

Psalms: Book One (Part Two)

Why Do the Nations Rage?

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 10-Apr-15; Sermon #1261A

We began this week of Unleavened Bread with the Israelites walking out of Egypt, a free people. They did this through the power and the watchfulness of God. They left in haste. In fact, hurrying out of their homes to gather in Rameses so fast that they did not even have time to allow their bread to rise. There just was not time to wait around and do all those things that they would normally have done. They just had to eat unleavened bread those seven days, which we commemorate today.

Once they got to Rameses and had gathered there as a people, they immediately plunged into the wilderness on the evening of Abib 15 or Nisan 15. Those names are the same, Abib and Nisan, they mean the same period of time. One is Hebrew and the other is, I believe, Aramaic, from a word they brought back from Babylon.

On the 6th day out of Rameses, however, they ran into a huge problem. The army of Pharaoh could be seen closing in on them from the west. They were themselves roughly heading east, maybe a little bit southeast, through a wadi, a dry riverbed that had been cut through the hills, and before them was the Red Sea. So in essence they were trapped on all sides. To the sides were these steep hillsides, maybe even something like canyon walls, so they could not scale them. Not a couple million people, that just was not feasible.

To the rear came the Egyptian army, not only Pharaoh himself in his splendid chariot, but many other chariots. The indication in the Hebrew is that not only did Pharaoh bring his 600 best chariots, but he brought the whole chariot core with them. So there were hundreds and hundreds of chariots thundering over the sands of this area that they were in in Egypt, northeast Egypt. And of course to the front with salt water too deep to cross, waves pounding on the beach.

We would say today they were in a pickle. It was an impossible situation from a human point of view and they needed somebody to rescue them. Please turn to Exodus 14. There is one point here that we really need to understand.

Exodus 14:1-4 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. [Notice how very explicit God was in His direction here, they were supposed to go and camp at a specific spot.] For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.' [this next verse is the one I was aiming for here] Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so.

This tells us explicitly, it is black and white, you cannot get any other indication from this, God Himself led them to this very spot. He *purposely* put them in the pickle. They were trapped at His command. He wanted them there and He wanted them there for a reason. He said He would harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would pursue the Israelites. He was orchestrating all of this. He was orchestrating the Israelites. He was orchestrating the Egyptians, and Pharaoh in particular. And He said He would do this for two reasons.

One, to kind of say, "nah, nah, nah, nah, nah" to Pharaoh, He would gain honor. Oh, He would not do it that way, but what He was doing is He was telling Pharaoh that He is the boss. He would gain honor over Pharaoh and show that He was really the great King. Secondly, He would show both Pharaoh and Egypt not only who was in control here, but who was *God*. Pharaoh remember was considered a god. And our God was saying, "We can't have any of this foolishness. We have to make sure once and for all that Pharaoh and the Egyptians know who the true God is." So He did.

Now the Hebrew in verse 4 says something like this, and it is a play on words. God says, "I will make Pharaoh's heart heavy with stubbornness, and I will be heavy with glory over Pharaoh."

We have the term, "Who's the heavy?" in this thing, who is the leader? Who is the one that has got all the power? Well, God said it would be shown that He was heavy with glory when He comes out the other side as the victor. So, victory over Pharaoh would show who the real sovereign is—the real sovereign God.

Let us go down to verse 13 and we will read through verse 18. In the meantime, Pharaoh has come up behind them, scared all the Israelites. They are silly with fear, they are complaining, "Moses, why have you brought us into the wilderness to die here? We could have died just as easily in Egypt." So they are complaining to Moses. They are accusing Moses, they are accusing God, and they are just in an uproar, in a turmoil. They think that Pharaoh is going to come down on them and just slaughter them with all his chariots, all his troops, all the horsemen, that whole huge army that was behind them. So this is the response.

Exodus 14:13-18 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still [because they were churning, it was turmoil. They were running around. What are we going to do? Everything was in confusion.], and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." [You shall be calm, you shall be collected, you will watch God do what God does, which is save His people.] And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

So these are the responses of Moses and God, first to faithless Israel, and then to faithful Moses. Moses responds in faith. His main concern was to keep the people calm, but he also told them very clearly that God would save them. Just watch, watch what God does, because behind this is the understanding that they had seen all of these things happen in Egypt. They knew the power of God, that God could do anything He pleased.

He could turn the water to blood, He could bring insects, He could bring disease, He could bring hail with lightning, He could bring death on the firstborn. He could do whatever He wanted. Nothing was too hard for Him to do. And so if Pharaoh had brought his army with his 600 chief chariots and all the drivers and all those other chariots and all the horsemen and all the soldiers that were pounding down on their position and ready to strike—that is no big thing for Him either. He could wipe them away in a second. He could do it with the Angel of Death or He can do it some other way and He decided to do it some other way. He had the sea there, great power in that sea, and He would use it.

