

Preaching the Psalms Series

(6)

Psalm 2

The Lord's Plan for the Human Race: The Rule of God's Son, the Savior of the World, Psalm 2:1-12

Psalm 2:1-12 (NASB)

¹ “Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

³ “Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!”

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.

⁵ Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying,

⁶ “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

⁷ “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.’

⁸ ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very*
ends of the earth as Your possession.’

⁹ ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like
earthenware.’”

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the
earth.

¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling.

¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in
Him!”

(Psalm 2:1-12) **Introduction:** A single word crosses our minds when we view the tragedies, evils, and heartbreaks that characterize our world: “*Why?*” Why does God permit evil and suffering in the world? Why does He allow human beings to stand as enemies of His—to curse and profane His holy name, to reject and rebel against Him? Why does God allow evildoers to continue? Why does He let innocent people suffer because of other people’s wickedness? Most people have asked these questions when observing painful oppression or unjust suffering.

“*Why?*” is the question that begins this most-quoted psalm in the New Testament (See Deeper Study # 1). In it, the Lord offers this response: the answer is not found by looking around at our world, but by looking forward to the fulfillment of God’s divine plan for the human race. Note that four voices are heard in this hymn.

This is, *The Lord's Plan for the Human Race: The Rule of God's Son, the Savior of the World*, [Psalm 2:1-12](#).

1. The people's rebellion against God (vv. 1-3).
2. The Lord's plan for the universe (vv. 4-6).
3. The Son's proclamation of the Lord's plan (decree): God's glorious promise to His Son (vv. 7-9).
4. The Lord's warning to the rulers and citizens of the world (vv. 10-12).

1. ([Psalm 2:1-3](#)) The people's rebellion against God.

[Psalm 2:1-3 \(NASB\)](#)

- ¹ Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?
² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"

Amazement at man's gall and God's patience prompted the author to write this prophetic psalm. [Acts 4:25](#) identifies the author as David, and his is the first voice heard in the psalm.

[Acts 4:25 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁵ "Who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?'"

He speaks for all people who are astonished at man's boldness in rising up against God and at God's seeming silence at human rebellion against Him. ([vv. 1-3](#)).

[Psalm 2:1-3 \(NASB\)](#)

- ¹ Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?
² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"

David asked:

⇒ Why do people rebel against God when they stand no chance of prevailing against Him?

⇒ Why does God permit them to continue in opposition to Him?

Four observations perplexed Israel's king, facts that often bewilder us as well:

a. The nations rage against Him ([v. 1](#)^a).

[Psalm 2:1 \(NASB\)](#)

- ¹ Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?

Heathen or *nations* (**goy**) describes people united by geographic boundaries, a common language, a political government or system, and/or common ethnicity. Throughout the Old Testament it usually refers to the Gentile nations—those who do not

recognize and worship the Lord. They *rage* against the Lord the same way angry waves violently pound against the shoreline in a fierce storm.

b. The people plot against Him (v. 1^b).

Psalm 2:1 (NASB)

¹ Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?

People or *peoples* (**leowm**) emphasizes the individuals or tribes of individuals who form a nation. The use of the plural form in this verse stresses how people of various nations will cross geographic, political, and ethnic lines to unite together against the Lord. Even enemies will set aside their differences and national interests to form an alliance against God.

Imagine or *plot* (**hagah**) is the same word as *meditate* in **Psalm 1:2**.

Psalm 1:2 (NASB)

² “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

It portrays the peoples putting their heads together to form a strategy against the Lord. Note the contrast with the blessed individual of **Psalm 1**.

He or she meditates on God’s (Word) law and delights in it. The rebellious person despises it and meditates on how to escape it.

The peoples’ efforts to rise up in rebellion against God are all in *vain*. They are wasting their time and energy, for they cannot succeed. The psalmist is amazed that people actually think they can defeat God!

c. The rulers oppose Him and His Anointed One: A picture of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 2).

Psalm 2:2 (NASB)

² “The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against **His Anointed, saying.”**

Leaders of nations stir their people to rise up with them in rebellion against the Lord. **His Anointed** or **Anointed One** (**mashiach**) means one who is consecrated by the Lord to a specific office. It is used in the Old Testament of priests (**Leviticus 4:3; Leviticus 8:12**), prophets (**1 Kings 19:16**), and kings (**1 Samuel 24:6; 2 Samuel 12:7**).

Leviticus 4:3 (NASB)

³ “If the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD a bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.”

Leviticus 8:12 (NASB)

¹² “Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.”

1 Kings 19:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.”

1 Samuel 24:6 (NASB)

⁶“So he said to his men, “Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD'S anointed.”

2 Samuel 12:7 (NASB)

⁷“Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.’”

Transliterated as *messiah*, it finds its ultimate fulfillment in the promised Redeemer and Deliverer, Jesus Christ. In [Daniel 9:25](#), Jesus is specifically called the *Messiah*.

Daniel 9:25 (NASB)

²⁵“So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until **Messiah** the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.”

Christ is the New Testament translation of this word. To whom does it refer in this psalm?

⇒Some scholars and commentators believe that [Psalm 2](#) was a royal psalm used in the coronation of Hebrew kings. In their opinion the psalm “*refers to any anointed king who was seated on the throne of David.*” Most also recognize the prophetic connection to Christ.

⇒Many others believe that Christ is exclusively in view here, making it truly a *Messianic Psalm*. This view finds its major support in the context and preceding verses of [Psalm 2](#), and in the clear statements of the New Testament ([Acts 2:29-36](#); [Hebrews 1:5](#); [Hebrews 5:5](#)).

