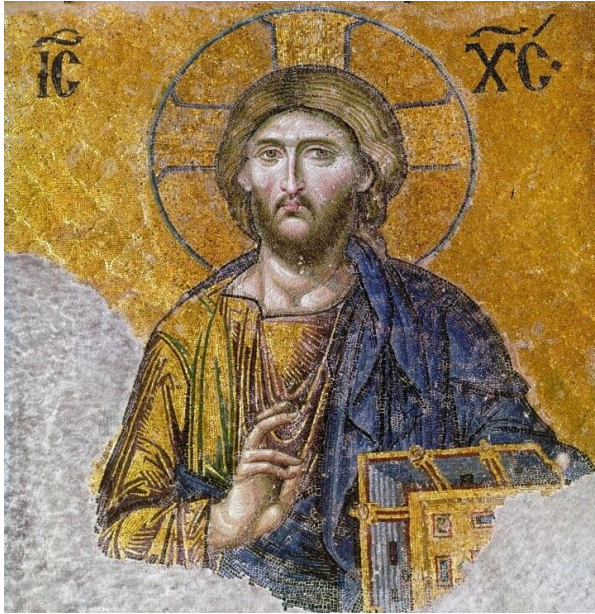


## TWO INTRODUCTORY PSALMS



Psalms 1 and 2 form an introduction to the whole book of Psalms. Together they deal with two of the most important themes of Psalms: the believer's attitude toward God's Word and the believer's attitude toward God's Messiah (the Anointed One). Psalm 1 begins with a blessing on the one who holds to God's Word. Psalm 2 ends with a blessing on the one who trusts in God's Messiah. Like bookends or brackets, these two blessings mark off these two psalms as a unit that introduces the whole Book.

### I. Psalm 1: *Beatus vir*

A handbook on meditation

Hymn 705



*Psalm One is a psalm of comfort which admonishes us to gladly hear and learn God's Word. It brings us the comfort that, in so doing, we will have many and great benefits, namely, that all our words and works will prosper despite all enemies, just as a palm tree by the water grows green and brings fruit despite all heat and cold and the like. The doctrines of men do not have these benefits, but, as the wind blows the chaff away, so they also pass away. For God says He is pleased by those who study His Word, but the others He allows to perish. This psalm flows from the Third*

*Commandment; indeed, it is a part of that Commandment, for the command to honor the Sabbath is itself the command to hear and learn God's Word. The Second and Third Petitions of the Our Father also pray for the same Word, for in these we pray for God's kingdom and His will, both of which are conveyed by His Word.*

### A. Text

- <sup>1</sup> O how blessed is the man, who walks not in the counsel/advice of the wicked,  
nor in the way of sinners stands,  
nor in the seat of scoffers/mockers sits,  
<sup>2</sup> but the law of the LORD is his delight,  
and on His law he meditates day and night,  
<sup>3</sup> and he is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither,  
and in all that he does he prospers.
- <sup>4</sup> Not so the wicked,  
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- <sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation/assembly of the righteous;
- <sup>6</sup> For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

## B. Key Terms

1. Happy = a word of “beatitude,” that is, blessing someone for what they already have/are rather than a blessing for something yet to be given. See the Beatitudes of our Lord in Matthew 5.
2. Wicked = the Hebrew word for a legal pronouncement of guilt, guilty in God’s court
3. Righteous = the Hebrew word for a legal pronouncement of innocence, innocent in God’s court
4. Law = Hebrew word *Torah*, “instruction,” “teaching.” Here, refers to the entire Word of God, not just strictly speaking what we call “the Law.”
5. Meditates = muttering, speaking to oneself
6. Double sense phrases
  - a. Day and night = “morning and evening” or “all day and all night”
  - b. “Its fruit” or “his fruit”
  - c. “Its season” or “His season”
  - d. “In all that he does he prospers” or “all that he does prospers”
7. Congregation/assembly = the gathering of people who meet with God at the temple
8. Stand = stand acquitted

## C. Key Imagery

1. Main image: life as a journey
  - a. Two ways: way of the wicked vs. the way of the righteous
  - b. Journey of a wicked person: walking, standing, sitting on a road that leads nowhere, and eventually perishes
  - c. Guidance on the wicked way by counsel, example, and mockery
  - d. Travel by the righteous person on an unseen way that is known only to the Lord
  - e. Guidance on the righteous way by the Lord through daily meditation on His word
2. Tree
  - a. God as the orchardist who plants and waters a fruit tree
  - b. Watered by a spring or irrigation canal (see Psalm 46:4)
  - c. Ever green
  - d. Seasonal fruit
3. Chaff
  - a. Separated from grain by threshing
  - b. Removal from grain by winnowing
  - c. Windblown and useless

4. Court of law
  - a. God as Judge in the divine service
  - b. Congregational assembly as place for judgment
  - c. Verdict: guilty or justified/innocent
  - d. Sentence: exclusion from the congregation

#### D. Meaning of the Psalm

Central point: the proverb in v. 6, a reversal of two common statements in the OT, that is what the Psalm leads us to meditate upon

1. What makes a person blessed/happy in life? (vv. 1–2)
  - a. Negative characteristics, note the progression:
    - Walking -> standing -> sitting
    - Wicked -> sinners -> mockers
    - Advice -> way -> seat