So He responds to Moses. Like I said, Moses' response was faithful, but it was like, "Hey everybody, hold on, let's just watch and see what God's going to do here." And He says, "Moses, come on! You've seen Me work, get these people moving!" Moses wanted them to stop. God wanted them move. "Why are we wasting time here, Moses?" So His answer to Moses is like, "Come on, Moses, you've seen Me at work all this time, all these months, you know the drill, get the people moving. I already told you I would defeat Pharaoh." He had said that before earlier in the chapter. "Remember, I'm going to do all this stuff, so let's get going. Now is the time! No time to waste. Move!"

So as the holy day began, which we are observing today, Israel was once again preparing to leave Egypt and this time for good. They had still been in Egypt all this time, all walking through this whole week, they were just in the wilderness area of Egypt, trying to get to Sinai, which was still Egyptian territory really. It was one of those things that they had copper mines and such there, they were not actively there because it was wilderness, but still the real border was right there at the Red Sea. So they were about to leave Egypt for good.

So what did God do? He moved the pillar of fire to the rear, protecting Israel from the advancing Egyptians. It was darkness and terror on that side, facing the Egyptians, and it was light to the Israelites on the other side because they were preparing to pick up and go, to leave. It is almost a mirror image of what they did on the first holy day. But now they are about to leave Egypt altogether and they are, of course, in a different place, but God is going to once again show His power over Egypt, over Pharaoh, to let them be completely free.

Then it says, as we go on a little further, that He caused a wind to blow all night and this drove the sea back, and once it was driven back it dried the land over which they would walk, creating a causeway through the sea. They would drive their wagons, their cattle, whatever else they had with them, on dry land. There would be no problem. They would not get stuck in the mud. It was a dry, safe, clean path. God opened this up for them. He thought of everything, left nothing to chance. And while it was still dark, they began to cross. It is really interesting, I do not know all the ramifications of this, but they left in the dark—both times. They could not see, as it were, where they were going and so God led them by the hand in the dark.

Now let us see how this all worked out.

Exodus 14:23-28 And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. [Notice that *all*, the whole body of them got into the Red Sea along this causeway.] Now it came to pass, in the morning watch [The morning watch was the last three hours of the watch, overnight. So, like I said, it was still dark. This was pre-dawn.], that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the

Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.

So while the Israelites walk across this dry causeway, God stays behind to harry the Egyptians, to slow them down, to keep them from plunging into the sea after the stragglers. He made their chariots hard to drive, and some commentators think that perhaps God allowed some of the water to start seeping back in along the road that they were taking—the dry causeway was now getting wet again—and it was causing them to drive in mud. And the mud, being sticky and all that way mud is when it starts to get deep, they could not drive their chariots quickly and it would very easily allow the wheels to pop off the axles.

He could have done it another way, that is just what they are thinking, to try a naturalistic way of working. It might have been that He just went down there with a bunch of angels and said, "Hey, start popping wheels," and all these chariots just fell down in the dirt and could not go anywhere. They were sleds now. Maybe, maybe not. But it is interesting that He went back there and He kind of had fun confusing that Egyptian army. He was going to show them, each individual Egyptian in that army, that he was at God's mercy at any time because He was in control of this situation.

He made the horses rear and balk. He put fear into the men and they soon became aware that pursuing Israel was a bad idea, but they were already between the walls of water, and when they came to this decision that they needed to get out of there, they turned and they fled as fast as they could back toward the western shore. But the Hebrew says that when they turned to flee back west, that the water began coming back in *from the west*, in their faces, so that they were here marching east, God harries them, they turn around to face the west to get out, and they could see the walls of water just bending in over there fellows who were in front of them, and the wave came right at them, in their faces. There was no escape. So it says there none lived to take the news back to the capital city, that the entire army was dead. "Snap" just like that. All those beautiful 600 chariots, all the other ones that were not as beautiful, all the horseman, all the horses, all the soldiers, everyone dead, not a one left standing, gone.

That is pretty good proof of who is in control, do you not think? When your army, several million Israelites, all of them are standing on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, no one hurt, no one is bloody, everybody is cheering, but on the other side, nobody—total devastation. This is not even decimation. This is absolute annihilation. There is a point in this, which if you remember as we go through it a little bit later, has a point in what we will go through later.

