

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 25

KINGDOM PROPHECY, PART 6

Psalms 2:4–5 ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs [לְעֵג], The Lord scoffs [לְעֵג] at them. ⁵Then He will speak to them in His anger [אַף] And terrify [יִבְהִל] them in His fury [קִרוּחַ], saying,

The Lord has a twofold response to these vain things: laughter and wrath. The absolute foolishness of the human mind to think man can defeat God! Man ever thinks he is so important but he is insignificant and apart from God He is nothing. We were created to be of manifold worth, but when engaging in rebellion against God, we are nothing and deserving of His wrath. And wrath is what a rebellious world, its kings and its people, will experience. God holds these rebellious kings in derision and His wrath, once unleashed against them, will terrify them. The words used here are strong words to indicate God's anger and the people's response in terror, however, they are probably inadequate as an expression of God's mind and man's response. I don't think we can imagine the terror people are going to experience when the wrath of God is poured out on this sinful and unbelieving world. But even then, most of the people of the world will persist in their rebellion because that's what they want to do. They are their own gods and they are not going to submit to the Creator God. The inspired text of Psalm 2 seems to be written in this way to allow the reader to understand, in human terms, the mind of God and His reaction to this foolish, doomed rebellion. It also serves to show us rebellion is futile.

On the one hand, God is amused at these puny human beings who think they can defy the omnipotent Creator God of the universe and He ridicules their antics. But the seriousness of their rebellion is then expressed in the fact that God's reaction is also one of anger and He will pour out His wrath on these disobedient kings and on those who follow them.

The contrast between the earth bound kings and the God who sits in heaven, started in verses 1 and 2, is completed. God is in control of the universe. In contrast, the rule of kings is finite and actually miniscule and insignificant in comparison. God will speak their destruction into existence sealing their fate. He who originally spoke all things into existence at the beginning and holds all things together by His power, will destroy His enemies by speaking their destruction into existence. But let us not forget that the God who created the world loves the world and does not harbor any desire that these kings and their people perish. He would rather they all come to repentance and to the recognition of the truth so they might turn from the futility of their rebellion and avoid eternal death.

Revelation 19:15 ¹⁵From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

2 Peter 3:9 ⁹The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

This rebellion will end when the Son, the King, returns to earth to assume His Kingdom and speaks their destruction into existence.

Psalms 2:6-9 ⁶“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” ⁷“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. ⁹‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”

Zion was the name of the Canaanite city David conquered. Eventually, the name represented the Temple Mount and was used as a synonym for Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel in total. That holy mountain, the Temple Mount, is a special place to God. It was and is unique and it is set apart for the Lord despite the condition in which it finds itself today. This is no surprise; the Word of the Lord told us it would be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the time set by the Father for the Son to assume His throne arrives. In the future, the King will rule from that place or at least that place such as it will be after the geographical convulsions of the Tribulation are over. The city and the Temple Mount will experience significant topographical changes when the Lord comes back. The installation of the King is the end of the rebellion; He will strike down the nations with the sword of His mouth.

Luke 21:24 ²⁴...and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The decree of the Lord gives the Son the right to rule. This is most likely a reference to the Davidic Covenant.

2 Samuel 7:14 ¹⁴“I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me...”

Obviously, the language that claims the Davidic kings were sons of God is figurative language in the form of a metaphor. “The statement makes a comparison between what a son is to a father and what the king is to God to describe the special relationship between them. The immediate significance of this special relationship concerns the inheritance of the kingdom, beginning on the coronation day.” [Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1 (1-41)*, p. 1:207].

The concept of begotten has produced a lot of confusion over the years. Begotten, בְּלֵד, does refer to physical birth and cults have been based on this fact by claiming that Jesus was physically born of the Father and did not become God the Son until He was born. "The statement I have begotten You, which is directed from God the Father to God the Son, signifies not the production of Sonship (since all three persons of the Godhead are uncreated and eternal), but rather the Father's declaration of the Messiah's Sonship as announced later by Gabriel (Lk 1:32), reiterated at Jesus' baptism (Lk 3:22), and confirmed by His resurrection (Ac 13:33; Rm 1:4). In the ancient near east, a king was considered 'begotten' when he entered into kingship." [Michael G. Wechsler, "Psalms" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, p. 761]. "[P]art of the king's investiture at the time of his enthronement, equally avoids the idea that the king obtains that position by an act of physical begetting. Rather, he enters that position through the call of God that is based on a process of adoption." [*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, s.v. "בְּלֵד," p. 2:456]. "But 'You are my son' in Psalm 2 is used specifically for the coronation of the anointed king. The expression was applied to every descendant of David who came to the throne. And so in the New Testament it is used precisely in that way for the coronation of the Messiah at his exaltation to glory; he is the eternal king." [Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1 (1-41)*, p. 208, n. 5]. Acts 13:33 applies Psalm 2:7 to Christ Jesus. The phrase "Today I have begotten You" refers to the coronation of the Son as the King.

