

Hope in Troubled Times

The Wrong Path

Psalm 2:1-12

Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Scripture

“Where’s Susan?”

That’s the innocent question Joshua Rogers’s daughter asked as they were reading *The Last Battle*, the final book in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C. S. Lewis. Susan is the child queen who helped her siblings save Narnia from the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. However, she is conspicuously absent from an early scene in *The Last Battle* that includes every character who traveled to Narnia as a child. Rogers writes:

“Daddy, where is she?” my daughter asked again.

“We’ll see,” I said, with a tinge of sadness.

Although I’ve read *The Chronicles of Narnia* dozens of times since I was a boy, Susan’s tragic end gets me every time. The book eventually reveals that Susan grows up and outgrows her love for Narnia. We get few details about her until the end of the book, when High King Peter responds to an inquiry into his sister’s whereabouts.

“My sister Susan,” answered Peter shortly and gravely, “is no longer a friend of Narnia.”

“Yes,” said Eustace, “and whenever you’ve tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says, ‘What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children.’”¹

Susan believed that she had outgrown Narnia. She thought that the great lion king Aslan was wonderful for her

¹ Joshua Rogers, “The Overlooked Hope for Narnia’s Susan Pevensie,” *Christianity Today* (3-17-2016).

when she was a child. But now that she had grown up, she left Aslan and Narnia behind. She just did not believe it anymore.

Many learn about the great king Jesus when they are children. But when they grew up, they leave Jesus and the things of God behind.

Worse yet, many who oppose Jesus band together in nations and push back against anything having to do with Jesus or God or Christianity.

This is what Psalm 2 addresses. Psalm 2 shows us the path of rebellion and its consequences.

Please follow along as I read Psalm 2:1-12:

- ¹Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?**
- ²The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed,
saying,**
- ³“Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”**
- ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.**
- ⁵Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,**
- ⁶“As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”**
- ⁷I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.**
- ⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations
your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.**
- ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron**

**and dash them in pieces like
a potter's vessel.”**

**¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.**

**¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.**

**¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.**

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

(Psalm 2:1-12)

Introduction

Last week we looked at Psalm 1. This week we are looking at Psalm 2. There was a time when both psalms were joined together and considered as one psalm. However, at some point in time (I don't know when), they were separated into the two psalms that we now have in our Bibles.

Commentator Warren Wiersbe observes that “Psalm 1 emphasizes God's law while Psalm 2 focuses on prophecy. The people in Psalm 1 delight in the law, but the people in Psalm 2 defy the law. Psalm 1 begins with a beatitude and Psalm 2 ends with a beatitude. Psalm 1 is never quoted in the New Testament, while Psalm 2 is quoted or alluded to at least eighteen times, more than any single psalm.”²

Last week I said that the blessed man of Psalm 1 is the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 2 shows us the worldwide revolt against him. Let us now turn to Psalm 2 to observe this.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 16.

Lesson

Psalm 2:1-12 shows us the path of rebellion and its consequences.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Nations Revolt (2:1-3)
2. The Father Laughs (2:4-6)
3. The Son Rules (2:7-9)
4. The Nations Commanded (2:10-12)

I. The Nations Revolt (2:1-3)

First, the nations revolt.

David is identified (in Acts 4:25) as the author of Psalm 2. He writes in verses 1-3, **“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.’ ”**

Some scholars have argued that David wrote this when he was crowned as king. After all, kings were anointed when they were coronated. So, the scholars say, this psalm is about the surrounding nations raging against God and David.

However, while there may have been some truth to the rage of the surrounding nations against David and his God, the fact is that this psalm points us to David's Greater Son, Jesus. It is, therefore, a truly Messianic psalm.

The Hebrew word for **“Anointed”** is transliterated as “Messiah,” and in Greek, the word is *Christos* or, as we would say, “Christ.”

Moreover, I have already said that Psalm 2 is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament, with about eighteen

quotes or allusions.

Not long after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter and John were preaching about Jesus and his resurrection in the temple in Jerusalem. By this time about five thousand people had come to believe in Jesus. The religious leaders arrested Peter and John and placed them into custody. However, the next day they had to release them. Meanwhile, Peter and John's friends were praying for their release.

When they were released, Peter and John went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’ ”
(Acts 4:25-26)

As they continued their prayer, the Christians identified this rebellion with the conspiracy of "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel" against Jesus (Acts 4:27).

All over the world, there is increasing opposition against God and Christ. Growing numbers of people profess atheism or other religions. To be sure, Christianity is growing, but atheism and other religions are growing faster. The world is in revolt against God and his Christ.

II. The Father Laughs (2:4-6)

Second, the Father laughs.

The psalmist writes in verse 4, **“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.”** This is the only place in the Bible where God is said to laugh. But this is not the laughter of delight, say of a father with his children. It is instead the laughter of derision, the laughter of mockery.

God is not afraid of those who oppose him. He doesn't sit in heaven wondering whether he has enough on his side to combat those who revolt against him. He doesn't order Gabriel to go and count the hosts of heaven to see if he has enough to overpower his rebellious creatures.

The psalmist goes on to say in verses 5-6, **“Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ‘As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.’ ”** God wants those in revolt against him, those in rebellion against him, to know that he has appointed Jesus as the supreme and sovereign king over all.

