

LESSON ONE  
*Lord of All*

**FOCAL TEXT**

Psalms 2; 110

**BACKGROUND**

Psalms 2; 110

**MAIN IDEA**

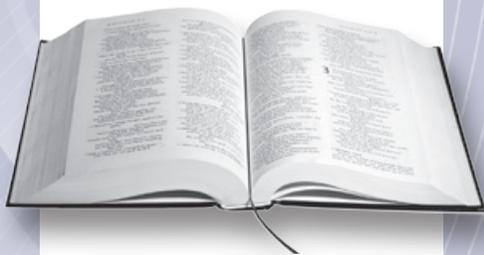
All who oppose the Lord  
do so in vain, for the  
Lord reigns over all.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

Who's in charge here—  
and everywhere?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to acknowledge  
God's lordship in their lives



## BIBLE COMMENTS

### Understanding the Context

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The Book of Psalms is a marvelous and intriguing collection of ancient Israel's worship songs and hymns. It provides us a picture of the prayerful faith relationship the Israelites maintained with God. This wonderful anthology contains a wide variety of faith expressions, ranging from exuberant praise hymns to prayers of deeply-grieving lament. Each of the psalms was composed, utilized, and preserved by God's people as a vehicle to give authentic and honest voice to both the high points and the low moments in their relationship with God and others.

Scholars have identified a handful of different types or genres of psalms in the book. The largest single category is lament—either an individual or corporate expression of Israelite loss, devastation, or grief. The other major types of psalms include the wisdom psalms, royal psalms, and praise psalms (a general group that includes a variety of expressions such as hymns, creation psalms, and thanksgiving psalms).<sup>1</sup>

The thirteen lessons included in this study of *Psalms: Songs from the Heart of Faith* will span most of the basic psalm types that appear in the Book of Psalms. These lessons were designed to highlight those psalms that the New Testament church found useful in its own faith journey and worship of Jesus Christ as Lord. Drawing from the historic faith of Israel in the Old Testament, the earliest Christians found the Book of Psalms an especially important source for expressing their own faith. This first lesson in our series is drawn from the category of the *royal psalms*. In these psalms, the human king over Israel, through the hereditary monarchy, was understood as God's duly-anointed representative on earth. These two psalms are the psalms most often quoted in the New Testament.

Among the ancient Hebrews, God was considered King over the whole earth. As the Creator of everything that exists, God is *sovereign* (an antique word for king or queen) over the earth and everything that happens there. Therefore, God's power over history is unquestioned. So Israel's faithfulness to God's will in history was the secret to her success and happiness. By following the Sinai Covenant she had made with

God, including God’s clear lifestyle instructions in the Law (or *Torah*), Israel would be following *the rule of God* (thus, a theocracy) and be *the kingdom of God*.

Because the Old Testament often pictured God as a King ruling over an empire on earth, Christianity adopted that very description for Christ as King over the kingdom of God now expressed in the New Israel, the church. Indeed, because Jesus was “descended from the house and family of David” (Luke 2:4), Jesus was interpreted to be the fulfillment of Israel’s longstanding hopes for a new king.<sup>2</sup> Remember that a common method Jesus himself used to apply Old Testament truths was to begin a parable with “The kingdom of God is like. . . .” Therefore, several New Testament writers quoted these royal psalms in order to connect Jesus to the Hebrew theocratic tradition and to identify Jesus clearly as King.

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### 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

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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### Background: Dealing with Authorship and the Superscriptions

Traditionally, we have spoken of “the Psalms of David,” and many persons thus have assumed that David penned them all. Evidence inside the Book of Psalms itself actually suggests several different authors. But while David was making other preparations to build the temple in Jerusalem, he may have sponsored the collecting of various psalms, including his own, into one place as a hymnbook. So his name is appropriately attached to such a collection whether or not he was its lone author.

The heading or title above many of the psalms is called a *superscription* (meaning *something written above*). These identifiers may have been

added much later than when the psalm was written. The words in the superscription are brief, not very detailed, and open to various interpretations. For example, “Of David” (Psalm 110:1) reflects a Hebrew expression that could be translated *of, to, for, concerning, or associated with David*.<sup>3</sup>

### The Worldly Powers Rebel (2:1–3)

The fact that God was Creator of everything is simply assumed in these royal psalms. In their declarations of fact, as well as in statements of praise, God is portrayed as the *boss* or lord or ruler over what God has made. Everything and everyone on earth is subject to God’s power and presence and provision.

