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# The world in which We Live

## Psalm Two

*Dan Turner*

### Introduction

*“If I ruled the world  
Every day would be  
The first day of Spring  
Every heart would have  
A new song to sing  
And we'd sing of the joy  
Every morning would bring  
If I ruled the world”*

The Artist - *The Supremes*

Florence Ballard, Mary Wilson and Diana Ross I think had good intentions back in the 1960's but I know that they were wrong. The tracing of Diana Ross' life or following the chronicles of world leaders or simply reading the newspaper would demonstrate how naive the Supremes were.

When people attempt to rule the world what happens?

- They reject God's rule by turning from His Word
  - Adam and Eve cast out of the garden (Gen.3)
  - Brother murders brother (Gen.4)
  - Human hearts think and want evil (Gen.6)
  - A world-wide mutiny is organized (Gen.11)
  - A whole nation is under oppression (Ex.1)
  - Everyone does what's right in their own eyes (Judges)
  - Israel wants a king like neighboring Nations (1Sam.)
  - Dispersion and captivity are experienced (Exile)
  - Hopes are dashed (post exilic writings)
  - Greece and Rome craving for kingdom authority
  - Crusades and campaigns taking over through coercion
  - Mussolini, Hitler and today's Islamic Fascism

No, Diana Ross was not accurate when she sung about people ruling the world. But my sense is that when she wrote that song she wanted something just like each of us wants something as we attempt to rule our own little world.

There are common themes to our hopes and dreams.

- A place
  - where people live in perfect peace
  - where work is rewarding and rest is sweet

- where the color of your skin won't get you in or keep you out
- where justice reigns and truth finally wins<sup>1</sup>
- where there is no sickness, sadness, suicides and Satan
- where droughts, doubts and death are bywords
- where poverty and perverts can be found no longer
- where faltering memories and failing bodies never occur
- where beauty is breathtaking without end
- where joy continues to grow & love is its atmosphere

My sense is that the more intense we strive for our perfect little worlds by our own little ways, the greater the pain we experience. And the greater the pain we experience the more desperate the longing for a world of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness and so on. Do you have a desperate longing for this type of world?

Today I desire to throw open the shutters and pull off the blinds. Today I desire to lift the windows to enjoy fresh air. Today I desire to take you through what I believe is the most astonishing Psalm in the Bible. Today I desire for each of you to catch a vision of *The World in which We Live*. This vision will be utterly fantastic while at the same time utterly realistic. You will be introduced to why the world doesn't work both for you personally and for 6 billion people corporately. You will get the chance to glance at the chilling problem. You will lovely be confronted with the only solution known to man. As we work our way through this Psalm, each of you will come across power, will feel tension, will hear hope and find no way out of personal responsibility. I pray, in other words, that as a result of this Psalm preached you will find yourself drawn into sweet submission through a sweet invitation.

Today I desire each of us to take out our Bibles and ask God to open our eyes, soften our hearts and strengthen our resolve. To help each of us believe everything we see in this Psalm; both troubling and terrific sights, please open your Bibles to Psalm Two.

Today I desire to escort you into *The World in which We Live*. [pray & read the Ps.]

Psalm Two is a prophetic picture of the world in which we live.

There will be four words used to organize our thoughts today. **Investigation** – a look at what's wrong. **Indignation** – a look at the real problem. **Declaration** – a look at the solution. **Invitation** – a look at how to respond.

## Investigation

## v.1-3

Let's begin by noticing verses 1-3.

The writer of Ps.2 begins his poem with a question. His question is one we normally do not ask. It is a question that for many, I fear, is simply unrelated to their daily concerns. For most of us I suspect our questions cluster around "why can't we as a married couple get along? Why do my children fight so much? Why can't Israel and the Palestinians be at peace

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<sup>1</sup> The first four bullets were shaped by Rich Mullins.

with each other? Though these types of questions are not bad questions, they simply don't focus on what's really wrong. They only move in horizontal directions.

