

The Messianic Intercessor: A Biblical Theology of Psalm 2

Donald McIntyre

Abstract: This paper will seek to perform a Biblical Theological analysis of Psalm 2 through employing a rigid methodology. Through a structured analysis the mediatorial role of the Israelite king will become apparent showing the intercessory role of the Israelite king as a conduit of the Abrahamic blessing. This psalm will also show, through an intertextual analysis, that suffering of the righteous King, serves a mediatorial role and is only temporary until the valiant return of the king to inflict judgement upon the nations should they not repent. As such, it will encourage the church to pray for wicked governments repentance, knowing the God answers prayers of His people, and to persevere in hope knowing that God's plan cannot be thwarted.

Keywords: Kingship Psalms, Psalm 2, Biblical Theology, Psalter, Messiah.

Introduction

Biblical theology is a disputed discipline in disarray where practitioners do whatever is right in their own eyes.² This dilemma has significantly affected the field of OT theology. While this could be a deterrent to Biblical theological inquiries, the Old Testament asserts God's revelation and therefore the Old Testament is a legitimate field for theological inquiry.³ The goal of

Donald C. "Mac" McIntyre, is a Ph.D. student at Baptist Bible Seminary and a licensed Southern Baptist minister. Mac can be reached at dcmcintyre77@gmail.com.

² D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 91.

³ Ben Ollenburger, "Discoursing Old Testament Theology," *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 3 (2003): 617–628.

this inquiry is to determine the theological message of Psalm 2 throughout the biblical corpus. This will be accomplished through the employment of a stringent methodology composed of exegetical and subsequent concentric theological analyses beginning with the Psalm in its original context and then progressing to its theological contribution to the understanding of the Psalter, and lastly the whole Bible. Finally, after a whole Biblical theological analysis, an application for the contemporary church audience will be provided.

Methodology and Definitions

Ken Gardoski describes three basic steps to doing theology: exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology. Biblical theology makes attempts at “Placing the Biblical Data in their Historical Context,” which is entirely derivative of, and logically preceded by, sound exegetical work.⁴ The exegetical method practiced below will employ a “consistently literal hermeneutic” seeking to interpret the data in a way that is cognizant of the author’s single intended meaning as could have been discerned by the original audience, and only be found within the confines of the text (avoiding the intentional fallacy).

Köstenberger and Patterson define biblical theology stating, “Biblical theology is the theology of the Bible. That is Biblical theology is theology that is biblical—derived from the Bible rather than imposed upon the Bible by a given interpreter of scripture . . . grounded in the historical setting and the narrative context, and is inductive in nature.”⁵ Mead similarly defines biblical theology as seeking “to identify and understand the Bible’s theological message, that is, what the Bible says about God and God’s relation to all creation, especially to humankind.”⁶ This article will proceed by defining biblical theology as the study of God within its own diverse array of literary contexts solely within the canon. This type of theology differs from systematics which seeks to group theological

⁴ Ken Gardoski, “Steps to Doing Theology.” Unpublished class notes from Doctoral Seminar TH1: Seminar in Theological Methods at Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA, Fall 2020.

⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *For the Love of God’s Word* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2015), 368.

⁶ James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville: John Knox, 2007), Kindle loc. 59.

content by themes.⁷ As such, there will be no integration of any extrabiblical sources of theology.

Old Testament Contextual Interpretation

A brief exegesis of the passage is mandated before proceeding to a theological synthesis. This exegesis will seek to offer a contextual interpretation through employing the historical-grammatical method of exegesis, consisting of translation discussion of literary and historical context of the psalm to the best of the interpreter’s abilities given the absence of certain critical elements. The will be done through supplying a commentary on the psalm’s contents, analyzed in stanza divisions found in the contextual study.

Translation

Below is the author’s original translation derived from the text of the BHS with the aid of the HALOT and BDB lexicons. It has been presented in a table and broken up into stanza divisions to be defended thereafter for ease of reference.

Translation	
Why rage the nations and the countries plot vanities? Taking their stand, the kings of the earth, and the dignitaries found/establish together against the LORD and against his anointed one. The dweller of the heavens laughs, the lord mocks them. This will he speak to them in his wrath, And with his fury he will terrify them;	I will tell of the announcement, “The LORD said to me, My Son are you, I, this day, have brought you forth. Ask from me, and you will I give the nations as your inheritance, And as your property the ends of the earth. You will smash them with a rod of iron, As the vessel of a potter you will break them to pieces.” So now you Kings be wise,

⁷ Cited in *ibid.*, Kindle loc. 409.

<p>“But I have set my king upon Zion the mountain of my holiness.”</p>	<p>Be instructed you judges of the earth! Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angered, And you perish in the way Because kindled as quickly is his wrath, Blessed are all who take refuge in him.</p>
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Context

The authorship and dating of Psalm 2 are unknown from the text of the Old Testament. New Testament claims of authorship, and an appropriately derived date, will be examined under the New Testament section. Claus Westermann has argued convincingly that all psalms fall under two main genre categories, praise and lament, and are further subdivided by their individual or corporate nature.⁸ Gunkel has argued for a different categorization system which is useful and will serve as a form of sub-genre classification. As such, this psalm should be considered a lament of the people, with its sub-genre being a kingship psalm, particularly a “prayer of the king.”⁹ It is important to understand that the king as a representative of the nation, in a culture of corporate solidarity, is viewed as speaking on behalf of the nation in his individual prayers. As goes the king, so goes the nation.¹⁰

Laments have a clearly defined structure: “address, lament, confession of trust, or assurance of being heard, petition, vow of

⁸ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 33–34.

⁹ Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, ed. Joachim Begrich, trans. James D. Nogalski (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 109.

¹⁰ Gunkel, *Introduction*, 112, 120.

praise.”¹¹ This psalm is particular in the fact that there is no petition proper. A cursory reading of the entire psalm would leave one to believe that the petition is implied in the nations’ rage, but discounted by the king as vain and futile because the king has received dominion from the almighty over-lord. The turn from lament to confidence is found in verses 4–6 where God speaks and terrifies the nations. An assertion of confidence is made by Zion’s king concerning his divine right to rule. The psalm ends with a call for the nations to submit to God’s rule through submitting to the lordship of Israel’s king.