Yet, just as in that first garden in Eden, human nature always wants to set its own path—stubbornly contrary to God’s ways. In these verses, the will of God—as expressed through the king of Israel who implemented the Sinai Covenant<sup>4</sup> in the world—is resisted by secular, ungodly powers who are dead set on another path. The term “his anointed” (Ps. 2:2; Hebrew word, *messiah*) indicates that the king of Israel serves as God’s own personal agent in Israel and in world affairs.

### God’s Response (2:4–6)

In parallel expressions typical of Old Testament poetry, God sarcastically “laughs” at and derides the pitiful futility of human beings who seek to thwart God’s purposes on earth. No matter how powerful these earthly kings might appear on the human scene, the God who looks down from so high above will quickly judge their misdeeds. Further, God will use “his anointed” one (2:2; Hebrew word, *messiah*)—whom he has set in power and who rules from Mount Zion in Jerusalem—to implement God’s will on earth through the Sinai Covenant.

### The King Speaks (2:7–9)

As God’s agent, the Israelite monarch speaks up in defense of God’s instructions. If nations or powers set themselves against the ways of God, then God’s anointed representative would confront and defeat them as the act of God’s own judgment. Note the image of shattered pottery in

Psalm 2:9. This image is similarly applied to God's judgment of Judah's misdeeds in Jeremiah 19. God's judgment is thorough and complete.

The poetic image of the earthly king as God's adopted son recalls God's promise to David that the legacy of his hereditary monarchy would continue as an eternal dynasty (see 2 Samuel 7:8–17, especially 7:14–16). David almost certainly took God's promise to be a biological prediction, but in God's own providence in history the dynasty of David found fulfillment in a theological truth. For New Testament era Christians, it was not David's physical *DNA*, but David's spiritual faithfulness to God's word and ways, that found eternal continuity in the church of Jesus Christ, "son of David" (Matthew 1:1).

### A Word to the Wise—and the Powerful (2:10–12)

The psalmist concluded with a strong direct challenge: either choose to serve God obediently and be blessed, or prepare to be crushed in your rebellion. Temptation is strong to secure one's own future with power grabs and selfish ventures, but the abundant life is found in God.

The best option is to submit to God's own sovereign role in the world, and in your life. Acknowledge God as the source of your life and the constant provider of your sustenance and your protection in this life. Then, like a good and gracious king, God will take care of you. This timeless biblical truth applies to kings and commoners alike.

### Israel's King as God's Agent in the World (110:1–4)

110:1. The psalmist began this royal psalm with God's instruction for Israel's king ("my lord" for the psalmist and all the other Israelite subjects) to stay close to God ("at my right hand") and thus succeed in his royal policies in the world (God's defeat of Israel's enemies).

This verse is the single Old Testament passage that is most often quoted in the New Testament.

In a defining argument that stymied the Pharisees, Jesus quoted the verse to try to get his opponents beyond their literalistic legalism and help them to see the spiritual truth concerning the expected messiah (Matthew 22:41–46; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44). At his trial, Jesus connected this verse with Daniel 7:13 to state his own identity as Messiah (Matthew 26:62–68; Mark 14:61–65; Luke 22:66–71).

In the early church, Jesus was seen as prophet-priest-king in the Israelite tradition of God's faithful spiritual leader. In Christian theology, God has given Jesus victory over sin and the grave because of his faithfulness to serve God's will in the world. God raised Jesus from the dead as testimony to God's approval and reward for the work Jesus completed. Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2 (especially Acts 2:29–36) connects Psalm 110:1 with that completed and divinely approved work of King Jesus.

**110:2.** God will bring the victory to the faithful king of Israel whose powerful rule (“mighty scepter”) is consistent with God's will.

**110:3.** The king will find that his people will follow his leadership into battle against enemies when the cause is right and just.

**110:4.** God will be faithful now to the obedient king who acknowledges and serves God, just as God consistently had been faithful to good spiritual leaders from Israel's very earliest history. In Genesis 14:13–24, the early patriarch Abraham won a victory in battle over pagan enemies and then gave his offering tithe to God Most High through the priest/king named Melchizedek. Melchizedek resided then in Salem (later Jerusalem = *city of shalom*). In Jewish and later Christian theology, Melchizedek became an emblem of the priestly and kingly functions that were centered in Jerusalem.

