

Psalm 2 (v10-12) Exegesis

**A Hebrew Exegesis Paper
Submitted to Dr. Paul D. Wegner
Phoenix Seminary
Scottsdale, Arizona**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Hebrew IV**

**by
Troy A. Griffitts
28-Apr-2008**

INTRODUCTION

The majority of scholars agree that Psalm 2 was written as a coronation psalm likely sung at the inauguration of a new king-- possibly at annual royal confirmation ceremonies. "In the monarchical period, the 'anointed one' was the Davidic king and the psalm was probably composed as a coronation or pre-battle song. But after the monarchy's demise, when the psalter was compiled, thoughts would have turned to a future messianic deliverer."¹ We will look at some basic background for this psalm, briefly consider the messianic implication, and then concentrate more closely on the concluding stance, vv 10-12.

Date and Authorship: "We should certainly think of the era of the Jerusalem monarchy in Judah... If the king is the speaker, he could also have been the poet. But we could also look for the poet in the circles of court prophets who wrote for the king, for Psalm 2 is undoubtedly permeated by a strong prophetic power."²

As the Davidic kingship came to a close, readers of this psalm began to find hope in messianic overtones. "Ps 2 received a messianic interpretation very early on in its history of interpretation, in the Targum and, very prominently, in the New Testament (Luke 3,22; Acts 4,24f.; 13,33; Heb 1,5; 5,5; Rev 2,26-27; 19,15.19). However, this interpretation does not reflect the psalm's original meaning. Rather, Ps 2 is a royal psalm and celebrates the accession of a Judaeen king."³ Eschatological, messianic themes can be seen in the Qumran texts. After quoting Psalm 2:1, a commentator writes, "The meaning

¹ Tremper Longman III, Philip Johnston, *IVP Introduction to the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006). p.101

² Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1988). p.126

³ Joachim Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (76. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995). p.72

is that the nations shall set themselves and conspire vainly against the chosen of Israel in the Last Days. That will be the time of persecution that is to come upon the House of Judah, to the end of sealing up the wicked in consuming fire and destroying all the children of Belial. Then shall be left behind a remnant of chosen ones, the predestined. They shall perform the whole of the Law, as God commanded through Moses” [4Q174, Col 3, Line 19 - Col 4, Line 3]. We can definitely find a pre-Christian messianic interpretation of this psalm, though nothing in the text would force the original respondents to understand it as such.

The structure of the psalm is outlined in 4 stanzas. Verses 1-3 pose the address of the psalm: why is there rebellion against God's reign? Verses 4-6 convey to the rebellious God's lack of fret for their uprising; indeed, His power is all encompassing and He will enlighten the uninformed. This stanza ends with the earthly occasion for the address: the anointing of a Judaeen king. Verses 7-9 are phrased as spoken from the new king. He assures the nations that he understands God's endorsement of his throne, and that his kingdom is upheld not by its own might, but stands or falls based upon the presence of God's power. The closing stanza, verses 10-12, readdresses the rebellious surrounding kings in light of the inevitable rule of God's anointed.

EXEGESIS

MT: 10 וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים תִּשְׁכִּילוּ תִּסְרוּ שְׁפָטֵי אֲרֶץ :

10 And now kings, cause wisdom to be had; be counseled, those who judge the earth.

LXX: 10 και νυν βασιλεις συνετε παιδευθητε παντες οι κρινοντες την γην

10 And now O Kings, comprehend, be tutored, all those who judge the earth.

“Psalm 2 presents the idea that God has chosen the Israelite king and will defend him against the conspiracies of the nations.”⁴ While this theme is dominant in the early sections of the psalm, this

⁴ Andrew E. Hill, and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub.

beginning verse of the last stanza seems to change tone for the psalm to exhortation. As Calvin notices, the author, having established the decrees and power of God, “proceeds now, in the character of a prophet and teacher, to exhort the unbelieving to repentance, that they may not, when it is too late, be compelled to acknowledge, from dire experience, that the divine threatenings are neither idle nor ineffectual.”⁵ While at a new king's coronations, God wanted to assure His king and people of the true power behind Israel, He also intended to remind the descendants of Abraham of their role to be an outreach and blessing to the nations. “*Be wise and be warned* are favourite words of the Wisdom writings,”⁶ where a son is encouraged to trust in the tutoring of a benevolent father. This verse starts in the Hiphil mood with **הַשְׁכִּילֵנוּ**, instead of the imperative, and can be considered an appeal to kings who were accustomed to *causing* events to happen, “cause wisdom to be had.” The stanza continues in the Niphal mood, passively, with **אֶתְסַוְּרוּ**, “be counseled.” This should not have been an offensive appeal to a king who would have regularly received counsel from his court.

MT: 11 **עֲבַדְוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּיִרְאָה וּבְרֵעָה**:
11 Serve Yahweh in fear and rejoice in trembling.

LXX: 11 **δουλευσατε τω κυριω εν φοβω και αγαλλιασθε αυτω εν τρομω**
11 Serve the Lord in fear and rejoice under Him in trembling.

Our next verse leads into our first imperative **עֲבַדְוּ**, “serve.” After conditioning the hearer with a gentle call to consider wise counsel, an appeal is made for what must be done-- submission, “serve Yahweh in fear.” Though kings often would subjugate their authority to a king with power greater than their own, it frequently was not a desired position. Our text calls the respondents to

House, 1991). p.347

5 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Volume Fourth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), p.22.