World leaders may think that they can abolish Christ and his God. But, they cannot. The Father laughs at their inept revolt against him. One commentator says that Spurgeon pointed out that in the late third and early fourth centuries the emperor Diocletian (245–313 AD), a great foe of Christianity, struck a medal which bore the inscription: “The name of Christianity being extinguished.” Diocletian extended the frontier of the empire westward into Spain, where he erected two monuments proclaiming that Christianity had been extinguished.

But Diocletian had not abolished Christianity. On the contrary, at the time Christianity was growing stronger than ever, and eventually, it triumphed over Caesar's throne.

Spurgeon quotes an earlier preacher, William S. Plumer:

Of thirty Roman emperors, governors of provinces and others in high office, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and bitterness in persecuting the early Christians, one became speedily deranged after some atrocious cruelty, one was slain by his own son, one became blind, the eyes of one started out of his head, one was drowned, one was strangled, one died in a miserable captivity, one fell dead in a manner that will not bear recital, one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians were put to death because they could not abide the stench that filled his room, two committed suicide, a third attempted it but had to call for help to finish the work, five were assassinated by their own people or servants, five others died the most miserable and excruciating deaths, several of them having an untold complication of diseases, and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners.

Among these was Julian the Apostate. In the days of his prosperity, he is said to have pointed his dagger to heaven, defying the Son of God whom he commonly called the Galilean. But when he was wounded in battle, he saw that all was over with him, and he gathered up his clotted blood and threw it into the air, exclaiming, “Thou has conquered, O thou Galilean.”³

The Father laughed, and the Father continues to laugh.

III. The Son Rules (2:7-9)

Third, the Son rules.

The psalmist now has Jesus speaking, and he begins by saying in verse 7a, **“I will tell of the decree.”** Having been

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 24–25.

installed as King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus will tell all those who are in revolt against him and his Father what the Father has decreed, that is, determined, from all eternity. He will say in verse 7b, **“The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”** According to Acts 13:33, this is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus, when he was **“begotten”** from the tomb and raised in glory.

But Jesus goes on to say what the Father has said to him in verses 8-9, **“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”** The Father has promised Jesus complete victory over all the nations. You may remember that Satan promised to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him, but Jesus refused to do so (Matthew 4:8-11). Jesus knew that the Father would give it to him and that he would crush all those in opposition to him, and receive all who were in submission to him.

The Bible conference speaker, Harry Ironside, wrote, “I never come to a missionary meeting but I feel as though there ought to be written right across the entire platform, ‘Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.’” He continued, “It is the will of God that his Son should have a great heritage out of the heathen world, the godless Gentiles.”⁴

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our task is to make the name of Jesus known. Whether it be in our families, our neighborhoods, or to the ends of the earth, let each one of us be very active in the missionary enterprise of our church.

⁴ H. A. Ironside, *Studies on Book One of the Psalms* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1952), 21.

IV. The Nations Commanded (2:10-12)

And fourth, the nations commanded.

When we come to the last section, we are surprised by its tone. We have seen the nations revolt against God in verses 1-3, the Father laughing at them in verses 4-6, and then Son ruling in verses 7-9. One expects some statement now about the final destruction of those in revolt against God. Instead, our gracious, loving God gives an opportunity for repentance. The psalmist writes in verses 10-12b, **“Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.”**

It is important to note that God’s opportunity to repent is given by way of five commands: **“be wise”**; **“be warned”**; **“Serve the Lord with fear”**; **“rejoice with trembling”**; and **“Kiss the Son.”** God commands all in opposition to turn from their inevitable, terrible destiny and be saved. To **“kiss the Son”** in this context is a sign of submission and allegiance. In the ancient world, vassal rulers would show their submission and allegiance to their king by kissing his hand or cheek.

How kind of God to give an opportunity for repentance to any who are in opposition to him. If you are in opposition to God, if you are in revolt and rebellion against God, he commands you also to repent. You may say, “Well, I am not really in revolt against God. Like Susan in *The Last Battle*, I have just outgrown the things of God. I just don’t think much about God at all.” My friend, let me warn you that indifference to God *is* rebellion against God. Repent while you still have time **“lest he [that is, the Son] be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.”**

The psalmist then concludes with a wonderful promise in verse 12c, **“Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”** If you are in revolt against God and you do repent of all of your sins, and thereby **take refuge in him**, you will be **blessed**. That is, you will have a new status before God. You will be in Christ, and you will belong to God, and your destiny with God in heaven is secure for all eternity.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of rebellion in Psalm 2:1-12, let us be sure that we are taking refuge in Jesus.

In the fall of 1943 German soldiers began rounding up Jews in Italy and deporting them by the thousands to concentration camps. Simultaneously a mysterious and extremely deadly disease called “Syndrome K” swept through the city of Rome causing dozens of patients to be admitted to the Fate-benefratelli Hospital. The details of the disease were sketchy, but the symptoms included persistent coughing, paralysis, and painful death. The disease was said to be highly contagious.

When German soldiers went into the hospital to round up Jews, the doctors told them that the coughing patients behind some of the closed doors had “Syndrome K.” The terrified German soldiers stayed out of those rooms. It turned out that “Syndrome K” was a made-up disease. Possibly, as many as a hundred Jews found refuge in the hospital and were saved.⁵

Jesus is the only refuge that will protect you from perishing eternally in hell. Turn to Jesus today, if you have never done so, and find refuge in him. Amen.

⁵ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2020/february/syndrome-k-fake-disease-that-saved-lives.html>.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org