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PSALM 2: 1 Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing?

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This Psalm treats of the opposition raised, both by Jew and Gentile, against the kingdom of Christ, Psa 2:1-3. Christ's victory, and the confusion of his enemies, Psa 2:4-6. The promulgation of the Gospel after his resurrection, Psa 2:7-9. A call to all the potentates and judges of the earth to accept it, because of the destruction that shall fall on those who reject it, Psa 2:10-12.

Verse 1

Why do the heathen rage - It has been supposed that David composed this Psalm after he had taken Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and made it the head of the kingdom; 2Sam 5:7-9. The Philistines, hearing this, encamped in the valley of Rephaim, nigh to Jerusalem, and Josephus, Antiq. lib. 7: c. 4, says that all Syria, Phoenicia, and the other circumjacent warlike people, united their armies to those of the Philistines, in order to destroy David before he had strengthened himself in the kingdom. David, having consulted the Lord, 2Sam 5:17-19, gave them battle, and totally overthrew the whole of his enemies. In the first place, therefore, we may suppose that this Psalm was written to celebrate the taking of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of all the kings and chiefs of the neighboring nations. In the second place we find from the use made of this Psalm by the apostles, Act 4:27, that David typified Jesus Christ; and that the Psalm celebrates the victories of the Gospel over the Philistine Jews, and all the confederate power of the heathen governors of the Roman empire.

The heathen, גוים goyim, the nations; those who are commonly called the Gentiles.

Rage, רגשו rageshu, the gnashing of teeth, and tumultuously rushing together, of those indignant and cruel people, are well expressed by the sound as well as the meaning of the original word. A vain thing. Vain indeed to prevent the spread of the Gospel in the world. To prevent Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, from having the empire of his own earth. So vain were their endeavors that every effort only tended to open and enlarge the way for the all-conquering sway of the scepter of righteousness.

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PSALM 2: 2 The kings of the earth take a stand, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his Anointed, saying,

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Verse 2

Against his anointed - על משיחיה al Meshichiah, "Against his Messiah." - Chaldee. But as this signifies the anointed person, it may refer first to David, as it does secondly to Christ.

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PSALM 2: 3 "Let's break their bonds apart, and cast their cords from us."

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Verse 3

Let us break their bands - These are the words of the confederate heathen powers; and here, as Bishop Horne well remarks, "we may see the ground of opposition; namely, the unwillingness of rebellious nature to submit to the obligations of Divine laws, which cross the interests, and lay a restraint on the desires of men. Corrupt affections are the most inveterate enemies of Christ, and their language is, We will not have this man to reign over us. Doctrines would be readily believed if they involved in them no precepts; and the Church may be tolerated in the world if she will only give up her discipline."

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PSALM 2: 4 He who sits in the heavens will laugh. The Lord will have them in derision.

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Verse 4

He that sitteth in the heavens - Whose kingdom ruleth over all, and is above all might and power, human and diabolical. Shall laugh. Words spoken after the manner of men; shall utterly contemn their puny efforts; shall beat down their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices.

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PSALM 2: 5 Then he will speak to them in his anger, and terrify them in his wrath:

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Verse 5

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath - He did so to the Jews who rejected the Gospel, and vexed and ruined them by the Roman armies; he did so with the opposing Roman emperors, destroying all the contending factions, till he brought the empire under the dominion of one, and him he converted to Christianity viz., Constantine the Great.

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PSALM 2: 6 "Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion."

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Verse 6

I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion - Here the Gospel shall be first preached; here the kingdom of Christ shall be founded; and from hence shall the doctrine of the Lord go out into all the earth.

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PSALM 2: 7 I will tell of the decree. The LORD said to me, "You are my son. Today I have become your father.

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Verse 7

I will declare the decree - These words are supposed to have been spoken by the Messiah. I will declare to the world the decree, the purpose of God to redeem them by my blood, and to sanctify them by my Spirit. My death shall prove that the required atonement has been made; my resurrection shall prove that this atonement has been accepted.

Thou art my Son - Made man, born of a woman by the creative energy of the Holy Ghost, that thou mightest feel and suffer for man, and be the first-born of many brethren.

