

A World Out of Control

Psalm 2

By

Dallas R. Burdette

Website: www.freedominchrist.net

The sovereignty of God calls for surrender of our lives to Him. Just a casual reading of Psalm 2 reveals that the psalmist is dealing with a world that is out of control. This psalm is one of five specific Messianic Psalms (22, 45, 72, and 110) that paints a picture of the coming Messiah. This Messianic psalm reads like a modern day newspaper and sets the stage for a portrait of humanity's rebellion against God and His chosen One to redeem the world. The issues that David addresses are always contemporary. Even though we do not have a superscription to this psalm, nevertheless, we know that David penned this psalm. Peter specifically cites this psalm as having been written by David (see Acts 4:25).

We are conscious that there was a particular *Sitz im Leben* (Setting in Life) for the author of this psalm; nonetheless, the real author (the Holy Spirit) had another *Sitz im Leben* in mind—the rejection of God's Messiah by Israel. The true author of this psalm is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses David (reigned 1010-970 BC) **to foretell the rejection of Jesus by the nation of Israel as well as the kings of the earth** (see Isaiah 46:9-10). Approximately one thousand years after David penned this psalm, Peter and John, disciples of Jesus, cited Psalm 2 and ascribed this messianic psalm to David as the human author. Luke gives the response of these two Apostles concerning the rejection of Jesus by the Sanhedrin as well as earthly kings:

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them."²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?'²⁶ **The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.**²⁷ Indeed Herod [Matthew 2:13-18] Pontius Pilate [Matthew 27:11-26] met together with the Gentiles and the people^c of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.²⁸ They did what

^a That is, Christ or Messiah

^b Psalm 2:1, 2

^c The Greek is plural.

your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. (Acts 4:23-29)

Peter declares that the Holy Spirit spoke through David. It is in this vein that David's last words were concerning the Holy Spirit's role in his writing the psalms. The author of Second Samuel¹ records David's famous words:

These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs^a: ² 'The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.'" (2 Samuel 23:1-2)

Just a casual reading of Psalm 2 calls to mind the words of John, one of the Twelve, who also comments on the rejection of Jesus by many in Israel, which rejection was foretold by David. **John labors this point in his Gospel when he writes:**

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent,^c nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:10-13)

The Synoptic Gospels as well as the Gospel of John reveal conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. David speaks of a world that is out of control. The Jews, as a whole, rejected their Messiah, which rejection resulted in the utter devastation of the nation of Israel in AD 70.² **David lived in a world in which it did not appear that God was in power. The Apostles lived in a world that, too, spiraled out of control. We, today, also live in a world that is out of control.** Does this psalm upset us? Do we find this psalm about God's sovereignty rather strange? This psalm reveals the weird and wonderful way in which God exercises control. We quickly observe that God does not rule in the same way dictators govern. His reign is a government of love.

God wants all men and women to serve Him because they love Him. When we fail to respond to God's kindness, God is still longsuffering. Ezekiel (593 BC) wrote during the Babylonian captivity, which captivity God allowed because the Jews were living lives out of control. Yet, in spite of their stubbornness, God still pleaded for repentance. Pay attention to Ezekiel as he writes the words of God to the exiles:

¹**Second Samuel** begins its history in 1010 BC and ends in 970 BC. This book covers the reign of David, which history covers almost forty years. On the other hand, **First Samuel** covers a period of ninety years from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul in 1010 BC. There is a fifty-year overlap between the Book of Judges and the Book of First Samuel.

^a Or *Israel's beloved singer*

^c Greek *of bloods*

²See Dallas Burdette, "A Literary Analysis of the Gospel of Matthew" in Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts through New Eyes: A Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Lakewood, FL.: Xulon Press, 2009), 26-62, for a detailed study of how the religious leaders reacted to Jesus' claim to Messiahship.

