

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	81		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Psalm 2		
Date:	June 6, 2021 (a.m.)		

THE LORD AND HIS SON

“Have you noticed,” asked Alec Motyer, “that Psalm 2 ends where Psalm 1 begins, with blessing pronounced on the individual described in 1:1, and on all those described in 2:12? This has the effect of bracketing the two psalms together. They appear very different but, guided by this bracketing, we find them complementary. Psalm 1:1 describes the blessed way of life. This individual lives by distinctive directives (*advice*), distinctive principles (*takes his stand*) and distinctive settled convictions (*sit*). Psalm 2:12 focuses on a special relationship, in this case with the anointed One, the Lord’s Son: personal devotion (*kiss*, compare 1 Kings 19:18), and trustful reliance (*seek refuge*). Secondly, each psalm speaks in its own way of what Psalm 1:3 calls the transplanted life. Neither the individual of Psalm 1 nor the *all* of Psalm 2:12 are where they once were; there has been a great change, the acquisition of a new position. In Psalm 1, new life comes from life-giving waters; in Psalm 2, an erstwhile *king* has submitted to the Lord’s King who reigns on Zion. Psalm 87 describes this as acquiring new citizenship (compare Philippians 3:20), and therefore new possibilities, resources and privileges. Thirdly, in each case, the newness of position and life has come about through heeding the Word of God. The Lord’s Word came to the *kings of the earth* (2:2) that their rebellion was hopeless because his King was already in office on Zion (2:6) – a word confirmed by the testimony of the Son that, by the Father’s decree, it was his right to possess and rule the earth to its uttermost boundaries (2:8-9). In Psalm 1:2-3 the waters that refresh and renew the transplanted tree are consequent on delighting in and pondering the Lord’s teaching. The heart of Psalm 2 is consequent on delighting in and pondering the Lord’s teaching. The heart of Psalm 2 is fulfilled in the reign of Jesus, the Lord’s King, in the present (Hebrews 12:22-24) and the eternal Zion (Revelation 22:10, 22-27; 22:1); the heart of Psalm 1 is fulfilled in the Lord’s provision of the completed, inspired Scripture (2 Timothy 3:10-17); the heart of the spiritual life, Psalms teaches, lies in our devotion (2:12a) and constant resorting (2:12b) to the Lord Jesus, and in our assiduous attention to the Word of God (1:2).”¹ This Psalm, as Boice points out, “is referred to frequently in Revelation. Examples: *Jesus Christ . . . the ruler of the kings of the earth* (Rev. 1:5); *He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery* (Rev. 2:27); *She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter* (Rev. 12:5); and other less specific references. Augustine called Jesus *iste cantator psalmodum* (himself, the singer of the psalms). That is explicitly true of Psalm 2, since this psalm is not only *about* Jesus, but he himself speaks in it.”²

This is called a “royal Psalm” (cf. also Ps. 18, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132) because of its prophetic portrayals of the Davidic Messiah. In Ps. 2, the Messiah is the Son of God appointed to subdue all nations and to bring *shalom* to the people of God.³ Acts 4:25 declares this to be a psalm of David.⁴ It opens with a description of the nations in rebellion against the Lord and His King. Note how this is stated in question form. Conditions have not changed. The world today is in rebellion against the Almighty – and this is madness, for *who* can stand against God (cf. Rom. 9:19c)? There is a limit to God’s forbearance – what are rebels to do?

- I. **DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENT.** To study this Psalm carefully, we must first of all discover the speakers in its various portions.⁵
 - A. *God the Father Speaks* (vv. 1-6).
 - B. *God the Son speaks* (vv. 7-9).
 - C. *God the Spirit Speaks* (vv. 10-12).

- II. **THE DIVISION OF MANKIND.** Note how these are distinguished: *heathen, people, kings, rulers, judges* (vv. 1, 2, 10). Note how their actions are described:
 - A. *Their Preparation* (v. 2a).
 - B. *Their Plotting* (v. 1).
 - C. *Their Proposal* (v. 3).

- III. **THE DERISION OF GOD** (v. 4). The verbs here are present tense: *laughs, scoffs, rebukes*. Human language is used here to describe God's attitude and actions.⁶

- IV. **THE DEFENSE OF BELIEVERS** (v. 12).
 - A. *Submission* to the Son is the only hope, the only way to escape divine wrath.

NOTE: The expression "kiss the Son" was the mark of subjection and respect in the East of the time. This kiss, writes E. W. Hengstenberg, "was given for the most part not upon the mouth, but upon the kisser's own garment, or upon the hand of the person kissed"⁷ (cf. 1 Sa. 10:1; 1 Kings 19:18; Job 31:27; Hos. 13:2).

- B. **Blessedness.** Only those who seek shelter (cf. Heb. 6:18) in the Son are safe. This text stresses the divine nature and dignity of the Anointed King, esp. when compared with Ps. 118:9 and 146:3. "Scripture constantly admonishes us to place our confidence in the Lord alone; on which account the verb (v. 12) before us is in a manner consecrated and set apart; and also warns us against confiding in earthly kings."⁸ Throughout the Psalm *trust* is often linked with *taking refuge* in God (Ps. 40:4; 55:22, 23; 56:3, 4; 62:8, 10, compare with Ps. 49:13).

