

Psalm 2  
TPH 2B  
Acts 4

“Blessed Are All Who Take Refuge in Him”

November 20, 2022

Last week we looked at Psalm 1,  
and saw how Psalm 1 functions as an introduction to the Psalter.  
The Psalm gives us a vision of the Blessed Man,  
the one whom Israel was called to be.

We saw how Jesus is the true Israel,  
the one who is the tree planted by streams of water,  
the one who prospers in all that he does.

What I did not mention last week,  
is how Psalm 1 connects with Psalm 2!  
Because Psalm 2 is also part of the introduction to the Psalter.  
Psalm 1 sets forth the contrast between the way of the wicked and way of the righteous.  
Psalm 1 reminds us of the coming judgment of God.  
Psalm 2 moves us from the pastoral imagery of the tree and the chaff,  
to the royal imagery of the king, the courts of Zion, and the decree of God.

While you can think of Psalm 1 in general terms,  
“Blessed is the man” sounds like it could mean anyone;  
Psalm 2 plainly refers to One Man—the Anointed King who sits enthroned on Zion.  
But coming on the heels of Psalm 1,  
Psalm 2 suggests to us that indeed, the Anointed King—the Messiah—  
is the truly Blessed Man.

The Psalm starts by asking a question,  
and this question provides the backdrop for the entire Psalm.  
“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?”

Remember that the Psalmist is writing this at a time  
when Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests.  
Israel was supposed to mediate the blessings of God to the nations.  
But the nations did not seem very interested in receiving God’s blessings.  
The kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord,  
And the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh and his anointed.

The nations are not coming to Jerusalem,  
beating down the door to hear the Word of the LORD;  
they are coming to Jerusalem,  
beating down the door to destroy the Lord’s Anointed king!

But the Psalmist understands that the Davidic king, sitting on David’s throne,

is the embodiment of Israel.  
All that God has promised to Israel is going to be fulfilled in their anointed king.  
God laughs at the enemies of Israel,  
because he has established the Son of David in Zion.  
And the dominion of the Son of David is going to extend to the whole earth.

Because the Son of David is also the Son of God.

So let's sing, TPH 2B  
Read Acts 4

The apostles realized that Psalm 2 was all about Jesus!  
The scheming of the nations against the LORD and his Anointed  
had happened in Jerusalem!  
You might think that "why do the nations rage" only refers to "heathen nations" –  
but Acts 4 makes clear that God's own chosen people  
can become a heathen nation!

Book One of the Psalms has a lot of songs about enemies and troubles  
and how things are *not* the way they should be!

You know how this goes!  
At work – things are not the way they should be...  
At school – things are not the way they should be....  
And then you come home – and things are not the way they should be...

It gets really frustrating –  
until you look in the mirror...  
and then realize – oh, right, I'm not the way I should be either!

I'd like to think that I'm the blessed man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...  
but actually, I did drift a ways this week.

I'm not the way I should be.  
Where is my refuge?  
Where is my hope?  
In whom can I trust?

Psalms 1's glowing meditation on the blessedness of the Blessed Man  
gives way to Psalm 2's reminder that the wicked don't give up so easily...

### **1. The Nations Rage Against the LORD and His Anointed (v1-3)**

*Why do the nations rage<sup>[a]</sup>  
and the peoples plot in vain?*

<sup>2</sup> *The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,*  
<sup>3</sup> *“Let us burst their bonds apart  
and cast away their cords from us.”*

Verses 1-3 portray the nations raging against the LORD and his Anointed – his Messiah – the Christ.

The picture here is of the Davidic king in Jerusalem as the Son of God.  
God had declared in Exodus 4 that Israel is my Son, my Firstborn.  
He had promised to give his son an inheritance—namely, the Promised Land.

In the Promised Land God set up the nation of Israel to be  
the embodiment of the Kingdom of God.  
Israel was called to be what Adam had failed to be.  
Adam, after all, was the first son of God.  
He had been called by his Father to have dominion over the creation,  
to exercise authority as the Son of God in ruling the creatures.  
And through his faithful rule over creation,  
Adam would receive the inheritance of eternal life with His Father.  
After Adam’s sin,  
the creation was subjected to futility,  
and the kingdom of man and of Satan was substituted for the kingdom of God.