The Psalmist starts where we all need to start in order to understand and appreciate the world in which we live. He asks, "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"

In light of verse 2, notice that the psalmist is not talking about a nation taking its stand against another nation. He is not investigating why people groups fight against other people groups. He points to all the nations fighting against God! This is remarkable. For it demonstrates that the world, in one sense, is not divided. All the ethnic groups are unified under one agenda. This "united nations" has one goal. Shoulder to shoulder they are totally at one as they plot how to defeat their common Enemy.

The psalmist's question provides us with a starting point for understanding the world in which we live. According to v.1-3 we see first a cosmic coup. We start our thinking over what our world is like by first asking the question most never ask. "Why do the nations all have in common this desire to overthrow God's authority"? He asks why there is a world-wide rebellion against the LORD and his anointed. His question moves in the direction of God. His question is the starting point for understanding the world in which we live. His investigation is into a world-wide rebellion.

## **A World-wide rebellion**

### **By the many and the mighty**

**v.1-2a**

This world-wide rebellion can be seen in v.1-2a coming from both the many and the mighty. The "peoples and kings" are unified under a common mission. This mission requires them to "set themselves" and "take counsel together" in order to defeat their common enemy.

### **To attack Yahweh and his anointed**

**v.2b**

And in v.2b we come to their common enemy. They desire to attack Yahweh and his Anointed. They want the one true God and his chosen King to be wiped out. They desire the true King to stay out of their lives and leave them to their own wills.

Now to put this in its historical context, I suppose we would see it referring to Israel's enemies in David's day – the heathen nations plotting to overthrow the unified kingdom of King David (or King Solomon). But the more we read psalm two the more it seems to me that the very strong language of this psalm doesn't lend itself easily to any particular historic event (Notice how this psalm does not have a superscript – an editorial comment at the beginning to locate it historically).

Rather, this psalm has always been held by the Church to refer to the reign of Christ and the world in which we live.

Think briefly with me over some of the coups that have been attempted and how they center on a God/Messiah-removal agenda. Take Communism of yesteryear as an example. For 70 years the great powers ruled over millions. As we think about this movement we easily see the ruthless pursuit of atheism and the destruction of Bible churches. Or take Fascism in the 1930's & 40's and how people like Mussolini and Hitler had a dream to subordinate all individuals to the desire of the State (i.e. their

desires). By just a quick read of this history we can see how brutal and godless they were. We can also notice their hatred of Christ, the Bible and Christ's people.

Or take Islamic Fascism of today with its appeal to young people for a utopian future where the world will be "cleansed" of Jews, atheists, homosexuals, and liberated women. But, in addition to these obvious targets, Christianity, the Bible and Christ Himself are marked for their hate-stimulated mission. Annihilation of the Bible's Yahweh and His Messiah are the agenda.

### **For a common desire**

### **v.3**

Come back to the Scriptures with me and see if we can understand what is behind all this madness. What is all this world-wide rebellion for anyway? In v.3 we come to the motivation for this rebellion.

In quotations we read "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us". We hear humanity in the form of the many and the mighty rejecting the rule of God and his anointed. Their perception is that if LORD's Christ controls their life they will be miserable. In Acts 4 the early church identified the cross as the climax of this rebellion against God. The point here is plain and putrid. When we get the chance we kill our Creator. We hear the call to submit to the King. We sense that this summons is worse than chewing glass. We pine at the thought of losing our autonomy. We cannot stomach the idea that Someone else will tell us what to think and how to live. That the Christ will interfere with our quest for joy is our belief. And so what do we do? We wage war against the Christ!

Why in the world would we want that? It all started in the garden. Our father and mother (Adam and Eve) believed the serpent's lie that God's rule is oppressive (i.e. a kill joy). The reality of God's rule is that it brings freedom, life, joy and peace. But the kings of the earth speak of breaking chains and throwing off fetters. They believe they can usher in utopia without the reign of and submission to the Christ.

History bears witness of the tragedy of this rebellion. From Eden onwards, humanity has rejected God's kingship. When we attempt to reign over our world it inevitably goes in one direction. It starts with hearing that God's rule is a rule that brings freedom. That message of submission to His King for joy of His people sounds ridiculous. Next, we begin to lean upon our own understanding. We move out in self-rule believing that this leads to freedom. We then yell at our spouse, are harsh with our children, gossip about our neighbor, do not give money or mercy to others, stare into the TV or computer, inhale mind-altering substances, dream of our promotions and retirement, have no heart for lost, and seldom sacrifice for the church.