The writer of Hebrews connected this long tradition concerning Melchizedek to Jesus (see Hebrews 7). Jesus is the superior high priest, more efficacious in his saving work than either Melchizedek or even the Levitical priesthood of Israel. The undefined and mysterious figure of Melchizedek in the story of Abraham (Genesis 14) had caught the imagination of Jewish believers for a long time, but Jesus was superior to him. Further, Jesus certainly surpassed the work accomplished by the priests of the tribe of Levi who had descended from Aaron. The spiritual accomplishments of Jesus as God's appointed intermediary (see Hebrews 5:5–6, which quotes *both* Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4) far surpasses any previous work of salvation.

## Focusing on the Meaning

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Some scholars have concluded that the royal psalms were recited as part of the ceremony when a new king was installed as the Lord's anointed to rule over ancient Israel. These psalms would serve to assure the king of God's power and protection over his administration as long as he followed God's ways. The people of Israel would bear witness to the newly anointed king as God's partner for truth in Israel and in the world. And the "other nations" outside Israel are subjected to God's will, too, if the king did his job properly in extending the principles and lifestyle of the Sinai Covenant throughout the earth.

The thrust of these two royal psalms is this: *The king and all of Israel through him will be happiest and most successful in this world when they give their selfish wills over to God.* The ultimate judgment of God on the unrighteousness of defeated pagans is proof of this truth.

Remember that Jesus taught us to pray for God's agenda to be implemented here on earth: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Jesus gave himself over to complete God's will on earth, even at great cost to himself: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not what I want but what you want" (Matt. 26:39).

Submission to God's lordship, and thus to God's power in our lives to define our ways in this world, is our best path to liberty and fulfillment—to the abundant life (see John 10:10).

## TEACHING PLANS

### Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities

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#### Connect with Life

1. To introduce the overall study of *Psalms: Songs from the Heart of Faith*, direct class members to the order of worship your church uses, and invite them to list various elements of worship. (Responses

might include prayer, music, waiting for God, inviting God's presence, reading Scripture, poetry, praise, listening to God, talking to God, seeking, etc.) If your church does not prepare a printed order of service, invite members to brainstorm worship elements based on your church's worship patterns. Comment that likely each of the identified elements of worship can be found in the Book of Psalms, and that the Psalms are a written record of prayerful conversations from people standing before God expressing deep emotion and strong feeling.

2. Invite members to look at the lesson titles in the *Study Guide*, and point out that this study will touch on life issues that confront us daily—God's greatness, trusting God, commitment, forgiveness, gratitude, crying out to God, deliverance, worship, thankfulness, and much more. Suggest that to comprehend the overall scope of the Psalms one must first recognize that the Lord God reigns over all. Use the information in "Introducing *The Book of Psalms: Songs from the Heart of Faith*" in the *Study Guide* to introduce the study further.
3. Display and call attention to a previously written poster with the statements: "As we think about God's plan for our lives, for any life, for all life, God is at the very center. God is Lord of all, and we must acknowledge and treat God that way!"

### Guide Bible Study

4. Ask, *When have you been most reminded of God's power?* After several responses, invite participants to turn to Psalm 2. Invite a class member to read Psalm 2 verse by verse, and ask remaining class members to respond after each line is read by saying together, *He is Lord of all.*
5. Comment that Psalms 2 and 110 are psalms that celebrate the Davidic king as the instrument of God's power over all. Invite members to turn to 1 Samuel 8 to consider the progression of Israel's kingship. Enlist a member to read 1 Samuel 8 aloud while the class listens for God's response to Israel's request for a king. Ask the following questions for discussion:

- Were Israel's motives for wanting a king pure? How or how not?
- How did Samuel respond to their request?
- How did God respond to their request?
- What was the real problem with Israel's request? (they wanted to trust in a human king like the other nations)

Lead the group to consider how Psalm 2 differs from 1 Samuel 8, particularly in the fact that God now has established a kingship that will have eternal consequences. Refer to 2 Samuel 7:12–15, and summarize the first paragraph under “The Kingly Covenant and a Warning (2:7–12)” in the *Study Guide*.

6. Then have four previously-enlisted class members to paraphrase briefly sections of Psalm 2 aloud (Ps. 2:1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–12), focusing on the meaning of the passage in its original context as it related to Israel's king.
7. Invite participants to turn to Psalm 110 and silently scan the verses. Then write the words “king,” “priest,” and “power” on a marker-board. Invite the class to place each verse (or phrase) into one of the categories represented by the words.
8. Give a brief overview of Psalm 110 using information in the *Study Guide* and in “Bible Comments” in this *Teaching Guide*, making sure to point out that these verses make it clear that God would reign over all things through his Messiah. To further tie these Psalms to the New Testament focus on the Messiah, invite members to compare the New Testament background verses listed in “Quotations of Psalms 2 and 110 in the New Testament” in the *Study Guide* with the psalms from which they are quoted. (Use the time wisely. Use only the New Testament references in the Gospels if necessary in order to have time for “Encourage Application.”) Point out that Jesus has lordship over every aspect of our lives.

