

EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE (Volume 1: Psalms 1-10)
Session 3 - Psalm 2: The Reign of the Lord's Anointed

Introductory Remarks:

- This psalm is easy to classify as a "Royal Psalm."
- As we mentioned last week, it probably serves as an introduction to the entire Book of Psalms along with Psalm 1. (Refer to last week's class and notes on Psalm 1 - glenwoodcc.org)
- While we do not have an exact historical event that forms the background for this psalm, it does reflect the promise of a king who would reign on David's throne forever in 2 Samuel 7.

Psalm 2:1-3: The foolishness of rebelling against God and his "Anointed"

- *"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"* (v.1) - These are not the types of questions that seek an answer. They function as an expression of bewilderment that the "nations" and "peoples" would even consider such rebellion against God. Basically, the idea is "What on earth are they thinking?"
- The nature of their rebellion is here characterized as "raging" and "plotting." The verb "rage" can be used of the restless raging of the sea. The second verb "plot" ("devise"), is the same word used for "meditate" in Psalm 1:2. The basic concept includes the ideas of "murmuring" or "muttering." In Psalm 1:2, it is positively used for the type of verbal action that might occur as one speaks to oneself to learn, memorize, and apply biblical truth throughout the day. In this verse, it is the muttering or even the growling that goes on as these rebels seek to plan their rebellion against God and his Anointed One. We thus have the picture of those who in an agitated state are seeking to figure out a way to overthrow God's dominion (and actually think they can do it).
- It is the "nations" and "peoples" along with their corresponding "kings" and "rulers" who are involved in this foolish rebellion. In their Old Testament context, these would be the nations that surrounded Israel and caused such problems for them throughout their history. It would have been easy for those in Israel to see this psalm as a declaration of God's sovereign control over all things and his blessing on Israel and especially her "anointed" king. However, as Willem VanGemeren points out:

"The actual state of the kingdom of Israel at any age was at best a pale representation of the ideal kingdom in Israel. The prophets looked for a day when Israel and Judah would

be ruled by a Davidic king from Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:2-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-28; Hosea 3:5) and the nations would be subject to him (Isaiah 11:10; Micah 4:1-5)." (Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

- We see the hope of this Davidic Ruler who would rule in the way that Psalm 2 says in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament witness to this coming "Anointed One" (Messiah) looked forward to the heart of what Paul called "*the gospel of God*" in Romans 1 and the central focus of that gospel was that "*which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh...*" (Romans 1:1-3). But he also had to be something more than one who was a descendent of David physically, he also "*was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.*" This "Anointed One" is ultimately "*Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 1:4).
- In Acts 4:23-31, we read of how the first two verses of Psalm 2 (and the message of the whole Psalm), were understood by the believers following Peter and John's arrest and release by the Sanhedrin. They saw Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Romans, and the unbelieving Jews who were arrayed against Jesus as being a fulfillment of the nations, peoples, kings and rulers who gather to throw off God and his Anointed King's rule in their lives. This is significant because it shows that this is not ultimately an Israel versus all other nations prophecy, but finds its focus in all those who have a real faith in Jesus Christ versus those who do not have saving faith in God and his Anointed One. Even the unbelieving Jewish leaders and people are seen as being a part of these nations and peoples who conspire and plot against God. This is important in our application of the psalms to our lives today. As people of God who through faith are a part of the faith of Abraham and David and all other believing Israelites, we can, after looking at these psalms in their original context, determine how they apply to us as followers of the "Anointed One," the Lord Jesus Christ. We have cause to see these psalms as highly relevant to our current lives because they address the truths that have to do with all of us who have faith in God (and his Anointed) and how we can experience God's presence in our daily lives.
- In Psalm 2:3 we are told that these rebels see being under the rule of the Lord and his Anointed as being bondage and not freedom. They seek to break what they see as the shackles of a tyrant who is keeping them from knowing true freedom. This is how unbelievers have always viewed the reign and rules of God. What they need to see is that it is their lack of repentance and faith in this God which keeps them in bondage to their sin. What they perceive as freedom is the very thing that keeps them from truly being free. This is an important biblical perspective. Freedom is primarily freedom from the bondage of sin and freedom to serve the Lord (Romans 6 contains a great example

of this perspective). Thus God's commandments are no longer a shackle to be freed from but something to be joyfully obeyed because they lead us into true freedom (1 John 5:3-5).

Psalm 2:4-6: The absolute rule of God and his established "King."

