

Psalm 2

- 2:1** Why are the nations agitated,
and the peoples thinking about vain things?¹
- 2:2** The kings of the earth take their stand,
and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh and against His Anointed One.²
- 2:3** Let us tear off their manacles,
and throw their yoke from us.³
- 2:4** He who sits in the heavens laughs at them.
The Lord mocks them.⁴
- 2:5** Then He will speak to them in His anger,
and in His fury He will terrify them,⁵
- 2:6** Now as for Me, I have installed My king on Zion, My sacred mountain.⁶
- 2:7** I will surely relate the command of Yahweh.
He said to me, You are My Son. Today I have given birth to you.⁷
- 2:8** Ask of Me, and I will give the nations as your inheritance,
and the ends of the earth as your possession.⁸
- 2:9** You shall break them with the scepter of iron.
You shall shatter them like a clay pot.⁹
- 2:10** Now therefore O kings, be wise.
Take warning O judges of the earth.¹⁰
- 2:11** Serve Yahweh with fear.
And rejoice with trembling.¹¹
- 2:12** Kiss the Son lest he become angry, and you perish in the way when his wrath burns quickly.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.¹²

¹ לְמַה רָגַשׁוּ גוֹיִם וְלְאַמִּים יִהְיוּ-רִיק – Since David is the author of this Psalm (cf. Acts 4:24-26), we can assume that he is writing it during the time of the coronation of his son Solomon to the throne of the king of Israel. Therefore, the question here in v. 1 is whether or not the other nations surrounding Israel are at this very moment agitated about Solomon’s coronation, or is David speaking generally about unbelievers, specifically Gentile unbelievers, who are naturally antipathetic towards God and His king, the Son of David (cf. 2 Samuel 7)? There is also the possibility that David is referring to all “peoples” and not just Gentile nations, thereby including the Jewish people who will eventually rebel against God and their own king when Jesus appears, so that the apostles are certainly justified in referring to the Jewish leadership along with the Roman leaders as those who are opposing God and His Anointed, the Messiah in Acts 4:23-28.

For the first verb, the LXX uses ἐφρόαζαν = to be furious. Clearly, the Gentile nations are upset that God’s Son is being enthroned in Israel, and they are conspiring with one another on how to eliminate any influence he might have on them, but their plans are in vain, David says. This kind of hostility from the Gentile nations around the world towards Jesus specifically will probably exist while he rules the earth during the time of the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel.

² וְתִצְבֹּב | מֶלֶךְ-אֶרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים נֹסְדוּ-יָחַד עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ – The universal rule of Yahweh and His Messiah, the king of Israel, is not something that other rulers accept, probably because of their pride and desire only that others submit to them. Again, this will be most evident during the millennial kingdom, especially at its end when Satan is released from his prison after the “1,000 years” and is able to motivate the Gentile nations to rise up and attempt to overthrow Jesus as their worldwide ruler (cf. Revelation 20).

cf. 2 Kings 11:12 – And he brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him and the witness, and they made him king and anointed him (וַיִּמְשְׁחֻהוּ) (καὶ ἔχρισεν αὐτόν), and they clapped their hands and said, “May the king live!”

³ וְנִגְתְּקָה אֶת-כּוֹסֵרוֹתֵימוֹ וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עַבְתָּימוֹ – The kings of the other nations are speaking through David and saying that they feel chained like slaves to God and His Messiah, the king of Israel, and they will do what they can to free themselves from them.

This will be most evident when God fulfills his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 to make his descendants a “great nation,” meaning that they will be the greatest nation on earth and ruling over all other nations, obviously with Jesus as their king (cf. Revelation 20). Then, also in Revelation 20, the final example of the Gentile nations’ attempt to destroy Jesus will come at the end of his millennial kingdom, but “fire will come down from heaven and devour them.”

⁴ יִשָּׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶי אֲדוֹנָי יְלַעַג לָמוֹ – The puny complaints and attempts of even the most powerful leaders of the earth to destroy God’s and the Messiah’s universal rule is just a reason for God to laugh at them and make fun of them. How comical that created beings would even think that they can defeat their Creator. God will win the battle for the world and destroy His enemies (cf. Revelation 20:9,10).

EBC – The confidence of God’s people rests in God himself, who is unmoved by the political machinations on earth. As earthly creatures we can hardly avoid becoming involved; yet our hope is in the God who laughs and scoffs at our enemies (cf. Psalm 59:6-8).

⁵ אֵיזוֹ יִדְבַר אֱלֹהֵימוֹ בְּאָפוֹ וּבְחִירוֹנוֹ יִבְהַלְמוֹ – God is not only laughing at the puny leaders who attempt to rebel against him, but He also addresses them with anger and fury with the result that they are frightened out of their minds.