You see, when we start with hostility with God rather than antagonism with others, we begin to see the ugliness and magnanimous problem. The problem is our belief that to submit to the Christ we will need to serve, suffer and sacrifice. And all three of these add up to bondage; not freedom! Living life apart from God promises happiness and ends in the terror of v.4-6.

## Indignation

v.4-6

The writer shifts his thought from himself and his investigation to the Lord and His indignation as seen in v.4-6.

### Against his “no serious threat” enemies

This indignation is against opponents who are no threat to his sovereignty. Whether they are world leaders awaiting the production of nuclear warheads or a rebellious teenager running away from home, nothing threatens his plan (cf. Dan.4:35). Whether there is someone in this auditorium this morning whose actions say “I’m close to God” while their heart says “I want to be in control”, God is not wringing his hands and pacing back and forth in his temple. We do not see the Lord biting his finger nails or nervously tapping his foot. Though much commotion is found in the heart and on the Earth, notice the Lord’s posture in verse 4.

### His laugh of derision

v.4

He is seated and he laughs. Here we see the LORD’s perspective on the world-wide rebellion. It’s not as though the Lord thinks rebellion is funny. The point of this verse is to demonstrate his matchless sovereignty.

The posture of sitting communicates that there is no serious threat to His rule and reign. Nothing or no one will ever make a serious run for his throne. He sits and he rules from on high.

The sound of his laughter communicates displeasure as we notice in v.5

### His utterance of displeasure

v.5

One of the most frightening verses in the Bible is found in v.5. Here we notice the LORD speaking not words of soft endearment. His utterance of displeasure over rebellion can be felt when one reads verse five. Wrath and terror and fury spring from his words as he tells the world what he has done. And what he has done is plainly seen in verse 6.

### His act of disclosure

v.6

Verse 6 contrasts v.2. In verse two we read about how people set themselves up in their self-ruling positions and for their self-focused plans. In this verse we notice how God set His king up in a position of utter authority. And according to verse 5, this gives no comfort to those who are prideful.

Who, then, is this king to whom he refers? Why would this installment of this king be terror and wrath to all who desire self-rule?

## Declaration

v.7-9

As we come to the third movement in this psalm we hear the psalmist’s declaration.

### About the Messianic King

This declaration is clear. It is all about the messianic king. This verse discloses the most profound and pivotal act God has done. God installing his king in Zion initially pointed to King David and his son Solomon. This echoes the covenant with King

David in 2 Samuel 7 that he is God's adopted son and God will give him the nations as an inheritance. But something much bigger and better is prophesied in this verse.

The writers of the NT saw this promise fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts.13). When Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God in Mark 1, he was declaring that the time has come for God to reassert his rule over the world. And through his perfect life and sinless death on behalf of His people, Jesus was taken out of the tomb and placed upon the seat of the throne of the Universe. He himself is God's king and he has authority over all people. This is the declaration. In v.7-9 we get the characteristics of this declaration.

### **His Pronouncement**

**v.7**

First, we see this declaration in a form of the decree or His pronouncement. This is the Messiah's pronouncement. The Son, in other words, is speaking on behalf of the LORD. It is prophecy that cannot be broken. It is not like a Doppler forecast that meteorologists use to talk about an upcoming storm that will likely produce 10" of snow. Forecasts are good guesses but they are not infallible.

This Psalm written likely back in 11<sup>th</sup> century BC said that someday God's Anointed One will reign on high over the entire world. We can imagine the excitement of the people who knew their OT well when Jesus was baptized, to hear the words "you are My Son" spoken from heaven.

As said earlier, the N.T. church understood these words to be fulfilled at the resurrection of Christ. "Today, I have begotten you" signaled the day when a king was installed. The word "today" points to a period or an age in which this King will reign forevermore. And that time has come. Upon his resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ assumed the throne and now "today" reigns over all. The world in which we, today, is ruled by the King; Christ Jesus the Lord.