The blessed person is one who avoids association with the wicked

    - In their words: following their advice
    - In their actions: copying their behavior
    - In their thinking: joining them in their ridicule of righteousness
  - b. Positive characteristics:
    - i. Delight in the Lord's instruction (heart)
    - ii. Active meditation, constant speaking and repetition of God's Word (mouth)
    - iii. Meditation on the Torah is the main mark of a blessed person
2. The result of meditation on the Torah (v. 3)
  - a. Fruitfulness of a tree
  - b. Success
3. Characteristics of the godless (vv. 4–5)
  - a. Their way of life is the opposite of those who follow the Lord's instruction
    - i. They don't delight in and meditate upon the Lord's instruction
    - ii. They are not fruitful
    - iii. They are not successful
  - b. Their character and fate is revealed by the outcome of their lives:
    - i. like chaff, without life, substance, and stability
    - ii. scattered by the wind of God's judgment which reveals their true character and its ultimate consequences
4. The difference between the righteous and the wicked (v. 6)

#### E. Who is the blessed man?

II. Psalm 2: *Quare fremuerunt gentes*

A handbook on taking refuge in the Messiah



- <sup>1</sup> Why do | the heathen so furiously / rage together? \*  
and why do the people ima- / gine a vain- thing?
- <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth stand up,  
and the rulers take / counsel together \*  
against the LORD, and against / His Anoint-ed:
- <sup>3</sup> “Let us break their / bonds asunder, \*  
and cast a- / way their cords- from us.”
- <sup>4</sup> He that dwells in heaven shall / laugh them to scorn: \*  
the Lord shall have them / in deri-sion.
- <sup>5</sup> Then shall He speak unto / them in His wrath, \*  
and vex them in His / sore displea-sure:
- <sup>6</sup> “I My- / self have set My King \*  
upon My holy / hill of Zi-on.
- <sup>7</sup> I will pro - / claim the decree; \*  
The LORD has said unto Me, “You are My Son, this day have / I begot-ten You.
- <sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, and I shall give You the nations for / Your inheritance, \*  
and the utmost parts of the earth for / Your posses-sion.
- <sup>9</sup> You shall bruise them with a / rod of iron, \*  
and break them in pieces like a / potter’s ves-sel.”
- <sup>10</sup> Be wise now, / therefore, O ye kings; \*  
be instructed, ye that are jud- / ges of the- earth.
- <sup>11</sup> - / Serve the LORD in fear, \*  
and rejoice unto / Him with rev-erence.
- <sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way,  
for His wrath is / quickly kindled. \*  
Blessed are all they that / put their trust- in Him.
- Glory be to the / Father and to the Son\*  
and to the / Holy Spir-it;  
as it was in / the beginning,\*  
is now and will be for- / ever. A-men.**



*Psalm Two is a prophecy of Christ, how He would suffer and through His suffering become King and Lord of the whole world. Within this psalm stands a warning against the world’s kings and lords: if, instead of honoring and serving this King, they seek to persecute and blot Him out, they shall perish. This psalm also contains a promise that those who believe in Him will be blessed. This psalm flows from the First Commandment, in which God promises to be our God, who will help us in every trouble and will work all good to us—just as He has, through Christ, delivered*

*us from sin, death, and hell and brought us to eternal life. This blessing is what we pray for in the Second Petition of the Our Father: that His kingdom come.*

A. Text

- <sup>1</sup> Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples meditate on emptiness?
- <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand,  
and the rulers conspire together  
against the LORD and His Messiah/Anointed One:
- <sup>3</sup> “Let us break Their chains apart  
and let us fling away from us Their ropes.”
- <sup>4</sup> The One enthroned over the heavens laughs;  
my Lord makes fun of/mocks them.
- <sup>5</sup> Now He speaks to them in His wrath,  
and in His indignation confounds them:
- <sup>6</sup> “But I Myself have installed My King on Zion,  
the mountain of My holiness/sanctuary.”
- <sup>7</sup> “Let me tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son;  
I Myself today have begotten You.
- <sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, that I may give you the nations as Your inheritance,  
and as Your possession the ends of the earth.
- <sup>9</sup> You will smash them with a scepter of iron  
like a vessel of pottery You will shatter them.”
- <sup>10</sup> And now, you kings, pay mind;  
Accept correction, you judges of the earth.
- <sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD in fear  
and rejoice with trembling.
- <sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest He be angry  
and you perish with respect to the way,  
for His wrath will kindle quickly/is kindled for a little while.  
O how blessed are all who seek refuge in Him.

B. Verbal links with Psalm 1

1. Meditate (1:2; 2:1)
2. Way (1:6; 2:12)
3. Perish (1:6; 2:12)
4. Blessed (1:1; 2:12)

C. Literary features

1. Direct speech
  - a. From the kings about God and His Messiah (v. 3)
  - b. From God about His King (v. 6)

- c. From God to the King (vv. 7b–9)
- 2. Change of speakers
  - a. David: vv. 1–6
  - b. King: vv. 7–9
  - c. David: vv. 10–12

#### D. Examination

1. Report by David: the Lord's reaction to the rebellion of the nations (vv. 1 – 6)  
Riddle: Why do the nations and their rulers rebel against God and His Messiah?
  - a. They meditate upon a futile delusion: victory
  - b. Conspiracy against the Lord and His Messiah
  - c. Decision to reject their rule
  - d. Desire for autonomy
2. God's response to their rebellion (vv. 4 – 6)
  - a. Unexpected reaction: no counterattack but mockery of their stupidity and a warning against incurring His wrath
  - b. Reason for mockery: installation of the Messiah on His holy mountain
  - c. Wrath at the desecration of His holiness
3. The words of King Messiah (vv. 7 – 9)
  - a. The announcement of His Father's decree
  - b. Gift of the world as His inheritance
  - c. Promise of dominion and victory
4. David's ultimatum to the nations (vv. 10 – 12)
  - a. Call for prudent attention to God's Word
  - b. Summons with three commands:
    - i. Worship the Lord: reverent participation in the Divine Service
    - ii. Rejoice with trembling: astonishment at the privilege given man
    - iii. Kiss the Son: acknowledgement of Him as God
  - c. Warning: avoidance of the Messiah's wrath and destruction
  - d. Blessing