Structure

The structure of this psalm is clearly denoted by the changes between the speaker and the audience.¹² The first stanza division runs from verses 1–3, where the psalmist is presumably addressing the LORD, describing the rebellion of the nations and questioning their reason. There is a change in speakers in verses 4–6 where the LORD answers the question of the psalmist. The psalmist then continues his role as the primary speaker in verses 7–9 where he describes a revelation previously received from the LORD, and ends with the speaker addressing the raging nations on how to respond appropriately to God’s revelation in verses 10–12.

Commentary

Stanza 1

Why rage the nations
and the countries plot vanities?

¹¹ Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 64; see also Gunkel, *Introduction*, 94; even though Gunkel calls this a royal psalm, its parts follow that of the “Individual Complaint Songs” namely, “address, complaint, petition, perhaps the certainty of having been heard, and the vow of a thanksgiving offering” (94).

¹² See David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 60–61. “The term ‘stanza’ is most frequently understood to be a semantic unit, that is, a unit of meaning . . . stanzaic style does not appear in Hebrew poetry. Groupings occur within the constraints of parallelism, rhythm, and other stylistic devices.” These constraints can be grammatical or semantical and “signal the reader that units external to the bi-colon, . . . hold lines together and separate them” (60–61).

Taking their stand, the kings of the earth,
 and the dignitaries found/establish together
 against the LORD and against his anointed one.
 Let us tear to pieces the fetters
 and throw from us their branches

Verse 1

The prayer opens with a question posed to the deity in verse one. The verse exhibits explanatory parallelism describing how the nations rage, namely through plotting worthless vanities. Nations גוים is a theologically loaded word referring particularly to “pagan peoples.”¹³ This term is often translated as “Gentiles,” Though the term was originally denotive of nations “in general” it “came to mean specifically ‘nations other than Israel.’”¹⁴ The DBI notes that this term should be understood as one of a few “serious words indicating a distinction between God’s people and the other peoples. One of the most basic divisions in Hebrew thought (as in many other cultures) was that of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ *Heathen* has the particular connotation of those who are different and religiously offensive.”¹⁵

Verse 2

Verse two is connected to verse one via explanatory parallelism, explaining the outcome of the nations’ conspiracy—they rebel by taking their stand. The next lines of verse two is also explanatory. The nations of the earth take their stand by working together, and by contrastive parallelism, shows that they are working against the LORD and his anointed one. It is important to note the connection between the LORD and his anointed one. The HALOT defines the משיח as “the anointed one” and then provides multiple biblical examples such as, “the king of Israel, Saul, David and his descendants . . . 2. Cyrus Is 45:1 . . . 3. priest הכהן המזבחות the anointed priest . . . 4. the patriarchs . . . 5. ‘Messiah’ . . . but not an eschatological saviour in OT.”¹⁶ VanGemerén describes the special relationship between these messiahs and the LORD stating, “The act of anointing not only

¹³ Willem VanGemerén, ed., *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:131.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:369.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Koehler et al., *HALOT* (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), 645.

initiated a person or an object into a new form of service, it also set that object or person apart from other forms of service or uses. . . . Not only did the anointing presuppose special obligations, it also was considered to convey special status; this was the Lord's anointed (2 Sam 23:1). To touch this person was in some sense to touch the Lord himself."¹⁷

Verse 3

The poem continues its explanatory function, linking verses 2–3, reporting the direct speech of the Gentile kings forming an unholy alliance.¹⁸ Here one can see that the Gentile kings are working together through the first-person plural pronoun attached to a cohortative verb form. There is a progressive parallelism seen between the lines of verse 3, as they seek to tear off the bonds which the LORD has placed upon the nations and shows the kings seeking to throw off his dominion over them exerted through the “branch.” The term for branch is another term that has become theologically significant. Here it functions as a metaphor, meant to give the poem symbolic imagery. Ryken et al. describe the symbolism:

Branches provide a rich array of symbols in the Bible. In a land with regions where trees were a relative rarity, a healthy tree with strong branches readily became a symbol of strength and prosperity. If leafy, fruit-bearing branches indicate a prospering olive, vine or fig tree, they readily become a symbol for a human family: “Joseph is a fruitful

¹⁷ VanGemenen, ed., *NIDOTTE*, 2:1124–1125.

¹⁸ For a brief introduction on parallelism and its relationship to Hebrew poetry, see Robert Bruce Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Samuel T. Goh, *The Basics of Hebrew Poetry: Theory and Practice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017); and David M. Howard Jr. “Recent Trends in Psalms Study,” in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Will T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 329–368. For a more in-depth discussion of parallelism see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1998); and Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. G. Gregory (1839; repr. Elibron Classics, 2005).

bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall” (Gen 49:22 RSV). Nations too, and especially their rulers, are referred to as trees.¹⁹

As such, the Gentile rulers are seeking to overcome the rule of the LORD, by casting off the leadership of his anointed king. Though this may seem a stretch from the poetry, such bondage to foreign rulers often entailed worship of their gods, coerced, or otherwise, as seen throughout the biblical account from the judges throughout the monarchial period. It is safe to assume there would have been a chance for countertransference during the monarchial period when this psalm was written to the chagrin of the foreign rulers who were loyal to their own gods and religiously motivated ethics, as well as geo-political and economic aspects that such fealty to the Israelite monarchy would necessarily entail.

Stanza 2

The dweller of the heavens laughs,
 the lord mocks them.
 This will he speak to them in his wrath,
 And with his fury he will terrify them;
 “But I have set my king upon Zion
 the mountain of my holiness.”

Verse 4

The second stanza division is warranted by a change in the subject and speaker. Whereas the previous stanza includes the psalmist’s report of the direct speech of the nations, this second stanza reports the direct speech of the LORD as a reaction to the plans of the wicked rulers. There is a contrastive parallelism linking verses 3–4, where the speech of the Gentile kings is contrasted to the speech of God, as he laughs and mocks them. There is progressive parallelism within verse 4 where God moves from laughter to mocking.