### **His Place**

**v.8**

Next we look at his declaration from the perspective of dominion or his place. We read in verse 8 that "the ends of the earth" will be his dominion. A world-wide empire the King will have. Although King David and Solomon enjoyed much territory and peace, they fell greatly short of these boundaries.

The ruling King who is the Christ has authority over the entire world. This is his place. This is His kingdom. His dominion, using words from Ps.72, is "from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth" (cf. v.8). The world in which we live is controlled by the King; Jesus Christ.

### **His Power**

**v.9**

Finally, we see the king's domination or his power in horrifying language in v.9. The rule over the rebellious that we are confronted with in this verse is no gentle thing. The image of broken pottery is used elsewhere in the Bible for divine judgment on the rebellious (cf. Isa.30:12-14; Jer.19:1-13) This word picture used in v.9 describes dreadful realities. "Iron rod", "smash them", "potter's vessel"; all these terms connote frightening devastation for those who remain at odds with the King.

## Invitation

## v.10-12

*The world in which we live* is what we've been looking at this morning. And what we have witnessed thus far concerning the world in which we live has been extensive<sup>2</sup>.

**From v.1-3** we came away with an understanding of the problem behind all our problems. From the very beginning, the mighty and the many; men and women, boys and girls everywhere have rejected God by doing things their own way. We all do this. We don't like someone telling us what to do or how to live – least of all God. And so, we rebel against him in lots of different ways. We may neglect reading the Bible saying we are too busy. We may disregard how Clearcreek Chapel loves and disciplines their people for the prospect of staying at home. We may simply ignore God after Sunday in order to live life the way we want to live it. Or maybe we shake our puny fists in his face and tell him to get lost. Either way, whether it is neglecting or rejecting, the problem behind our problems is hostility toward God. This is a sobering reality.

**From v.4-6** we learned that whether or not we feel at war with God, we know that God is at war with us. God takes rebellion seriously. He calls us to account for our actions and attitudes. It matters to him that we treat him and others so badly. Being opposed by people is one thing. But being opposed by the God of the Universe is quite another matter. This is a chilling reality.

**From v.7-9** we learned that God always had a plan to reclaim his rightful place as the ruler of the world. Prophesied long ago, we heard that He would install a King that would have dominion not merely over Israel but the entire world. And so, in the fullness of time God did not leave us to suffer the consequences of our foolish rebellion. He sent his own divine son into our world to become a man who would be installed as God's King.

This King's name is Jesus. He is the Christ. He always lived under God's rule perfectly. Yet, to deliver his people from the wrath to come, he died in our place as he took our punishment. This death God accepted as payment in full for our rebellion. Three days later God raised him from the dead. The risen Jesus is now the ruler of the world. As God's ruler, Jesus has also been appointed God's judge of the world. We saw the dreadful justice of the King that one day he will return to call all of us to account for our actions.

In the meantime, according to Psalm 2:10-12, the King offers us new life; both now and eternally. This invitation can be seen in four ways.

### As an offer of hope

### v.10

Verse 10 begins with a sense of hope. In view of the previous verses, the rebellious kings and nations are not without hope. They are not merely doomed to be smashed by the coming of the King. There is still time for something other than brutal and earned justice. The psalmist says "Be wise – be warned"! These are words given to the rebellious that will hear the forgoing thunderous prophecy and cry out for mercy.

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<sup>2</sup> This recap was influenced largely by "2 Ways to Live"; a pamphlet of *matthiasmedia* and one Clearcreek Chapel makes available to those desiring to understand the message of the heart of Christianity.

The hope found in this verse is hope found only in submission; submission to the only King – Jesus Christ. And what does this submission look like?

### **As a command to obey**

### **v.11-12a**

In vv.11-12a we see the invitation coming as a command to obey. “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son”. What submission to Jesus Christ looks like can be summed up in three commands.

The first command is “serve with fear”. This communicates servitude with holy reverence. Nobody will escape the wrath of v.9 without submission to and amazement at the King; King Jesus. Do you find this in your hearts today? The world in which we live is ruled by King Jesus. Hope is found for our rebellious lives in bowing in awe to the One on the throne.