This day have I begotten thee - By thy resurrection thou art declared to be the Son of God, ἐν δυνάμει, by miraculous power, being raised from the dead. Thus by thy wondrous and supernatural nativity, most extraordinary death, and miraculous resurrection, thou art declared to be the Son of God. And as in that Son dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, all the sufferings and the death of that human nature were stamped with an infinitely meritorious efficacy. We have St. Paul's authority for applying to the resurrection of our Lord these words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee;" - see Act 13:33; see also Heb 5:6; - and the man must indeed be a bold interpreter of the Scriptures who would give a different gloss to that of the apostle. It is well known that the words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," have been produced by many as a proof of the eternal generation of the Son of God. On the subject itself I have already given my opinion in my note on Luk 1:35, from which I recede not one hair's breadth. Still however it is necessary to spend a few moments on the clause before us. The word הַיּוֹם *haiyom*, Today, is in no part of the sacred writings used to express eternity, or any thing in reference to it; nor can it have any such signification. To-day is an absolute designation of the present, and equally excludes time past and time future; and never can, by any figure, or allowable latitude of construction, be applied to express eternity. But why then does the Divine Spirit use the word begotten in reference to the declaration of the inauguration of the Messiah to his kingdom, and his being seated at the right hand of God? Plainly to show both to Jews and Gentiles that this Man of sorrows, this Outcast from society, this Person who was prosecuted as a blasphemer of God, and crucified as an enemy to the public peace and a traitor to the government, is no less than that eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, who was God, and in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: that this rejected Person was he for whom in the fullness of time a body was prepared, begotten by the exclusive power of the Most High in the womb of an unspotted virgin, which body he gave unto death as a sin-offering for the redemption of the world; and having raised it from death, declared it to be that miraculously-begotten Son of God, and now gave farther proof of this by raising the God-man to his right hand.

The word ילדתי *yalidti*, "I have begotten," is here taken in the sense of manifesting, exhibiting, or declaring; and to this sense of it St. Paul (Rom 1:3, Rom 1:4) evidently alludes when speaking of "Jesus Christ, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, τοῦ ὀρισθέντος Υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει, κατὰ Πνεῦμα ἀγῶσυνης, ἐξ ἀναστασεως νεκρῶν; and declared (exhibited or determined) to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness." This very rejected Person, I this day, by raising him from the dead, and placing him at my right hand, giving to him all power in heaven and earth, declare to be my Son, the beloved one in whom I am well pleased. Therefore hear him, believe on him, and obey him; for there is no redemption but through his blood; no salvation but in his name; no resurrection unto eternal life but through his resurrection, ascension, and powerful intercession at my right hand. Thou art my Son; this day have I declared and manifested thee to be such. It was absolutely necessary to the salvation of men, and the credibility of the Gospel, that the supernatural origin of the humanity of Jesus Christ should be manifested and demonstrated. Hence we find the inspired writers taking pains to show that he was born of a woman, and of that woman by the sovereign power of the everlasting God. This vindicated the character of the blessed virgin, showed the human nature of Christ to be immaculate, and that, even in respect to this nature, he was every way qualified to be a proper atoning sacrifice and Mediator between God and man. I need not tell the learned reader that the Hebrew verb ילד *yalad*, to beget, is frequently used in reference to inanimate things, to signify their production, or the exhibition of the things produced. In Gen 2:4 : These are the generations, תּוֹלְדוֹת *toledoth*, of the heavens and the

earth; this is the order in which God produced and exhibited them. See Hebrews and Eng. Concord., Venema, etc.

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PSALM 2: 8 Ask of me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.

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Verse 8

Ask of me, and I shall give thee - Here a second branch of Christ's office as Savior of the world is referred to; viz., his mediatorial office. Having died as an atoning sacrifice, and risen again from the dead, he was now to make intercession for mankind; and in virtue and on account of what he had done and suffered, he was, at his request, to have the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. He was to become supreme Lord in the mediatorial kingdom; in consequence of which he sent his apostles throughout the habitable globe to preach the Gospel to every man.

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PSALM 2: 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

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Verse 9

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron - This may refer to the Jewish nation, whose final rejection of the Gospel was foreseen, and in whose place the Gentiles or heathen were brought into the Church of Christ. They were dispossessed of their land, their city was razed to its foundations, their temple was burnt with fire, and upwards of a million of themselves were slaughtered by the Romans! So heavily did the iron rod of God's judgments fall upon them for their obstinate unbelief.

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PSALM 2: 10 Now therefore be wise, you kings. Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

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Verse 10

Be wise - O ye kings - An exhortation of the Gospel to the rulers of all kingdoms, nations, and states, to whom it may be sent. All these should listen to its maxims, be governed by its precepts, and rule their subjects according to its dictates.

Be instructed, ye judges - Rather, Be ye reformed - cast away all your idolatrous maxims; and receive the Gospel as the law, or the basis of the law, of the land.

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PSALM 2: 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

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Verse 11

Serve the Lord with fear - A general direction to all men. Fear God with that reverence which is due to his supreme majesty. Serve him as subjects should their sovereign, and as servants should their master.

Rejoice with trembling - If ye serve God aright, ye cannot but be happy; but let a continual filial fear moderate all your joys. Ye must all stand at last before the judgment-seat of God; watch, pray, believe, work, and keep humble.

