

Psalms: Liturgical Approach, Coronation Psalms, Psalms 2 and 110

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Bruce Waltke examines the liturgical approach to interpreting the Psalms by focusing on two coronation Psalms, Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, which portray the enthronement of Davidic kings and anticipate the ultimate Messianic reign of Jesus Christ. He provides a structural exposition of Psalm 2 across four stanzas defined by distinct speakers: the rebellious nations, I AM in the heavenly court, the anointed King, and the Psalmist's final warning. Dr. Waltke explores key theological and contextual dimensions, including the setting of Zion, the Davidic Covenant, divine laughter and anger (Schadenfreude versus divine justice), and the New Testament fulfillment of these coronation traditions in Christ's ascension and heavenly reign.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Liturgical Approach and Coronation Psalms

- A. Context within methods of Psalms interpretation
 - 1. Review of accredited approaches (Historical approach in Psalm 4; Hymn of Praise in Psalm 100; Grateful Psalm of Praise)
 - 2. Application of the liturgical approach to Messianic coronation Psalms
- B. Focus on Coronation Psalms (Psalms 2 and 110)
 - 1. Definition: Psalms celebrating the coronation of Davidic kings over Israel
 - 2. New Testament prominence: Frequently cited with reference to Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ

II. Translation and Four-Stanza Structure of Psalm 2

- A. Overview of the Psalm's structure
 - 1. Total of 12 verses divided into four distinct stanzas (3 verses per stanza)
 - 2. Stanzas delineated by shifts in speaker and perspective
- B. Four Stanzas and Speakers
 - 1. Stanza 1 (vv. 1–3): The Hostile Nations Speak (Earthly pagan court revolting against I AM and His Anointed)

- 2. Stanza 2 (vv. 4–6): I AM Speaks (Heavenly court; God scoffs and resolves to install His King on Zion)
- 3. Stanza 3 (vv. 7–9): The Anointed King Speaks (Reciting the decree and stipulations of the Davidic covenant)
- 4. Stanza 4 (vv. 10–12): The Psalmist Speaks (Stepping onto the stage to admonish kings to submit to I AM)

III. Contextual Settings of Psalm 2

A. Historical and Liturgical Setting

- 1. Set in Zion at the Temple during a coronation liturgy
- 2. Enthronement of the Davidic king as God's adopted son ("Today I give you birth")

B. Canonical and Structural Setting (Psalms 1 and 2 as Introduction to the Psalter)

- 1. Paired together without superscripts or subscripts
- 2. Verbal and thematic catchwords linking Psalm 1 and Psalm 2:
 - a. Inclusio of blessing: Psalm 1:1 ("Blessed is the man") and Psalm 2:12 ("Blessed/rewarded are all who take refuge in him")
 - b. Contrast of meditation (hagah): Righteous meditating on the Law vs. nations plotting/meditating rebellion
 - c. Theme of divine scoffing/mockery and the perishing of the way of the ungodly
- 3. Double-level application: Relevant to the historical king and to individual believers in the kingdom

C. Canonical Fulfillment in the New Testament

- 1. Ultimate fulfillment in Christ's ascension and heavenly enthronement
- 2. Dominion extended to the ends of the earth beyond David's geographical borders
- 3. Early church application (Acts 4): Apostolically cited when Peter and John were opposed by rulers, equating Jewish/Gentile opposition to divine sovereignty

IV. Detailed Exposition of Psalm 2

A. Stanza 1 (vv. 1–3): Rebellion of Hostile Kings

- 1. Verse 1: Rhetorical amazement at the futile conspiracy of the nations
- 2. Verse 2: Universal scope of human rebellion against I AM and His Anointed (Mashiach)
- 3. Significance of Anointing:
 - a. Prophetic designation with oil as legitimization, validation, and cachet (e.g., Solomon vs. Adonijah)
 - b. The king as God's sacred property (explaining David's refusal to harm Saul)
 - c. Empowerment by the Spirit to perform royal works
- 4. Verse 3: Human desire to throw off divine authority viewed as galling bondage

B. Stanza 2 (vv. 4–6): Divine Response and Installation of the King

- 1. Verse 4: God enthroned in heaven scoffs and laughs at human rebellion
 - a. Theological discussion of Schadenfreude (joy at damage) vs. the victory of righteousness and divine justice

- b. Contrast between Old Testament divine judgment and Christ's first advent as the era of grace/favor (Luke 4)
 - 2. Verse 5: Divine wrath and moral indignation against sin
 - a. Importance of moral anger against evil (C.S. Lewis context)
 - b. Jesus' expression of deep indignation against death/sin (e.g., at Lazarus' tomb)
 - 3. Verse 6: Speech-act declaration installing the King on Mount Zion
 - a. Significance of Zion as the invincible, holy temple hill
 - b. Fulfillment at Christ's ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12) rather than an earthly political re-establishment
- C. Stanza 3 (vv. 7–9): Proclamation of the Davidic Decree
 - 1. Verse 7: The King recites the covenant decree ("You are my son")
 - a. Rooted in the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7)
 - b. Meaning of divine sonship:
 - i. Historical Davidic king: Adopted son of God at coronation
 - ii. Jesus Christ: Son of David, Son begotten by the Holy Spirit, and eternal Son of God (John's Christology)
 - 2. Verse 8: Universal inheritance granted to the Son
 - a. Domain extending to the ends of the earth upon request in prayer
 - b. Co-heirship of believers through adoption in Christ
 - 3. Verse 9: Subduing the nations with a rod of iron
 - a. Textual/linguistic problem: Vocalization of ra'ah ("to break" vs. "to shepherd")
 - b. Resolution: Breaking/shattering hostile powers at Christ's second advent
- D. Stanza 4 (vv. 10–12): Exhortation and Warning by the Psalmist
 - 1. Verse 10: Call for worldly kings and rulers to be wise and submit
 - 2. Verse 11: Imperative to serve ('abad) I AM with fear and trembling
 - 3. Verse 12: Exhortation to "kiss the son" (act of homage/worship)
 - a. Danger of divine wrath and destruction
 - b. Final beatitude: Eternal reward and refuge for those who trust in Him