

# Why do the Heathen Rage?

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## *Psalm 2*

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**P**icture the following vision in your mind: A mass of people spread out in a room, some are happy, rejoicing, and enjoying the blessings of God. They look as if they are intoxicated with all that is going on. Others have a look of remoteness in their eyes. They seem to be despising the happy group while the happy group seems to be “looking down their noses” at them. Others are oblivious to these two groups and are busy pursuing their daily activities. Meanwhile, an ugly, threatening claw comes down from the ceiling and steadily plucks away the freedoms and liberties of everyone. Finally, a small group of people emerges from the crowd to challenge the talon.

Who are these people? The mass of people are the professed body of Christ. Some are happy, some are serious, some are judgmental, some could care less. What is the claw? Satan’s influence infiltrating the nations through secular humanism. The claw is destroying cultures through anti-God education, anti-God economics, and anti-God government, laws, welfare, and judicial systems. The small group challenging the claw are those who understand what is really going on.

What is this vision telling us? Some of us have been so taken up with having a time of blessing and joy, some of us have been so serious, some of us have been so judgmental, some of us have been so filled with disillusionment and apathy, that *we have defaulted on our mandate to challenge the nations of the earth with the Lordship of Christ*. We, the body of Christ, are the world’s *only* hope. Psalm 2 accurately describes the present state of the nations, *as well as what we must do*.

Who wrote this Psalm? King David. When did he write it? When Nathan, the prophet, spoke to him about a future descendant, house, kingdom, and eternal reign (II Samuel 7:12-16). What kind of Psalm is this? Messianic.

As David viewed the nations round about him in terms of God’s promise to him, the Spirit of Christ was working within him predicting in his life and writings the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (I Peter 1:11). When did Christ fulfill this Psalm? According to Acts 13:30-34, in His resurrection. The resurrection of Christ bears witness (the meaning of *begotten*) to the truth that Jesus is enthroned as Lord of heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18-19). In this coronation, Jesus has fulfilled the promise made to David in II Samuel (see Acts 2:29-33).

Let’s outline the Psalm first:

1. David asks a question (v.1).
2. The nations give testimony (v. 2-3).
3. God, the Lord, responds to this testimony (v. 4-6).
4. Another voice speaks (v. 7).
5. God commands this voice (v.8-9).

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6. A call to the nations (v.10-12).

## David asks a question

He observes the contemporary scene and asks, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” To rage means to be in an uproar, to seethe, to be in turmoil, to conspire. It pictures a horse bucking in rebellion. Vain means empty and worthless. Is not this a divine revelation of the human condition? Why do the heathen rage? *Because they are heathen!* A heathen is a person or a culture that is at war with God and His laws (Romans 8:7).

## Listen to the testimony of the nations

“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 bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” The plans and counsels of heathen cultures, vain and empty as they are, are against the Lord and His anointed one. In context, David was God’s anointed one (I Samuel 16:1-13). The Hebrew word for anointed is *mashiyach*. It speaks of a consecrated person. In greater context, it points expressly to the greater David, the Messiah (Christ) - the Lord Jesus. The rage that David experienced was ultimately a rage against his Lord and his Christ (Psalm 110:1-2; cf. Matthew 22:42-45). Bands are fetters or halters; restraints used on horses in order to control them. Cords are ropes of control. The kings and rulers of the nations are saying, “Let us fling off the controls of God!” The prophet Jeremiah defines the bands of restraint as the way of the Lord; the judgments (laws) of God (Jeremiah 5:5). To rebellious nations, the laws of God are anathema. They cast away:

- God’s law for marriage and sex (monogamy and sex for the marriage bed only).
- God’s law for the economy (just weights and measures).
- God’s law for justice (restitution and death penalty for murder).
- God’s law for welfare (he that does not work shall not eat).
- God’s law for the education of children (the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge).

Rebellious nations do not want God’s restraints. The result? Death. “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:36). They would rather die prematurely from AIDS or venereal disease than submit to God’s law. They would rather go down the tube of economic disaster than submit to God’s law. They would rather let murderers and other criminals walk the streets free to commit more crimes than submit to God’s law. They would rather watch their children smolder on the coals of Moloch than submit to God’s law.

## God, the Lord of the nations, responds

“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” His first response is that He sits in

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the heavens. The raging of the nations does not catch Him by surprise for He has sovereignly decreed it. Not only does He sit, He laughs! (cf. Psalm 37:12-13; 59:1-8). He derides or scoffs (makes fun) at the evil plans and schemes of the heathen. His second response is that He will speak to them in His wrath. Christ is the word of God (John 1:1-14). The word of God is like a sharp sword that smites the nations (Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 19:11-16).

