

LESSON ONE

Lord of All

FOCAL TEXT

Psalms 2; 110

BACKGROUND

Psalms 2; 110

MAIN IDEA

All who oppose the Lord do so in vain, for the Lord reigns over all.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

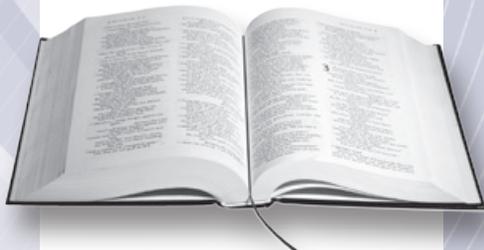
Who's in charge here—
and everywhere?

STUDY AIM

To acknowledge God's
lordship in my life

QUICK READ

Psalms 2 and 110 are royal psalms, which celebrate the Davidic king as the instrument of God's power over all. The Davidic Messiah, Jesus, has lordship over all.



Have you ever been in an electricity blackout that lasted more than a few minutes? Normally when the power is out for just a few minutes, we don't realize the impact. We probably spend those several minutes looking for flashlights. But when the power stays off for a while, we recognize the extreme influence it has on the way we live. The air conditioner goes off, the refrigerator loses coolness, the television and the computer don't work, and we have to carry flashlights just to get to different parts of the house. Although electricity affects virtually every aspect of our lives, it is an unseen power that often goes unnoticed.

Similarly, God is also an unseen power in life who goes unnoticed. Psalms 2 and 110 are meant to remind their readers, or singers, of the unmatched power of God over all of life. They are royal psalms related to a celebration of Israel's kings, but both also emphasize that the rule of those kings is representative of God's own reigning power.¹

PSALM 2

- 1 Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the LORD
and against his Anointed One.
- 3 "Let us break their chains," they say,
"and throw off their fetters."
- 4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
- 5 Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
- 6 "I have installed my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
- 7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.
- 8 Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.

- 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”
- 10 Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
- 11 Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in your way,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

PSALM 110

Of David. A psalm.

- 1 The LORD says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”
- 2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion;
you will rule in the midst of your enemies.
- 3 Your troops will be willing
on your day of battle.
Arrayed in holy majesty,
from the womb of the dawn
you will receive the dew of your youth.
- 4 The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind:
“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”
- 5 The Lord is at your right hand;
he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.
- 6 He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead
and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.
- 7 He will drink from a brook beside the way;
therefore he will lift up his head.

Quotations of Psalms 2 and 110 in the New Testament

Psalm 2—Acts 4:25–26; 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5;
Revelation 2:26–27; 11:18; 12:5; 19:15
Psalm 110—Matthew 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62;
Luke 20:42–43; 22:69; Acts 2:34–35;
Hebrews 1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21

Rebellion and Response (2:1–6)

Neither Psalm 1 nor Psalm 2 has a heading or indication of authorship. Because of their lack of these features, commentators have suggested that the two psalms acted as an introduction to the rest of the Psalter. In its original context, Psalm 2 likely was used as a part of the ceremony that would celebrate the enthronement of a new king. While honoring the new king and his reign, the psalm also emphasized that the king functioned as the instrument of God. The power of God in the world is an important theme that is found throughout the songs of Israel's worship.

Psalm 2:1–3 describes a kind of international conspiracy against God. The nations were plotting against God, with all of the kings gathered together trying to figure out how they could break away from the rule of the Lord and his anointed. The anointed one referred to here is Israel's king. The imaginary group of nations felt as though the Lord and his king had them bound in chains and shackles, and they desired to get free.

God responded to their conspiracy in Psalm 2:4–6. By referring to God as the “the One enthroned in heaven” (Psalm 2:4), the psalmist emphasized God's kingship and power. The ultimate King laughed and scoffed at the nations who were trying to plot against him. No alliance of human powers can ever match the power of the One in heaven, and thus God did not even take the plot seriously. God's laughter then turned to rebukes, and his anger and wrath terrified the nations.

But rather than issuing a divine punishment or judgment on the nations, God merely made a statement to the nations that he had installed his king on Zion, his holy mountain (Ps. 2:6). The simple presence of the Lord's instrument of power was sufficient to level the nations' conspiracy. But the king was not installed just anywhere; the king was on

Zion, the holy mountain. Zion becomes one of the names for Jerusalem in the Old Testament. That Zion is designated as God’s “holy” mountain means that it is set apart to belong specifically to God and to be used especially for God’s service. The place where the king dwells is the place where God is present and at work. The holy mountain is the place where the king mediates the power of God.

The Kingly Covenant and a Warning (2:7–12)

Now the king moved to the forefront and spoke. The king declared God’s covenant with the Davidic kings—that God would be their father and that they would be sons of God. When God established a covenant with David that David’s house and kingdom would endure before the Lord forever, God specifically outlined this father-son relationship with the Davidic kings (see 2 Samuel 7:14).

As God’s son, the king was subject to an inheritance. The inheritance God promised was “the nations” and “the ends of the earth” (Ps. 2:8). Territorial expansion, having more land and resources, was a concern of every king, and so the promise of all the nations and the ends of the earth meant great power. The king is said to conquer the nations so intently that they are broken and shattered into pieces like a pot that has been smashed with an iron rod.

Then, because of this promise of great power to God’s king, the kings of the nations are warned to watch out. If the nations served the Lord, celebrated his rule, and honored God’s son the king, they would be saved. If not, they would become like the shattered pot. Thus they are reminded, “Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (2:12). Only those who were sheltered by God’s king would find God’s blessing.