Acts 2:29-36 (NASB)

²⁹“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.”

³⁰“And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,

³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.”

³²“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.”

³³“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.”

³⁴ “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:
“THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD”, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
³⁵ UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.””

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made
Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Hebrews 1:5 (NASB)

⁵ “For to which of the angels did He ever say, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY
I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”? And again, “I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM
AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”?”

Hebrews 5:5 (NASB)

⁵ “So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He
who said to Him, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN
YOU.””

Peter and John recognized this psalm’s fulfillment in the conspiring together of
Jewish and Roman officials to crucify Christ ([Acts 4:25-28](#); [Matthew 26:47-
27:26](#)).

Acts 4:25-28 (NASB)

²⁵ “Who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your
servant, said, ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES
DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?’

²⁶ ‘THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE
RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND
AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’

²⁷ “For 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,

²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

A future fulfillment will also take place when Christ returns to earth
([Revelation 13:12-14](#); [Revelation 19:15-21](#)).

Revelation 13:12-14 (NASB)

¹² “He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the
earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was
healed.

¹³ He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to
the earth in the presence of men.

¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was
given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the
earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come
to life.”

Revelation 19:15-21 (NASB)

¹⁵ “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God,

¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.”

¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

d. The citizens all have one goal: To break the rule of God and His commandments (chains) over them (v. 3).

Psalm 2:3 (NASB)

³ “Let us tear **their** fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!”

The unholy objective of the nations, peoples, and rulers is astoundingly bold: they passionately desire to break free from God, to lose themselves from His authority over their lives.

Also note the plural pronoun “**their**” in their statements. They are specifically speaking of any dominion of God in their lives that is exerted through His Anointed One—His Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Rebellious people hate God, His Son, and His commandments. They view themselves as slaves chained against their will to Divine laws that restrain them from living as they choose. This is the subtle, deceitful strategy of Satan. The cunning whisper of the serpent in the ear of Eve suggested to her that she was bound to God’s enslaving command not to eat of the one forbidden tree.

Satan’s temptation ignited the fleshly desire of Eve’s sinful nature. She wanted to do as she pleased, without the influence or interference of God ([Genesis 3:1-6](#)), and thus, sin entered the human race.

Genesis 3:1-6 (NASB)

¹ “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not

eat from any tree of the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

³but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

⁵"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes" will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

Thought 1. Are God's commandments truly enslaving? Are they indeed chains and ropes that bind us and prevent us from enjoying life? It is crucial that we understand the purpose of God's laws and the blessings that obeying them brings to our lives.

God's precepts are born out of His great love for humanity, and out of His desire for only the best in our lives. His commands are boundaries that He established to protect us from the deadly dangers of sin. Sin destroys lives. It wrecks marriages, breaks up homes, and brings immeasurable heartache and pain to our lives. Financial ruin, loss of employment, shattered dreams, broken hearts, injury, disease, and death are found in its path.

People who defiantly climb over the fences of God's commands to play in the streets of sin are the ones who are truly enslaved. They may think they are free to do as they choose, but they find themselves inescapably chained to their sin and its torturing consequences.

True freedom is found within the perimeter of God's commands. There we are free from the wages of sin. There we do not have to worry about getting caught. There we do not have to be careful to keep our stories straight. There we are safe from both the natural and eternal consequences of harmful, sinful choices. There we are free to enjoy peaceful, prosperous, blessed lives. The truth is, it is *sin* that is enslaving and God's commands that are truly liberating.

2 Peter 2:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸"For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

¹⁹promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved."

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NASB)

¹²"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

James 1:14-16 (NASB)

14 “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.”

James 1:21-25 (NASB)

21 “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”

Psalms 119:45 (NASB)

45 “And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.”

Thought 2. It is always vain to think that we can prevail against God and His plan. How foolish we are when we try to oppose Him! What is it that so deceives people into senselessly thinking they stand a chance against the all-powerful Creator of the universe?

The answer is PRIDE. Pride is the devastating sin of Satan, and it is first on the list of sins that God especially hates ([Proverbs 6:16-17](#)).

Proverbs 6:16-17 (NASB)

16 “There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood.”

Pride—the desire to rule our own lives, to topple God and His authority from the throne of our lives—is the root of all opposition to Him and disobedience to His commands.

Furthermore, it is absurd for a group of people or a confederation of nations to think that God can be overcome by their efforts to erase His name from society or by destroying His Word and/or His people. When the Jewish council was plotting to execute the apostles for preaching the gospel, Gamaliel, a Pharisee, spoke words of wisdom that diffused the situation:

Acts 5:38-39 (NASB)

³⁸ “So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;
³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”

Those who rise up in opposition to God will always suffer defeat. As this psalm teaches, it may not come immediately, but it will—in God’s good time—always come.

Proverbs 6:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ “There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

¹⁷ Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood.”

Proverbs 16:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

Isaiah 14:12-15 (NASB)

¹² “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!

¹³ “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north.’

¹⁴ ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’

¹⁵ “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.”

Thought 3. Any opposition to Jesus Christ is opposition to God. We live in a world that believes a person can have a relationship with God apart from Christ and that it is possible to worship God without belief in Christ. But there is no true worship of God apart from a relationship with His Son:

John 14:6 (NASB)

⁶ “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”