

Nations Rage but God Reigns, Part 2

Psalm 2:4-9

We began part 1 of this brief series by observing that society is in an uproar; “Why do the nations rage?” (Psalm 2:1). As we noted, “Civil unrest is brewing and the heat of this summer could easily light the fuse on the powder keg of societal problems.”ⁱ

And during these two weeks, the powder keg has been lit. Riots have broken out in Seattle, Nashville, Louisville, Dallas, Las Vegas, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Miami, Minneapolis, Denver, Atlanta, New York, Memphis and Los Angeles. Here in Ohio, rioters broke into our Statehouse in Columbus.ⁱⁱ

People have been rightly angered by police brutality and racial injustice; and those responsible have been charged with murder. But you have to wonder why anarchists have looted their neighbors’ stores to steal new television sets. As one journalist has noted, “. . . police brutality must be condemned and punished. But the antifa mobs who are orchestrating the smashing up of stores are not interested in fairness. They are thrilled by carnage.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This corresponds to what we learned from Psalm 2:1-3 under the heading “Humanity 101.” This psalm contains three quick lessons about life on earth. **Humanity 101 (An introduction to mankind), vs. 1-3; Theology 101 (An introduction to the true God), vs. 4-9; and Practical Studies 101 (An introduction to wisdom), vs.10-12**

In the first 3 verses, rebellious humanity speaks. In verses 4-6, God the Father speaks. In verses 7-9, God the Son speaks. Then, in verses 10-12, God the Spirit makes practical appeals to rebellious humanity to repent, and to embrace the Son of God and their Savior.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

The design of the glorious God was and is to bless the nations through the Seed of Abraham: Immanuel, the Messiah. As we noted in the last message, all the nations of the earth will be blessed by Abraham's seed, (Genesis 22:18; 26:4).

Through Paul's instruction in Galatians 3:16, we understand that this was the promise of the Messiah: **"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ"** (Galatians 3:16). This planned blessing was advanced through the line of King David (according to 2 Samuel 7:12-16). God promised to adopt each of these kings in David's line as His own son (vs. 14); He said, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."

Psalm 2 was apparently used at the coronation of the kings in David's line to remind His people of this remarkable promise. As one author has pointed out, "his anointed one" referred to David and the kings of David's line, including the everlasting Messiah.^{iv} This is why the angel said to Mary, **"³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: ³³ And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end"** (Luke 1:32-33).

As part of God's plan, Israel was to be a holy nation to the Lord (Exodus 19:6).^v Israel rebelled, but Immanuel prevailed and will reconcile wayward Israel (Romans 9-11). In fact, the nations of the world learn to glorify God by watching His dealings with Israel (Numbers 14:15, Deuteronomy 4:6-8; 29:24; 32:43).

But under the heading of "Humanity 101," we learned that human history is full of raging imaginations against God (vs. 1). Verses 2 and 3 taught us that human history is full of rulers' conspiracies against the God of the Bible. The leaders of this world have conspired together against the Lord God and His Anointed Son. This is evident in the crucifixion of Christ.

In Acts 3:13-15, Peter recounted the awful reality of this human rebellion against God's Anointed: **"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. ¹⁴ But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; ¹⁵ And killed the Prince of life . . ."**

In their raging imaginations, nations, rulers and kings took counsel together to destroy God's anointed. And these raging imaginations continue, as we noted in the last message. Even today, they wish to throw Christ and His followers out of their governments, out of their schools, and, if it were possible, out of existence.

To sum up the first section of Psalm 2, we have been singing:

Why do the nations rage? Conspiring all in vain?

So kings and rulers set themselves against God's righteous reign?

They rise against the Lord and His Anointed One

They try to cast their bonds away rejecting God's dear Son

THEOLOGY 101

In this message, we will consider verses 4 through 9 under the heading, "Theology 101." When the world and its rulers defy the Almighty God, how does He respond? When the kings of the earth are taking counsel together against the Lord and His anointed, what are they saying? They are saying, **"Let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us."** God's indescribable blessings on humanity are characterized as intolerable chains. Understanding God's response to man's rebellion gives us a basic understanding of God. In response to rebellious humanity, God the Father speaks in wrath, and God the Son speaks in absolute victory.