Verse 5

Verse five displays intensifying/progressive parallelism from verse 4 to verse 5 where the LORD moves from laughter and mocking to wrath. Verse 5, employing explanatory parallelism shows God’s

¹⁹ Ryken et al., *Dictionary*, 116.

wrathful speech, describing the effects of his wrath leaving the nations terrified.

Verse 6

There is a contrastive relationship between verses 5–6, where the subject moves from the nations which the LORD has chastised, to the anointed one, now specified as the king whom the LORD has set upon Zion. God reassures the Israelite king that the goal of the heathen nations was vain because the LORD was responsible for the placement of the Israelite king. There is descriptive parallelism between the lines of verse 6 where Zion is specified as the place where the LORD has set his anointed king and Zion is described as the mountain of the LORD's holiness. The term קדוש is described in adjectival form as "adj. holy, causing anxiety, separated, ordained for."²⁰ The idea of causing anxiety is particularly appropriate considering the fear that has been invoked upon the gentile kings at the word of the LORD in the previous verse. The idea is that Zion was holy because it was the LORD's special possession given to his anointed king, and an attack on the anointed King (1 Sam. 9:16–17, 16:12; 2 Sam. 7:12–16), in the ordained location, without God's prior sanction would ultimately be an attack on God himself (see conversation above on משה), his promises and plan.

Stanza 3

I will tell of the announcement,

“The LORD said to me, My Son are you,

I, this day, have brought you forth.

Ask from me, and you will I give the nations as your inheritance,

And as your property the ends of the earth.

You will smash them with a rod of iron,

As the vessel of a potter you will break them to pieces.”

Verse 7

The third stanza is denoted again by a change in speaker and subject. Where the LORD was speaking to the gentile kings in stanza two, the LORD now turns his attention to the Israelit king, speaking to him directly. This verse should be identified as the beginning of “the oracle” where God “promises the ruler what the prayer desired

²⁰ VanGemenen, ed., *NIDOTTE*, 3:877.

for him.”²¹ There is specifying/descriptive parallelism between verses 6 and 7, linking the third stanza to the second. Where the LORD has asserted His installation of the Israelite king upon Zion in verse 6, verse 7 describes the decree elevating the Israelite king over other nations. There is descriptive parallelism between the lines of verse 7 where the LORD announces that the king is his son, and how this sonship was brought about—through the son’s receipt of the kingdom. The use of the term *son* had political significance. It was common for equal kings to refer to each other as brothers, and inferior/superior relationships to be addressed as father/son.²² This became common terminology for ANE kings to refer to themselves as sons of their respective deities, receiving kingdoms at the behest of their divine benefactors.²³ This idea harkens back to the Davidic covenant where the LORD promises,

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. (2 Sam 7:10–14, ESV)

The war time machinations of the Gentile kings’ coupe attempt would be antithetical to the Davidic covenant apart from God’s direct intervention. Since the king was in a special relationship to the LORD, to move on the king without divine sanction was to move

²¹ Gunkel, *Introduction*, 111.

²² Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BC*, Blackwell History of the Ancient World, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2016), 107, Kindle ed.

²³ Allison Thomason, “The Materiality of Assyrian Sacred Kingship,” *Religion Compass* 10, no. 6 (June 10, 2016): 133–148, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12201>. See also Nicole Brisch, “Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Religion Compass* 7, no. 2 (February 4, 2013): 37–46, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12031>.

against the LORD Himself. Gunkel rightly notes the extent of such a relationship: “The first rule of this state religion in Israel, as in all nations of antiquity which lived under kings, was that the prince stands in an especially close relationship to the God of the people. . . the court singer praises the prince quite highly, but do not forget that YHWY is above him.”²⁴ As zealously monotheistic as Israel was, and given the cultural usage of the term at the time of composition, it is unlikely that the author, or the redactor after him, would have viewed this psalm as referring to a future divine king figure such as that seen in the NT person of Jesus—though this text does not preclude such typological fulfillment.

Verse 8

There is developmental parallelism between verses 7–8 where verse 7 announces the receipt of the kingdom by the son, and verse 8 describes the receipt of gifts which are the king’s due. The receipt of gifts upon royal ascension was normative in the ANE, and a royal ascension being denoted by the phrase “this day,” has archaeological support.²⁵ It was common for kings to receive gifts from other kings, even greater kings, upon coronation. In Jewish thought, God was the King of the whole earth, and it was common for greater kings to acknowledge lesser kings as their sons, bestowing gifts upon these lesser kings at coronation.²⁶

Verse 9

Verse nine explains how this coronation gift would be achieved, describing the process by which the new king would receive the inheritance of the other nations: war. In the ANE, a king had to prove

²⁴ Gunkel, *Introduction*, 112.

²⁵ See Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., WBC 19 (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 67, where he notes “‘Today’ points to the fact that the words were announced on the coronation day, the day on which the divine decree became effective.” See also Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (THOTC) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), Kindle ed. Grogan notes, “At his enthronement (‘today’) he has been adopted as God’s son (cf. 2 Sam 7:14), for his rule is God’s gift and he accords him fatherly protection” (45).

²⁶ Van De Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 148.

himself as worthy of kingship through military prowess.²⁷ It would be through this war, fought with divine sanction, that the son would receive the inheritance. This command seems to serve as a divine commission to conduct wars. Kitchen notes, “Often in antiquity, war leaders sought, or were granted, an act of commission before going to war — and for other major actions such as building temples. Joshua had a visionary visitor (5:13-15); others had their experiences.”²⁸ Since the land of Canaan is consistently referred to in Deuteronomy as an inheritance (cf. Deut 1:38; 10:9; 12:9–10; 15:4; 16:20; etc.) and that book functions as a preparatory speech before a prolonged military campaign (Deut 1, esp. vv. 34–38), there can be little reason to reject this interpretation for a similar event.

There is intensifying parallelism between the cola of verse 9 where the king smashes the nations with a rod, resulting in their breaking like clay pottery. This imagery should not be lost when viewed within the previous context of the first stanza where the nations conspire for rebellion. It was common for covenants to be inscribed on clay tablets, and preserved through baking in a kiln, such as you would find at a potter’s house. Brashler points out, “Ancient covenants included where archival copies of the agreement were to be stored on clay tablets, a list of witnesses, a description of the blessings and curses if the covenant was honored or violated, and perhaps an affirming oath and a final ceremony.”²⁹ For the covenant documents to be broken and shattered would be a symbolic act, seen as early as Moses breaking the tablets of the Ten Commandments.³⁰ Here one may see poetic imagery of the king of Israel smashing the covenants forged between himself and the heathen kings who are currently under subjection in verse 2 and preparing for war.

