

# He Who Sitteth in the Heavens Shall Laugh

Psalm 2

[Phil Johnson](#)

This morning I want to look at Psalm 2. The Psalm starts out with that famous question, "**Why do the heathen rage?**" This psalm goes on to say, "**The peoples plot . . . The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed.**" The idea here is a vast conspiracy against God. All this world's forces—courts, government powers, the academic elite, and even prevailing opinion among everyday heathens—all those forces collectively have aligned themselves against the Lord and His anointed (that's Christ). They oppose his authority; they reject His law; and they challenge his right to rule over them. And in order to assert their own autonomy, they will go so far as to embrace irrational philosophies, adopt wicked, twisted moral standards, attack the foundations of orderly society, self-identify as whoever or whatever they please, and even redefine marriage by court order and try to impose their ungodly notions by government force. And ultimately they do this for one main reason: this is an emphatic expression of their refusal to believe in God and live in accord with his law.

Does all this sound familiar? Listen again: **"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'"** That describes precisely the kind of arrogant rebellion epitomized in this week's Supreme Court decision. And a host of other massive changes in our culture that all have one thing in common: they represent an overt rebellion against the moral standards given to us in Scripture. Nowadays it seems like our whole culture is engaged in a wholesale effort to overthrow the authority of God's law. Or to put it in the terms used in this psalm, *the heathen are raging more than ever*. This is definitely a psalm for our times.

Psalm 2 is the first of what are known as the Messianic Psalms—Psalms that make prophetic references to Christ. And this particular psalm is quoted at least seven times in the New Testament, always in reference to Christ. So the meaning of the Psalm is absolutely clear. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we can say dogmatically that this is a Psalm about Christ. More precisely, it is a Psalm about *Messiah the prince*. The focus is on Christ's lordship and His absolute right to demand not only obedience, but also worship from everyone on earth.

Acts 4:25 quotes this Psalm and attributes it to David. Like most of David's Psalms it was prompted by a specific

event in his life, written by David especially for the occasion. This one seems to have been written to celebrate the establishment of David's throne in Jerusalem. You can read it with that in mind, and it is in perfect harmony with what we know about Israel's history and the establishment of the Davidic kingdom. When David ascended the throne in Jerusalem, and the kingdom was united, the heathen nations were in an rage. God had set his chosen king on the throne in Zion, the holy hill in Jerusalem.

But this is not merely a celebration of David's earthly triumph. The language goes far beyond the earthly reality David was celebrating, and speaks prophetically of an even greater, eternal reality—the establishment of Messiah's throne.

And I want to stress this: The *primary* meaning of this Psalm is *Messianic*. The New Testament consistently underscores the Messianic sense of the Psalm. It's one of those passages that is very clearly Messianic. There's no speculating on whether or not this refers to Christ. The New Testament repeatedly and plainly says that it does.

At least 19 of the Psalms fit in this category of Messianic prophecy. This is the first in order of appearance. Notice this expression in verse 2: **"the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed"** That word *anointed* is the Hebrew word *mashiach*, from which we get our word

*Messiah*. Messiah literally means, "Anointed one." The Greek equivalent is the word "Christ."

This particular Psalm divides naturally into four sections of three verses each. The parallelism of the Psalm itself gives us our outline. Each of the four sections features a different voice speaking. First, in verses 1-3, we hear the voice of the world. Then, in verses 4-6, it is the voice of the Father. Verses 7-9 feature the voice of the Son. And in the final three verses we hear the voice of the Spirit.

So the Psalm plays out like a miniature drama, with one speaker after another taking center stage. The drama is about a great cosmic conflict. It is a battle over the kingdom of Christ. It is a war between heaven and hell for dominion over this earth. Who do you suppose wins this battle? *God does, of course.*

And this Psalm underscores both the utter futility and the sheer idiocy of opposing the will of a sovereign God. God *will* be victorious in this cosmic battle, and all who oppose Him only accomplish their own destruction. He *will* set Christ on His rightful throne, and those who try to thwart Him gain nothing but their own damnation.