Acts 13:33 ³³that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'

"The verb 'begotten' in its literal sense refers to a child who shares the nature of the father (as opposed to words like 'made' and 'created'). To describe Jesus as 'begotten' indicates that he has the nature of the Father, i.e., divine and eternal; and if he is eternal, then 'begotten' refers to nature and not a beginning. The description is figurative. This is why the Nicene Creed clarifies the point: Jesus is 'begotten not made.' When Scripture uses 'begotten' in that sense, the expression includes 'only' (μονογενής, 'the only begotten'); there is only one person who shares the divine nature of the Father, and that is Jesus Christ." [Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1 (1-41)*, p. 208, n. 5]. The point to all this is Christ Jesus is the Son of God who is Himself God, divine and eternal, and He is the King who will rule (future) from Zion.

The believing remnant of the kings, rulers, nations and peoples that are attempting to overthrow the King are going to become His inheritance. Many people will come to faith during this time when God is exercising His wrath upon the unbelieving people of the world. There will be no part of the earth, no nation, and no people group who are not and will not be subject to His authority as the King. No one could overthrow King David and no one will prevent King Jesus from establishing His Kingdom. At the end of history, all the nations of the earth will be in rebellion against God; no exceptions. They will all be made subject to the King and defeated. Those among them who believe during this time of wrath and judgment will enter the Kingdom as subjects of the King.

When the King returns, He will put down this rebellion and establish His Kingdom; He will smash them and defeat them. He will rule with a rod of iron which refers to the King's scepter. It signifies His sovereign authority and the use of iron as a metaphor to describe it indicates the strength of His rule. The idea that He will smash them like earthenware is thought to describe an Egyptian practice the nations of the time would have known about. "This figure may be based on the Egyptian custom in which the name of each city under the king's dominion was written on a little votive jar and placed in the temple of his god [meaning the god of the city, not necessarily Pharaoh's god]. Then, if the people in a city rebelled, the pharaoh could smash that city's little jar in the presence of the deity. Such a symbolic act would terrify the rebellious—not that the city had much of a chance of withstanding the pharaoh in the first place. The psalmist may be drawing on that imagery to stress how easily the king, with all the authority of heaven behind him, will crush the rebellion swiftly." [Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1 (1-41)*, p. 210].

Psalms 2 ends with advice for the kings and rulers of the nations.

Psalms 2:10–11 ¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, show discernment [שָׁכַל]; Take warning [יִסַּר], O judges of the earth. ¹¹Worship [עֲבֹד] the LORD with reverence [יִרְאַה] And rejoice [גִּיל] with trembling [רָעַד].

The NASB has the poorest interpretation of verses 10-12. Other good translations counsel the kings to be wise and to be willing to receive instruction or correction and these are much more accurate interpretations of the Hebrew. The JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh has it as discipline. Discernment, in English, is about exercising good judgment but this is about wisdom and gaining understanding. Those two are not the same thing. It is about the willingness to accept instruction and discipline with the goal of learning from it and changing behavior. In English, warning means to indicate the possibility of danger or something unpleasant but this word is talking about receiving instruction and changing behavior. In English, the word discernment would be better translated wise and warning would be better translated as instruction, correction, or discipline.

Psalms 2:10 ¹⁰So now, you kings, do what is wise; you rulers of the earth, submit to correction! [NET Bible]

Psalms 2:10 ¹⁰So now, kings, be wise; receive instruction, you judges of the earth. [HCSB]

Psalms 2:10 ¹⁰Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. [NKJV]

Psalms 2:10 So now, O kings, be prudent; accept discipline, you rulers of the earth! [JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh]

