

## Psalm Chapter 2

There is often much debate as to who is the author of some of the Psalms. As we read this Psalm, there is no immediate help as to its authorship. But once we come into the New Testament, we are left in no doubt that the writer was David. We read in Acts chapter 4:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

With some of the psalms, questions are also raised as to whether or not it can be described as a "Messianic psalm" ie is it a psalm that would tell us something of the coming Messiah of Israel? Again, we are left in little doubt that it is indeed a Messianic psalm, for it is quoted no less than 7 times in the New Testament, either directly or indirectly, and all with reference to the Lord Jesus.

On one occasion, verse 1 is quoted – "Why do the heathen rage...". Acts 4

On three occasions we read, "Thou art My Son" – Acts 13, Heb 1, and Heb 5.

On three occasions in Revelation, we read of the rod of iron.

And what is this psalm all about? It is about the final triumph of the Son of God over all His enemies – the victory to be secured in a coming day.

Different voices can be heard in the Psalm, and these different voices really divide the psalm into four different portions.

1. Verses 1 to 3 The voices of men
2. Verses 4 to 6 The voice of God as He answers the rebellion of men
3. Verses 7 to 9 The voice of God in His promises to His Son
4. Verses 10 to 12 The voice of the Spirit as He gives advice regarding the Son

### 1. Verses 1 to 3 The voices of men

In these verses, the voices of men are heard as they rebel against God:

1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Many scriptures have both an application and an interpretation, and this is one of them. What is the difference between an application and an interpretation? The interpretation of a verse is the real meaning of the verse that the writer had in mind or rather that the Spirit of God had in mind when He inspired the writer to record the words. There can be only one interpretation. The application of a portion is what we often make of it when we use it as an illustration of some other part of scripture. We often use Old Testament

scriptures to give us pictorial representations of New Testament truth. We are making an application of scripture.

In these three verses, there is no doubt an immediate application in the then current experience of the writer David. David was a man of war. Apart from his continuous battles against the Philistines, he had those years of struggling against Saul. He is no doubt expressing his own feelings when he speaks about the raging of the heathen and the vain imagination of the people, and the rejection of the Anointed one by the kings and rulers. This would be the first application of these verses.

In the second application, we have to go to Acts chapter 4. This is the first NT quotation of a portion of Psalm 2. What are the circumstances in which the Psalm is being quoted? Peter and John have been preaching in the temple. They have been taken captive by the priests and put into prison. On the day following, they are threatened not to speak at all nor preach in the name of Jesus. When they are released they went to "their own company" – a lovely expression, "their own company", which sets the saints of God apart from the world – and they bring the matter before God in prayer. It is interesting to note how they prayed. They did not rush in to tell God what these terribly wicked men were doing to them. Rather they begin by reminding God of His great work in creation:

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

Is this a pointless digression? Far from it! They are reminding God of His almighty power as the creator of all things. God is omnipotent. They then go on to quote the words of David in Psalm 2:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

What are they doing now? They are reminding God of His omniscience. One thousand years before Calvary, God knew what would happen to His Son. God is omniscient. They then make this second application of Psalm 2 for they see similarities between the characters involved in David's psalm and the recent events at Calvary:

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Herod was the king, Pilate was the governor, the Romans were the heathen, Israel was the people. They all conspired at Calvary to do what? "To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done". The powers that be only conspired to do the foreknown will of God. Notice that, although, Psalm 2 is written in the present tense, their application of David's words are in the past tense. "Why did the heathen rage?"

They are saying in effect, "Oh God who has all power and all knowledge, you

know our circumstances, and who are these men who stand in our way? Thou art the all powerful God." They are bringing the threats of men down to size. "And now Lord, behold their threatenings".

Did the prayer work? The disciples asked for two things – they wanted boldness to preach and power to do the extraordinary. The Lord answered first in a show of His power – the building was shaken - and they went out to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4 is therefore the second application of Psalm 2: 1

But what about its complete fulfilment – its true interpretation? Does this not await a still future day – the day of the Lord? It will be a time of man's greatest rebellion against God. The heathen will rage. Jerusalem will be compassed about with armies. The Beast will be there with his subordinate kings and their armies. The king of the north will be there rampaging through the glorious land. And what about the people, Israel? "The people imagine a vain thing". They will have put their trust in a covenant with the Beast – the first Beast of Revelation chapter 13. Isaiah 28 speaks of it:

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Daniel chapter 9 speaks of the same covenant.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week:

Why has Israel entered into a covenant with the confederate head of the nations? They hope to gain an ally against the king of the north, the overflowing scourge. But the covenant will not save them.