²⁷ Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox), 269–280, Kindle ed.

²⁸ K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), Kindle ed.

²⁹ James Brashler, “God’s Covenant with Abraham,” *Presbyterian Outlook*, Sep 04, 2017, <https://pres-outlook.org/2017/09/gods-covenant-abraham-september-10-2017/>.

³⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 677.

Stanza 4

So now you Kings be wise,
 Be instructed you judges of the earth!
Serve the LORD with fear,
 And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the son, lest he be angered,
 And you perish in the way
 Because kindled as quickly is his wrath,
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Verse 10

The fourth stanza shows another change of speaker and audience. In verses 10–12, the psalmist now speaks on his own behalf to the Gentile kings who are now considered his and God's enemies. From stanza 3 to stanza 4 there is a progressive development. Since the covenantal relationship between the Gentile kings and Zion's King was decreed by the LORD any rebellion was doomed to futility signified by broken pottery. The plots of the heathens are in vain due to the LORD's special relationship with His anointed king. The Israelite king then counsels the rebels to act wisely and heed the warning of the psalmist. The Israelite King has heard the word of the LORD and has recounted that word to the rebels, lest they should suffer the judgement of being shattered in war. This verse has nearly synonymous parallelism showing the slightest development; they must act wisely and heed the warning. This wise course of action is found by taking the instruction found in verses 11–12.

Verse 11

Since verse 10 served a preparatory command function, it is connected to verse 11 through explanatory parallelism. Verse 11 supplies the instruction which the kings are to hear, finding the wisdom they were exhorted to receive in verse 10. There is progressive parallelism within verse 11; the Gentile kings should serve the LORD willingly, and then rejoice in the LORD through their service. This idea of serving the LORD cannot be divorced from its religious context. The book of Exodus describes Israel's duty to serve the LORD in Exodus 23:23–25. Service is related directly to worship, and proper service results in God's blessing upon Israel's

conquest of the land.³¹ This thought is often passed over by commentators, who simply see this as a geopolitical type of service; however, as will be argued below, Psalm 2 must be read in context with Psalm 1, where Torah is pivotal. This was the problem of the heathen kings—they were not submitting to YHWH, and by rebelling against YHWH, they also rebelled against his anointed king. The song then progresses to its end via warning and blessing.

Verse 12

The last verse is linked to the preceding by way of specifying parallelism. Verse 12 describes how the kings of the earth can serve God and rejoice with fear and trembling, denoting a proper respect for a powerful monarch. This service is affected through entering into a proper relationship with the son of God who sits on Israel's throne. Failure to come into an adoring relationship with, denoted by kissing the son, will result in peril since the son's wrath is kindled quickly. Discussing the foreign influences on Israelite understanding of monarchy in his *Introduction to the Psalms*, Gunkel notes, "Any subject granted an audience with the king was said to 'look on the king's face,' a phrase repeated among the Israelites. . . . That subject had to bow before the king as before a god and kiss his feet."³² The last line of verse 12 is an emphatic mono-colon pronouncing a blessing on those who take refuge in the son of God.³³ This

³¹ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 335–336.

³² Gunkel, *Introduction*, 108.

³³ Samuel T. Goh notes, "The monocolon refers to a colon that 'does not cohere with another colon in the same sub-section of a poem.' It is not very common, but does occur in Hebrew poetry" (*Basics of Hebrew Poetry*, 16). This lack of occurrence can serve as a contrast as David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards point out, "The presence of monocola suggests that parallelism is not the only factor in the creation of Hebrew poetry. While a monocolon does not have a direct relationship to another line, it does provide variation to other units—for example, a bicolon—and thus creates contrast with the more frequent parallelistic structures" (*Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, 23). See also Wilfred Watson, who describes "the structural functions of the monocolon: it can open a stanza . . . it can close a stanza or poem. . . it can segment a poem into stanzas. . . can mark a climax— a function clearly related to its structural functions" (*Classical Hebrew Poetry* [Sheffield: Bloomsbury], 169–170).

relationship is peculiar. Throughout the psalm, there is an intricate relationship between God as the ultimate cause of the nations' futility in war. This war against the anointed, who is God's agent, results in a divine commission for the Israelite king to effect judgment upon rebels with a rod of iron when his wrath is kindled. If one is to be spared from the son's wrath, they must take refuge in him through joyful submission, where they will find blessing.

Describing the imagery associated with refuge, Ryken notes, "A number of Hebrew words in the OT evoke images of refuge—a place of safety from danger, relief after stress, defense from an enemy, protection from the heat of the sun, overall security. These images incorporate both rocks and fortresses on the one hand and houses or homes on the other."³⁴ All of these associated images are utilized at times for God, but the idea of a house seems most appropriate for a kingship psalm, since it was the promise of a "house" (2 Sam 7:11, 16), elsewhere described as an "enduring house" (1 Sam 25:28) that seems to apply to the Judean kings. Since taking refuge denotes coming under the roof of a house, this image may allude to the idea of finding blessing by the Gentile king coming under the roof of David's house, i.e., submitting to the Israelite king's authority, which is what was in question in verse one.

Theological Implications for Original Audience of the Individual Psalm

Having completed a brief exegesis of the passage, one can now begin to derive theological themes from the text that the original audience would have been able to discern from the text, as received within its historical context. The first thing that the reader will notice is that the psalmist has posed a question. Though the addressee is unnamed, the reply by God through the oracle implies that God was the ultimate addressee. In this case, this psalm is a prayer, particularly a lament. There are theological ramifications to the concept of prayer. If prayer is made and oracles are received as a response to prayer, then there can be little doubt that God is willing and able to communicate with individuals in some fashion. Furthermore, this prayer shows that in some form or fashion, God answers prayers assuring the faithful of His sovereign plan which has been revealed.

³⁴ Ryken et al., *Dictionary*, 701.