So in Exodus 4, when Israel is declared to be the Son of God,  
God had declared that he is reestablishing his Kingdom.  
Sonship and Kingship are intimately connected.  
To be the Son of God is to be the king in God’s kingdom.

Psalm 2, therefore, is an enthronement Psalm.  
This Psalm could very easily have been sung at the coronation of the king of Judah,  
as the Son of David was seated on the throne of his Father.  
The people, or more likely the Levitical choir,  
would sing about how God had chosen the Son of David to rule over his kingdom.  
And since the Kingdom of God extends ultimately over all nations,  
they would sing of how this provincial, backwater king,  
was actually the most powerful king in the world.  
Because, quite frankly,  
even the united kingdom of Judah and Israel,  
was a pretty small player in world politics.

To sing verses 10-11 took true faith!  
Jerusalem did not look like the center of world politics,  
and yet the faithful in Judah understood that their King was the Son of God.

God had said to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 that he would establish his kingdom forever.  
“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”

Those who first sang Psalm 2 may not have understood how their king would inherit the nations,  
but they believed God’s promises.

The nations rage and mock – because they can’t imagine how this little Podunk king  
could possibly resist them!

## **2. The Lord Laughs – Because He Has Set His King on Zion (v4-6)**

<sup>4</sup> *He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord holds them in derision.*

<sup>5</sup> *Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,*

<sup>6</sup> *“As for me, I have set my King  
on Zion, my holy hill.”*

Hebrews 1 explains why the King is called the Son of God.

Hebrews 1:5 quotes Psalm 2.

Now, what does this refer to in the life of Jesus?

At what point did God declare, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”

You might think immediately of the baptism of Jesus,

where God declares, “This is my beloved Son, in him I am well pleased.”

But that is not what Hebrews is talking about.

Remember that Psalm 2 is an enthronement Psalm.

When Hebrews quotes Psalm 2,

Hebrews is thinking of the ascension of Christ.

Look up to verse 3.

Verse 5 is explicating verse 3.

When Jesus sits down at the right hand of the Father,

He is enthroned as king in a way that he was not before.

Listen to Hebrews 1:1-3a.

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

This is where we hear of the eternal Sonship of the Second Person of the Trinity.

The heir of all things is the same one through whom God created the world.

The eternal Son of God has always upheld the universe by the word of his power.

He has always been the Son of God in his divine nature.

But what good is that to us?

We are sinners!

Adam—the human son of God—failed!

Israel—the human son of God—failed!  
David—the human son of God—failed!  
This is why Paul says in Romans 1:1-4,  
*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle,  
set apart for the gospel of God,  
which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy  
Scriptures,*

*concerning his Son,  
who was descended from David according to the flesh  
and was declared to be the Son of God in power  
according to the Spirit of holiness  
by his resurrection from the dead.”*

Jesus was the Son of David according to the flesh,  
but many sons of David have come and gone.

What makes this one different?

What makes this one different is that this Son of David  
has been declared to be the Son of God,  
because this son of David has been raised from the dead  
and now sits at the right hand of God.

Jesus is declared to be the Son of God in power by the Spirit of holiness  
through his resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection and ascension of Christ to right hand of the Father,  
is his enthronement.

And just as the Davidic King would be declared to be the Son of God  
as he was enthroned in the earthly Jerusalem,  
so now Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God  
as he was enthroned in the heavenly Jerusalem.

To put it simply,

Jesus was always the Son of God in his deity.

But through his enthronement at the right hand of the Father,  
he has entered into his official duties as the human Son of God.

### **3. The Messiah Is the Son Who Inherits the Earth (v7-9)**

<sup>7</sup> *I will tell of the decree:*

*The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;  
today I have begotten you.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.*

<sup>9</sup> *You shall break<sup>b</sup> them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”*

And this matters to us – because Jesus has been given dominion over the nations!

Psalm 2 speaks of the kingdom of God as a universal kingdom.

“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.”

It was not obvious from the OT how this was going to happen.

Was God going to give the king amazing military victories  
in order to establish his kingdom?

Would the nations be subdued by the sword?

“You shall break them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel,”  
might sound like it!

But the apostles quoted Psalm 2 in a different way.

We read this in Acts 4.

The rebellion of the nations against the Lord and His Anointed  
comes to its climax in the crucifixion of Christ.