Son of man, say to the house of Israel, “This is what you are saying: ‘Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of^b them. How then can we live?’”¹¹ Say to them, ‘**As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.** Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’¹² “Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, ‘The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.’¹³ **If I tell the righteous man** that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done.¹⁴ **And if I say to the wicked man,** ‘You will surely die,’ but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right—¹⁵ if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die.¹⁶ None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live.” (Ezekiel 33:10-16)

GOD’S ANOINTED ONE ANNOUNCED BY ISAIAH

In spite of all the rebellion exhibited by Judah, God still offers forgiveness to Judah if she will repent and accept His Law. Ezekiel writes about four hundred years after David penned Psalm 2. This rebellion continues to the first century—the birth of the Messiah. David speaks of those who excluded themselves by rejecting God’s Messiah and God’s will for their lives. **We, today, also exclude ourselves when we, too, reject God’s Gospel**, that is to say, Jesus. Psalm 2:2 speaks of the kings of the earth and the rulers taking a stand against the Lord (יהוה, *yhwh*) and His Anointed One (מָשִׁיחַ), *m^ešî-ḥô’*, Anointed One of Him). Who is this Anointed One? He is the One whom Isaiah (739 BC) foretold would come. Pay attention to his prophecy concerning the coming Messiah:

For to us a **child is born**, to us a **son is given**, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called **Wonderful Counselor**,^b **Mighty God**, **Everlasting Father**, **Prince of Peace**.⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

This Child that “is born” is none other than Jesus, God’s Messiah. This is the same child that Isaiah spoke to King Ahaz (735-716 BC) about concerning a miraculous sign, “the virgin birth”:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you^c a sign [“House of David”]: The virgin (הַעַלְוִיָּה, *hā·’āl-mā(h)*) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and^d will call him Immanuel.^e (7:14)

This child does not refer to one of Isaiah’s sons. The context of 7:14 indicates that this child is none other than the One that Isaiah 9:6 addresses. In 7:11, God requested Ahaz to ask for a sign for himself, which he refused. In verse 11, God uses the singular pronoun (אָנֹכִי, 2nd masculine

^b Or *away in*

^b Or *Wonderful, Counselor*

^c The Hebrew is plural.

^d Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls *and he* or *and they*

^e *Immanuel* means *God with us*. I prefer to translate: “with us is GOD.” See Isaiah 9:6.

singular) in His address to Ahaz (735-716 BC). When Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign, God then speaks to the house of David and gives a sign to the nation of Judah concerning the coming Messiah who would bring peace and righteousness. Listen, once more, to Isaiah as he records the words of God to Ahaz:

Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David (בֵּית דָּוִד, *bêt dā-wid*)! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you^c (לָכֶם, *lā-kēm*)³ a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and^d will call him Immanuel.^e (Isaiah 7:13-14)

When Ahaz spurned the divine suggestion, Isaiah, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, looked in a different direction—the coming of the Messiah. Matthew, one of the Twelve, understood Isaiah 7:14 as having reference to the Messiah, that is to say, the Christ. He, too, writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^a because he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin (ἡ παρθένος, *hē parthenos*) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^b—which means, “God with us.” (Matthew 1:21-23)

Shortly before Christ’s ascension, **He unfolded the prophecies concerning Himself**, which explanations included the prophecies of Isaiah. Listen to Luke as he records the last words of Jesus to His Apostles:

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

We cannot read these words of Jesus without reflection upon His conversation with the Twelve concerning the Messianic prophecies. Whatever they lacked in understanding or remembering, the Holy Spirit, said Jesus, will bring all of this to their attention. John records this conversation:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he

^c The Hebrew is plural.

³ לָכֶם, (*lā-kēm*) consists of a particle, preposition, with **second person, plural**, masculine suffix.

^d Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls *and he* or *and they*

^e *Immanuel* means *God with us*. I prefer to translate: with us is GOD!

^a *Jesus* is the Greek form of *Joshua*, which means *the LORD saves*.