God proved Himself without a shadow of a doubt to be the Great God. Of course, the Egyptians all died. They could not go and tell anybody about this because they were all dead. They were floating in the ocean or had sunk down by the weight of their armor to the bottom. Who could tell? Israel. Israel knew who the Great God was and who was sovereign, who had control over the waters of the sea. That He could rip it open with the wind and He could send it back crashing down on the heads of the pursuing army. All He did was say, "Moses, lift your rod." "Moses, again, lift your rod," and it was done.

That is an amazing thing to think about. We probably do not think about it enough. But as we go through the Bible, we find out that the Israelites, at least those who were thinking about what God had done in the past, they are constantly coming back to this. God parted the sea, and the people went through on dry land and all made it! And all the enemy died. It is incredible! If God can do that, what can He not do? Nothing! He could do anything. He can do anything for us.

So God proved that He was sovereign over all things. Nothing could stop Him. Nothing could countermand His will. He was ruler over all his creation. He was ruler over nations, ruler over armies, rulers over all the peoples of the earth. He cannot be defeated. He is Almighty God. That means something. All mighty. He is omnipotent. There is no power that reaches even close to His own. And so any enemy is weak and essentially powerless when facing Him. That is something we have to understand.

Let us move forward here into Exodus 15. I want you to see the Israelites' reaction in this Song of Moses. Because (whether this was written later or not, I do not think so, it seems like it was written immediately, if we take the Bible literally), they got it, they got the point.

Exodus 15:1-18 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying:

"I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army, He has cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sink to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence, You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth your wrath; it consumed them like stubble, and with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together; the flood stood upright like a heap; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You and Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation. The people will hear and be afraid; sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Eden will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, until Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over whom You have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

As we go forward into Psalm 2, I want you to think about all of the echoes that we hear of this in that chapter. The phrasing is very close. The theme of this Song of Moses is *God is sovereign*. God is overall, God is almighty. God controls everything. And even though Pharaoh can say I will do this and I will do that and I will make myself wonderful and glorious, God says, "No. I'm just going to crush you like a bug." And so they say there, as we get through verses 11-13, the pronoun changes from I, I from Pharaoh, to you Lord, you Lord, you Lord. You did this, You did that, You did this all these things and it came out right for Your people. It is a counter to what Pharaoh says. Pharaoh says, "I'm going to do this, I'm going to win." And God says, "No, there is no way. You're going to die."

So God's response here is that He is going to prove Himself greater than Pharaoh and greater than the nations, greater than all the people. Nothing, no one, even the great kings of the earth, can stand before Him. And beyond that, not just as a man of war, but He is also a ruler and guide of His people. So He is going to lead them and protect them, direct them and save them. And it is something, in reading this story and reading the poem, reading this song, that we can understand and take to the bank because the Bible consistently pounds on this very point, time after time after time. And it is hard to get through your thick skulls that God is superior to *all* things, and His plans, whatever they are, are going to come to pass.

So we do not need to worry. It is not just stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. It is get moving! Tell the people to move forward. We do not need to worry, just keep walking the path that God has blown with His mighty wind.

Now, this story fits splendidly with Psalm 2, which as I talked about last time, is the second half of the introduction to Psalms: Book One. And we are going to see these same themes pop out in spades as we finish laying the groundwork for this Book One. And it is just incredible. The psalmist hit you with the two big themes that you need to know as you begin. I want to just read Psalm 1 so you get refreshed on what is in that psalm. This is blessed and happy is the man. But remember some of the other little points that we brought out here.

Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord [Remember I said that law means instruction here and instruction in general, everything that God teaches. That is our delight.], in His law he meditates day and night.

It has got to be something that is constantly on our minds, we are constantly mulling over. We are thinking about how to apply it, we are thinking about how to grow in it. We are thinking about how to overcome those things that hold us back from from doing well, doing good. And then it says, this kind of person

Psalm 1:3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, . . .

Remember I said it was not just planted, but the implication is *transplanted*. It was taken out of a field or taken out of a forest and *put* in a specific place beside these rivers of waters so it could be fed, it could be watered.

Psalm 1:3 . . . that bring forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper.

So the good soil that God plants you in, the nourishment from the river (remember living waters of God's Spirit?), those things help the tree to bring forth fruit, and if the tree remains faithful and continues in the way, he is going to be constantly prospering. And there is an indication here that in his leaf not withering, he is going to have eternal life.

Psalm 1:4-5 The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

The sinners, the ungodly, are going to meet their end like a desiccated piece of vegetable matter, a tumbleweed, and they are going to end up, as we see, being burned up.

Psalm 1:6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous [He knows us, He knows our way and He is following and watching over and guiding us.], but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Remember I said as we were closing last time, that this is an indication that people who try to go it on their own, to go "my way," like Frank Sinatra said, those kind of people are going to end up going down the path of self-destruction. It does not work. You have got to go down the path with God, otherwise you are not going to get to the place you want to go.