6 Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*. The Tyndale Old Testament commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973). p.52.

consider the benefits of subjugation to a such a powerful and benevolent ruler, “*rejoice* under Him with trembling”. Notice the contrast between the call to *serve* (the antithesis of a king's desire) and the encouragement to *rejoice*. The volume of the appeal is raised with the superlatives *in fear* and *in trembling*.

MT: 12 נִשְׁקוּ-בֶרֶךְ פֶּן-יֵאָנֶרְף | וְתֵאבְדוּ דְרֹךְ כִּי-יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אַפּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־י כָּל-
תּוֹסִי בּוֹ:

12 Kiss the Son, that He not become angry, and your way perish, because He burns quickly in anger; blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

LXX: 12 δραξασθε παιδειας μηποτε οργισθη κυριος και απολεισθε εξ οδου δικαιας οταν
εκκαυθη εν ταχει ο θυμος αυτου μακαριοι παντες οι πεποιθοτες επ αυτω
12 Grasp tutelage, lest ever the Lord is enraged and you might perish from the way of justice since He tends to be zealous with His passion. Blessed ones are all those have yielded to/have confidence on Him.

“Kiss the Son” is an unclear phrase here. The Aramaic word בֶּרֶךְ is used in lieu of the Hebrew

בֵּן, which is used in verse 7. Some commentators cite this as a corrupted text.⁷ Craig interestingly notes,

... is בֶּרֶךְ, admittedly an Aramaic loan-word, necessarily a major problem in a psalm dated provisionally at some point in the Hebrew monarchy? It need not be; Aramaic is known to have been used widely in Syria-Palestine from at least the ninth century B.C., and the current absence of earlier epigraphic evidence does not mean that it could not have been used earlier... Furthermore, the context of vv 11-12 should be noted. The words are addressed (in the mouth of the poet) to *foreign* nations and kings (Aramaic speaking?), whereas בֵּן, “son,” in verse 7, is used by God in speaking to his king. It is possible that the poet deliberately uses a foreign word (loan-word) to dramatize his poetic intent at this point.”⁸

⁷ Robert Doran, Adele Berlin, Carol A. Newsom, and J. Clinton, Jr McCann, *The New Interpreter's Bible. The First Book of Maccabees, the Second Book of Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms. Volume IV* (Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 1996). p.690

⁸ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms. 1-50*. Word biblical commentary, v. 19 (Waco, Tex: Word Books, 1983). p.64

The LXX translates this as **δραξασθε παιδειας** (grasp tutelage) connecting the appeal from verse 10 to be tutored (**παιδευθητε**). There was a messianic theme prevalent at the time of Christ ascribing the role of teacher to the coming eschatological king.

The term is obviously not used in the simple sense of 'to discipline', 'to punish'. Rather its connection with the fields of teaching and learning is stressed... The exhortation is depicted as coming from the wisest of Israelite kings. However, there is a clearly messianic passage in 1 Enoch 51,3 where the Chosen One, seated on his throne, teaches wisdom on the day of judgment. The Messiah's teaching of the 'secrets of wisdom' is considered as one of the central features of eschatological fulfillment.⁹

In either rendering, the theme of willing submission to God and His benevolent King is upheld. The stanza ends with a loud conclusion “*blessed* are those who *take refuge* in Him.” This is a call to end the rebellion and just enjoy the peace and rule of justice of a good king. It is OK-- no, a blessing-- to be ruled by Yahweh; enjoy refuge in Him.

CONCLUSION

The historical critical setting for our psalm sets original purpose to inaugurate a Judaeen King and an appeal to the surrounding kings to willingly submit to his good rule. This divine *pattern*, seen in the earthly coronation of a king, sheds light on the heavenly *form* of God's eternal rule. As God's anointed earthly king brought life and safety, sound civil structure with justice to an earthly land, so God's messianic King offers this same organizing peace to our lives, if we willingly subjugate ourselves to His good rule. God indeed is the source of all, sustainer and manager of all things, mighty supreme Delegator, Who also demands even our submission; but when that power is wielded by a benevolent and wise kingly Father, it can bring joyous peace to our lives and the universe-- if we willing “take refuge in Him”.

⁹ Joachim Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (76. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995). p.74

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Johnston, Philip. *IVP Introduction to the Bible*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006.
- Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1988.
- Schaper, Joachim. *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 76. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995.
- Hill, Andrew E., and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1991.
- Calvin, John, and James Anderson. *Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Volume Fourth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.
- Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*. The Tyndale Old Testament commentaries. London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973.
- Doran, Robert, Adele Berlin, Carol A. Newsom, and J. Clinton, Jr McCann. *The New Interpreter's Bible. The First Book of Maccabees, the Second Book of Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms. Volume IV*. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 1996.
- Craigie, Peter C. *Psalms. 1-50*. Word Biblical Commentary, v. 19. Waco, Tex: Word Books, 1983.



Sermon Outline

וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשְּׂכִילוּ¹⁰

הִסְרוּ נַפְשֵׁי אֶרֶץ:

עֲבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּיִרְאָה¹¹

וְזִילוּ בְּרַעְדָּה:

נִשְׁקוּ־בָר¹²

פֶּן־יֵאָנֶף | וְתֵאבְדוּ דָרֶךְ

כִּי־יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אָפוּ

אֲשֶׁר־י כָּל־חֹסֵי בוֹ:

Title: When Subjugation is a Blessing.

TS: There are three **appeals** for submission to God's *good reign*.

- 1) An appeal to logic (v10)
- 2) An appeal to His good and powerful Character (v11)
- 3) An appeal to refuge and not rebellion (v12)

Summary: Willingly submit to God for He is gracious.