^b Isaiah 7:14

hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. ¹⁶ In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me. (John 16:12-16)

There are many prophecies in the Book of Isaiah concerning the coming of Jesus as God's Messiah. For example, one such prophecy is found in Isaiah 49:6. Isaiah writes: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Paul, while proclaiming Christ in Pisidian Antioch, cited Isaiah 49:6. The context of his reference to the Isaiah passage is to demonstrate that his ministry to the Gentiles is what Isaiah prophesied seven hundred years earlier. Luke reports this incidence as follows:

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you^g (σε, se) a light for the Gentiles, that you^h (σε, se) may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:46-48)

Even though Isaiah 49 refers to Christ as the "Light," nevertheless, we, as disciples of Christ are to be "light" to the world. Paul was as light to the Gentiles. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He addressed His disciples as "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). As stated above, Psalm 2:1-2 is cited by Peter and John, as recorded in Acts 4:25-26. This psalm, by David, also speaks of those who refuse self-abandonment as a way of life. As a result of autonomous behavior—a life without our God—the ungodly often pursue the righteous with a vengeance that often creates doubt in the faithful as to the powers of God.⁴ The righteous—those who live under the sovereignty of God—will be vulnerable to the powers of the world. A classic example of this mindset is found in Jesus' words to the religious leaders:

You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell [τῆς γέεννης, *tēs geennēs*]? ³⁴ Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵ And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation (those living at that time). ³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate. (Matthew 23:33-38; see also Matthew 24:15; Daniel 12:1-3)

^g The Greek is singular.

^h The Greek is singular.

ⁱ Isaiah 49:6

⁴ See Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994) for an exhaustive study of a life lived without God. He graphically demonstrates a life out of control when God is not within our thinking and behavior.

Psalm 2 is about Jesus and His rejection by His enemies. In the very next psalm (Psalm 3), David reveals the heartaches that he, too, endured at the hands of his enemies, especially his son Absalom. But in spite of tragedy, God still delivers. David goes right to the heart of God's involvement: "From the LORD comes deliverance" (Psalm 3:8). What can we, as believers, do in the face of circumstances that are beyond our control? How do we relate to personal problems in our own lives? How should we respond to things that we do not understand? Listen to the psalmist as he strips away all vestiges of self-reliance: "Blessed are all who take **refuge** (מִקְלָט, *miq·lāt*, "asylum") in him" (Psalm 2:12d). Those who put their trust in Him find true happiness (John 14:25-27; 16:33).

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 are both encased in the English word *happy* (אֲשֶׁרֵי, *'āš·rê*, happy, or blessed). The introduction to the Book of Psalms sets forth the things that create happiness in the life of His people. Just as Psalm 1 begins with the word *blessed*, so Psalm 2 concludes with a blessing: "Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (2:12d). Psalm 1 is a contrast between the righteous and the sinner. The second psalm is a contrast between the world's disobedience and the exaltation of God's Son. In the first psalm, the wicked are driven away like chaff (1:4), but in the second psalm, the wicked are dashed to pieces like pottery (2:9). Also, In the second psalm, the psalmist brings us face-to-face with the Messiah, the Son of God.

STRUCTURE OF THE PSALM

This psalm is best understood when it is viewed as a four-fold picture. In other words, this psalm is divided into four stanzas of three verses each. For example, consider the following analysis:

Nations Conspire

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ³"Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." (2:1-3)

The Lord Scoffs at Them

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. ⁵Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ⁶"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." (2:4-6)

The Son Proclaims the Decree

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." (2:7-9)

Kings Are Advised to Serve the Lord

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (2:10-12)

As we reflect upon Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, we discover that both psalms set forth a life that is dependent upon God and is the opposite of autonomy (self-rule). God wants individuals and nations **to practice self-abandonment.** These two psalms make clear that God is sovereign. In other words, God is reigning over the affairs of men and women. **God wants us to delight** in His Law and to be opened to His instructions (1:2). If we take pleasure in the Law of God, then we will “take refuge in Him” (2:12d). These two psalms should be read together. Not only does the word *blessed* link these two psalms, but the Hebrew word **הָגָה** (*hā·gā(h)*) is employed in 1:2b (“meditate”) and 2:1b (“plot”). The translators of our English versions render the Hebrew word **הָגָה** with two separate English words: “**meditate**” in 1:2b and “**plot**” in 2:1b. **This repetition creates a contrast between persons who meditate on God’s instructions and those whose thinking is vain, empty, and purposeless.**⁵