So this is a sort of big-picture look at the conflict of the ages. There's a lot of gospel truth here, too. It reveals the wickedness of human depravity; the sovereign power of God, the preeminence of Christ, and it closes with a tender invitation and a blessing on all who trust in Him. In a sense

the entire Gospel is here in capsule form. That's why this Psalm is so frequently quoted in the New Testament.

Now let's look at the way the drama unfolds in the Psalm. Each of the four voices takes center stage, one after the other, starting with the voice of the world. This is a voice of defiance.

### **1. THE WORLD; THE VOICE OF DEFIANCE.**

Listen to the first three verses of this Psalm:

- 2:1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?**
- 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 burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."**

These first three verses describe the sinful hatred of all unbelieving humanity against God's authority. Their contempt for God and all he represents, pushed to its ultimate expression, becomes a blind, irrational *rage*. They despise the Lord God; they loathe His Messiah, and this hatred has put them in a state of passionate fury.

Have you ever seen an unbeliever express this sort of rage against God? I see it all the time. My Web site on the Internet often makes me a target for this sort of irrational rage. There's a more or less organized effort on the Internet to attack and discredit biblical Christianity. There's one group

of arrogant atheists who have labeled themselves the Internet Infidels, and they have made it their business to assault and malign Christianity wherever they find it. I get e-mails from people like this on a semi-regular basis. And they say the most vile, blasphemous, angry things. Whenever I read one of their ranting e-mail messages, I think of this verse.

The heathen rage, and it's an irrational rage: notice this phrase at the end of verse 1: **"the peoples plot in vain."** The King James Version uses the word *"imagine"*: **"The people imagine a vain thing"** That is identical to the language the Apostle Paul uses in Romans 1:21 (again from the King James Version): **"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."** *Vain imaginations.* The ESV says, **"They became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."** These are people with foolish minds, futile ambitions, and dark hearts—and they actually prefer their own ignorance and emptiness to the knowledge of the true God. Paul says they refused to honor God as God, and that is why their foolish hearts were darkened.

Now keep this in mind: Both the Psalmist and the apostle Paul are describing the fallen state of *all* humanity. Before we get Righteously indignant at the Supreme Court, or our entertainment celebrities, or our legislators, or all the other people we blame for the deterioration of our culture, we have

to confess that left to ourselves, we would also be complicit in this conspiracy against God's authority. In fact, we ourselves have been guilty of the worst kinds of sin and rebellion, and if it were not for Christ's redeeming work on our behalf, we ourselves would be damned, right along with the worst rebels who ever raised a fist to heaven. We need to bear that in mind when we're lamenting the sad state of our culture today. Considered by ourselves, apart from Christ, we are as guilty as anyone.

In fact, Paul's comments in Romans 1 are the very beginning of an argument he builds over the first three chapters of Romans, culminating in those familiar statements of Romans 3:9-12: **"all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'**" Paul keeps going, quoting Old Testament verses that underscore the universal guilt of all humanity. No one can read these verses and say, *"I'm exempt."* In the end, Paul says in Romans 3:19, every mouth is stopped and the whole world stands guilty before God.

So the rage that is described in verse 1 is bound up in every fallen human heart. It doesn't always manifest itself in overt insolence. Sometimes it is manifest in more passive ways. But there is nonetheless defiance and rage in every sinful heart.

The ultimate proof of the sinner's rebellion is *unbelief*. Now, that doesn't always mean rank atheism. In fact, unbelief often masquerades as piety, but it is always poised to break forth in active rebellion against God. Remember that the throngs who shouted "**Hosannah!**" at Christ when He entered Jerusalem no doubt included some of the same people who joined the mob that were screaming for His death within a week.