⁶ וְאַנִּי נֹסֶכְתִּי מִלְּפָנֶי עַל-צִיּוֹן הַר-קְדְּשִׁי – Now God speaks through David the psalmist. While Zion is a small mountain in comparison to even the Mt. of Olives nearby, it is God’s mountain, and He is telling the other kings directly that He has caused His king to reign, meaning that no one will be able to thwart His plans and purposes to do so.

⁷ וְאַסְפָּרָה אֵל תֶּק יְהוָה אֲמַר אֵלַי בְּנֵי אֶתֶּה אֲנִי תְנוּם יִלְדֶתֶיךָ – Now God’s king, the Messiah, speaks through David the psalmist and communicates God’s command to him, which is that He has made him His Son by virtue of his being coronated king of Israel. Thus, the coronation ceremony is a birthing event for the king. God has given birth to him, meaning that He has adopted him as His Son. In the ANE, this meant that this human king was God’s proxy on earth who had all the rights as God Himself to rule over His entire creation and therefore be “worshiped” and “revered” in the same manner as God. When someone walked into Solomon’s throne room, they needed to think of themselves as walking into Yahweh’s throne room and standing before God Himself. It was this much reference that they should give to the king.

⁸ שְׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי וְאַתְּנָה גוֹיִם נִחְלַתְךָ וְאַחֲזַתְךָ אֶפְסֵי-אֶרֶץ – Presumably the asking is not because the king of Israel has to ask God for all the territory over which he has the right to rule as the Son of God, but because expressing it this way is how God wants to emphasize this right of His Son. There is simply no doubt that the Son of God does and will rule over all the other peoples of the earth, from one end to the other. Because Yahweh rules the whole universe, His Son does too, and the most important part of the universe over which he will rule is the earth and all the peoples on it—during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and the permanent kingdom of Revelation 21.

cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4

⁹ תִּלְעֵם בְּשִׁבְטֵי בְּרוּל כִּכְלֵי יוֹצֵר הַנְּפֻצִים – If the first verb is really referring to absolute destruction, then this could very well be that of the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians and his army after they invade the land of Israel. At the return of Jesus, he crushes these forces and establishes his universal rule over the whole earth.

The LXX translates תִּלְעֵם with ποιμαίνει αὐτούς = you will shepherd them. But the meaning could still be a kind of causing the Gentile nations to submit to Jesus because he will shepherd them ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ = with an iron staff. In other words, Jesus' staff of shepherd us hard enough to crush the bones of sheep, thus either killing them or at least threatening them to the extent that they grudgingly submit to him in order not to be destroyed by him.

¹⁰ וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשִּׁכְּלוּ הַיְּסֻדֵי שִׁבְטֵי אֲדָמָה – The psalmist now personally appeals to the leaders of the nations of the earth to consider carefully what he has said about Yahweh and His king, the Messiah, and to take the warning that God and the Son of God will eventually express their wrath towards those who refuse to submit to them and will destroy them. Thus, this is basically an appeal to hear the gospel of mercy (implied) and flee from the wrath and destruction of God. Even during the millennial kingdom, the Gentile nations will have the time and opportunity to repent and submit properly to God, which we know some people will because they will actually move to the land of Israel with the believing Jews who are restored to their land (cf. Isaiah 56). Thus, the leaders represent everyone in their countries.

¹¹ עֲבַדְנוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּיִרְאָה וְנִילֵוּ בְּרֵעָה – The psalmist appeals to the rulers to serve (LXX – δουλεύσατε) God and not their selfish desires for power and independence from God. And their serving God should be with the fear of His judgment, condemnation, and destruction. The corollary to this fear is joy in knowing that God is readily merciful towards those who are willing to fear Him properly, even while they tremble to a degree at the close escape from His wrath and judgment.

¹² נִשְׁקֹנֵי־מֶלֶךְ כֹּן־יֵאָמֵר | וְהִיאָבְרוּ יְהוָה כִּי־יִבְעַר כַּמְעַט אַפּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־י כָּל־תּוֹסֵי בּוֹ – The key to the rulers' standing before God will be how they relate to His Son. The psalmist urges them to “kiss,” i.e., pay homage to, God's earthly king who rules over all of God's territory and therefore over them. They must submit to him or incur his anger and destruction. The psalmist is warning them that the Son will not put up with their rebellion for very long. His wrath will burn quickly once he becomes aware of their rebellion against him, and his anger will move him to counter their efforts to destroy him and destroy them instead. Again, this sounds most applicable to the end of the millennial kingdom when the Gentiles rise up one last time to overthrow Jesus and are destroyed.

The psalmist ends with the assurance to all who read this psalm that those who go to the Son of God for protection against God's and his wrath and destruction will be happy to find it. This is the whole point of the creation, to find solace, comfort, mercy, and salvation from God's justice and condemnation through attaching oneself to His king, the Son of God. And obviously now as a result of the NT we know this Son's name, Jesus of Nazareth.