Now on to Psalm 2. Let us go ahead and read this one in full as well just so we get the flow and get the idea of it and then we will pick it apart.

Psalm 2:1 Why do the nations rage, and the people plot of a vain thing?

Let me read that differently because I want you to get the sense of it. "Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing!?! " That is the way you have got to think of it. You are astounded. What in the world are they thinking?

Psalm 2:2-12 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'" Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges 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, when

His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm, which may have been performed as part of the Israelite coronation ceremony. There are ways to look at this psalm as if the Lord is the Lord as we understand Him, and the My Son or the Anointed, is the anointed king of Israel. So there is a little bit of that physical understanding of this psalm, but it works far, far better when we think of the Lord as the One we know as the Father, and the Anointed as the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Son. I am not going to talk about the physical aspects of that very much because we are more interested in the spiritual ramifications of this.

We saw in Psalm 1 that it concentrates on those two kinds of people. There are the righteous and there are the ungodly, and they walk two different paths. One walks a path that is God's way, God's instruction, God's law, and the other, they walk a path of their own making. And at the end of those two paths there are different outcomes. The righteous, who go along the path of the way of the Lord, end up with eternal life. They are prosperous, they bear fruit, God knows them, they know God, and we know from John 17:3 that eternal life is to know the Father and the Son. That is all very important.

But the ungodly, they walk along this passive path of their own choosing. They go hither and yon, they do whatever they want, they do not follow a code unless it is their own, but that is devised by themselves and it is flawed and as we see, the end of that is death. They will perish, there is no future in it. That is what happens in Psalm 1. So it is concentrating on these two things, these two different ways, these two paths, two rewards. It also concentrates on the righteous going along the path, keeping God's law. God's instruction, constantly in mind. The emphasis is on the law. Remember, I said that *torah* was the big key word.

The second half of the introduction, Psalm 2, focuses the reader on the object of Christian life, on the person that is the goal, on the person, the actor, who makes everything happen, and that is the Son, the Anointed, the King, the Judge. And because of this, because it focuses on the Son, it also focuses on sovereignty. That the Son has control over everything. And we see that this has been given. Remember when He was about to rise to heaven, Jesus said

all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. That is kind of a reflection of this psalm.

So let us just make sure we understand that the first psalm focuses on keeping God's Word in mind. The second psalm focuses on keeping the Son in mind and knowing the Son. It teaches that no matter what is going on in the world, no matter how many kings are agitating, how many nations are rebelling against God, He will have the final say, just as He did in Egypt. Because at the Red Sea, He is going to win—no matter what. It is a foregone conclusion. You cannot defeat God. We would be fools.

That is how I read verse 1. We would be fools to think that we could put our trust in anything other than God and win. It is stupid. It is idiotic. It is insane, truly! We are out of our minds if we think something can beat God. The reality is that we trust Him wholeheartedly in everything—no matter what. Whatever the circumstance is, if we trust Him we are promised blessing. Even if the whole world is against us, They will still win. We may die, but we still win. God is stronger than death.

Recall that the key word in Psalm 1 is *torah*, law, which means instruction in general. The key word in Psalm 2 is anointed, Messiah in Hebrew. This kind of goes into my dad's sermons. This implies the sanctification, because anointed means to be set apart, of Jesus in all of His offices to bring about God's ends. So it implies not just Jesus as Son, which is what is highlighted in this particular psalm, that He is the Son, as well as King, because He has been set on the throne by the Father. But also Servant, like is shown in the book of Mark; Savior, as shown in all the gospels that He is Savior; Redeemer, Mediator as shown in Hebrews; Intercessor, shown everywhere, particularly Romans 8 and in the book of Hebrews; Judge, which is shown in a lot of places; warrior, like we saw in Exodus 14 and 15; Shepherd, which we see a lot in John 10, He is the Good Shepherd; of course Bridegroom shown in many parables, and in Revelation 19 He is shown as the bridegroom; and on top of all of that, His sanctification as God, which covers everything.

Of course He has always been God. But this puts him in a slightly different position because now He has been anointed as King, Son, and all of these things, and ultimately as God. And it is still something that people have a

hard time accepting, even Christians. They do not want to give Him the title or the position of God, but He is *very God* and He has been sanctified to that through what He did and what God did, especially what the Father did in appointing Him, making it very noticeable that He is God as well. He is not just a man that was good and God rewarded Him for being good. Not at all. It goes far beyond that.

Let me just say that again. Anointed implies the sanctification of Jesus in all of His offices and this part is important too, to bring about God's ends. He is not just appointed to these offices and given all these titles and all these hats to wear. He has a job to do and an end to bring about, a goal, not just for God, but for all of us. And so He has been anointed to make sure all of those things happen!