In fact, the crucifixion is the very event prophetically described in this passage. Look at verses 2-3 again: "**The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'**" How do we know what this refers to? Let me show you the New Testament commentary on this verse. Keep a marker here and turn to Acts 4.

I'll set the context for you: This was soon after the events of Pentecost. Peter and John had healed a lame man at the Temple (at the beginning of Acts 3). The Sanhedrin had them arrested and held them overnight, and instructed them to stop preaching in Jesus' name. But since there was no legitimate crime with which they could be charged, the Sanhedrin had to let them go. And when Peter and John returned to their group, they prayed this prayer for boldness. Since the Sanhedrin had tried to forbid them to preach, they prayed to

God for strength to preach boldly. their prayer starts in Acts 4:24:

**Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,  
25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?  
26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'--**

What Old Testament passage are they quoting from? Psalm 2, verses 1-2.

Now look at the apostles' commentary on this Psalm, Acts 4:27: **"truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."**

So the primary fulfillment of this Messianic Psalm is seen in the crucifixion of Christ, when the rulers of this world took counsel with one another against the Lord and His anointed. There's an interesting vignette about this in Luke's gospel. It is well-known fact of history that the family of Herod and the Roman governors were bitter political rivals. In fact, the territory of Judea, which was where the Roman governors ruled, was originally under the control of the

Herodian dynasty. One of the sons of Herod the great, Archelaus, was deposed by the Roman emperor, and a Roman governor was appointed over Judea. So from the perspective of Herod, the Roman governors had usurped a key portion of his rightful kingdom. All the members of Herodian dynasty therefore *hated* the Roman governors. And Pontius Pilate was just the fifth governor in that line of men who took over Judea after the death of Herod the Great. So these governors were no friends of the Herods.

Yet, according to Luke 23:12, on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, **"Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day."** The conspiracy against Christ brought these two bitter political rivals together. And so you have, according to Acts 4, **"both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel"** gathered together against Christ.

Those are unlikely allies. Herod and Pilate, the Jews and the Romans, all conspiring together to kill the spotless lamb of God. Just as Psalm 2 prophesied, both the leaders and the people are in a rage. These groups of people and rulers were all political enemies—devoted to contradictory agendas, living in contempt for one another, constantly at odds—morally, politically, economically, and religiously. And yet all came together with one sinister goal in mind: to set themselves against the Lord and His anointed, and to try

to cast off His rule over them. They were united against Christ in their rage.

Things are no different today. The rulers of the world today are more sophisticated in their tactics, I suppose, but both rulers and people still rage against the Lord and His anointed. The world as a whole still desperately tries to cast off the bonds of God's rule.

Our own society has been on a mad quest for the past half century or more to rid our laws and moral standards of any of the remnants of God's law. Society has now legitimized fornication, divorce, abortion, and homosexuality. Next will be euthanasia, polygamy, and who-knows-what other kinds of perversion. Furthermore, our culture makes heroes of those who flaunt sins like those. It's one of the marks of American pop culture: our celebrities love to defy all moral standards. And people love to have it that way.

Both rulers and people still conspire together. Their hatred of God is as spiteful and malicious as that of the people who put Christ to death. They storm and rage; it is a deliberate and obstinate opposition to God and His authority over the human heart. Like those described in this Psalm, they "**[set themselves] against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'**" They are willing to defy both reason and conscience. Their hatred of the Lord is a blind rage, exactly what is

described in this Psalm. They will by all means attempt to prevent the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

Now it's easy for Christians in a culture like ours to get panicky and frustrated. But only if we keep our focus earthward. If we listen to the voice of the world, the voice of defiance, we might get the impression that we are on the losing side of this cosmic battle. If we think of it as *our* responsibility to establish the Lord's kingdom, we might despair.