### Encourage Application

9. Call attention to question 4 in the *Study Guide*. Allow time for response and discussion.

10. Hand a previously enlisted class member a crown (made of paper or jewels; one secured at a local fast food restaurant will work fine) and ask the volunteer to fashion it to his or her head. Then call attention once again to the poster used at the beginning of the lesson and say, *The crown our class member is wearing represents Lordship. Each of us must make the decision to remove the crown from ourselves and acknowledge the King, Jesus the Messiah, as Lord of our lives and Lord of all. Each of us must make the decision to crown him King of kings and Lord of lords.* As you are speaking, the volunteer will remove the poster from the wall, place it in the floor, take his or her crown off, and place it on the poster, symbolizing his or her surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Then say, *Our class member has made the decision to acknowledge that the Lord reigns over all. Will you follow?*
11. Read the last statement of 2:12. Comment that true happiness is based on reliance on God. Close in prayer, encouraging class members to acknowledge God's lordship this week.

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## Teaching Plan—Lecture and Questions

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### Connect with Life

1. To introduce the study, refer to and summarize the information in “Introducing *The Book of Psalms: Songs from the Heart of Faith*” in the *Study Guide*.
2. Comment that at the very beginning of the collection of the Psalms we are reminded of God's power and lordship over all.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Display and call attention to the following study outline (taken from the *Study Guide*) for this lesson:
  - a. Rebellion and Response (Psalm 2:1–6)
  - b. The Kingly Covenant and a Warning (Psalm 2:7–12)
  - c. At the Lord's Right Hand (Psalm 110)

4. Enlist someone to read Psalm 2:1–6 aloud. Then ask:
  - How did the psalmist describe this international conspiracy against God?
  - How might these verses foreshadow the rejection of the New Testament King, the Messiah?
  - Why might these nations feel they were bound?
  - What words describe the Lord’s response to these nations?
  - What bold statement did God make to the nations?
  - What is the significance of Zion, God’s holy mountain?
5. Direct members to 2:7–12, and point out that these verses were spoken by God’s king. Invite members to turn to 2 Samuel 7:12–16 as you read these verses aloud. Point out that this passage outlines God’s covenant with the Davidic kings. Call attention as seems helpful to the small article titled “Son of God” in the *Study Guide*. Explain further using information on Psalm 2:7–12 in the *Study Guide* and in “Bible Comments” in this *Teaching Guide*.
6. To further explore Psalm 2:7–12 you may want to ask questions like these:
  - What warning is given to the kings of the nations?
  - Why is this warning significant?
  - To what degree is this warning relevant for us today?
7. Invite a class member to read Psalm 110 aloud as others follow in their Bibles. Ask the following questions for discussion and consideration:
  - What are the implications of God’s words to the king in verse 1?
  - How does Psalm 110 help us understand Jesus’ role as Messiah? (See in “Bible Comments” in this *Teaching Guide* the New Testament references under 110:1 and 110:4.)
  - How does *Lord of all* imply more than a simple title?
  - What action words listed in the verses help us understand God’s Lordship?

### Encourage Application

8. Call attention to the Main Idea of this lesson in the *Study Guide*:  
“All who oppose the Lord do so in vain, for the Lord reigns over

all.” Then ask, *What are some evidences around you that could suggest God is not in control of everything?* Then ask an opposite question, *What are some evidences around you that strongly suggest, or even prove, that God is Lord of all?* After a few minutes of discussion, ask the follow-up question, *How can we live with assurance in this tension?* Suggest that *faith* is the appropriate response to God’s sovereign faithfulness.

9. As you close in prayer, invite members to ponder, *How will I live differently this week in light of God’s Lordship over all?*

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## NOTES

1. For more details, see W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 17–31, which also includes a helpful brief summary of the 20th century contributions of Hermann Gunkel, Claus Westermann, Sigmund Mowinckel, and Brevard Childs.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–9 are from the New Revised Standard Version.
3. See Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises*, 8–14
4. See Exodus 19–20.