Discernment is better translated “wise,” *שָׂכֵל*, meaning to have insight, to get wisdom, gain understanding, be prudent, or be skilled. Prudent means acting with or showing care and thought for the future so that is a viable translation but most English speakers probably wouldn’t have that meaning come to mind. The word refers to possessing the capacity for understanding implying this state is a result of proper teaching. We are exposed to wisdom by being properly taught. Whether we accept and internalize it or not is a separate issue. That is the problem with these kings; they can hear the instruction but they don’t want it. The deceitful hearts and satanically deceived minds of these kings cannot learn apart from God. They have been willingly deceived and they do not want what God has to offer them; they deliberately reject it and turn aside to the evil one. They do not want to gain the wisdom of God; instead, they want to be immersed in the faulty, ungodly wisdom of man. Their lust for power, wealth, and prestige in the sight of men destroys any latent desire they may harbor to respond positively to God. When mankind deliberately rejects the God they know and replaces Him with a god of their own mind or making, He will give them over to their rebellion which can only lead to destruction. Paul describes this truth in Romans 1:18-32.

Warning is better translated “discipline, “correction,” or “instruction,” *יָסַר*, meaning to be disciplined and to accept correction. It refers to punishment in order to improve behavior implying the training of the person is the desired result of the disciplinary process. Kings are rulers who have been placed in their rulership positions by God and He expects them to wisely rule. Part of that is to learn right from wrong from God’s perspective and to act accordingly; but they don’t—and they won’t. The vast majority of them never have and never will. The world rulers of today are not any different and the world rulers of tomorrow who will be ruling at the time of the Lord’s return won’t be any different either. The only thing to which world rulers have historically submitted is force. They will accept correction, reluctantly, when forced to do so, but they will not do it voluntarily. They will experience the ultimate force when Christ Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom and they will perish.

The bottom line is this: the world will not heed the warnings of the Word of God nor will they heed the teaching of sound doctrine and the gospel of grace based on that Word, but it is our mandate to preach the Word to this lost and dying world anyway. Some few will listen and believe; the rest will go their own way. Our job is the preaching; God’s job is the results.

The kings and rulers are being counseled by God to be wise and correct their behavior. If they don’t, they will suffer the consequences. This warning is no less applicable today; nations rise and fall as God wills. The day of judgment on the world’s nations and its leaders is coming. The consequences will be final and irrevocable.

In verse 11, these kings are counseled to become believing servants of the one true God. The NASB translates *עָבַד* as “worship.” When the word refers to worship, it is usually referring to performing the proper rites for religious observance and it can be used in

that way. [William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "עָבַד," p. 261], but in this verse that really isn't the context. Every source I consulted that was translated by a Jewish theologian used "serve" and not "worship" in this verse. No other translation that strives to be more literal in the hermeneutics they use in producing their translation used "worship" either; they used "serve." The NASB stands alone in its translation. The primary meaning of the word is work or labor. It refers to expending considerable energy and intensity in a task or function. It can mean to be a slave or to be indentured to someone. Using "serve" here instead of "worship" seems to be in keeping with the context and the meaning of the word. This verse, in total, is describing proper worship, that is, serving the Lord, fearing Him, lamenting one's rebellion implying repentance from that rebellion, and trembling at His awesomeness and the power He has to inflict punishment on those who rebel against Him. To serve Him is part of the total worship experience. These kings are being advised to turn from rebelling against God to serve Him as part of a total act of worship as all people should be serving and worshiping Him. The way the NASB translates this verse, it makes it seem as though worship is one part of the discussion when the verse is referring to worship in total. Using the word "serve" removes that understanding so that worship may be thought of as these various elements together rather than as a part of them. The Psalm is a command to stop the rebellion, believe in the Son, and serve Him as part of the worship due Him as God or suffer the consequences.

Reverence, יִרְאָה, means reverence or fear. It refers to a state of piety and respect toward a superior. It can refer to an element of worship which is the activity or speech of showing profound reverence toward a superior which may include ritual action. Finally, it can mean fear or terror in the sense of great anxiety and alarm. Most of the literal translations use "fear" in verse 11. The Holman Christian Standard Bible uses "reverential awe" which is the common English understanding of what it means to fear the Lord. However, in this verse the word is coupled with רָעַד translated "trembling" which means great distress or trembling. It is a condition of great fear and anxiety which may include an involuntary bodily reaction of shuddering or trembling. "This Heb. root represents a condition of such immense terror as to produce physical trembling in both human beings and nature." [*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, s.v. "רָעַד," p. 3:1138].