As we think about these two psalms, we must search our own souls to determine if we are God-centered or self-centered. These two psalms are against autonomy (self-government), that is to say, a law unto ourselves. The contrast is between those who are self-instructed and those who are God-instructed. Are we listening to the counsel of God? Are we rejecting the guidance of ungodly individuals? Have we accepted Jesus, the Messiah, as God’s Anointed One for the salvation of our souls? **This last question brings us face to face with the full-blown teachings of Psalm 2—the rejection of God’s Anointed One, namely, Jesus as God’s Messiah for the redemption of humanity.**

MESSIANIC PSALM

This psalm, as stated earlier, had an original setting concerning David being established on his throne, in spite of opposition. The language, at times, appears to have an uncommon glow and to participate in bold exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in order to lead us to contemplate something much higher than David himself. A casual glance at this royal psalm leads us from things below to things above, from things human to things Divine. Whatever the original *Sitz im Leben*, the psalm is still Messianic throughout. David transcends his earthly reign to the reign of the Messiah. **This revelatory psalm depicts the ultimate rejection of God’s Son.** This classic psalm of a “world out of control” is an example of the mutiny of the human heart against God.

⁵See J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms* in Leander E. Keck, Senior Editor, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: 1 & 2 Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms*, Vol., 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 689. I am deeply indebted to McCann for his insightful commentary and reflections upon Psalm 2.

JESUS AND PSALM TWO

Psalm 2 is an important psalm for the Christian community. We should never forget that there is ample evidence from the New Testament writings that this psalm had its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. Remember, as stated above, Luke records that Jesus, after His Resurrection and before His ascension, spoke to the disciples concerning the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Luke preserves, as cited earlier, for his readers the following comments of Jesus to His disciples:

“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the **Law of Moses**, the **Prophets** and the **Psalms**.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:44-47)

Repetition is sometimes helpful in order to understand and appreciate what the Holy Spirit revealed for His people. In Jesus’ instructions to His disciples, He calls attention to the **Law**, the **Prophets**, and the **Psalms**. **No doubt, Psalm 2 was one such psalm that our Lord expounded to His disciples.** The Psalms, as well as the Law and the Prophets, were to be read with eagerness to ascertain the Messianic overtones found in them. As we peruse the denial and unbelief of Peter, shortly before and after the Resurrection, we observe an individual that did not fully understand what was going on. After Jesus instructed His Apostles from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, we find Peter on the Day of Pentecost citing from the Book of Psalms (Psalm 69:20; 109:8) to give credence to the election of Matthias (mă-thī’ās) to replace Judas (see Acts 1:21-26).

Following the choosing of Matthias to take the place of Judas, Peter addresses a group of believers (numbering about 120) concerning the field of blood. Luke says everyone in Jerusalem was conscious of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas and the purchase of the Field of Blood with the money paid to Judas (Acts 1:12-19). During his speech, Peter informed the company of Jesus’ disciples assembled that this action on the part of Judas and the replacement of Judas with Matthias was foretold by the psalmist: “May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it” (**Acts 1:20 = Psalm 69:25**) and “May another take his place of leadership” (**Acts 1:20 = Psalm 109:8**). These two passages of Scripture were put forward to call to mind that Judas had left a vacancy that had to be filled. How did Peter know this? Was not his understanding of the psalms from the instructions that our Lord shared with the Eleven before His ascension?