This Psalm is cited in Acts 2:30-33, 13:33, and Heb. 1:5, 5:5. The Scripture pronounces a blessing on all who will trust the Son. Trust in Christ supposes that He has manifested in some way a willingness to save us – and indeed this is the case. Therefore we find the gospel full of invitations and gracious promises to all who will come unto the Son and receive salvation as a free gift.

CONCLUSION: "The specifically messianic psalms are not numerous. They include Psalms 22, 45, 72, 110, and some others. But among even this relatively small number Psalm 2 stands out dramatically. That is probably why it has been placed where it is, as the second introductory psalm to the Psalter. There is some evidence in both Jewish and Christian traditions that Psalm 2 was at one time joined to Psalm 1, both psalms together being considered the first psalm. In the Jewish tradition Rabbi Johanan is quoted in the Talmud as having said: *Every chapter that was particularly dear to David he commenced with Happy and terminated with Happy. He began with Happy as it is written, Happy is the man, and he terminated with Happy, as it is written, Happy are all they that take refuge in him.* (Ber. 9b). These references are to Psalm 1:1 and Psalm 2:12, which indicates that the two psalms were at that time considered a single literary unit. Similarly, in the oldest Greek texts of Acts 13:33, Psalm 2:7 is referred to as being from Psalm 1. Modern versions change the reference to Psalm 2, which is appropriate in view of the psalms' present numbering. But the fact that the oldest texts called Psalm 2, Psalm 1 indicates that at one time the two were together. This throws light on how Psalm 2 should be taken. For if the psalm is messianic, and if it was originally linked with Psalm 1, then the doctrine of the two ways introduced in Psalm 1 is here carried forward but at a higher pitch. On the one hand,

the way of sinners in Psalm 1 now becomes a cosmic revolt of the nations against God and his Anointed. It becomes an unfolding of the wrong path and its consequences. On the other hand, the righteous man of the opening psalm is now explicitly seen to be God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, which I suggested at the close of the previous chapter. It is by taking refuge in Jesus that the judgment awaiting the wicked can be avoided by them."⁹ Finally, listen to the words of H. P. Liddon on the true identity of the Son, "This King is immortal; He is also all-knowing and all-mighty. *Omniscience alone can hear the cry of every human heart; Omnipotence alone can bring deliverance to every human sufferer.* Look at one more representation of this Royalty, that to which our Lord Himself referred, in dealing with his Jewish adversaries. David describes his Great Descendant Messiah as his *Lord*. Messiah is sitting on the right hand of Jehovah, as the partner of His dignity. Messiah reigns upon a throne which impiety alone could assign to any human monarch; He is to reign until His enemies are made His footstool; He is ruler now, even among His unsubdued opponents. In the day of His power, His people offer themselves willingly to His service; they are clad not in earthly armour, but *in the beauties of holiness*. Messiah is Priest as well as King; He is an everlasting Priest of that older order which had been honoured by the father of the faithful. Who is this everlasting Priest, this resistless King, reigning thus amid His enemies and commanding the inmost hearts of His servants? He is David's Descendant; the Pharisees knew that truth. But He is also David's Lord. How could He be both, if He was merely human? The belief of Christendom can alone answer the question which our Lord addressed to the Pharisees. The Son of David is David's Lord, because He is God; the Lord of David is David's Son, because He is God Incarnate."¹⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ A. Motyer, *Psalms By The Day: A Devotional Translation* (Christian Focus, 2016), p. 14.

² J. M. Boice, *Psalms: An Expository Commentary I* (Baker, 1994), p. 22.

³ W. Van Germeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation From Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 215, 456.

⁴ A. F. Kirkpatrick points out that the name "David in the NT may mean no more than the Psalter" (Heb. 4:7) or "a Psalmist." *The Book of Psalms* (rpt. Baker, 1982), p. 5.

⁵ G. Campbell-Morgan, *Notes On the Psalms* (Revell, 1947), p. 18.

⁶ This is called Anthropopathism – the attribution of human emotions or feelings to God (cf. Exod. 4:14; Ps. 51:16 and Rom. 11:22). F. B. Huey and Bruce Corley, *A Student's Dictionary for Biblical and Theological Studies* (Zondervan, 1983), p. 24.

⁷ *The Works of Hengstenberg: The Psalms V* (rpt. Mack Publishing, n.d.), p. 35. The same Heb. word, *nashaq*, is translated "brushing against" (Ezk. 3:13). Some ancient versions do not have "kiss" but "lay hold of (or receive) instruction;" or "worship in purity." In any case the thought is the same, of paying homage. Cf. J. Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia III* (Eerdmans, 1949), p. 1814.

⁸ Op. cit., p. 31.

⁹ Boice, op. cit.

¹⁰ H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord* (rpt. Klock & Klock, 1979), p. 83.