

## **Series FolkSongs of Faith**

### **This Message Two Ways: Rebellion or Submission**

#### **Scripture Psalm 2**

The Psalms were the folksongs of faith of God's people in the OT. Both Psalms 1 and 2 provide instruction about life choices. These Psalms are traditionally linked together and read as a unit. Together they are considered to be the introduction to the entire collection of songs.

The underlying theme in both Psalms is the two ways of life — the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness. In Psalm 1 we learned that righteous people immerse themselves in the words of the LORD. They desire to understand the LORD and to follow His ways. The result for them is spiritual fruitfulness and prosperity. In contrast, ungodly people exclude God from their lives and, as a result, God will exclude them from His presence at the time of judgment. The way of the wicked ends in their destruction.

In Psalm 2 the contrast is between the two ways of rebelliousness and submission. People who are inclined to rebel against God are warned about their arrogance and vain foolishness. Kings and rulers of the earth often have an inflated opinion of themselves and their power because they are able to influence the direction and behavior of their followers. In Psalm 2 these leaders are reminded that they are under the sovereign authority of God. They are warned about their arrogance and pride. The leaders of the world face the choice between the ways of rebellion against God or submission to Him.

#### **Read Psalm 2**

Let's quickly analyze the structure of these verses. There are 12 verses which are divided into 4 sections, each with 3 verses. There is a different emphasis in each section. The first section talks about the threats of the leaders of the nations against the LORD and against the LORD's Anointed One. The second section describes the reaction of the sovereign LORD to the threats of these human leaders. The third section explains the LORD's predetermined course of action. The final verses have an important application: the leaders must either get with the LORD's program or suffer consequences.

Now let's dig down a little deeper into the meaning of the Psalm. The first verse begins with a question. The thought is: "Why are the nations doing this? Why are the people foolishly trying to rebel against the LORD?" The writer is astonished that the rulers of the earth are trying to organize themselves against the LORD and His Anointed One. From the beginning of the Psalm, the writer makes it clear that any uprising against God is a vain, totally foolish effort.

Why were leaders organizing against the Lord? They didn't want to accept the fact that Someone Else had ultimate authority over them. They desired to be free of the limits and controls which the LORD had placed on humanity.

They compared the controls of God to "chains" and "fetters." "Chains" and "fetters" were put upon enemy prisoners, criminals, and slaves. These shackles were symbols of the loss of personal freedom and rights. The shackles meant that they were under the control of someone. The rulers of earth did not want God to be lord over them and so they made a conscious, deliberate effort to try to break free of God's control. In the opinion of the leaders, the restrictions of God put them in an unacceptable position and they wanted to make their own decisions.

Last week in Psalm 1 we read about the "law of the LORD." The law is God's guidebook for humanity. Ungodly people don't want the law of the LORD to interfere with their lives. They don't want to be inhibited by God's rules of moral and ethical behavior and His requirements of righteousness. They want the authority to make up their own rules about their own behavior. They want to be their own gods.

The ultimate problem of sin is this lack of submission to the Creator God. The goal of rebellion is personal autonomy and self control. The rebellious person wants the freedom to manage his/her own life. Leaders, especially, want to be "in charge" of their own behavior. Unregenerate people want to be "like God." This attitude goes back to the beginning of creation. You remember the temptation of Adam and Eve. They were told "If you eat of the forbidden fruit, you will be like God." This desire led to their disobedience.

This desire for autonomy is the greatest of all barriers to righteousness and godliness. Even believers find it difficult to turn over their wills to God — to yield themselves and everything they have to God, and to let Him be the LORD of all aspects of our lives. We all struggle with this matter of our personal “rights” and independence on a continual basis.

Notice that the antagonism of the leaders is not only directed toward the LORD but also against the Lord's "Anointed One". This is a reference to the Messiah. The English word “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew word “anointed one.” And the English word “Christ” comes from the Greek version of the word “anointed one.” The “Anointed One” is Messiah Jesus.

There are many examples in Scripture of vain and foolish rulers who thought they could thwart God’s plans concerning His people and His Anointed One. For examples, the nations of Assyria and Babylonia tried to oppress and destroy the people of God. In the first-century, the Jewish religious leaders, Herod, Pilate, and the Romans conspired against the Anointed One. All of these people were involved in the crucifixion of Jesus (*Acts 4:23-30*). Psalm 2 is a prediction of what the Old Testament prophets, the apostles in the early Church, even the Lord Jesus Himself, said would happen — that nations would rise up against God and his Messiah. This is happening throughout our world.

Why is there so much hatred against Jesus? There’s an easy answer to this question: Because there is anger against the One who gives the law, there is also anger against every individual who carries out the law. How did Jesus carry out the law of God? First of all, He always did those things which pleased the Father in heaven. He was always obedient. He is the standard by which God measures the behavior of all humans. Also Jesus always said what the Father wanted Him to say. Jesus told His critics: “the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it. What I say is just what the Father told Me to say” (*John 8:28*).