The raging of the Gentiles and plots of the peoples are boiled down in verses 27-28:

Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel  
all combined against the Lord and against his anointed.

Psalm 2 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

And because Psalm 2 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ,  
we must therefore understand that the plots of the nations  
have to do with Christ and his kingdom.

Therefore they continue in verse 29-30...

*<sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup> while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

Since the nations raged against Christ,  
they will also rage against you.

But just as Jesus was exalted,  
so also we have confidence that God will vindicate us.

He will vindicate us because the Anointed Jesus,  
the Son of God,  
will indeed rule the nations with a rod of iron.

The judgment of Christ, by which he breaks the nations with a rod of iron,  
is described in Revelation three times:

Revelation 12:5 describes the birth of Christ as,

“She gave birth to a male child,  
one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.”

Revelation 19:15 describes Christ’s final coming:

“From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations,  
and he will rule them with a rod of iron.”

The resurrected, exalted Christ is the one who will judge the nations.  
That makes sense, right?

But the third reference in Revelation is fascinating.  
Revelation 2:27—the one who conquers in the name of Christ,  
“To him I will give authority over the nations,  
and he will rule them with a rod of iron,  
as when earthen pots are broken in pieces,  
even as I myself have received authority from my Father.”

Those who endure through suffering,  
believing in the faithful promises of God,  
will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Isn't that something that Psalm 2 restricts ONLY to the anointed Son of God?  
Yes.

Isn't that something that Revelation says that the exalted Christ will do?  
Yes.

And if you are united to Christ,  
then ALL that is his is yours.

As we see in all the scripture, that includes his suffering.

And as we see here in Revelation 2, that includes his authority.

YOU will exercise the authority of Christ in judging the nations.

After all, if you are sons of God,  
then you have a royal calling.

And you, when you are raised from the dead,  
you, too, will be seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father,  
and you will exercise judgment together with him.

What are doing with the authority of Christ?

In 1 Corinthians 5-6 Paul asks, if you are going to judge angels someday,  
aren't you competent to judge smaller matters now?

As kings, how do you wield Christ's authority?

Are you selfishly seeking your own glory?

Christ wielded the authority of his Father for your sake.

And now you have been given the authority of Christ,  
so that you might give glory to him.

I recently preached on the Ten Commandments –  
using the Larger Catechism's exposition –  
and I really appreciated question 130 of our Larger Catechism,  
reflecting on the fifth commandment:

Q. 130. *What are the sins of superiors?*

A. The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counseling, encouraging, or favoring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly; careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.

The proper use of authority is for the good of others.

When you use your authority unjustly – improperly –  
you dishonor *yourself* –  
and harm others –  
and, for that matter, you lie about God –  
because as a person in authority, you represent him in your words and actions!

Good rulers will reflect Christ well.

Bad rulers won't.

#### **4. The Warning to the Rulers: Kiss the Son! (v10-12)**

<sup>10</sup> *Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.*

<sup>11</sup> *Serve the LORD with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.*

<sup>12</sup> *Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.*

*Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

Therefore, verses 10-12 warn the kings and rulers to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

Who is the blessed man?

The blessed man is the one who takes refuge in the Son.

The blessed man is the one who serves the Lord with fear,  
and rejoices with trembling.

For the kingdom of God has been established by Jesus Christ!

His throne endures forever—which means, his judgment endures forever.

Do you fear the wrath of Christ?



Then kiss the Son—yield to his authority.  
Submit yourself to his rule.

This is what Peter and John declared in Acts 4:11—  
“And there is salvation in no one else,  
for there is no other name under heaven given among men  
by which we must be saved.”

Do not hope in princes.  
Do not put your trust in politicians.  
The gospel of Jesus Christ does indeed have a political thrust.  
It shows our confidence in presidents to be idolatry:  
Don't put your trust in earthly rulers!

Blessed are all who take refuge in him!  
Psalm 1 declared a blessing on the one who walks faithfully before God.

Psalm 2 was placed side by side with Psalm 1  
so that we might have the hope of the gospel stated clearly  
at the beginning of the Psalter

Yes – you are certainly called to walk in the way of the righteous! (that's not optional!)

But the fact is that we all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
Each one has turned to his own way.  
And the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.