In this particular case, prayer serves to comfort those who are distressed by the ungodly.

The question that opens the prayer concerns the kings of the nations, asking why they vainly rage against God and his anointed one. This is the central tension of the lament, that heathen rulers persist in the earth and rebel against God's ordained authority structures. There are two aspects to this section of the lament that are important for theology. The first issue is that there are indeed people, and particularly governmental structures, which rebel against God. The rebellion against the LORD is the first concern, and only after God's interest in the rebellion is stated is that qualified in some form through the following dependent clause "against his anointed one." By referring to the king as the LORD's anointed one, the psalm affirms that the Israelite king has been given a distinct prominence among the nations, which includes some measure of penultimate authority as the vice-regent of God, the ultimate authority. Though such discussion of an anointed king has caused people to relate this psalm and those like it to the Messiah, which "was the explanation of the synagogues which no longer possessed Kingship. . ." this paper rightly agrees with Gunkel, that "this group of psalms does not relate to a future king, but to the ruling king."³⁵

Through the analogy of antecedent revelation, one can see that this psalm assumes the transfer of the Abrahamic blessing to the monarchy so that "those who bless you will be blessed, and those who curse you will be cursed."³⁶ Though this retributive theme is appropriate, there is evidence of the royal psalmist's concern about the welfare of these heathen nations. The Israelite king who is serving as a mediator of the Abrahamic covenant is responsible for presenting God's blessings to the nations, having a responsibility to pray for the repentance of ungodly governments as seen in verse 1, mediating direct revelation seen throughout stanza 3, and calling upon them to repent and be reconciled to God through obedience in stanza 4. This repentance is necessary because their rebellious machinations are futile and judgement is sure for the unrepentant. The reason for this

³⁵ Gunkel, *Introduction*, 119.

³⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), Kindle ed., Kindle locs. 1881–1883.

futility is found in stanza 2 where God is shown as sovereign over the ungodly governments.

In the ANE, a king had to prove himself worthy of kingship through military prowess. The process is described by Longman in *A History of Israel*:

The process would look something like this. First, an individual would be designated by some means for a particular leadership role. Next, the new designee would be expected to demonstrate his status and his prowess by engaging in some feat of arms or military action. Finally, having thus distinguished himself and come to public attention, the designee would be confirmed in his leadership office.³⁷

Therefore, if God is King over Israel, He must first be their warrior. This happened at the Exodus, (See Exod 15 and the common refrain, “The LORD is a Warrior!”). This motif runs throughout the Old Testament so that Old Testament theologian G. Ernest Wright is forced to discuss God as a warrior saying:

A most pervasive Biblical motif is the interpretation of conflict in history as owing to the sin of man, against which the cosmic government and its suzerain [READ KING] take vigorous action. Since so much of history is concerned warfare, it therefore must be expected that one major activity of the suzerain will be the direction of war for both redemptive and judgmental ends.³⁸

This right to rule, validated through war, is no different for the Israelite King. An Israelite King must prove worthy of Kingship through their utilization of their divinely given office through judging and avenging God’s people. With the heathen nations raging against God and against his anointed one, it must be assumed that there was war and rebellion in the air.³⁹ As such, it was the role of the king to

³⁷ Provan et al., *Biblical History of Israel*, 279–280.

³⁸ Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology*, 83.

³⁹ Peter C. Craigie states, “The nations of the world, their warriors and rulers, are gathering together in an act of rebellion against God and the king. Although it is possible to seek an historical background to the rebellious nations (e.g., in the reign of King Solomon), the psalmist is not necessarily referring to any particular event in history. The language reflects primarily all—or any—nations that do not acknowledge the

execute justice on the rebellious and to maintain the safety of his people, proving his right to rule.⁴⁰ However, this psalm is clear that this battle would not be the result of the king's prowess as assumed throughout the ANE, but would be the result of God's act on His son's behalf.

Theologically, there is also an element of mercy and justice. Notice in verses 4–5 that there is a progression. The LORD does not immediately judge the nations for their wicked rebellion. Instead, keeping with his character of being “merciful and gracious, longsuffering” (Exod 34:6), He delays his judgment in verse nine until after he has given them multiple forms of warning. This is also why there is an element of warning in the psalmist's reply; there is still time for the rebellious Gentile kings to repent.

Theological Implications for the Original Audience of the Psalter

There has been much discussion about the composition of the book of Psalms.⁴¹ “However, in recent Psalms studies, a new emphasis is being placed on the broader context for interpreting a psalm in connection with other psalms that surround it in order to render a more accurate picture of what the psalmist meant. This new

primacy of Israel's God, and therefore of Israel's king. Thus, the verses contain a reflection of the opposite to a theological ideal. The ideal was that of a world in which all nations and kings recognized the kingship of God and his appointed sovereign; the reality was seen anew in each coronation, that such was not the case. Foreign nations would act violently against Israel's king and in so doing would be rebelling against divine rule” (*Psalms 1-50*, 65–66). Grogan alludes to a similar issue, though in the time of David (*Psalms*, 44).

⁴⁰ Botha notes this same sentiment as a continued theme throughout the Psalter, particularly in book 4, after the psalmist poses the question in Psalm 94 of “who will oppose the wicked and the evildoers, Psalm 101 offers an emphatic answer. His earthly representative will do it! In this way, he himself will wipe them out through his anointed” (Phillipus J. Botha, “Psalm 101: A Supplication for the Restoration of Society in the Late Post-Exilic Age,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 [August 19, 2016]: 8).