God the Father speaks to rebellious humanity in His hot displeasure. (vs. 4-6)

⁴ He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. ⁵ Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. ⁶ Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

■ **God the Father is enthroned in the heavens. 4** (cf. Isaiah 66:1; Psalm 123:1)

Our God is not pacing nervously in the heavens like some mythical, imaginary deity. He sits, enthroned in the heavens, at peace. When the Bible speaks of the fact that He “sits in the heavens” it refers to the special place where God abides.^{vi} He is the Most High God, and speaks with absolute authority. Yesterday, May 30, 2020, SpaceX, a private company, launched a spaceship called “Crew Dragon.” Using a Falcon 9 rocket, the craft will reach the International Space Station at an altitude of 250 nautical miles. That’s roughly the distance from Findlay, Ohio to Cincinnati, Ohio. We pride ourselves on our great scientific achievement, but it’s humbling to consider that our God sits enthroned in the heavens.

■ **God the Father scorns the puny protests of rebellious humanity. 4**

It’s important to remember God’s perspective on humanity, including all its kings and their honors: **“Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity”** (Psalm 62:9). Remember this viewpoint of the eternal God about mankind’s empty protests.

There are parents here who have observed these protests in their own children. Is there anything quite as laughable as the two year old who sets out to declare war on the world, armed only with a bowl of cold oatmeal? But make no mistake, God laughs in disdain – not because He is entertained.

Verse 4 describes the derisive laughter of the Almighty against hardened rebels. He is not laughing at the painful plight of humanity, suffering under the curse; He is laughing at the pompous plans of rebels who deserve ridicule. A careful reading of Proverbs 1:24-33 will bear this out. Rebellious humanity eats the fruit of its own ways – and this is the most bitter of fruits.

When wicked men cause pain and grief in the lives of believers, it is natural for us to ask why God doesn't deal with them. When you are suffering under such evil, remember this appeal from John Calvin: "Let us, therefore, assure ourselves that if God does not immediately stretch forth his hand against the ungodly, it is now his time of laughter;"^{vii}

■ **God the Father speaks to rebellious humanity in wrath and vexes them in His displeasure. 5**

Verse 5 contains parallel phrases: "speak in His wrath" and "vex them in His displeasure." God speaks in direct opposition to what the kings of the earth are "saying" (vs. 2). The word translated "vex"^{viii} means "to distress, dismay, terrify or trouble." (As it is in Job 22:10, ". . . sudden fear troubles you.") Is this merely an Old Testament phenomenon, or is the Lord still doing this today? Immediately after declaring the preeminent importance of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17, "the just shall live by faith"), the Apostle Paul wrote, "**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;**" (Romans 1:18).

This verse speaks of natural revelation (in contrast to the special revelation of the Bible). But Psalm 2:5 helps us understand why unregenerate men hate the Word of God. It speaks to them of God's displeasure with sin and His wrath against wickedness. Those who proclaim warnings about God's wrath will be told "don't preach!" (Micah 2:4-6). But our answer is God's own question to all, "Do not my words do good to him that walks uprightly?" (Micah 2:7).

This is why we have sung, "*Laughter through heaven rings as God, in wrath, derides*

The rebels and their empty plans and they are terrified!"

Specifically what is it that the Father says? The answer is in verse 6.

■ God the Father will install His King over all the earth on Mount Zion. 6

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” In direct opposition to the kings who set themselves (vs. 2), God the Father will set His King upon His holy hill at Mount Zion. (The use of the words “I have set” indicate what is called “the prophetic perfect.” That is, it is such a certainty that it is as if it has already happened.)

This is the event that Jesus described in Matthew 25:31, when the Son of Man will be seated on the throne of His glory. To God’s people, this is God’s great kindness; to rebels against God, this is God’s terrifying condemnation. The word “set” means “to pour out.” Most commentators translate this as “install,” “anoint” or “set up.” God’s King is identified in terms of the geography of where He will be set up: Mount Zion. In response to rebellious humanity, God the Father speaks in wrath, and God the Son speaks in absolute victory.

