flown by an octogenarian, while Mickey Rooney got in another airplane flown by a drunk guy? Why would Jonathon Winters totally destroy a gas station, and Spencer Tracy go over to the dark side? They were chasing the elusive dream of freedom, autonomy, riches, and ultimately the right to rule over their own lives. This is what David wrote Psalm 2 about, "Let us break the bonds (God's laws) that bind us and cast away the cords" (Ps.2:3). In the movie, the story pans from one group of characters to another all flailing about in futility--nobody can get there. In the end, nobody gets the prize, the treasure, the great fulfillment of their desires. The money ends up fluttering away in the wind. Just as Solomon wrote at the end of his life, "It was all like chasing after the wind".

Psalm 2

Many scholars will debate whether Ps.2 was really written about the Messiah, specifically Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament authors like Peter, Paul, Luke, and the author of Hebrews, Psalm 2 is about the rebellion of mankind against God, the resultant plan of God to send His Son, the "anointed one" (which means Messiah), and their rejection of God's anointed one. God the Father issued a decree to give His Son dominion over them, and Psalm 2 is just one of the passages we have to confirm that.

Last week we studied Ps.1, which I think David wrote as an introduction to Ps.2. In Psalm 1 we have the doctrine of the two ways, the contrast of the unbeliever going his own way scoffing at God, and the believer who is seeking God according to the truth God has provided. Now in Psalm 2, the way of the unbeliever becomes a cosmic revolt of the nations against God and His Anointed. It unfolds the wrong path and its consequences. The righteous man of Psalm 1 is now seen to be God's Son, and it is by taking refuge in Jesus that the coming judgment can be avoided.

The structure of Ps.2 can be broken down into four sections, each with its own speaker. The first section is v.1-3 and the speakers are the world rulers who join together in an international conspiracy against the authority of God and His Representative. They are very unlikely co-conspirators like Herod, Pilate, and Caiphas (the high priest) who have nothing in common but their mutual rejection of Jesus. In the same way, the kings and rulers of the earth are united in rebellion against God and against God's plan of redemption. The benevolent rule of God is seen as bondage in v.3, "Let us tear their (God

and Jesus) bonds apart, and cast away their cords from us!” They see God’s plan and His way as a limit to their freedom and independence. After all don’t most people believe that there are many ways to heaven? Can’t you just choose your own way? Isn’t it too restrictive, too narrow, and unreasonable to expect everyone to conform to one narrow way? Doesn’t it inhibit our freedom to be told we must submit to this one narrow restrictive relationship with Christ?

Section two (v.4-6), gives God’s response to these questions as well as God’s response to the demands of the kings and rulers of v.3. GOD LAUGHS. In v.4-6 God is the speaker who responds to the rebellion. I’m not sure, but I think this is one of the few places where God is seen openly laughing. There are many where it is implied, but here in v.4 it says, “He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them”. God is enthroned in heaven as He is the power that is out of this world. He created the world and all that is in it. What a joke it is that these earthbound created beings that have no more significance or power than a speck of sand, presume to reject His rightful authority. God sees them, knows them, and is unconcerned. In v.5 we read that God will ultimately terrify them with His judgment, and in v.6 we read that in the end God will install HIS KING to rule from His holy mountain, Zion. Zion is in Jerusalem where David built his throne, so this conforms to God’s promise to David in 2 Sam.7:16 that David’s descendant would rule the world in the kingdom of God. You may be surprised that God laughs at people’s arrogance, but just think about how absurd it is that a weak creature should become a critic of the all powerful Creator.

In section 3 of Ps.2, the Son, the Anointed One of God speaks. In v.7 we read, “Thou art my Son, today I have begotten Thee.” This is Jesus quoting God the Father’s words to Him. Turn to the New Testament and the same words of God spoken to Jesus are found in several places. At Jesus’ baptism, and then again at the transfiguration, all the Gospel writers record God saying, “This is My beloved Son”(Matt.3:17;17:5). Paul also quoted Ps.2:7 in his sermon found in Acts 13:33 to be fulfilled by the incarnation and resurrection. Can there be any doubt that Ps.2:8-9 is referring to the second coming of Christ when Jesus will come as the conquering king “to rule with a rod of iron”? Does v.9 sound like those who are so arrogant now will be broken then? In God’s amazing program, He is now allowing people to do as they please and it seems like the world leaders are resisting Him, but the Bible leaves no doubt that God is patient now allowing all who will come to Him to come, but there will be a day of reckoning. Hebrews 2:8 says “today we do not see everything subject to Him”, but hold on, Christ is indeed coming.

In section 4(v.10-12), I believe the speaker is the Holy Spirit (through David) warning all the people of the earth to “Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice in Him with trembling. Do homage to the Son.” The consequences otherwise are that God’s wrath will be kindled and you will perish eternally. All who submit to God now will avoid divine wrath then, and they will find refuge in Him and be blessed. One of the worst persecutors of Christians ever was the Emperor Diocletian who boasted on ancient coins that we have found that “the name of Christ has been extinguished”. Rome fell, its emperors are all dead, and today no one has ever heard of Diocletian, so is the fate of all who oppose God.

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