His job is *you* and His job is to judge the earth. His job is to come back and destroy all those who are against Him. His job is to heal everything. His job is to place a government on this earth and cause peace and prosperity to come. We could just stack up all these jobs that He has to do. (You think you are busy?) Not only that, He has the whole universe to uphold by the word of His power, which is very interesting and we will get to that in a minute.

Let us look at it this way, putting these two psalms together. All of the instruction from Psalm 1 is focused on Messiah of Psalm 2. That is one way to look at it. All of the instruction that we are told—to meditate day and night upon—is focused on Messiah. So instruction, Messiah; instruction, Messiah; Messiah, instruction; instruction, Messiah. They go together. We could say Psalm 1 is about the Word of God and Psalm 2 is about the Word of God. You get it? This is God's Word—Psalm 1—He is the Word of God, the Logos in heaven. We are talking about the same thing. But one is instruction what we get out of the Book and the other is the relationship we have with the Person. They go on the same track. Jesus Himself says in John 6:48, "I am the bread of life" and you need to eat Me. Lots of things going on there.

To put it into what we are going through today, He is that unleavened bread from heaven that we must eat of every day to have eternal life. Are we not supposed to eat unleavened bread seven days? It is a lesson this week trying to teach us that we have to constantly be at the Word, this Word, that Word.

We have got to eat His Word. We have got to keep our relationship close with that Word. They go together. They cannot be separated.

So we must come to know not only His instruction in the Bible, but we also have to come to know Him as a person, as a being, as *the one* who is sovereignly controlling everything. And He is especially focused on those chosen ones in His church. So if we come across a problem, He is on it because He knows you, He knows your way, He knows what you are going through. And He has got all that power that He showed there on the shores of the Red Sea to come to your disposal. And you have got to have faith in that. You have got to trust in Him that He is going to bring that power to bear according to His will because He has got a plan for you. And He has been tasked to make sure that plan reaches fruition. It is good to know the King and what the King will do.

Let us take this psalm apart just a little bit. We are going to go through this stanza by stanza. There is four stanzas each of three verses. So we have 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. It splits up very nicely into these four stanzas. I want to read 1-3 again so we understand what is going on here.

Psalm 2:1-3 Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth [He is saying, "Look at them."] set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."

This is what is going on behind the scenes, or in our information age, right in the open.

What we see here in in the New King James and whatever Bible you have, almost all of them do this. They write this as a question. "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?" Well, it *is* a question really, technically, but really the way it is supposed to be understood as an exclamation of surprise, of astonishment. The psalmist is looking at things from God's perspective and he is saying, "What's going on here?!" He is puzzled, he is perplexed. He does not know why they could think that, why they could do this, because it is utterly foolish and stupid to think that they can, in any way, plot against God.

Have they not ever heard of omnipresence? Do they not know that He is omniscient? Do they not know that He has an ear on all their councils? Even if they are muttering. That is one of those words here. The word plot here is the same word as meditates in chapter 1, verse 2. There it was like murmuring because they were reading aloud. Here it is muttering, nattering, "this is what I want to do, what is that you want to do?" and they are trying to keep their voices low so nobody hears. And so they are making these sounds that sound like murmuring or muttering, but what they are doing is they are plotting. That is why they translated it here as a plot because that is what they are doing and they are trying to keep their voices low.

But God can hear. That is why the psalmist is saying, "What are they thinking?! Whether you murmur or mutter or natter, or whatever it is you are doing, God can hear you. You don't even have to speak. He can hear what's going on inside your head and what you're thinking. Do you think you're going under the radar here and think you are going to surprise God? Ha ha! He knows all your plans. He has figured everything out." Like I said before, He is going to squash you like a bug. What he calls it here is vain, it is worthless. It is not going to get you anywhere. Why waste your breath? You are going against God. It is going to come to nothing.

Now, these leaders of nations, these kings, these rulers, it says they have set themselves. The idea here is that they have arrayed themselves for war against Him. They are preparing for battle in the sense in the Hebrew and then they allied themselves together and they try to gain strength and bring this guy in and bring this nation in. And they think that if they gather the peoples of the world together, they are going to be strong enough to fight against God. And so they make all their little devious plans and they plot and they scheme. And the psalmist was like, "What are they thinking? How stupid."

There is an interesting contrast developed in verses 1 and 2. Notice that when it is written down here, we see nations, people, that means like a lot of people. It is not just six or eight, we are talking thousands and millions of people are plotting vain things. Kings, rulers. We are talking many, many multiple millions of people scheming against God, plotting, allying themselves, conniving, doing all this stuff against God.