The kings of the earth will set themselves and the rulers will take counsel together against the Lord and against His Christ. It is man's great day of rebellion against God. They will be hoping to break God's bands and cast away His chords. Men will have no restraints – moral or spiritual.

We see the seeds of this today. Things which were illegal thirty years ago are not only legalised today but defended by the law which now bears down upon those who seek to oppose this immorality. Things which are spoken of in the law of God as an abomination, are now upheld by the law of men. Men want no restraints whatsoever. 2011 is only a foretaste of what is to come.

## **2. Verses 4 to 6 The voice of God as He answers the rebellion of men**

Verses 4 to 6 now tell us of God's response to this rebellion of mankind.

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Men laughed at, and cruelly mocked the Son of God on the cross – and appear to have got away with it. That was a terrible day. But that day will be nothing compared to the day when God will laugh. Why is God laughing? He is laughing at the feeble attempts of men to set Him aside. All the armies of the world are gathered together, but what are they compared to the infinite power of the Almighty. Psalm 8 compares man with God:

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

The vast universe is but the work of His fingers.

We have spoken about the Beast and his armies. He is the Gentile world ruler. But before the Lord comes to win the great victory, who will be seated on the throne of Israel? The dragon will have set his own man upon the throne – the Antichrist. Brethren often speak of the first beast of Revelation 13 as the Antichrist, but the first beast rises out of the sea – surely a Gentile. The second beast arises out of the earth; the earth surely is the land of Israel. This makes sense. The Antichrist is not only opposed to the true Christ, he is also an impersonation of the true Christ. He must then be a Jew. The nation could never accept a Messiah who was not Jewish. In Revelation 13, the second beast looks like the Lord. He has two horns like a lamb, but he spake as a dragon. He has power to do miracles in the sight of the first beast. The Jew expects their Messiah to do miracles. In the Lord's day, many were beginning to ask the question, "When the Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man doeth?" The wicked one of II Thessalonians chapter 2 is also the Antichrist for he is noted for his signs and lying wonders whereby he seeks to deceive men.

The Antichrist will act as a priest, for he will not seek worship for himself but will cause all men to worship the first beast. He is described in Revelation as the false Prophet – he is a prophet also. Then in Daniel chapter 11, he is described as a king. "The king shall do according to his will". He is the wilful king of Daniel 11. He seeks to take to himself the titles of prophet, priest, and king.

But this wicked king will be displaced by Jehovah's king:

**6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.**

The verse does not say, "Will I set", but rather "have I set". Only God can describe the future in the past tense. It is as good as done.

The New Testament describes not one but two days for His coronation. David was crowned twice – once in Hebron, when he was acclaimed by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, then later by the other 10 tribes also in Jerusalem. Hebron means joining or fellowship – Jerusalem is the city of peace. He was crowned in the city of fellowship and in the city of peace.

The Lord will first be crowned in heaven – that is described in Revelation chapter 5. John sees Him who sat upon the throne with a book in His hand. What is this book? – Surely, the title deeds of earth. Who is worthy to take this

book? No one is found worthy, and John weeps. But then one is found worthy and on two different accounts. I never think of this chapter without first thinking of Esau and Jacob as they contended for the birthright and blessing of Isaac. Esau was the elder son and had the legal right but not the moral right. The Bible describes him as "that profane person". Jacob had the moral right but no legal right. But the Lord has the legal right to the throne – He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David. He also has the moral right – He is the Lamb of God who has purchased the world in His own blood. He is therefore crowned in heaven.

Where and when will He be crowned a second time? In John 12, we read of His triumphal ride into Jerusalem, and of the words of His disciples.

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

It is a scene that will be repeated in this coming day, when He will come to be acknowledged as king. John 12 is but a foretaste of His crowning day of glory, as the Lord promised Himself.

Mt 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

### **3. Verses 7 to 9 The voice of God in His promises to His Son**

In verses 7 to 9, we come to the section in which God is now speaking to His Son.

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

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

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

It is not immediately clear from verse 7 of the psalm exactly who God is speaking to. Is He speaking to David the writer or to some other man? Verse 7 could easily apply to David but in verse 8, was David ever invited by God to ask for the nations for his inheritance or the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession? David rather, struggled all his life to keep the Philistines at bay so verses 8 and 9 certainly could not apply to him.