Lots of Christians do that, you know. That's why the evangelical community is so distracted and obsessed with public policy every election year. One of the besetting sins of the church in our generation is that her focus is too earthbound. She is far too concerned with and troubled about what the raging heathen may or may not do, and what threats the kings of the earth pose to the welfare of God's people. We need to remember that the raging kings and people of the earth are not sovereign; God is.

So let's turn our ears away from the defiant voice of the world, and listen to the next voice in the drama of Psalm 2. This is the voice of—

## **2. THE FATHER; THE VOICE OF DERISION.**

*We* may be tempted to despair when we see the whole world, all its rulers and all its people, arrayed against God and determined to throw off His rule. Do you think God is the least bit alarmed by all that opposition? Not at all; look at the Father's response. He laughs! He mocks them. Verses 4-6:

**4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.**

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

**6 "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."**

There's a stark contrast here. The world, described in the first three verses, is pictured as agitated, raging, turbulent, angry—distressed and disturbed in their frantic efforts to overthrow divine authority. God is pictured as *seated* in the heavens, calmly having a good laugh at them.

They rage, and yet they cannot vex God. He sits still, and they are driven further into a frenzy.

There's a stately dignity in the way God responds. He shows His contempt for their rebelliousness not by rising up to do battle with them—but by *sitting and laughing* at them! All their attempts to overthrow Him are so absurd, so irrational, so hopeless, that their combined efforts muster no defense whatsoever from him—only scorn.

"**The Lord holds them in derision.**" That means His only response to them is a deliberate show of utter contempt. Rather than being unsettled by their fury, He makes sport of them. He has no regard whatsoever for their pathetic efforts to overthrow Him.

Psalm 115:3 says, "**Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.**" He is absolutely sovereign, and all the sinful rage of humanity does not disquiet him in the least. All Satan's cunning, all the forces of hell, and all the combined energies of this world—cannot shake or upset Him in the least. Those things are certainly formidable from *our* perspective, but they are nothing in God's eyes. He sees these wretched rebels as no threat to Him at all. They are merely contemptible, despicable, insignificant—objects of His derision. He laughs at them.

The enemies of God are well known for scoffing at the people of God. No one thinks or talks more about God than those who say they don't believe in him. And their favorite stratagem is mockery. Insults. They jeer at believers. They do it, I'm convinced, as a way of trying to intimidate us. It can be very intimidating and humiliating (and even discouraging) when someone is taunting and pouring contempt on you.

But we can take great comfort in this: *God* is not intimidated, and he turns their mockery right back against them. But when *God* laughs, it is no mere intimidation. He is

not a cosmic bully who needs to assert His authority by intimidation. Quite the opposite. His laughter is a righteous display of His sovereign confidence in the face of a universe of evil opposition. He is fixed on His heavenly throne, and all the opposition in the universe will not overthrow Him.

This is not a laughter of glee, but a scornful laughter. Nevertheless, I think there's good reason to see a sort of divine sense of humor underlying even this kind of laughter. God often makes it a point to turn His foes' rebelliousness against them in ways that are genuinely humorous. Remember when the Philistines captured the Ark and put it in the Temple of Dagon? And they came in the next morning, and the little statue of Dagon was on his face before the ark of the Lord. So they set Dagon up in his place again, and when they came back, Dagon was on his face again, this time with his head and hands broken off.

That's funny. I don't care how stodgy your view of God is, that has to make you laugh.

Remember how God demonstrated His sovereignty to Nebuchadnezzar? Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful man in the world at the time, defied the living God. And what happened to him? **"He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws"** (Daniel 4:33). There's a ton of ironic humor in that.

There's also a genuinely funny irony in the fact that Pharaoh ordered all the Israelite males to be drowned, and then his own daughter wound up raising Moses. All through Scripture we see evidence God's humor in the way He deals with His enemies.

You see it reflected for example, in the merciless way Elijah taunted the evil priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, just before the Lord sent fire from heaven and defeated them in the sight of all Israel. The scornful humor in Elijah's sarcasm reflects exactly the same kind of derision described in Psalm 2.