And who are they doing this against? The Lord and His Anointed. Look at the odds there. *Millions* on one side, whole nations, all the people of the earth, God and His Anointed on the other side. *Everybody* against Two. Surely they are going to win, right? We got the numbers behind us. We are just going to steamroll the Lord and His Anointed, right? Ha, ha, ha, ha! Hardly. It may be Two against millions, but the tone of the psalm with the surprised beginning and the way that he talks about these stupid kings, it is certain that the few will easily defeat the many. They are like gnats, "Go away," to God. It is no contest.

Now, this seems paradoxical to us. We as humans think that if you get a lot of allies together and you are stronger than the other in terms of numbers, that you are going to win. But with God that is not the case. You could put all the people of the earth who have ever lived. And let us throw in the dinosaurs just to kind of make things fair. And it is not fair. God wins, hands down. No problem.

What he is telling us here is that there is no way in heaven and on earth to defeat God. It is impossible. It will never happen. Satan tried it with one-third of the angels, and God said, "Go, leave" and He blasted them back to earth. They did not have a chance. Never. Even though Satan with his big head thought he had everything going for him and he had collected all these allies, and if he caught God in an off moment, maybe he could win. And it did not happen. Not by a long shot. And if Satan cannot do it, we cannot do it, no human can do it. And so for us, the lesson is that if we align ourselves with Him, we are guaranteed, one hundred percent, to be on the winning side.

God does not need our help. We are not going to add anything to His armies or to His strength. He wants us on His side. Like the children of Israel continuing along the path and He will protect our rear as we go and He will fight the battles. Just align yourself with God and stay on His path. That is what the psalms are telling us here and He will work it out. He will make it work because he has got all the power and all the strategies and all the smarts and all whatever is needed to win.

So what do these kings and these rulers want? Well, obviously they tell us in verse 3. They think God has enslaved them. "Oh, we want to throw His

chains off. Poor us. We can't do anything. His law is so restrictive." Under Him they complain that they have no freedom to do what they want to do. They want to be the big cheeses, not Him. They want to take over His throne. Just like Satan. It is the same attitude that is coming out in human beings. They want to rise up and be the kings of all things. They want to cast Him off His throne and take His place.

But we are told that they are actually enslaved to sin. It is sin that is binding them and it is sin that God has freed us from. And if He can free us from that sin, He could free them from their sin. But they are too blind to see it. All they think is me, me, me. I want this, I want that. God is too harsh. He tells me what to do and I cannot take that. I want to do what I want to do. And so they think that they can somehow throw Him off, but they cannot.

Now this psalm has two major motifs and that is kings. There is a comparison there between the kings of the earth and *the* King, and speech, what is said. Each one of these stanzas pretty much ends with a quotation from someone. And this stanza opens the psalm up with their speech and they are, like I said, raging. Their speech and they are thronging together. They have got all this turmoil. They are talking excitedly with one another. They are plotting, they take counsel together. All of these are speeches that they are doing, they are talking, they are doing all this interaction through speech. And then they say, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."

This is what their speech boils down to: that God is oppressing us and we are going to go to war against Him, we are going to rebel, we are going to be free to do what we want to do. That is what their speech boils down to.

But the fact is that they cannot do anything! It is all talk. It is all hot air. They can make your ear red with all their talking. And they have all these arguments and they are constantly coming up with new ones and that is why it says that they are murmuring, they are muttering, they are always talking, but it always comes to nothing. All their talk means nothing. It is not backed with any action because they cannot act. You cannot fight God.

On the other hand, as we are going to see here as we go through this, when God talks, not only do people listen, things get done. Their words come to

nothing, His words come to pass. Let us look at this in Isaiah 55 just to refresh this.

Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty [worthless, void], but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

So we have this contrast. You have this muttering and nattering and murmuring from all these people, making vain plots and schemes against God, and they come to nothing. But on the other hand, you have God speaking a word and it not only comes to pass, it brings forth fruit. It makes prosperity, it does all these wonderful things that are only good.

You have a great disparity here between the words of men and the words of God. Even great rulers of the earth. All their mutterings come to nothing. All their decrees, all their laws, they do not work. But God's do.

Let us go on to verses 4-6. What is God's response?

Psalm 2:4-6 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord holds them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion."

God's reaction is a great big belly laugh. He just gets a kick out of them. It is just amazing. Look at those foolish people down there, thinking they can come against My power and stall My plans. It is not going to happen. It is pretty funny.