- There is a sudden shift in verse 4 as we now move to the perspective of God ruling from his throne in heaven. The rebellion of these rulers is, to God, laughable. He is not worried or threatened by their plots and plans. We are given the picture of God being so confident in this reign and his victory over any supposed threat that he laughs and mocks their foolishness. Why? Because they are not a threat! When he decides to act, he will terrify them in the outpouring of his wrath. The "wrath" and "anger" of God are necessary and beautiful characteristics of God. Unlike human anger and wrath it is not the uncontrolled fury that stems from a sinfully selfish heart. It is the righteous and necessary reaction of God to all that is sinful, unholy, and destructive. God hates what he should hate. He condemns what he should condemn. His wrath and fury is unleashed only against that which is truly worthy of his hatred. Those who remain in rebellion against him face his wrath. In verses 10 - 12 we will see the solution for escaping this wrath. The Book of Revelation also provides such a perspective on the rebellion of unbelievers and their "powerful" leaders (i.e. Revelation 6:12-17).
- In verse 6 God answers their threats through a proclamation. They may conspire to throw off his reign, but he says, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." He has already established his King on his holy mountain. He is behind his king. This should have been a promise that fueled the worship and confident faith of the Israelites in the face of their enemies. And it is a promise that can fuel our worship and faith today. God is sovereignly reigning over his creation. He has established his King. The promise of a king who would reign on the throne of David forever is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- Embracing such a view of God's sovereignty makes all the difference in the way that we view our world. It allows us to "walk by faith and not by sight" with confidence. We are given the great gift of seeing God as reigning and ruling from his throne in heaven. We can see that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is established as King forever over all. The Psalms thus give us a perspective from which we can live life as servants of this King. We can face anything with a confident faith and can rejoice with all our might that he is on the throne and is for us.

Psalm 2:7-9: The Coronation of the "Son" and his complete dominion over all.

- In verses 7 - 9, the King speaks of his own official coronation as the "Son" of God. His pedigree, so to speak, as the Son and the one who is to reign on the throne is officially announced. This is a divine decree and one that is used in various New Testament settings of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 3:16; Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). It is quite clear again that the ultimate fulfillment of this coronation is found in the one unique Son of God through whom we can become sons of God as well.
- The Son is offered (and obviously accepts) absolute and unlimited dominion over the whole earth . He not only has the right to reign, but also the power to do so (verse 8). In Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel has a vision of this "one like a son of man" who is "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (also Psalm 72:8; 89:27). One day this reign will be completely consummated and experienced (Revelation 11:15-18; Rev. 19 - 22).
- The reign of the King means that he will also put down all rebellion. Thus he is said to "break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There is no missing the imagery here. It shows the complete crushing of his enemies and it will be no harder for him than it is for us to throw down a piece of pottery and smash it into a thousand pieces. There is no threat to this King from these rebels (See also Revelation 2:26-28; 12:5; 19:11-15).
- With God and his Anointed so securely enthroned and in control, it leaves the rebels with only one reasonable response: Repent!

Psalm 2:10-12: Warning to repent and submit to God and the "Son" while there is still time.

- This universal reign is not simply carried out by the King destroying his enemies. He is unbelievably patient and merciful (Exodus 34:6-7). These rebels are now called upon to be wise and to assess their situation. The warning is not lifted, it is a part of the call for wisdom. God graciously warns us when a warning is needed. To exercise wisdom we must watch and listen for God's warnings as well as his blessings. This can be clearly seen in the way the Book of Proverbs warns against listening to foolishness and calls upon the reader to listen to God's wisdom. God graciously gives these rebels the chance to turn from their rebellion to serve, fear, delight in, and worship the Son who reigns. It is quite evangelistic and a positive response would result in what we read about in 1

Thessalonians 1:9-10 concerning those who believed in Jesus in that church. However, it is also clearly the type of warning that we read concerning those same believers in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonian church (See 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12).

- A right response to God includes responding to him according to who he really is. He should be served with a proper fear (reverence in its most significant form). We are to rejoice, but with trembling before his awesome majesty, holiness and power. We are to embrace him with the love, honor and worship that is due to him. Why? Because the warning of his judgment still stands. The bottom line is that God deserves to be served, feared and worshiped in this way and those who refuse to submit to him deserve his righteous wrath. Thus, the two ways of Psalm 1 still stand. Those who persist in their sin will perish. Those who turn from their sin and place their faith in the one true King will live under God's blessing. "Blessed are all who take refuge in him."