Jesus was the perfect man. He was the Truth affirming all the Father's righteous demands, and the proof that a human could fulfill the law of God. Jesus is described in Scripture as the "Light of the world." He said "Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (*John 8:12*). Then Jesus explained the problem. He said "everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (*John 3:20*). As a result, rebellious people are angry at both Messiah Jesus and the Father.

Verses 4-6 give us the heavenly perspective toward rebellious people. First of all, we learn that the Lord is not affected by the plans and turmoil among the nations. He is secure in His position—His position is established in the heavens. The attitudes and conditions on earth will not affect His authority. He is over everything. In fact, the Lord laughs at the futile and feeble efforts of people to change His purposes and plans. He scoffs at people who think they are big enough to manage their own destinies and avoid a reckoning with Himself.

Verse 5 mentions God's anger and wrath. God's anger is not like human anger. His anger is righteous indignation. God becomes angry when people do not show appreciation to Him. Let me give a few reasons. God created all things, including people, and therefore He is unhappy with people who think they can live independently without loyalty to Him. The Father offered His Son to redeem people from sin and death, and therefore He is unhappy with those who reject His free gift of salvation. God is enthroned in heaven, high above all earthly creatures. He is sovereign over all, and therefore He has no tolerance for humans who think they are equal with Him and can live without Him. God is legitimately angry against people who refuse to recognize His Lordship and to submit to Him.

Verse 6 indicates that God is determined. He will accomplish His purposes in spite of earthly opposition. Scripture indicates that God had a plan for humanity even before creation began. Before this Psalm was written, God revealed an important part of His plan. He announced that a descendent of King David would rule over the nations of the earth. Rebellious humans will not be able to prevent God from carrying out His plans. As this Psalm states, the LORD's chosen king was installed on Zion, His holy hill, the designated place for worship in the city of Jerusalem. The leaders of the nations did not have the power to change the LORD's plan. What the LORD promised came to pass. His King was installed.

Verses 7-9 are spoken by the "heir" of the Father. The "heir" is the Son and the "Anointed One" of the Father. The phrase "I will proclaim the decree of the LORD" does not mean that a new decree is being introduced. The emphasis is on the retelling of something already in place.

It is a little difficult to sort out the pronouns in this section so let me read the verses with the correct identities. "I will proclaim;" this is what the Son, the King, the Anointed One, Jesus, will do. It is Jesus who is speaking. He will "proclaim the decree of the LORD;" the LORD is God, Yahweh, the Father. "He said to Me" means that the One enthroned in heaven, the LORD, the Father, said to His Heir, "You are My Son ... I have become your Father." The Son is, of course, Jesus.

Verse 8 "Ask of Me;" this is the Father encouraging His Son to ask about His inheritance. The Father "will make the nations the inheritance of the Son." "You (the Son and Heir) will rule the nations with a scepter of iron."

This decree was a covenant promise given to David. The Father announced that one of David's descendents would be the Messiah. The decree concerns the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Did Jesus make the kingdom known? Yes! When Jesus was on the earth 2000 years ago, He announced and proclaimed the kingdom of God. He established the spiritual aspects of this kingdom and explained how people could become members of God's kingdom.

At some point in the future, King Jesus will make the kingdom of God a physical reality on earth. His kingdom will extend to the "end of the earth." As believers, we look forward to that time. This is the reason we pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (*Matthew 6:10*).

From verse 9 we understand that the LORD's king has power to smash all opposition to His rule. The king's sovereignty is expressed as an "iron rule" in which rebels are crushed like fragile clay vessels. The "scepter" in His hand is the symbol of rule — of His right to discipline and judge. Judgment was also part of the decree of the LORD.

The word "therefore" in verse 10 introduces the application section of the Psalm. This Psalm ends with an appeal for rulers and leaders to be wise and to submit to the LORD before the day of wrath. The LORD does not want to resort to force in order to control the leaders of the earth, but such action is His right if it is necessary. The LORD hopes that the leaders will assess their situation, and will act wisely and respond favorably.

Submission is the only acceptable response to the LORD and His Anointed One. This submission must be voluntary if it is to be acceptable and pleasing to the LORD. Submission is expressed by "service," which connotes a willingness to be obedient and to recognize God's sovereignty, lordship, and authority. People are to "serve the LORD with fear." This means they must look up to and highly esteem the LORD, acknowledging that He is of higher rank than they are. People are also to "rejoice with trembling." They are to be happy, contented, and satisfied with their relationship with the LORD, as well as respectful, recognizing the authority and power of the LORD.

In verse 12, the "kiss" is a sign of submission. In ancient times, people would kiss the hands or feet of the kings as an indication of their allegiance and submission. People are to submit to and esteem the Son in the same way they do the Father, or else the Father will be angry, and they "will be destroyed."

Psalms 1 and 2 come to similar conclusions: The LORD will bless those who take refuge in Him, whereas sinners will perish. I want to conclude with a series of proverbs which summarize this Psalm: "Those who will not bow shall be broken." "There is no refuge apart from Him: only in him." "Don't run from God; run to Him!" "We can defy God and perish, or surrender to Him and be blessed."