On the Day of Pentecost (pěn’tě-köst), Peter speaks of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus as having been foretold through **Psalm 16:8-11**. Peter begins this quotation with the words: “David said about him” (Acts 2:25). Then he cites Psalm 16:8-11 by David to prove that God had foreordained this Resurrection of the Messiah:

“**I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ⁹Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, ¹⁰ because**

you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. ¹¹ **You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.”** (Acts 2:25-28)

How did Peter envision this citation? Listen as he logically draws conclusions to illustrate that this psalm could not possibly refer to David:

Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the **patriarch David** died (970 BC) and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But **he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.** ³¹ **Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ,^d that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.** ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. (Acts 2:29-33)

Peter then understandably draws an inference based upon the historical reality of the death of David. He states that even though David did not ascend into heaven, nevertheless, David could still write (Psalm 110:1): “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’” (Acts 2:35). The people to whom Peter addresses these words understood the implications—**Jesus is both Lord and Christ**—and responded to the Messianic character of these psalms by inquiring as to what actions they could take to eliminate their guilt for crucifying the Son of God.

Psalm Two and the Rejection of Jesus by the Rulers

Again, repetition is sometimes necessary in order to paint a graphic picture of the true nature of biblical prophecy. With this concept in mind, we cite Luke as he reveals an episode of conflict between two Apostles—Peter and John—and the Sanhedrin (sǎn’hē-drĭn, Acts 4:21). These two men had been arrested and released for preaching Jesus as the only way of salvation (4:3-4, 12). After their release from incarceration, Peter and John “went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them” (4:23). Upon hearing the testimony of these two men, the crowd broke out in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving (4:24). **The significant thing about their “praise and thanksgiving” is found in their interpretation of Psalm 2. They begin their reference to this psalm by saying, “You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David”** (4:25a). As mentioned earlier, this psalm is one that Jesus must have expounded upon in His discourse with the Eleven.

In their prayer to God, they acknowledged that God made the heavens and the earth. They did not believe in evolution. Peter and John accepted Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” After giving credit to God concerning His creation, these two Apostles also cited Psalm 2:1-2:

^d Or *Messiah*. “The Christ” (Greek) and “the Messiah” (Hebrew) both mean “the Anointed One”; also in verse 36.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One [*χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ*, *christou autou*, “His Christ”]. (Acts 4: 25-26)

Who took their stand against God? Who were the rulers? Who were the nations? Who were the people? Who was the Anointed One? Listen, once more, to this prayer that occurred almost two thousand years ago:

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people^c of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (4:27-31)

EVANGELISTIC ZEAL AND PSALM TWO

As we seek to understand the structure of this psalm, we need to remember that the first three verses of this psalm depict those who refuse to believe. Second, God gives His answer in response to their rejection of Jesus as the Savior of the world, which is found in verses 4-6. The third part of the structure reveals God’s decree in the form of a conversation with the One He called “Son” in verses 7-9. Finally, the psalmist gives his advice to the rebellious kings, rulers, and people in verses 10-12. Peter, John, and the other believers were conscious that this psalm was Messianic. But this rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel did not deter their evangelistic zeal. In fact, they prayed: “enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness” (4:29). Are we, too, praying that God will enable us to speak His Word with courage? Are we mindful that this psalm is also an evangelistic outreach? Jesus’ disciples were all aware that this psalm set forth the tone for their evangelistic passion. In this psalm, David, through the Holy Spirit, speaks of the Messiah as saying:

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. (Psalm 2:7-8)

“You are my Son” stands out in this psalm. God is the One who made this startling statement. The One He call His Son is God’s own King whom He establishes in Zion. This One who is called Son is none other than One of the Divine Persons referred to in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word *God* (אֱלֹהִים, *’ēlō-hîm’*, Gods) is plural in the Hebrew text. He is not simply a human being; He is Mighty God (אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר, *’ēl’ gîb·bôr’*) [Isaiah 9:6]. When Isaiah speaks of the Son in Isaiah 9:6, he employs the singular word for God (אֱלֹהֵי, *’ēl’*). In Psalm 2:10-12, the psalmist exhorts the kings of the earth and the

