

Psalm 2

A Study by John Hepp, Jr.

To the left below I quote Psalm 2 from the NIV. For each stanza I add (a) comments to the right, emphasizing its speaker(s) and titles for God and the King, (b) questions to be answered later.

Psalms 1 and 2 provide an important introduction to all the psalms. Psalm 1 describes an individual who is fruitful and successful because he delights in the LORD's instruction. Psalm 2 refers to the future inauguration of the LORD's worldwide kingdom. The title the LORD stands for His name Yahweh.

STANZA I

**1 Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The 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."**

COMMENTS

Earth's rulers speak
to each other,
leading their nations in
rebellion.
They plot to free themselves
from control by
the LORD and His Anointed One.

Questions

- Who are the LORD and His Anointed One?
- Why and how do the nations plot against them?
 - How does this relate to us?

STANZA II

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

COMMENTS

God in heaven speaks
to the nations
in anger.
In spite of their rebellion, He has
installed **His King** on Mt. Zion.

Questions

- What does God here call His Anointed One?
 - Where is this holy hill of Zion?
- When will God speak to the nations in anger?

S T A N Z A I I I

**7 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.
9 You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”**

Questions

- What does it mean that this Person becomes the LORD’s Son?
- When will He ask the Father for the nations and the earth to inherit?
 - Will He use violence in His kingdom?

C O M M E N T S

The LORD’s Anointed One (King) speaks to everyone.

He quotes the LORD’s decree making Him **His Son** (Heir) and offering Him absolute rule over the nations and the earth.

S T A N Z A I V

**10 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.**

Questions

- Will the nations ever submit to the Son?
- Do we need to fear the Son’s anger?
- How can we be sure of His protection?

C O M M E N T S

The prophet speaks to the rulers.

He warns them to submit to the **LORD’s Son** lest He destroy them.

Questions & Answers on Psalm 2

Question numbers do not correspond to verse numbers.

Stanza I, vv. 1–3

1. Who are the LORD and His Anointed One?

Here “the LORD” is spelled in all-capital letters, L a large cap and ORD small caps. This is a special name for God found in many Old Testament translations. It takes the place of the Hebrew covenant name for God, Yahweh. By making this substitution in English, most versions follow the Jewish reading custom. They did (do) not read God’s name but read “the LORD” instead.

“The LORD’s Anointed One” was a title for each king over God’s Old Testament kingdom on earth. They were anointed with oil as a symbol of God’s Holy Spirit giving them power and wisdom to rule (as described in Isa. 11:2). Several times, for example, the Bible records David’s calling Saul by that title (for example, 1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11). In Psalm 2:2 and other prophecies this title also referred to the future king of God’s kingdom when it gets restored.

The word in the Hebrew original translated “Anointed One” is *Mashiac*. The word with the same meaning in Aramaic is like *Messiah*; in Greek it is *Cristos*. For example, here in Psalm 2:2 the original Hebrew refers to the LORD’s *Mashiac*, but the Greek translation of it says the LORD’s *Cristos*. These same words are used often in the Old Testament and translated “Anointed One.” The Greek word *Cristos* is also common in the New Testament. But there most English versions do not translate it at all. Instead, they simply write the Greek word in English, *Christ*. For example, the first verse of the New Testament introduces us to *Jesus Christ*. This means that Jesus is the “Anointed One” predicted in Psalm 2 and other prophecies.

2. Why and how do the nations plot against the LORD and His Anointed One?

Why? Because fallen mankind has never liked God or His control. They hate Him.

How? They use many methods, including opposition to God’s people in the church and to His nation Israel. In the last days they will join their armed forces to attack, and will be defeated, at Armageddon.

3. How does this relate to us?

Above all, we wait for the Lord’s Anointed One to rule—and try to get others to do the same. In the past the United States of America was said to be “under God”; it granted considerable freedom to live and witness for Messiah. Now, however, it is becoming more opposed to Him and His followers. Whether free or opposed, we who obey Him as Leader aim to grow in grace and in knowledge of Him.

Stanza II, vv. 4–6

4. In this second stanza what does God call His Anointed One?

“My king,” that is, the king He has prepared. Scripture says that we who suffer with Him will reign with Him.

5. Where is this holy hill of Zion where He will rule?

It is in the Holy Land and often identified with Jerusalem. Old Testament prophecies consistently picture Zion as the capital of God’s future kingdom on earth. For example, “The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations...” (Isa. 2:3b–4a).

6. When will God speak to the nations in anger?

Apparently, when He gets ready to install His king. That time is described in the Book of Revelation, chapters 4–18. But nobody knows “the times or dates” except the Father Himself (Acts 1:7). Meanwhile, God is silent, giving the nations a chance to repent.

Stanza III, vv. 7–9**7. What does it mean that this Person becomes the Lord’s Son?**

Verses 8 and 9 make it clear that He becomes Son in order to inherit God’s creation—that is, to rule it. Hebrews 1:3–4 quotes from this part of Psalm 2, also from 2 Samuel 7. It shows that at least in one sense Jesus obtained His sonship as a human being. He will rule for God but do so as a Man (Psa. 8; Heb. 2).

8. When will He ask the Father for the nations and the earth to inherit?

As implied in the answer to question 6, it seems that the Father Himself will prompt Him to request His inheritance (see Acts 1:6–8). This has not happened yet. The kind of kingdom described in this Psalm 2 is obviously still future.

9. Will He use violence in His kingdom?

Yes, when necessary. Verse 9 says He “will rule them with an iron sceptre [and] dash them to pieces like pottery.” Many other prophecies agree. For example, Isaiah 11:4 says, “He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.” The apostle Paul says, “he will pay back trouble to those who trouble you” and “he will punish those who do not know God” (2 Thess. 1:5–9). The apostle John describes Him coming back to rule, seated on a white horse: “With justice he judges and makes war...Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty” (Rev. 19:11, 15).

Stanza IV, vv. 10–12**10. Will the nations ever submit to the Son?**

At least many will, since Psalm 2 says they are the inheritance He will rule over. Other prophecies agree. “In the last days,” says Isaiah, “all nations will stream to” the capital city of God’s kingdom. “Let us go up,” they will say; “He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths...He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples” (Isa. 2:2–4). Heaven will come to earth, says Revelation 21. Even then, the nations and their kings will continue to have glory (Rev. 21:24, 26). And “the leaves of the tree [of life] are for the healing of the nations” (22:2). In the Son’s glorious coming kingdom there will always be distinct kinds of people. They will not all be alike.

11. Do we need to fear the Son’s anger?

We do if we have not submitted to Him. “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire ...He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel....They will be punished with everlasting destruction...” (2 Thess. 1:7–9).

12. How can we be sure of His protection?

“Kiss the Son.” This is the kiss of submission. By thus coming to Him in repentance and submissive faith, we will find His favor rather than His wrath.