But in the big picture of things, this is *not* funny. Especially for the raging heathen. **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."** An old British commentator named Thomas Adams, wrote this comment on Psalm 2: "Oh, what are his frowns, if his smiles be so terrible!"

After the Lord has laughed, He speaks (v. 5). He retaliates, not with violence, but with a simple decree. Spurgeon wrote, "He needs not smite; the breath of his lips is enough."

And despite His laughter, the Lord answers them with *wrath*. Again, He is not the least bit threatened by their conspiracy against Him. Yet, in the words of Matthew Henry, "Though God despises them as impotent, yet he does not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them"

as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so and to tremble before him."

So He speaks to them with anger—not a spiteful hostility, but a righteous, holy wrath. Because He is perfectly holy, He cannot ignore their rebellion. It displeases Him. And His displeasure with them is described as "**fury**" in verse 5. The King James Version calls it "**sore displeasure.**" It's an intense term. It echoes the thought of Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:25: "**Our God is a consuming fire.**"

So when it says He speaks to them in His wrath, the idea is that He overthrows and destroys them merely by speaking the word. Their aim was to frustrate Him and dethrone Him from His rightful dominion. They failed—completely. Now *He* will vex *them*, and He will vanquish them completely.

He speaks, and note what He says (v. 6): "**As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.**" He announces to them that the very thing they were in a rage to prevent, He has already accomplished! In Spurgeon's words, "God's Anointed is appointed, and shall not be disappointed." God's will is done, and all the rage of Man cannot overthrow it.

Have you noticed that everywhere we turn in Scripture, we encounter the doctrine of God's sovereignty? *Here it is in bold print.* Try as they might, the raging heathen can never thwart the will of God. He will use even their sinful rebellion to further His own purposes.

Now, having announced that His chosen King is already enthroned, the voice of the Father gives way to the voice of the Son, and the drama of Psalm 2 moves on. The voice of the world was a voice of *defiance*. The voice of the Father was a voice of *derision*. The Son's voice is the voice of *devotion*.

### 3. THE SON; THE VOICE OF DEVOTION.

Verses 7-9, Christ speaks, and these are some of the most often-quoted verses in the New Testament. He says:

**7 I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.**

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

**9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."**

I referred to this as the voice of *devotion*. Here Christ reveals His devotion to the Father's Word, the Father's Will, and the father's Work.

First, note His devotion to the Father's Word. Practically his whole speech consists of words He is quoting from the Father. Jesus said in John 8:28, "**I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.**"

"I will tell of the decree," he says in verse 7. Whose decree? This is the *eternal* decree of God concerning the Son. "**You**

are my Son; today I have begotten you" speaks of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son.

Now, here's a point I can't just skip over, because it is probably the most heavily-debated issue in this Psalm: I do not believe this is a statement about the incarnation. I do not believe the expression "**today**" is meant to fix a point in time. Rather, this is a decree that belongs to eternity past, before there was time. It is describing the eternal relationship between the First and Second members of the Trinity.

The "begetting" spoken of here refers to the same mystery spoken of in John 3:16, when Jesus is called the "**only begotten**" Son of God. Going all the way back to the Nicene council, theologians have referred to this as "eternal generation," which sounds like a contradiction in terms, because we tend to think of "generation" as having to do with the *origin* or the conception of someone or something. But when Scripture says Christ was "begotten" of God, it is not speaking about His origin, for He is eternally God, without beginning—and a host of statements in Scripture, like John 1:1, affirm that. "**He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**" In other words, He had no *origin*; and He Himself cannot be a created being, because "**without him was not any thing made that was made.**" So the fact that He is "begotten" cannot speak of His origin.