Those four proverbs are not in Scripture, but I think they express the truth. The next proverbs are in Scripture. Prov 14:12 “There is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” Prov 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

End of message

## *Appendix*

### ***Some notes which will provide helpful information about this Psalm:***

#### ***Concerning the author of this Psalm.***

*Peter and John ascribe this Psalm to David in Acts 4:25, although this may be in accordance with Jewish practice of referring to the collection of Psalms by the primary author, David.*

#### ***Concerning the anger of kings and rulers.***

*There were probably two reasons why the kings and rulers are so angry. In the ancient Near East, most kings considered themselves to be “divine” monarchs, established in their positions by whatever gods they worshipped. Perhaps there was some sort of jealousy or competition between these territorial gods and the claims made by Israel about its God. Secondly, the rebellion might have been directed to Israel. All of the early kings of Israel were described as “the anointed one” at the time of their coronations (cf. 1 Samuel 16:13; 1 Kings 1:39). Perhaps there were rulers from the surrounding nations who were opposed to Israel as a nation, and therefore were opposed to the designated (anointed) leaders of Israel.*

*To understand this better, we need to think about the historical context when this Psalm was written. This Psalm is classified as a royal Psalm (a Psalm related to kingship and leadership.) Some years later, this Psalm was also classified as a Messianic Psalm. At the time the Psalm was written, there was not yet a well developed understanding of Messiah. II Samuel 7:5-15 changed all that. When David was king, God made a promise to him concerning his descendents.*

*In the centuries after David's death, the covenant promise in II Samuel 7 began to shape the understanding of Psalm 2. The "Anointed One" mentioned in verse 2 became understood as the Messiah, not just another earthly king. The anger and actions of the rulers of the nations became interpreted to be a threat to the Israel, the covenant people of God, to peace for God's people, and in an ultimate sense, to the universal rule of God upon earth. The prophets looked for the day when Israel and Judah would be ruled by a Davidic king from Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:2-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Ezekiel 37:24-28; Hosea 3:5), at which time all the nations would be subject to Him (Isaiah 11:10; Micah 4:1-5).*

*All this is the background for Psalm 2. I think we can recognize how the behavior of the nations has been and is opposed to the purposes of God. Most of the world does not want to be obedient to God and His Messiah and the people of the world want to break the bonds between themselves and God. The conspiracy of the kings is parallel with the folly of the wicked in Psalm 1:1; but whereas the godly meditate on God's law, the kings "meditate" or "plot" on rebellion. Psalm 2 gives us a theological (Biblical) perspective for interpreting the course of human and world events.*

### **Concerning Zion.**

*The Israelites understood that heaven was God's "throne" and the "whole earth" was his footstool. They understood that God could not be limited to a hill or a temple or any physical location. Nevertheless, the hill of Zion became the main connection point between God and the Israelites. Historically, this hill was the place where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac. After David declared the city of Jerusalem as his capital, Zion became the designated place of worship. It was the location where Solomon's temple was constructed, where Nehemiah reconstructed the temple, and Herod built the temple which stood in the time of Jesus. God sanctified the city of Jerusalem and the temple mount by His presence and glory. It was His "holy hill," where His people met with Him in worship.*



### **Concerning Jesus as the King.**

*Scripture indicates that there will be a double fulfillment concerning the King. Not only was Jesus declared the King over Satan and death as the result of His crucifixion which occurred on Zion, but Zion is the location where Jesus will have His throne after His return to earth at the end of the age. The sovereign One enthroned in heaven predetermined that His king would be installed on Zion, and the second "installation" will take place just like the first.]*

### **Concerning the phrase: "Today I have become your Father."**

*Which day is it referring to? This future descendent of David would be confirmed at the time of anointing and coronation, when he would begin to occupy the place of kingly rule and authority. The real question is when this occurred or will occur. Wasn't Jesus always God, the Father's Son? Can we point to a time when Jesus was proclaimed as "Son?" There are actually several times when the Father proclaimed Jesus as His Son. For example, the angel announced to Mary that she would bear a son. The angel said, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33).*

*At the time of Jesus' baptism, "As Jesus went up out of the water, at that moment heaven was opened ... and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased"' (Matthew 3:16-17). The Gospels also describe a special occasion when the appearance of Jesus was transfigured, and "a voice from out of a bright cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased"' (Matthew 17: 5).*

*After Jesus had completed the Father's work on earth, "God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 8-11). Today Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father (see Hebrews 1:1-9), the place of kingly rule and authority.*

### **Concerning prayer.**

*In the light of this psalm's message, our prayer should include (1) thanksgiving that we have been incorporated into God's kingdom, (2) a petition for the*

*immediate and full establishment of the messianic kingdom, (3) an entreaty for the nations of the world that they would not continue their rebellion against God, (4) a supplication for our brothers and sisters under governments hostile to Christianity, and (5) intercession for the Jewish people that they may soon be restored to Christ (Romans 11:25-32).*