God the Son speaks to rebellious humanity with absolute authority. (vs. 7-9)

⁷ I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. ⁸ Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession. ⁹ Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

■ He declares by whose authority He speaks. This proceeds from the Father’s adoption. 7

In Proverbs 30:1-4, Agur reflected on his own foolishness compared to God’s wisdom. In the last of a series of questions magnifying the Lord, Agur wrote about the Lord God, “What is His name? and what is His Son’s name?” It is verses such as these that help us to understand the meaning of John 1:14, **“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”** In what sense was God’s Son “begotten?” The word “begotten” in John 1:14 translates the Greek word [*monogenes*] which “pertains to being the only one of its kind or class, *unique (in kind).*”^{ix} This same term is used in 1

John 4:9-10 to describe the unique “One and only” natural Son of God: **“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”**

Jesus is the eternal Son of God (as described in Isaiah 9:6-7). So, in what sense does Psalm 2:7 speak when it says, **“This day have I begotten thee?”** Psalm 2:7 is speaking of the Father’s adoption of the king of the Davidic line (2 Samuel 7:14). Speaking of David’s royal son(s), God promised, **“I will be his father, and he shall be my son.”** This is adoption language. But when was this fulfilled? The apostles joyfully proclaimed the ultimate reference of Psalm 2:7. Consider, for instance, the words of Romans 1:3-4, **“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; ⁴ And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:”**. When Paul preached at Antioch (Pisidia), he declared, **“³³ God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. ³⁴ And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David”** (Acts 13:33-34).

In an unpublished paper, Douglas McLachlan describes Psalm 2 in terms of three critical days: The Execution Day (vs. 1-3) (referring to the crucifixion of Christ), the Resurrection Day (vs. 7) and the coming Coronation Day (vs. 6, 8-9).^x In all of this, we see that the sovereign God will rule the world in such a manner that His purposes will not be thwarted.

■ **He declares the scope of His authority. This proceeds from the Father’s authorization. 8**

⁸ **Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.**

There is a beautiful scene depicted in Heaven, during the time of the worldwide Tribulation, in Revelation 15:1-4. Standing on a sea of glass, the saints of God will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Listen to their words in Revelation 15:3-4, **“Great and marvelous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. ⁴Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”** All nations will come to worship the Son of God who asked His Father for the nations as His inheritance. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

■ **He declares the manner in which He will use His authority. This proceeds from the Father’s anger. 9**

This final victory over the nations is echoed in Revelation 2:27; 12:5 and 19:15-16. In closing, consider these words of Revelation 19:15-16:

“¹⁵ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

So we have sung:

*But God ordained His plan
His own Anointed One
To pour Him out on Zion’s mount
And resurrect His Son!*

*“Ask of Me,” God declares
To His own chosen King
“Ask for the nations everywhere,
That they would glory bring!”*

*The nations He shall rule
As with an iron rod
As every man before Him kneels
To Christ, the Son of God.*

In response to rebellious humanity, God the Father speaks in wrath, and God the Son speaks in absolute victory. Now is the time to kneel before the Lord as King of kings and Lord of lords.

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ⁱ Nations Rage but God Reigns, Part 1 manuscript, audio and video available at <https://www.cbfindlay.org/nations-rage-but-god-reigns/>

ⁱⁱ Paul Bolyard, "Violent Rioters Breach Ohio Statehouse, Breaking Windows and Entering Building to Protest Death of George Floyd," PJ Media, May 29, 2020, accessed at <https://pjmedia.com/news-and-politics/paula-bolyard/2020/05/29/violent-rioters-breach-ohio-statehouse-breaking-windows-and-entering-building-to-protest-death-of-george-floyd-n454462>

ⁱⁱⁱ Freddy Gray, "After the Lockdown, the Social Breakdown," Spectator, USA, May 28, 2020 accessed at <https://spectator.us/after-lockdown-social-breakdown-minneapolis-george-floyd-riots/>

^{iv} Bruce A. Baker, "A Biblical Theology of the Royal Psalms," The Journal of Dispensational Theology, 16:49, December 2012

^v See the discussion of "Nations" in "Nations Rage but God Reigns, part 1" manuscript at <https://www.cbfindlay.org/nations-rage-but-god-reigns/>

^{vi} When the Apostle Paul spoke of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2). We speak of the atmosphere where birds and planes fly as "the heavens." Also, we speak of the stars as placed in "the heavens." The third heaven is the special dwelling place of God (as seen in Hebrews 12:22-24).

^{vii} John Calvin and James Anderson, [*Commentary on the Book of Psalms*](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 14.

^{viii} Hebrew בָּהַל [bahal] (Piel stem)

^{ix} William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 658.

^x Doug McLachlan, "In the Heart of the Storm: Glorifying God in our Hostile World, the Universal Antipathy for Christ in the Cosmos, Psalm 2. Unpublished paper