⁴¹ Howard, “Recent Trends,” 329–368.

development is a welcome addition to treatment of the book of Psalms.”⁴² Many interpreters have asserted that Psalms 1–2 serve as an introduction to the entire Psalter.⁴³ However, some like Kaiser, have separated the rest of the contents of book 1 from Psalm 1–2. Instead, it seems preferable to keep Psalms 1–2 with the entirety of book 1, serving a dual-introductory purpose. As such, Psalm 2 should be read in light of Psalms 1 and 2 since in agreement with Palmer Robertson, there must be some sort of “intentional development of order and theme” since there are “deliberate groupings with similar form, substance, or author” which “attest to an intentional arrangement at more than one point during the five-hundred-year history of the creation and collection of the various psalms.”⁴⁴

Psalm 1 discusses the two ways, that of the wicked who pursue iniquity and sin, and that of the righteous who meditates on God’s law day and night. Psalm 2 serves to evince a contrast between the righteous ruler installed by God, and the wicked rulers, who rebel against God and his ordained governmental structures. Psalm 3 continues this theme by evincing a singularly wicked ruler who ironically came from within David’s own house and rebelled like the gentile kings from whom he descended (Absalom’s maternal grandfather being Talmai, King of Geshur, 2 Sam. 13:37). As such, Psalm 2 displays God’s ultimate sovereignty over the geo-politics of the nations, and his strategic placement of a particular King of Davidic descent so that no rebellion is achievable. Through Psalm 2, the preservation of the anointed King’s life is assured against the machinations of wicked would-be usurpers.

⁴² Walter C. Kaiser, “The Structure of the Book of Psalms,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174, no. 693 (January 2017): 3.

⁴³ Botha states that these two psalms were “composed and edited by exponents of wisdom teaching to reflect two possible responses to the invitation of Wisdom in Proverbs 1. Psalm 1 was composed to represent the correct, positive, and accepting response to the warnings and invitations in Proverbs 1:10 and 15. Psalm 2, on the other hand, in its present form, reflects on the futility of a rejection of this invitation by the rulers of the world and reports on the amused response of Yahweh in the role of a wisdom teacher” (Botha, “Psalm 101,” 7).

⁴⁴ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 50.

This message of preservation would be of critical importance for the audience of the Psalter. It is accepted that the Psalter would have been found in its final form, or closely thereto, before the Hasmonean dynasty and after the exile.⁴⁵ In the days of the exile, the Davidic dynasty was removed from rule, as the Israelites were consistently dominated by foreign rule, with no real hope of a Davidic restoration. This lack of a Davidic candidate for Kingship resulted in the general acceptance of the Hasmonean dynasty shortly after the composition of the psalter. By turning to Psalm 2, the post-exilic audience could cast their hope in God's **הסד**, believing and hoping that he would fulfill his unconditional covenant to David and eventually bring an heir to the throne who would overthrow the wicked nations which had oppressed Israel so violently. When that **משח** arrived, the nations would do proper obeisance, granting him god-like fealty, or suffer his wrath. However, the goal of Psalm 2 was not simply to raise Israel to a place of political prominence but ultimately to bring these nations under the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant as they blessed the Abrahamic nation, his chosen seed, and by so doing serve the LORD (v. 11). Though this might seem to contradict the early agreement with Gunkel, this is not the case, it is a refinement which distinguishes the author's original intention with that of the final redactor of the book of Psalms and his intended audience.

Synthesis of New Testament Employment

Due to space limitations and the notorious difficulty of defining allusions, this study will limit New Testament employment to those quotes and allusions of Psalm 2 in the Gospels and Acts. The discussion will locate the quote/allusion, and then discuss its rhetorical effect within the story, and the intended effect on the audience.

⁴⁵ Evidence for this being that the kingship psalms continue to be limited to a Davidic ruler and not the Hasmoneans. See Gunkel, *Introduction*, 99, 112, and 119. Certain Psalms such as 89 and 137 are clearly exilic or post exilic. For agreement to this assessment, see Kaiser, "Structure," who argues for a purely messianic referent from the Davidic line.

Synoptic Employment

The synoptic gospels have limited references to the second psalm in the NT by way of direct quotation. However, the employment of these quotations seems to be quite emphatic since both instances come directly by way of the audible command of the Father concerning the Son to an audience. The first instance of Psalm 2's employment is found in the passage that describes Christ's baptism (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; and Luke 3:22). All three of these biblical narratives, describing the same event, show the Father publicly recognizing Jesus as his son. While Matthew seems to have a different wording for the direct speech, Luke and Mark align more closely with the direct speech of the Father being directed to Jesus instead of the crowd by using *Σύ* instead of *Οὗτος* as in Matthew. This makes little difference in the meaning of the text, since the semantic effect, due to an audible proclamation in a public setting, still leaves the crowd with an authoritative divine witness to Christ's unique relationship to the Father before the start of his public ministry. This divine approval and authorization is something Christ will refer back to in his disputations with the Pharisees (see John 5:32–37). The entirety of the quotation seems to have conflagrated two distinct OT passages, Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. Discussing this effect, Blomberg notes, "The conjunction of the two allusions is especially significant inasmuch as at least a segment of pre-Christian Judaism apparently took both as messianic (cf. 4Q174 I I, 10–14 with Tg. Isa. 42:1). Together they reflect the heavenly Father's understanding of Jesus' dual role: one day a kingly messiah, but for now a Suffering Servant—both appropriate to his unique identity as the divine son."⁴⁶

The second allusion in the synoptics appears at the transfiguration (see Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; and Luke 9:35). Blomberg notes well the similarity in semantic function when he describes this passage by commenting that, "As at Jesus' baptism (see Matt. 3:17), a heavenly voice refers to him by alluding to Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1, combining allusions to his roles as messianic king and Suffering Servant (17:5b)." However, Blomberg goes too far when he asserts that, "The

⁴⁶ Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 14.

additional charge, ‘Listen to him,’ alludes to Deut. 18:15 on heeding the prophet like Moses.’⁴⁷ Though this allusion to Deuteronomy may not be inappropriate, Blomberg should have also noted how the phrase “Kiss the Son lest he be angry” found in Psalm 2 denotes the same type of obeisance owed to the divine son-king as was noted above in this papers commentary on verse 12. This section is especially pertinent considering this comes between Jesus’ first and second passion prediction in all three synoptics. This conflated quotation, twice repeated at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (baptism) and a new stage in his ministry (after public confession of Messiahship by the disciples in Matthew 16:21–33, Luke 9:18–22, and Mark 8:27–33) seems to then serve as an introduction of the nature of Christ’s ministry in the first instance (baptism) and a correction to the disciple’s common messianic expectations in the second instance (transfiguration). These messianic expectations are evinced through Peter’s chastisement of Christ for the first passion prediction, (see again Matthew 16:21–33, Luke 9:18–22, and Mark 8:27–33). It has been well documented that second temple Judaism expected a conquering Davidic Messiah, and not a suffering Messiah, and this divine validation should have served as confirmation of Christ’s understanding to his ill-informed disciples.⁴⁸

Acts Employment of Psalm 2

The writer of Acts quotes Psalm 2 twice and provides some necessary insight into Psalm 2, which is absent from the original text. It is especially noteworthy that both quotations (Acts 4:25–26 and 13:33) appear in evangelistic contexts, once by Peter praying for boldness when the authorities attempted to silence his witness, and once by Paul, at the beginning of his public preaching ministry to the Gentiles.