Instead, this is a sort of anthropomorphic expression that describes the Father's relationship to the Son. Here, for the first time in Scripture, the Son is said to be *begotten* by the Father. That expression is repeatedly used in Scripture—John 3:16 (speaks of the "**only begotten Son**"); 1 John 4:19 ("**God has sent His only begotten Son into the world.**") The Greek word is *monogenes*—meaning "one of a kind"; or literally, "only-begotten." That's Christ's unique relationship to the Father: He is begotten (eternally begotten) in a way unlike any mere creature. Not created, not adopted, but begotten.

John 15:26 says the Holy Spirit "**proceeds from the Father.**" The Son is *begotten* by the Father; the Spirit *proceeds* from the Father. Both of these expressions describe eternal realities that are a mystery. Neither expression suggests that the Son or the Spirit had a beginning, but they give us a clue about the eternal relationships within the Trinity. Those, by the way, are the very properties that make the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity distinct from the Father. In every other sense, the members of the Godhead share exactly the same attributes, and they agree in every respect. But only of the Son may it be said that He is "begotten." And only of the Spirit can it be said that He "proceeds."

Why do I stress this? Because Hebrews 2 quotes this verse as proof that Jesus is God. God the Father calls Him His begotten Son, a title never conferred on any angelic being.

You and I are called sons of God in an adoptive sense, but Jesus is the only *begotten* Son of God. Therefore He is higher than any angel or any other merely created being; He is God. "**He was in the beginning with God**"—the eternal Word. And from the beginning "**the Word was God.**" He did not come into being at some point in time.

And so it seems clear to me that this begetting, and the sonship spoken of here, are related necessarily to Christ's *deity*, not His humanity, not His incarnation. This passage is an emphatic affirmation of Jesus' deity as the eternal son of God—and it is expressly quoted to make that point in Hebrews 1.

By the way, the early church was wracked by debates about the deity of Christ, His incarnation, and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Arians and Gnostics held heretical opinions about these vital doctrines. In the end, it was this doctrine of the eternal sonship of Christ that ultimately became a key point in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. The view that Christ is eternally begotten of the Father became an important plank in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. And this verse, Psalm 2:7, is the key text in understanding that doctrine. This is a declaration of the eternal decree of God, not a description of something that happened at a point in time.

Now, back to the text, and remember *why* the Son recites the Father's eternal decree: this is to demonstrate that He is devoted to the Father's Word.

Furthermore, He is devoted to the Father's will. Verse 8, still quoting the father, He says, "**Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.**"

This is the Father's Will: that the same heathen who raged against Him in verse 1 would become the Son's inheritance. And in order to assure this, God visits the Gentiles, to call out from among them a people for His name (Acts 15:14). In order to do that, He must first redeem them, and in order to do that, the Son must die on their behalf.

So the Son's devotion to the Father's will is going to cost Him His life, but He willingly pays the price. Listen to John 10, verses 15 and 18: Jesus said, "**I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . I lay down my life . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. . . . This commandment have I received of my Father.**" God's will involved redeeming a people whom he would give the Son for His inheritance, but the price of their redemption was the Son's own life. He willingly paid that price, so devoted was He to the Father's will.

Third, he was devoted to the Father's work. Verse 9: "**You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.**" He declares to the Father's enemies that they will be His inheritance, and He will rule over them with an

iron scepter—despite their frantic attempts to thwart the plan. His work will be to enforce the Father's rightful authority.

Verse 9 is echoed in Revelation 2:26-27, Jesus' letter to the church at Thyatira. He makes this promise to faithful believers: **"The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, 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."** So He passes on His own legacy to the redeemed. He shares His birthright with us. That's what is included in the fact that we are joint-heirs with Him. It's really an amazing thought.

But here's the point in Psalm 2: the reign of Christ was established in eternity past by divine decree. It is part of the Son's birthright, growing out of the eternal counsel of the Godhead, and as such it is not subject to change or overthrow. This is the work the Father Has given the Son to do, and He is devoted to it.

And those whom He redeems, the ones who overcome, will share the very throne they once opposed! This is an incredible promise! I'd love to stop at that point and preach a whole sermon on the implications of our co-regency with Christ.