^c The Greek is plural.

rulers (judges) to act wisely by kissing the Son. This Son (בֶּרֶךְ, *bār'*)⁶ in Psalm 2:12 would be the same Son that God the Father addresses as “My Son” (בְּנִי, *b'ēnī*)¹ in 2:7. As discussed above, this Son is to enter the world by a virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14). In Isaiah 9:6, this Son is the God-Man. The **Son is given**, but the **Child is born**. We can hardly reflect upon the implications of 9:6 without focusing upon the words of Jesus to Nicodemus (nīk'ō-dē'mūs):

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^f that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world **through him**. ¹⁸ Whoever believes **in him** is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.^g ¹⁹ This is the verdict: **Light has come into the world**, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.^h (John 3:16-21)

Psalms 2 is about the Gospel of God. Not only did our Lord remind His disciples of Psalm 2, but He also instructed them as to their responsibilities toward the nations. Again, we should meditate carefully upon the Great Commission concerning the nations:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in^a the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

As we reflect upon Psalm 2:8: “I will make the nations **your inheritance**, the ends of the earth **your possession**,” we cannot help but recall again the words of Jesus in his farewell discourse to His disciples as reported by Luke (Luke 24:44-48). Jesus' missionary activity was to bring about the evangelization of the nations. Again, it is extremely important for us to ponder once more the words of Jesus as reported by Luke:

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ **and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:44-48)

Jesus' work was to be a mission of conquest. It is evident that our Lord interpreted Psalm 2 in terms of His farewell message to His followers. It is in this regard to the Great Commission that Paul and Barnabas found themselves in Pisidian Antioch (275 miles NW of Paphos)

⁶ בֶּרֶךְ *bar*: A masculine noun meaning son. It refers to the specially anointed Son of the Lord to whom the nations will pay homage (Ps. 2:7, 12).

^f Or *his only begotten Son*

^g Or *God's only begotten Son*

^h Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 15.

^a Or *into*; see Acts 8:16; 19:5; Romans 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13; 10:2 and Gal. 3:27.

preaching the Word of God to both men of Israel and Gentiles who also worshiped God (Acts 13:13, 16). In Paul's speech about the Good News of God, he cited from David, Isaiah, and Habakkuk to prove that Jesus' coming was foretold by the prophets. He cited Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3, Psalm 16:10, and Habakkuk 1:5 to prove that Jesus is the One spoken of in the Psalms and in the Prophets. Again, it is also noteworthy that Paul cites Psalm 2:7 to prove the Resurrection of Jesus:

We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. **As it is written in the second Psalm: "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"**.^{b,c} (Acts 13:32-33)

Nations were to hear the Word of God, to learn of the Atoning sacrifice of Jesus, to see something of the depths of Jesus' love, and then to come to Him in repentance for the forgiveness of sins through His name. This is God's way of salvation. He urges His followers to go out into the entire world to make disciples and to win the nations for His "inheritance" and the ends of the earth for His "possession" (Psalm 2:8). God has given to every believer the privilege of participating in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus. Paul soars in his language as he captures the very heart of the Good News about God's way of salvation in his second letter to Corinth:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And **he has committed to us the message of reconciliation**. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^a for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

Yes, every Christian is a "new creation" in Christ Jesus. We, as believers, are reconciled to God through Christ. **God in His infinite love allows us who are in Christ to become a part of the labor force.** God has given to us "the ministry of reconciliation." God has committed to every redeemed person "the message of reconciliation." We must never forget that we, as individuals, are, in the words of Paul, to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12-13).