The clues are in the New Testament. Verse 7 is quoted three times in the NT, and on each occasion, the words are linked with the Lord Jesus. Verse 9 likewise is quoted either directly or indirectly in the NT with each quotation referring to the Lord Jesus.

One wonders just what the Jew would make of this verse. They knew God only as Jehovah, the ever living one. We would know Him today as God the Father. They knew a little regarding God the Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned as early as Genesis 1:2

The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters.

They knew then of God the Almighty and of God the Spirit. But what did they know of a third person in the Godhead? Genesis 1:1 hints at such. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth". The word for "God" is ELOHIM. The Hebrew word is plural ie three or more, so there were at least three persons acting together as one when God worked in creation.

But see how quick is the response of Nathaniel to the Lord's omniscience in John chapter 1:

Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the king of Israel. The Jew should have been able to grasp that the Messiah was David's Lord and therefore a divine person.

"Thou art My Son" is first quoted in Acts 13:33 by Paul as he preached at Antioch in Pisidia, when it has reference to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. The second quotation is in Hebrews 1:5. In this chapter we learn of how much greater the Lord is than all the angels in heaven. In the book of Job, the angels are three times referred to as the sons of God but the Lord Jesus is **the** Son of God. He is the well beloved Son of God at Jordan and on the Holy Mount. His position as Son far exceeds that of the angels of God.

The third reference is again in Hebrews 5:5. This time the subject is priesthood. The One who said to Him, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek also said to Him, "Thou art My Son". His priesthood depended on His humanity as well as His deity.

When the Lord ascends the throne in Jerusalem, He only has to ask His Father and He will receive the nations for His inheritance.

Ps 72:11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

Daniel 7 also speaks of the dominion of the Lord over all the nations.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

His kingdom will be from shore to shore – it will reach to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Verse 9 speaks of the severity of his rule, especially true in the first days of His reign when He will have to subdue all His enemies. This rule with a rod of iron is three times referred to in the New Testament, each time in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 2:27, the overcomer in the church of Thyatira is given the same power over the nations as the Lord Himself received of His Father. In chapter 12:5, power over the nations is given to the man child of the woman. The babe that lay in Mary's arms will one day hold the nations in His hand. The third and final quotation of this verse is in Revelation 19:15, when the Lord comes out of heaven as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will come to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

How different these three quotations from the "gentle Jesus meek and mild"

that we imagine when we read the gospels. Even Paul speaks of the "meekness and gentleness of Christ". In the gospels, He is the Lamb of God. In the book of Revelation, men will tremble and fear as the wrath of the Lamb breaks forth upon them. Have you ever seen an angry lamb? The nations, in this coming day, will fear Him and will try to hide from His wrath.

#### **4. Vs 10 to 12 The voice of the Spirit as He gives advice regarding the Son**

It is not now God speaking in response to the rebellious nations or God speaking to His Son. It is the Spirit of God speaking as He directs David to write this last little section of the psalm. The Spirit is giving advice to men as to how they should treat the Son.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

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

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

This is good advice for all men of all ages. It was as true in David's day as it is in our day, and will still be true before the Lord's return to earth. Instead of the kings and the judges rebelling against Him, they should serve Him with fear. They are to kiss the Son before His anger is kindled against them. The last phrase is beautiful:

Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

The scholars tell us that in the two occurrences of the word "Son" in this psalm, two different words are used in the original language in which the psalm was written.

In "Thou art my Son", the word for son is the Hebrew word "Ben". We find it used in Genesis as Rachel gives birth to her younger son. She calls the child, "Benoni" – "The son of my sorrow". But Jacob called him, "Benjamin" – the son of my right hand. Both names are appropriate. As Rachel lay dying in her childbirth, the child was indeed the son of sorrow.

It is typical of the Lord Jesus. When we see the Lord Jesus upon the cross, we see Him as the son of sorrow, but when God raised Him up to sit on His throne, He became the son of the right hand.

The second occurrence of the word "son" in this psalm is in verse 12. "Kiss the Son". The word for "son" here is the Aramaic word "Bar". It is used in the description of Peter as "Simon Barjonah". Simon, the son of Jonah. Barnabus is the son of consolation. Blind Bartimeous was the son of Timeous and so on. One more occurrence is that of Barabbas – "the son of the father". We see the force of the name in the trial of the Lord Jesus. We read of Pilate giving the people a choice of Barabbas or Jesus. "Which of the twain will I release unto you?" Would it be Barabbas – a son of his father the devil, who was accused of three crimes – robbery, rebellion, and murder. Or would it be the three times acquitted Jesus, the son of the Father. We know the answer to the question.