The second command is “rejoice with trembling”. This communicates joy with seriousness. Nobody will escape the wrath of v.9 without serious joy in Jesus. This is not the popular slap-stick happiness of Christianity. Never! This is blood-earnest gladness in the glory and grace of our King; King Jesus. Do you find this in your hearts today? The world in which we live is ruled by King Jesus. Hope is found for our rebellious lives in hunting for our happiness in His holiness.

The third command we find in v.11-12a is “kiss the Son”. This communicates homage with great affection. Nobody escapes the wrath of v.9 without affectionate worship for the one and only king of the universe; Jesus Christ the Lord. Do you find this in your hearts today? The world in which we live is ruled by King Jesus Hope is found for our rebellious lives as we pay unreserved honor with great affection to Jesus.

These three commands serve to help us understand what submission to the King looks like.

### **As a warning to heed**

### **v.12b**

There is another way this Psalm describes submission that is the world’s only hope. And this description is seen as a warning to heed. Notice the little word “lest”. This word tells us that if we do not obey the above commands by faith we will experience the below threat. The threat is devastating. If we do not believe that our only hope is in submission to the King the King will be angry. His wrath will flare up in full blaze. And we as a result perish. This quickly kindled anger is not to suggest that Jesus Christ has a temper. This phrase communicates urgency to the rebels. This warning is telling the world and telling us that danger awaits those who presume upon God’s patience. If we hear Him speaking today, we must respond today. No waiting. No loitering. No neutrality. We are to hear and heed immediately.

### **As a promise to embrace**

### **v.12c**

There is but one hope for the world. That hope is found in submitting to the King. This submission has been described in the last few verses. The Psalmist concludes his poem with one last explanation of submission. You can see it in the last phrase of v.12. “Blessed are all who take refuge in him”. In such a thunderous psalm, it is sweet to the ears to hear a gracious promise to embrace. In fact, I would say that due to this final benediction we must conclude that grace has inspired the full invitation of verses 10-12.

What unbelief and pride have interpreted as burden in verse 3, v.12 tells us that it is blessing. Confinement to the King's authority is contentment to the King's people. Freedom is found in submission. Perhaps we could wrap up this entire message by saying *submission to God's Son is not a burden but a blessing.*

**Conclusion** In conclusion, we have seen four main characteristics of the world in which we live.

INVESTIGATION (v.1-3) – ***The World in which we live...***

- *Rebels against the Lord and his Son Jesus the King.*
- *Believes that Christ and the Bible saddle them with burdens and trouble.*
- *Thinks the solution to this burden is to liberate oneself from Jesus Christ.*

INDIGNATION (v.4-6) – ***The World in which we live...***

- *Cannot overrule the LORD's will.*
- *Is under His fierce anger due to rebellion.*

DECLARATION (v.7-9) – ***The World in which we live...***

- *Faces a fulfilled prophecy that:*
  - *God has installed His Son on the throne.*
  - *His Son has come into the world.*
  - *His Son lived always under God's rule perfectly.*
  - *His Son was killed to pay the penalty for rebels who trust Him.*
  - *His Son was raised from the dead and seated on the throne of the Universe.*
  - *His Son will come again to judge the rebels who will not trust Him.*

INVITATION (v.10-12) – ***The World in which we live...***

- *Has hope.*
- *Finds this hope in submission to Jesus Christ the King.*
- *A submission that*
  - *Turns from self rule and trusts in His rule.*
  - *Trusts His sacrifice on the cross for their sins.*
  - *Gladly obeys His commands.*
  - *Humbly pays attention to His warnings.*
  - *Exuberantly embraces all His promises.*

Here is the world in which you live. It's laid out for you in Psalm Two. Living for yourself in your own way rejects the Christ with the result that fierce condemnation from King Jesus will be yours forevermore.

But there is hope! Turning from your own way and submitting to Christ's work and way you will have the true freedom – a freedom from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and in the future the presence of sin.

Put your weapons down and come to Christ to live.