But we need to move on to the final voice in this drama. This is the voice of—

#### 4. THE HOLY SPIRIT; THE VOICE OF DECISION.

This final voice is not expressly identified for us, but the tender pleadings here are indicative of the Holy Spirit's role in wooing and convicting sinners—and pointing them to Christ. Here's what the Spirit says (vv. 10-12):

**Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.**

**11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.**

**12 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.**

First, he appeals to those who are vain in their imaginations to be wise and be warned and receive instruction (v. 10). In other words, He pleads for them to conform their *intellects* to the mind of God.

Second, he counsels those who have set themselves against the Lord and His anointed to serve Him with fear. That is a plea for them to submit their *wills* to the will of God.

Finally, he admonishes those who are in a blind rage against divine authority to "**Kiss the Son,**"—meaning love the One whom they have hated. That is a plea for them to bind their *hearts* to the heart of God.

So He pleads for a full surrender of intellect, emotions, and will. The alternative is total destruction, for which they will bear full responsibility, if they continue in rebellion.

There's an incredible promise of grace at the end of this Psalm: "**Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**" Those who once raged against God are offered His blessing in return for their trust. The way this is worded is significant. "**Kiss the son,**" it says. A kiss is a sign of love between equals. None of us has any right to that sort of familiarity with the eternal God of the universe. Yet the Son assumed humanity precisely so that He could relate to us as brethren. What a glorious condescension that is for Him! And what a glorious elevation it is for us—from raging heathen to joint-heirs with Christ!

This is in perfect harmony with scores of places in Scripture where God offers mercy to any and all who will put their trust in Christ. We talk about limited atonement, and by that we mean that God's *design* in the atonement was for the elect alone. But there is no limitation whatsoever on the *sufficiency* of the atonement, and God's proposal of mercy is indiscriminate, offered freely to all. Whosoever will may come. And whoever does come He will not cast out.

But in the end, the rebellion of sinners is so determined, so obstinate, that the only ones who *do* come are those who are sovereignly drawn by God and given new hearts of faith. So sinfully rebellious is the unregenerate heart that not one sinner ever responds to this merciful invitation apart from the enablement of divine grace.

And so we see that God, who laughs at the collective efforts of all the forces of evil who try to overthrow His rule, nonetheless offers kindness and mercy to all. When that divine mercy is spurned, he sovereignly, graciously redeems a remnant, so that His eternal purposes are fulfilled despite the fact that the whole world and the entire empire of Satan try to conspire together to thwart Him.

That's a good, brief summary of the conflict of the ages. And David gives it this benediction: **"Blessed are all who take refuge in him."** That is an expression that denotes *faith*. In fact, the King James Version translates it this way: **"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him"**

So here, in harmony with everything else Scripture teaches, we are taught that divine blessing comes not to those who earn it by their merits, but to those who simply trust in God and his Anointed. The doctrine of justification by faith is wrapped up in that statement.

Every one of us should be humbled and challenged by that. It helps, I think, to look at the battle of the ages from God's perspective, and realize that no matter how perilous things may seem when you find yourself in the midst of a world of raging heathen, from the heavenly perspective, there is no cause for alarm. God will triumph over His enemies, and in the process, He will bless those who put their trust in Him.

Let's pray:

Father, we're reminded in Romans 5 that **"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** In fact, **"when we were enemies, we were reconciled to [You] by the death of [Your] Son."** We were not merely idly indifferent, but **"children of wrath, like the rest of mankind,"** raging in our opposition to all that is holy—walking in sin and self-will, **"[living] in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of [our own] body and [our own] mind."**

We thank you for the salvation Christ purchased on our behalf. May we live in a way that reflects your grace and your righteousness—and as we have been exhorted in this Psalm, may we honor your Son in all that we do, that we might be living reflections of Your glory, even in the midst of a raging world.