How long will God suffer the nations before He speaks to them in His wrath in time and on earth? *How long* did He suffer Sodom and Gomorrah with its rampant homosexuality, arrogance, abundant food, careless ease, and blind eye toward the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49)? In time, He smote these cities with fire and brimstone. *How long* did He suffer ancient Babylon when it captured God's people and mocked the vessels of the holy temple? In time, God wrote on a wall and smote the city with the armies of Cyrus. Note that the remnant returned to their homeland at the command of Cyrus. *How long* did He suffer national Israel when it rejected the Messiah and persecuted the saints? In time, God sent Roman armies and rivers of blood flowed in the streets of Jerusalem. Note that their rejection brought salvation to the nations (Romans 11:11). *How long* did He suffer Rome with the blood of Christian martyrs on its hands? In time, God sent a few thousand barbarians who walked over a culture that had lost all will to resist and survive. Note, the barbarians, ancestors of Western civilization, eventually converted to Christianity. *How long* did He suffer France with its massacre of the Huguenots, total hatred of Christianity, and mass abortions? In time, God sent a ravaging blood bath called the French Revolution. How long did He suffer the atheistic regime of Communist Russia? Only 70 years. *How long* will He suffer *us*? Isaiah 26:9, "For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

God will trouble or terrify the nations in His fury. As He once terrified a godless Nebuchadnezzar with a dream, He will also terrify the nations that reject His law.

The nations follow the Church. The reason why the nations are in a mess is because the Church is in a mess (II Chronicles 15:1-6). That is why God's first order of business is to "purify the sons of Levi" that their offerings might be pleasant unto the Lord (Malachi 3; I Peter 4:17). He will judge the spirit of disunity for the unity of God's people provides the basis for the world to believe in the apostleship of Jesus (John 17:21; Hebrews 3:1). He will send a delusion upon those who disregard and despise sound doctrine in favor of "manifestations of the Spirit" (II Thessalonians 2:11-12; II Timothy 4:3-4). He will either clean up or dispose of church leaders so that the saints will be "equipped for service" in order to bring about the "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:11-13). He will judge a "Zion at ease" (Amos 6:1) with our appetites, our entertainment, what we permit our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our mouths to speak. Because Zion is at ease, the Church of Jesus Christ has lost its *moral* dynamic to address the nations. We also have nothing to say to the nations because we do not understand the times, nor have we knowledge of what to do (I Chronicles 12:32). We cannot even put our own house in order. We will never speak to the nations concerning debt until we are out of debt. The anti-God welfare state will never be shattered until the Church takes it over administrating welfare according to biblical law.

*Is God laughing at Western civilization or is He speaking to it in His anger?* One thing we know for sure, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." God has installed His King on Zion, His

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holy mountain. Jesus Christ is securely established upon His throne and He governs the nations of the earth. *Nations may come and go, but the kingdom of God will remain forever* (Hebrews 12:26-29).

## **Another voice enters the scene**

“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” A decree is a decision that *cannot* be altered. Although David said this, his words echoed the greater David to come and the reality of His resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:33-34; Hebrews 1:5).

## **God then commands this voice**

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Christ asked for and received the nations as His inheritance at His ascension (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 5; Matthew 28:18-19). Since the nations are the inheritance of Christ, He *will assuredly* possess them (Psalm 22:27-28). Christ is ruling the nations now with a rod of iron. A rod is a shepherd’s staff. In ancient times, it symbolized the authority of a king. It was used to correct a king’s rebellious subjects. Evil nations are spoken of as God’s rod. Assyria, the Communist Russia of the Old Testament, is spoken of as the “rod of God’s wrath” and is sent by God to discipline His people (Isaiah 10:5-6). God’s people are spoken of as His rod or war club (Jeremiah 51:19-23). In Revelation 2:26-27, this same promise is given to overcomers and in Acts 4, the early believers applied Psalm 2 in their prayers as they faced opposition to the Gospel. God increases His government on earth through His redemptive agency: the Church (Isaiah 9:7; Psalm 149; Matthew 6:10; Acts 1:8).

The nations that persist in rebellion will, in time, be broken and shattered to pieces by God’s rod of iron. In the battle of pottery versus iron, the pottery has *no* chance. The gates of hell shall not prevail against Christ and His Church (Matthew 16:18). Note, although the rod of the Shepherd is a terror to the wicked, it is a comfort to the obedient (Psalm 23:4; Micah 7:14).

## **In the light of Christ’s enthronement and authority, a call is issued to the kings of the earth**

Repent or perish! (Luke 13:3). “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” *Unless* the kings of the earth subject themselves to the King of kings with respect, esteem and an awesome, trembling joy ... *unless* the kings of the earth kiss the Son by falling at the feet of a superior authority in total submission and service, *they will perish*. If a nation submits, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12). If a nation rebels, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5-8).

What must we do to be used of God to bring the nations to their knees? How can we join that small group who, in the vision, victoriously challenges the Satanic talon? First, put God’s blessings (Psalm 1) in the context of the nations (Psalm 67). God blesses us so that the ends of the earth might

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fear Him. Second, are we at ease in Zion? Have the comforts of the western world lulled us to sleep? Arise! And Christ will shine His light upon you (Isaiah 60:1-3). Third, seek to understand the times; learn from history that God rules the nations. Fourth, strive for *unity and purpose* in the body of Christ. Fifth, pray for the nations (I Timothy 2:1-4). Sixth, restore biblical government by the ministry of service in meeting the spiritual and physical needs about you. Seventh, be skilled in your vocational calling. If you do, God promises that *you will stand before kings* (Proverbs 22:29).

Remember, the Bible is a command book; its commands may disturb our “ease” for it is the word of the Sovereign King of kings. We must listen and obey because God requires it. We are His purchased possession and that should be sufficient for us. *There can be nothing better than that.*

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