The first quotation appears in Acts 4:25. Before this section, the Spirit has descended upon Christ’s disciples, empowering them for ministry, and the church was growing in drastic proportions. A short time later, Peter and John were walking into the temple, where they were conducting their regular Jewish duties and their Christian

⁴⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁸ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 411–412, 419–420.

preaching ministry, when they encountered a lame man. Peter healed the lame man and began preaching Christ to the witnesses. Upon seeing this healing and preaching, the Pharisees were upset, and they arrested Peter and John and they took counsel together. Luke recounts the event, where the Pharisees took counsel together concerning their next steps at the trial asking each other, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name” (Acts 4:16–17). Peter and John returned to the disciples and explained the day’s events, causing the believers to pray. Luke recounts the situation:

And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“‘Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’?” (Acts
4:24–26)

As the disciples pondered their next steps, seeking counsel together, they began to do so by prayer. This is something noticeably absent from the Jewish high council which immediately preceded this pericope. This implicit contrast should probably be more discussed than it has to date. It should also be noted that this is the first occurrence of the church proper praying the psalms, a practice still employed with benefit to this day, and to be heartily commended.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it is apparent that the NT church saw the psalms as a source of comfort among tribulation, and a book to be utilized in prayer.

This employment of the second psalm is actually quite ironic when compared to the second psalm in isolation from the psalms

⁴⁹ N. T. Wright. *The Case for the Psalms* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 1, Kindle ed.

surrounding it. This passage does a better job in the English version of pointing out the identity of the rebellious participants in Psalm 2. The rebels were Gentiles, whom Luke goes through great pains to show as being a source of contention in the early church due to Jewish national identity during the second temple period. But here, it seems that the disciples have placed the Jewish leadership in the same category as the Gentiles because of their raging and plotting against Christ through the crucifixion and subsequent actions. Though the second psalm in isolation seems to imply that it is Gentile nations that would reject the son, a canonical-contextual reading of the psalter will actually show the same irony in the movement from Psalm 2 to Psalm 3. God hears the prayer of the disciples, and answers it affirmatively, granting them their petition for boldness; this would seem to agree with the context of the second psalm that was not quoted. In Psalm 2, the psalmist turned to the Gentiles after receiving his oracle from God and counseled them to fear God, and to submit to the Davidic ruler. This is the same situation that will be lived out for the rest of the book of Acts; God has heard their prayer, responded with an oracle (particularly the shaking of the room and filling of the Holy Spirit in v. 31), and allowed them to continue “to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

Theological Implications for New Testament Audiences

As the NT writers found Psalm 2 in the original documents, some 20–30 years after the facts, they were reading a piece of literature that was interpreting history through the lenses of theology.⁵⁰ Each of the Gospel writers wrote for a specific audience, whether it was Matthew seeking to disciple a Jewish audience from the Scriptures of Christ’s status, Luke’s attempt to affirm the testimony which Theophilus had heard, or Mark’s goal to deliver a gospel to those suffering persecution that they might continue to defend the faith that was entrusted to them.⁵¹ These unbelievers

⁵⁰ Köstenberger and Patterson, *For the Love of God’s Word*, 198.

⁵¹ For Matthew’s Jewish audience, Carson and Moo use the term “catechize” for Mark’s audience’s struggles with Jewish persecution (*An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], Kindle ed., Kindle locs. 3327 and 3466. Luke’s audience, explicitly named in the text, does not need substantiation in this author’s view, but to

were in need of seeing Christ's status as a way of invoking them to faith. Psalm 2 served the purpose of historically attesting to the divine affirmation of Christ's status in the gospel in the presence of witnesses, many of whom were named and known. Since Christ was revealed to be the divine Son and the ultimate Messiah of prophetic annunciation, though admittedly different than second temple expectations, then the readers had only one reasonable response, "kiss the Son lest he be angry and consume you in his wrath."

For the at-risk believer, perhaps Theophilus, and most assuredly much of Mark's audience, the psalm served a different purpose, like that of Peter's need in the Gospel. They needed a corrective lens that would allow them to see that suffering precedes exultation as part of God's divine economy. Psalm 2's affirmation of Christ's sonship, bracketed by predictions of his suffering, would have told the fledgling church that suffering in this life does not negate the plan of God or diminish the status of his servants.

The book of Acts was completely limited to Theophilus, presumably a high-ranking Gentile official (though this is debated). By seeing the ironic employment of Psalm 2 in Acts, and reading the rest of Luke's argument, he could begin to see how the Jewish nation had now turned into the heathen rebels which they had long counted the Greeks. He would also learn from the context of Psalm 2 that there was hope for Gentile rulers just like him if they would submit to the divine authority of the Son of God. However, should one choose not to submit there was an implicit dire warning, He would return, and there would be violence. The day was, and indeed is still yet, coming when the Davidic King Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Son of God, will rule over all of the earth, and that this rule will be brought about through violent ends. Until the day of Christ's return, his followers like Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, and Paul must busy themselves commanding the rebels to act wisely through serving God through submission to Jesus Christ.

As the king of the universe, God is worthy of service.⁵² God as King has appointed humans to serve as vice-regents over creation,

validate the likelihood of Theophilus being a high-ranking official, see Carson and Moo, *Kindle* loc. 4783.

⁵² Kaiser describes Psalm 2 noting that "rebellling against Yahweh's kingship is an exercise in futility" ("Structure," 6).

and within the human race, other authority structures have been given for man's good. Goldingay notes this well when he shows how the Gentile authorities must react wisely to God's revelation when he says, "First, they will serve Yhwh with reverence. It does not come naturally to leaders to serve—indeed, it is a contradiction. How can a leader be a servant? But leaders have to see themselves as standing in a chain of command in which they are not at the top. They serve God, and thus they lead with reverence."⁵³ Jesus exhorted the same sentiment among his followers in Matthew 20:26.