Part of having an awesome respect for God is fear in the sense of fright. Fear can relate to both of these aspects of meaning in the Bible. People may be terrified in the presence of God. Many believing biblical characters such as Daniel, Isaiah, and John experienced this. Jesus counseled people to fear the one who could cast them into hell (Luke 12:5) but this obviously doesn't apply to believers. Believers, however, do have to fear the God who can impose temporal discipline on them for unfaithfulness which may be a very unpleasant experience. We need look no further than Ananias and Sapphira (Acts: 5:1-11) who were put to death for lying to the Holy Spirit or to Hymenaeus and Alexander who Paul handed over to Satan so they would be taught not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:20). The fear of the Lord also encompasses the concept of reverential awe as

most people today understand it. “The religious sense of our word as reverential awe does not eliminate the idea of fear, but it turns it into a positive devotion. Like the Israelites at the foot of the fiery mountain, the devout are drawn to the LORD in adoration and amazement because his power is glorious, but they also shrink back because the power is frightening.” [Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms, Volume 1 (1-41)*, p. 1:211, n. 30]. Fearing God in terms of both aspects of the word's meaning is spiritually healthy.

Psalm 2:10–11 ¹⁰Now therefore be wise, O ye kings: Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
¹¹Serve Jehovah with fear, And rejoice with trembling. [ASV]

Psalm 2:10–11 ¹⁰So now, you kings, do what is wise; you rulers of the earth, submit to correction! ¹¹Serve the LORD in fear! Repent in terror! [NET Bible]

Psalm 2:10-11 So now, O kings, be prudent; accept discipline, you rulers of the earth! Serve the LORD in awe; tremble with fright [JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh]

The translators of the NET Bible have an interesting interpretation that may best fit the context but it is a nuance not many others have recognized and it carries a meaning far removed from that of the NASB. These rebellious kings are being told to exercise true wisdom and submit to the instruction/correction/discipline to which God is subjecting them. He is giving them every chance to repent, that is, change their minds, believe, and correct their thinking and their behavior. They should be very afraid of the God who can exercise serious judgment upon them if they fail to change their mind and turn to him (repent). The word the NASB translates “rejoice” גִּיל means to rejoice or be glad but it can refer to a lament or to mourning as it does in Hosea 10:5. In Hosea, the word is translated “cry out” and it is coupled with “mourn.” The NET Bible translation notes for Psalm 2:11 on “rejoice with trembling” read as follows: “Traditionally, ‘rejoice with trembling’ [as in the NASB]. The verb גִּיל [rejoice] normally means ‘rejoice,’ but this meaning does not fit well here in conjunction with ‘in trembling.’ Some try to understand ‘trembling’ (and the parallel יעדה, ‘fear’) in the sense of ‘reverential awe’ and then take the verbs ‘serve/ and ‘rejoice’ in the sense of worship (cf. NASB). But רעדה (‘trembling’) [עָבַד] and its related terms consistently refer to utter terror and fear (see Exod. 15:15; Job 4:14; Pss 48:6; 55:5; 104:32; Isa 33:14; Dan 10:11) or at least great emotional distress (Ezra 10:9). It seems more likely here that גִּיל carries its polarized meaning ‘mourn, lament,’ as in Hos 10:5. ‘Mourn, lament’ would then by metonymic in this context for ‘repent’ (referring to one’s rebellious ways).” [The NET Bible, p. 851, n. 8]. The Jewish Publication Society’s *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* reads “Serve the Lord in awe; tremble with fright.” This is consistent with the thinking of the NET Bible translators concerning “rejoice with trembling” as the NASB translates it.

Hosea 10:5 ⁵The inhabitants of Samaria will fear For the calf of Beth-aven. Indeed, its people will mourn for it, And its idolatrous priests will cry out [גִּיל] over it, Over its glory, since it has departed from it.

The Psalmist is describing the complete worship attitude that these kings should embrace. They should turn from their rebellion against God to believing in God and then worshiping God as is His due. If they refuse to do so, their end will be terrifyingly final. For an English speaking audience, it would have been more accurate within the confines of the text to translate these words as wisdom (instead of discernment), instruction (instead of warning), service (instead of worship), fear (instead of reverence), lament (instead of rejoice), and terror (instead of trembling). The NASB didn't do as good a job at translating this verse as most of the other translations do. The majority of them do miss the point of the last clause they translate as "And rejoice with trembling." The NET Bible seems to get this right. The kings of the earth will lament and mourn in terror unless they repent and believe in Him and pay homage to the Son.