Actually, it is not just amusement. What we find here in verse 4 is derision, mockery. He finds them to be absolutely ludicrous, ridiculous. It is unbelievable that they would do anything like that and think they can win. This is what He is thinking. This is the the idea behind His mockery. He is up there, He is enthroned in glorious majesty, in all His power, in the third

heaven, sea of glass, all that stuff, just wonders everywhere. He has got angels by the millions that He can say, "do this, do that, do this, go there, tell them this, make sure this happens," whatever. He has every law under His control. He has got the whole universe spinning the way He wants it to go. And this pitiful, little, conniving group of men think that they can defeat Him? How stupid. They are not in their right minds. It is rich. He has to laugh! But that is what people do. They fight against God. But His laughter does not last.

You notice what happens in verse 5. "Then He shall speak to them in His wrath" because His laughter turns to wrath very quickly when He realizes—this happens very quickly with God—their rebellion against Him. What impudence that little man can think that he has anything, any idea, any technology, any power that can defeat God. And so He answers, He speaks. This is God's speech. He speaks to them in wrath and it says here in the Hebrew in the last bit of verse 5, that His deep displeasure will terrorize them. They have not seen anything yet. When God finally gets angry at their impudence, at their plots and threats, their rattling of swords.

Finally He has enough. So God speaks. He speaks His answer. He speaks what He is going to do to solve this problem of the nations raging and plotting against Him. He says, "As for Me" (that is what the "yet" is), I will install My king in Zion." Notice that that is a reflection of something that was said there in Psalm 15. It is the place that He has chosen. So not only does He install a king, but He installs Him in a particular place—His holy place on earth. That is the answer to the problem. That is the Father speaking. I have set or installed or enthroned, established, My King on the holy hill of Zion. That is how He is going to make everything work. All He needs to do is put His chosen one as king and that king will do the rest because He has anointed Him to do all those things and He has the power to get them done.

So all the kings do, all they did here, was natter and murmur and scheme. But God speaks an action and He places that king, the Messiah, as King over all the earth. What He does is He replaces the kings of the earth and He puts His King in their place. And so He is anointed, which is already mentioned in verse 2, "His Anointed," this King, meaning that He has been separated for that position.

Have you ever heard the Protestants used the phrase "Jesus is the answer"? They are right. The problem of human rebellion and sin is Jesus Christ. That is God's answer. "I will set My King on My holy hill of Zion." Which tells you two things. One, that He is a king, and two, that He is God, that He has a secular position as well as a religious position. It is both in one. He is not only a king, but He is a holy king and He is there in God's temple in Zion. And so He fulfills both roles of king and priest, which He does, which is another one of His jobs that He has been appointed to do. He is taking care of both ends here of the rulership aspect and the religious aspect in the one Person.

So Jesus is the answer to human turmoil and rebellion. He is going to bring peace, ultimately, but not until He first cracks the heads of the rebels like He does in Revelation 19. This is clearly Messianic, it is far beyond what any of the Davidic kings ever did. We are obviously looking way into the future here of when the Messiah would come the second time. Not just the first time. He took care of some of this the first time, but it will culminate in Him coming again a second time. That time He will come as King and He will crack the heads. That is what happens in Revelation 19.

Now, David and Solomon fulfilled these, typically. David was a man of war, a man of blood. So in many respects, he fulfilled that king side. But Solomon was a man of peace and in a sense, he fulfills the millennial side of what Jesus Christ will do as ruler and giver of peace. Of course Solomon was not perfect. But both of those ideas are there.

Psalm 2:7-9 "I will declare the decree [notice that this is the Son speaking, the Anointed]: the Lord has said to Me [and now He is going to quote the Father's words to Him], 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

Now this one speaks and He tells Him what His job is and what He has been given to do. The most important point here is the first one. That Messiah, this One is His begotten Son, because this sets Him apart from everything else,

from all others in the universe. God has only one begotten Son in this way. He is the one, what we would say is God's *real* Son, God's *true* Son.

And so what is told us here, way back in the Old Testament, is that the Lord, as He is called here, will be the Father. And this other one, the Anointed One, will be the Son, His beloved Son, and He will be born of God. This is not an adoption. This is a real birth. We find in Galatians that He was born of Mary, born under the law, but we know that God, by His Spirit, impregnated Mary and made Him *really* His Son. This is very important, very important.

I was going to go through some of the New Testament scriptures where it talks about the only begotten Son of God in the New Testament. They are verses like Mark 1:9-11, at the baptism of Jesus where the voice comes out and says, "This is My beloved Son; John 1:14 says He is the only begotten of the Father and He came, in verse 18, to reveal the Father. The most famous verse in all the Bible says that His only begotten Son came to save the world. Hebrews 1:5-9 tells us this great Jesus is the Son, not an angel. "To which of the angels did He ever say these things?" He is different from angels. He is greater than angels because He is the Son. He is the begotten Son. I John 4:9 is another one. We can rely on the love of God because of the begotten Son.