KISS THE SON

Therefore, you kings, **be wise; be warned**, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹ **Serve the LORD** with fear and rejoice with trembling. ¹² **Kiss the Son**, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for **his wrath** can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psalm 2:10-12)

^b Or *have begotten you*

^c Psalm 2:7

^a Or *be a sin offering*

David calls upon the rebellious to “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.” **When we serve the Lord, we live under the rule of God.** When we serve the Lord, we depend upon God for life. To serve the Lord is our spiritual act of worship. How do we, as individuals, worship? Paul says that it is in offering of “your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).⁷ There must be submission. David graphically portrays obedience as to “kiss the Son.” **To “kiss the Son” is a way of calling for full surrender to the Anointed One.** Those who refuse to “Kiss the Son” are in danger of fierce destruction. He is warning the rebellious to “be wise,” to “be warned,” to “serve the Lord,” and to “kiss the Son.” Why? The psalmist says, “Lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment” (Psalm 2:12). John the Baptist and Jesus warned the religious leaders about God’s wrath (see Matthew 3:7-8 and chapters 23, 24, and 25), which wrath reached its climax in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 for the rejection of God’s Son.

We, as Christians, frequently lose sight of this tragic truth in our eagerness to stress the love of God, which we must do. The word “destroyed” (דָּבַח, *’ā·bād*, “to perish”) is the same word that forms the dark background for John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus continues His conversation by calling attention to His purpose in coming. Listen to Him as He captures the very heart of His Gospel: “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (3:17). But, if we fail to “kiss the Son,” then Jesus tells Nicodemus: “whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (3:18).

The Jews in Jesus’ day suffered God’s wrath and desolation in AD 70 for their failure to believe and accept Jesus as God’s Son. Today, Men and women will “perish” if they continue in their rebellion against God and their refusal to accept Jesus as God’s way of redemption. Revolt brings ruin, but trust in Jesus brings full and free salvation. Do we remember the last line of this psalm? If not, listen again to the Holy Spirit: “Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Psalm 2:12d). To take “refuge in him” means to depend on God, to trust God, and to entrust our lives and future to God. Have we done this? Have we accepted the Lord Jesus as our “righteousness,” our “holiness,” and our “redemption” (See 1 Corinthians 1:30)?

Trust and surrender will always bring forgiveness and restoration to a place in His favor. God, in His infinite goodness, cannot allow rebellion and sin to go unchecked. Sin must be dealt with.⁸ What is God’s answer? It is Jesus. Paul can say, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2). Psalm 2 sets forth the philosophy of a world out of control. On a daily basis, the newspapers and television portray a world without God. The next chapter (Psalm 3) examines David’s faith versus the arrogance of the wicked. This psalm serves as a mirror in which we see the emotions of our own soul as we

⁷For a more detailed study of worship, see Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Jesus and Our Privileges*, Vol. 1 (Longwood, FL., Xulon Press, 2009), 358-438.

⁸For a detailed study of God’s wrath against those who refuse to take refuge in Jesus, see “Overview of Romans” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL.: Xulon Press, 2008), 209-281.

attempt to escape from a world out of control into the arms of God's scheme of redemption, namely Jesus. **Have we consciously examined the sovereignty of God and its implications in our lives? Are our lives out of control? Are our lives self-centered or God centered? Are we endeavoring to live our lives in isolation from God?**

CONCLUSION

Are we living lives out of control? Are we, too, a part of a world that is out of control in its failure to honor God? How do we stand before the Creator of the heavens and the earth? Are our daily lives in harmony with the will of God? Have we "kissed the Son"? **Have we committed our lives to Him? Have we presented our bodies as living sacrifices to the One who made Atonement for our sins?** If we refuse His sacrifice, if we reject Jesus as God's way of salvation, if we spurn baptism as a part of our response to Jesus as Lord, then there is no hope for us. Do we remember the words of Jesus as reported by Mark concerning the Great Commission? Pay attention to Jesus as He instructs His disciples: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). **Have you been baptized into the name of "the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19)? If not, then why not submit your life this day to the Savior of the world?** In the words of Peter, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:28). What does Psalm 2 mean to us? Have we rejected God's Anointed One? Can we sing the words of the following spiritual song: "My heart, my mind, my body, my soul I give to You, take control. I give my body a living sacrifice. Lord, take control, take control"?