From an historical perspective, the Davidic dynasty never achieved the world dominance that this psalm suggests. Even at its peak, Israel was a small nation in comparison to the world powers existing all around it. But in its context, the psalm represented God’s promise of his power at work in the world through the Davidic king. However, as the monarchy decreased in power, the psalm began to be interpreted in new ways. The exilic community, which existed as a kingless colony of Persia and later other empires, saw this psalm as a promise of the restoration of Israel through a new king in the line of David—a messiah. The New

SON OF GOD

Because of God's promise in the Davidic covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:12–15), the Davidic kings were thought of as *sons of God*. When Jesus is called the Son of God in the New Testament, it may be this connotation of the Davidic king to which the authors were alluding. Being called a *son of God* was another way of being called the Davidic Messiah. So while we often think of a familial, or even biological, relationship when Jesus is called the Son of God, it is likely that the initial audience of the New Testament heard this phrase as a reference to Jesus' role as Messiah and the promise of national Jewish restoration instead of it being an indication of Jesus' divine nature.

Testament then took this interpretation a step further and began to see Jesus as the Son of God represented in the psalm.

At the Lord's Right Hand (Psalm 110)

The heading of Psalm 110, "Of David. A psalm," was a later addition to the psalm. Scholars are divided over the dating of this psalm and its original context. Some say that the psalm belonged to a period during the Davidic monarchy and possibly was a psalm celebrating one of David's victories. Others suggest a later date for the psalm, when the offices of king and priest were more closely related than in David's day. Either way, as with Psalm 2, Psalm 110 also proclaims the Lord's great power as enacted through the king, and subsequent interpretation of the psalm has connected its themes to that of the Messiah and to Jesus.

In Psalm 110:1, the Lord spoke to the king and told him to sit at the Lord's right hand. Sitting in such a place of honor was symbolic of the idea that the king functioned as co-regent with God, or as God's associate. For the king to sit at God's right hand emphasized that it was God who had the ultimate power to conquer enemies. Although the king was the visible face of power, God was the real power even though he was not seen. God was the power through whom the king would extend his "mighty scepter" (Ps. 110:2), "crush kings" (110:5), and "judge the

nations” (110:6). What God would enable the king to do in 110:7 is uncertain, for the translation of the Hebrew phrase is unclear. However, the basic meaning of 110:7 appears to suggest that the king would be eternally refreshed and empowered by God’s provisions of water so that he could lift up his head and do God’s work.

In addition to the celebration of God’s power through the king, a unique statement is made of the king, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (110:4). The Davidic kings did not come from the line of Levi, Moses, or Aaron, and so they should not have had any right to serve the function of priest. However, the psalmist drew on the example of Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham in Genesis 14:18. Melchizedek was the king of Salem (the previous name for Jerusalem), who also functioned as a priest of the Most High God. So, in the Davidic king’s home in the new Salem, Jerusalem, God designated that like Melchizedek the king would become a priestly mediator between God and the people.

Psalm 110:1 is the Old Testament passage most frequently quoted in the New Testament. One example is how Jesus used the verse to demonstrate to the Pharisees that a king was coming who was more powerful than David (Matthew 22:41–45; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44). Jesus is also referred to in the third person as the One who sits at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12). Further, the idea of a king who is also a priest is used in Hebrews as a part of the basis for understanding Jesus’ own high priesthood (Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21).

As with Psalm 2, New Testament interpreters came to see the value of Psalm 110 in understanding Jesus’ role as the Messiah. Jesus is the Son of God, he sits at the right hand of God, and he is the King who is also a Priest. It is important to note, however, that while the original context of these psalms was for political rule and the military power of the king, the New Testament authors reinterpreted Jesus’ role as Messiah in terms of spiritual rule—the kingdom of God. And as the nations were the Messiah’s inheritance, Jesus’ new kingdom opened the way for non-Israelites, Gentiles, to be welcomed under God’s reign. While the Israelite kings did not succeed in ruling over the entire world, the Messiah of the Christian faith, Jesus, has been given the power to reign over all of life. He truly is the Lord of all!

BIBLE FREEDOM

Bible freedom is an important Baptist distinctive. *Bible freedom* refers to an individual's freedom to interpret the living and active Bible under the lordship of Christ. Changing interpretations of Psalms 2 and 110 are examples of Bible freedom at work—from seeing these psalms as applied to the Davidic king, then to a future messiah, and then finally to Jesus. As the word of God is living and active, each generation who reads it can find application to their needs. As Baptists, we are grateful to have the freedom to try to continually understand Scripture and its meaning in our ever-changing contexts.

This Lesson and Life

Jesus' lordship over all includes our own individual lives. Like the nations, we are given instructions in Psalm 2:11–12 on how to live in the acknowledgement of that lordship. First, we can “serve the LORD with fear.” When we serve in fear, we use our lives and the things that we do as ways of service to pay proper respect and reverence (“fear”) to God. Second, we can celebrate his rule “with trembling.” Celebrating Jesus' rule means not trying to take control of our own lives in opposition to him, but rather respecting Jesus' rule by submitting to God's purposes and desires. And third, we can “kiss”—honor—“the Son,” Jesus, as King. Honoring Jesus as King means giving him the worship and adoration he deserves as Lord over all. Then, in that service, submission, and adoration, we will be able to seek refuge and shelter in the Son of God. When we do, we will find the blessings of living under the lordship of Christ.

3. What is the difference between Christ's function as king and his function as priest in our lives?

4. In addition to the ways mentioned in these lesson comments, how can we demonstrate Christ's lordship over our lives?

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1-2, 4-13 are from the New International Version (1984 edition).