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PSALM 2: 12 Give sincere homage to the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish on the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.

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#### Verse 12

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry - It is remarkable that the word son (בר bar, a Chaldee word) is not found in any of the versions except the Syriac, nor indeed any thing equivalent to it.

The Chaldee, Vulgate, Septuagint, Arabic, and Ethiopic, have a term which signifies doctrine or discipline: "Embrace discipline, lest the Lord be angry with you," etc. This is a remarkable case, and especially that in so pure a piece of Hebrew as this poem is, a Chaldee word should have been found; rb bar, instead of b ben, which adds nothing to the strength of the expression or the elegance of the poetry. I know it is supposed that rb bar is also pure Hebrew, as well as Chaldee; but as it is taken in the former language in the sense of purifying, the versions probably understood it so here. Embrace that which is pure; namely, the doctrine of God.

As all judgment is committed to the Son, the Jews and others are exhorted to submit to him, to be reconciled to him, that they might be received into his family, and be acknowledged as his adopted children. Kissing was the token of subjection and friendship.

Is kindled but a little - The slightest stroke of the iron rod of Christ's justice is sufficient to break in pieces a whole rebel world. Every sinner, not yet reconciled to God through Christ, should receive this as a most solemn warning.

Blessed: are all they - He is only the inexorable Judge to them who harden their hearts in their iniquity, and still not come unto him that they may have life. But all they who trust in him - who repose all their trust and confidence in him as their atonement and as their Lord, shall be blessed with innumerable blessings, For as the word is the same here as in Psa 1:1, אֲשֶׁר־ ashrey, it may be translated the same. "O the blessedness of all them who trust in him!"

This Psalm is remarkable, not only for its subject - the future kingdom of the Messiah, its rise, opposition, and gradual extent, but also for the elegant change of person. In the first verse the prophet speaks; in the third, the adversaries; in the fourth and fifth, the prophet answers, in the sixth, Jehovah speaks; in the seventh, the Messiah; in the eighth and ninth, Jehovah answers, and in the tenth to the twelfth, the prophet exhorts the opponents to submission and obedience - Dr. A. Bayly.

The prime subject of this Psalm is CHRIST; the type, DAVID. The persons we are chiefly to reflect on are three, and which make three parts of the Psalm: I. The enemies of Christ; II. Christ the Lord; III. The princes and judges of the earth.

I. The enemies of Christ are great men, who are described here, partly from their wickedness, and partly from their weakness.

First, Their wickedness is apparent. 1. They furiously rage. 2. They tumultuously assemble. 3. They set themselves-stand up, and take counsel, against the Lord and against his anointed. 4. They encourage themselves in mischief, saying, "Come, and let us cast away their cords from us." All which is sharpened by the interrogatory Why!

Secondly, Their weakness; in that they shall never be able to bring their plots and conspiracies against Christ and his kingdom to pass; for, 1. What they imagine is but a vain thing. 2. "He that sits in heaven shall laugh, and have them in derision." 3. "He shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." 4. For, maugre all their plots, "God hath set up his king upon his holy hill of Zion."

II. At Ps 2:6 begins the exaltation of Christ to his kingdom, which is the SECOND PART of the Psalm; in which the prophet, by a προσωποποια, or personification, brings in God the Father speaking, and the Son answering.

First, The words of the Father are, "I have set my king;" where we have the inauguration of Christ, or his vocation to the crown.

Secondly, The answer of the Son, "I will preach the law;" which sets forth his willing obedience to publish and proclaim the laws of the kingdom; of which the chief is, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

Thirdly, The reply of the Father, containing the reward that Christ was to have upon the publication of the Gospel; which was, 1. An addition to his empire by the conversion and accession of the Gentiles: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," &c. 2. And the confusion of his enemies: "Thou shalt break them," who would not have thee reign, that did rage and stand up against thee, "with a rod of iron; and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel."

III. In the third part the prophet descends to his exhortation and admonition, and that very aptly; for, Is Christ a King? Is he a King anointed by God? Is he a great King, a powerful King? So great that the nations are his subjects? So powerful that he will break and batter to pieces his enemies? Besides, Is he the only begotten Son of God? Be wise, therefore, O ye kings. In this we find,

First, The persons to whom this caveat is given: kings and judges.

Secondly, What they are taught. 1. To know their duty. "Be wise; be learned." 2. To do their duty: "Serve the Lord with fear; rejoice with trembling; kiss the Son."

Thirdly, The time when this is to be done; even now. The reason double: 1. Drawn from his wrath, and the consequent punishment: "Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the right way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." 2. From the happy condition of those who learn to know, and fear, and serve, and adore him: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." There must be no delay; this is the time of wrath, and the day of salvation.