Comparing Psalm 2:10-11 as the NASB translates it with the changes made above look like this:

Psalm 2:10–11 ¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹Worship the Lord with reverence And rejoice with trembling. [NASB]

Now therefore, O kings, show **wisdom**; take **instruction**, O judges of the earth. **Serve** the Lord with **fear** and **lament** with **terror**. [my translation]

Psalm 2:12 ¹²Do homage [נִשְׁקָ] to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

In verse 12, the warning to repent, cease the rebellion, and submit to the Son continues. The message is clear. Submit to the King or suffer the wrath of God as a consequence for refusal.

The word "homage," נִשְׁקָ, means to kiss. It is to touch with the lips as a gesture of affection and mutual relationship or submission. This is why so many translations read "Kiss the Son." In context, submission and honor would be the appropriate thought that should come to mind. This is an act of submission and to pay homage to an authority figure means to publicly display honor and respect. For human kings to pay homage to God is and will be a gesture of humility, worship, and submission they do not normally grant to another person. Kings have a tendency to be overly impressed with their own importance.

Those who do not pay homage to the Son will arouse God's anger. Rebelling against one is rebelling against both. There is a sense of urgency for these kings to repent and turn to the Son because God's wrath may soon be kindled. In terms of man's thinking, this has been going on for a long time, thousands of years. But when viewed in terms of eternity, it has been but a short time and the time is growing ever shorter. God has decreed that the Son will rule over all the nations. These kings will either submit to the

Son or they will be vanquished and suffer the consequences of their rebellion and unbelief. The consequences will include death and banishment to the lake of fire. No unbeliever will enter the Kingdom.

The Psalm ends with the promise of blessing for all who find refuge in the Son. Refuge, *נָצַח*, means to take refuge. It is to go to a place where one will find safety, rest, or comfort implying the place of refuge is a place to be trusted to keep one safe. "In the N.T., 'faith' and 'believe' are words which express the same characteristic as the Hebrew expression here rendered 'take refuge.'" [*The Scofield Study Bible III*, p. 749]. Ultimately, kings and their subjects will either believe in the Son and be blessed or continue in their rebellion and experience God's wrath. We must not forget that throughout the history of Israel the Israelites and their kings and rulers were not divorced from rebelling against God either and they eventually suffered the consequences for their rebellion.

This Psalm represents the condition of the world from the Fall to the establishment of the Kingdom. Its emphasis is on the eschatological end of history when the Son is granted the right to rule the nations from His throne in Jerusalem. The kings of the earth and the people they rule are continually in rebellion against God and this will culminate in God's wrath being poured out on the earth to be followed by the installation of the King and the establishment of His Kingdom.

According to Scofield, this Psalm revealed the order of the establishment of the Kingdom in six phases [*The Scofield Study Bible III*, p. 748].

1. The uproar and the vain plots of the Jews and Gentiles against the Lord and His Anointed One (vv. 1-3). The inspired interpretation of this is in Acts 4:25-48, which asserts its fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ.
2. The scoffing of the Lord (v. 4) that men should suppose it possible to set aside His Covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-17) [the Davidic Covenant] and oath (Ps. 89:34-37) [God's affirmation of the Davidic Covenant established forever].
3. His rebuke (v. 5) fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, and the dispersion of the Jews at that time; yet to be fulfilled more completely in the tribulation (Matt. 24:29), which immediately precedes the return of the King (Matt. 24:30).
4. The establishment of the rejected King upon Zion (v. 6).
5. The subjection of the earth to the King's rule (vv. 7-9).
6. The present appeal to the world powers (vv. 10-12).

Amillennialists teach that Psalm 2 has already been fulfilled. "Christ is already a king with his kingdom, but for now this realm is visible chiefly in the public ministry of Word, sacrament, and discipline ... the powers of the age to come begin to penetrate this fading evil age. The church is not yet identical with the kingdom that Christ will

consummate at his return ... amillennialism argues that the kingdom was inaugurated by Christ's earthly ministry and will continue to flourish until he returns in glory.... the key to an amillennial understanding of the kingdom is the 'already' and 'not yet' dialectic. Jesus spoke of the kingdom as a present ('already') reality (Mk 1:15; Mt. 11:5-6; 12:28; 13:1-46; Lk 11:5-6, 20; 17:20-23; 15:4-32), but also as something 'not yet,' belonging to the future (Mt 6:10; 16:28; Mk 9:1; Lk 6:20-26; 9:27; 11:2; 13:28-29). The kingdom is coming, but also has come (Mt. 12:28-29; Lk 11:20)." [Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, pp. 525-526, 935].

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