Any form of rebellion like that offered by the kings is vanity, worthless, futile, and invites the chastisement of God which will strike like an iron rod. We best serve God through submitting to the authorities he has ordained, in a hierarchal structure. This includes both the Davidic ruler God has sent in Jesus Christ, but also those governmental authorities whom Christ's representatives have charged the Christian with submission to since there be no authority except that which is appointed by God (Rom 13).

Theological Implications for the Church

The world continuously rages against the Davidic ruler, now revealed as Jesus Christ. Historical and current events make this painstakingly apparent.⁵⁴ Christians are consistently martyred and imprisoned in communist and Muslim countries,⁵⁵ and are increasingly censored in the Western world for what is deemed exclusivist hate speech.⁵⁶ Jesus warned his disciples of this very

⁵³ John Goldingay, *Psalms: Volume 1, Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 102.

⁵⁴ Historical events can be seen from instances such as the Roman empire's persecution of Christians until Constantine, and again after the fall of the empire when Augustine was forced to write the *City of God*. For discussion on early events such as these see Everett Ferguson, *Church History*.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of persecution amongst believers see *The Voice of the Martyrs* at <http://www.persecution.com/>.

⁵⁶ One example includes Kim Watterson, Reed Smith, and Catherine Roper, "Preacher Prosecuted for Anti-Homosexuality Speech," *ACLU Pennsylvania*, July 22, 2019, <https://www.aclupa.org/en/cases/preacher->

thing (John 15:18–20). The rebels have taken counsel together in attempts to cast off the dominion of the Messiah in the past and will continue to do so by various means throughout the future (see Rev 16). Furthermore, through the ironic placement of Psalm 3 and the similar ironic employment in Acts 4, one can see that the rebellious raging heathens are no longer limited to ethnic distinctions, but will arise from Gentile and Jew alike (see Rom 9:6). As such the Christian walks in a world that is hostile to Christ, and his servants, and they should pray to find comfort, find hope in the coming restoration of the Davidic kingdom in the eschaton, and seek to turn the rebels towards repentance.

The reason that the Christian is able to find hope is because the machinations of the wicked are ultimately vain. God is in sovereign control, and as the ultimate sovereign, he has delivered the kingdom over to Christ (see Matt 28:16–18; 1 Cor 15:24–28; Rev 20:1–15, etc.).⁵⁷ A time of reckoning is coming when Jesus the Messiah will reign from Mount Zion.⁵⁸ Upon Christ's return and the consummation of the kingdom, he will set up his rule and reign, smiting all the wicked for their rebellion in a violent display of justice.⁵⁹ This element of justice is often passed over in Christian circles as Ollenburger has pointed out:

Since so much of history is concerned warfare, it therefore must be expected that one major activity of the suzerain will be the direction of war for both redemptive and judgmental ends. That is the major function of the suzerain will be understood to be his work as Warrior. Yet in our time no attribute of the Biblical God is more consciously and almost universally rejected than this one. The reason is that theologically we are unable to keep up with our emotional attitudes toward war. The latter are so shocked by the savage horror of war that it is most difficult to see any positive good in this type of conflict. . . .

prosecuted-anti-homosexuality-speech; others include the common workplace restraints against proselytizing.

⁵⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 605.

⁵⁸ For Zion as a referent to Jerusalem, see Grogan, *Psalms*, 44. For Jesus' future reign from Jerusalem, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 1129.

⁵⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1058.

As a result, the Bible on this subject is simply dismissed, or at best treated in the most simplistic and superficial manner. Jesus and the New Testament portray love and the God of love, while the God of the Old Testament, especially the God of Joshua is another deity altogether, or at least a lower, more primitive understanding of deity.⁶⁰

Though the thought may be uncomfortable, the warfare of God has been on full display throughout the biblical account from the judgment upon the wicked, whether it be Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), the original inhabitants of Canaan (Joshua, *passim*), the revenge promised up Edom (Obadiah), the judgment effected upon Assyria (Nahum), and even the chastisement set upon God's own covenant people which the final compiler of the Psalter understood all too well (Numbers; 2 Chron 36:15–21). This same element of war is promised in Revelation 19. Though it makes some uncomfortable, wishing to see only the “meek and lowly” Jesus of love, to make Christ into our own likening, as opposed to that which he has revealed himself in Scripture, is to form an idol. Do not be fooled, for “the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise . . . not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (1 Pet 3:9); therefore his people should act like the psalmist encouraging the rebellious to find blessing by taking refuge in the King. By properly divulging this essential truth, one may find their evangelism more effective since Jude says that the Christian must seek to “save some with fear” (Jude 23). Those who have taken refuge in Jesus, however, will receive the divine blessing promised beforehand, and it is to that end that the Christian hopes (Rev 22:12–14).⁶¹

Conclusion

Psalm 2 has had its message and contents analyzed repeatedly. This particular Psalm seems inexhaustible for purposes of Christian edification, and this treatment was a limited sampling of the value that can be gleaned by studying the Psalms theologically. As such, it should be noted that sound exegesis must proceed theology, and theology should be done methodologically, starting from the text, and moving in ever increasing concentric circles (clause, sentence,

⁶⁰ Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology*, 83.

⁶¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1952.

pericope, etc.).⁶² This article has sought to show how a biblical theology of the Psalm can be derived by practicing a strict method moving from the Psalm, to the Psalter, to the Old Testament, and finally to the entire Christian corpus. By practicing this methodology, it is believed that some value was found in seeing the irony employed in the canonical shape of the psalter, as well as the employment in Acts, and the rhetorical effect in the Gospels. By moving through the process one step at a time, and not simply imposing a Christian interpretation on the text, the reader should have been able to glean more theological nuance than offered through an alternative method. Particularly, the psalm showed the intercessory work of the Davidic King in light of political oppression and offered grace through repentance to the rebels as a result of the king's prayers.

⁶² Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), Kindle ed., Kindle loc. 6791.