Put simply, the Father sent the only begotten Son into the world to reveal Him, to save humanity from itself and from sin and from Satan through His death and resurrection. And He also came to rule. He was sent to preach the gospel and to separate believers from unbelievers, and many, many, many other things. That is the point. Christ, the Messiah, is everything! He is everything to us because He is the actor, the Personage, the Person, the Being that has been appointed by God and anointed to do all these things. He is the Son, that is His job. And so we have what is written by Paul, he kind of says something like this.

I Corinthians 1:30-31 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

So Paul is in a sense saying, look, He is all these things for us because we are the weak of the world and He has come to save the weak and give them all these wonderful things in His Kingdom.

Psalm 2:10-12 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed you judges 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, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are those who put their trust in Him.

Now the New King James shows the Son stopping His speech there with verse 9, but the Hebrew indicates that the Son is actually continuing to speak, He just stops the quotation of His Father. So He is not speaking of what God said to Him anymore. He is now speaking His own words to us and this is what He says. "Be wise," be instructed or be warned, and then He tells us to serve, rejoice, kiss, which is pay homage. Those are His instructions of how to make sure that we are in the right attitude before Him.

This stanza is His instruction in the form of a warning to the kings of the earth, primarily, to the people who are unbelievers. But it also is very instructive for us. He tells us how we can avoid the disastrous fate of being broken like a potter's vessel. How we can avoid the rod of His anger.

Notice that through all this the kings are silent. Their speech has been stopped, they are speechless. They cannot say a thing. They are guilty as charged. They have no comeback. So the first thing He tells them to do is serve or worship God with fear. We should think of this as fear of the Lord. The proper reverence and respect that He desires. This is totally 180 degrees on the other side different from their murmuring and agitating against Him in the first stanza. He tells them you have got to quit that and come before God with the proper fear and serve Him, not rebel against Him. Turn all the way around and begin doing what He says, serving and worshipping Him rather than fighting against Him.

Then He tells them to rejoice with trembling, which sounds also kind of paradoxical or backward. How do you rejoice, saying your wonderful things to God, but you are trembling at the same time? Well, that is kind of parallel

with serve, as he says here, serve with fear. Rejoice with trembling. There is these two sides of it here. We have to be willing to do these wonderful things in praise of God and service to God, but we have to have the proper respect while we are doing them. One way we could maybe render this last one "rejoice with trembling," as "be joyful but intimidated." Know that that is the One with all the power that you are praising. You do not want to step to one side or the other on the path. Just keep rejoicing, keep praising, and remember that He is the one we need to fear. That is the attitude that one would have in coming before a great king who could snuff your life out like that. Rejoice, service, but fearful and intimidated too. You are respecting the power there.

Now "Kiss the Son." Actually, the word Son is not even in that verse. The word is *bar* and we would say Simon Bar-Jonah. Simon the son of Jonah. But *bar* is Aramaic and this is written in Hebrew, so it is not *bar*. It is not son. If it were written in Hebrew it would be *ben*, which is the Hebrew for son. So *bar* must mean something else. And actually *bar* in Hebrew means pure or purely in an adverbial sense. Literally it is "kiss purely" or "kiss sincerely." It describes an act of homage that is done without reservation and without ulterior motives. You are pure in your submitting to His rule. So we could also say it is "submit to His rule with a whole heart."

Now failure to pay sincere homage will result in adverse judgment. Because as Philippians 2:10 says, to Him every knee will bow. And if you do not, then you are going to die. Perish here, remember we saw that at the end of chapter 1, "the way of the ungodly shall perish." Well here, He says, that if you do not kiss the Son or if you do not pay sincere homage to the Son, He will be angry and you will perish in the way. What this means is that you will perish in mid-step, in mid-course. He can blot you out that quickly.

The fury or the wrath that He talks about, "His wrath is kindled but a little," it says. His wrath flares up in a moment and you are gone. It is an image of the wrath that He comes bringing with Him at the second coming and it is also further an image of the second death in the Lake of Fire.

The final thought, this "Blessed are those who put their trust in Him," is said to have been added by an editor, and it probably was. What it does is indicate that these two psalms are all part of the introduction. So it starts with

"Blessed is the man" and it ends with "Blessed are those who put their trust in Him." It is saying all of these thoughts that we have gone through in chapter 1 and chapter 2, they hang together. They need to be thought of as one introductory thought that is going to spring us into Book One and actually through the whole of Psalms.

Let us finish in Psalm 146. This is the summary psalm. I am not going to make any comments. I just want to read it so we can get these ideas in our heads as we finish.

Psalm 146:1-10 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!
While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish. Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down. The Lord shall reign forever—your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!