

## Nations Rage but God Reigns

### Part 3

#### Psalm 2:10-12

The nations are raging. Protests have broken out across the world, raging against racial injustice. Protests have broken out across the U.S., leading 40 large cities to impose curfews to curb the violence. 62,000 National Guardsmen have been deployed, and more than 4400 people have been arrested.<sup>i</sup>

The “Antifa” (“Anti-Fascists”) are using the tactics of Fascists to denounce Fascism. Even a child can see the problem with their approach. Supposedly, they are protesting police brutality with acts of public brutality. And many of their fellow citizens have been killed by the random violence they have instigated. And now a far-right group called “the Boogaloo<sup>ii</sup> boys” are arming themselves, preparing for civil war.

Violent reactions are only producing more violent reactions. These uprisings have also raised concern about the spread of infection. “Protests have now unfolded in every one of the 25 U.S. communities with the highest concentrations of new COVID-19 cases, stoking fears of a spike in new infections.”<sup>iii</sup>

But the worldwide protests are not just about the police brutality in Minnesota. Recently, demonstrations broke out in Ecuador over the discontinuation of fuel subsidies.<sup>iv</sup> Bolivians rioted over growing poverty. Inequality in income is said to be the chief cause of protests in Chile. Lebanon is in an uproar over corruption and economic difficulties. Uprisings in Egypt have been attributed to accusations of government and military corruption. As you have read recently, protesters in Hong Kong are enraged by the encroachment of the Chinese communists. Other nations have experienced public demonstrations from those who are denouncing climate change. Would you agree with me that nations are raging?

Psalm 2 begins with the exclamation and question, “Why do the nations rage?!”

### Overview

In Psalm 2, we see three quick lessons in the realities of human life: Humanity 101, an introduction to mankind (vs.1-3), Theology 101, an introduction to the true God (vs. 4-9), and Practical Studies 101, an introduction to wisdom (vs. 10-12). In the first three verses, we learned that humanity has spoken in hard-hearted rebellion against the Lord and His Anointed. Nations and their leaders plot how to dethrone the one true God and His Son. But in the following verses, we learned that the God of Heaven laughs at man’s silly plans. In direct response to the speech of the rebels, God announces the coronation of His Son. And in verses 7-9, God’s Anointed Son amplifies and explains God’s decree with strong warnings. So today we come to Practical Studies, 101, an introduction to wisdom. Commentators have expressed the opinion that the Holy Spirit issues the commands in verses 10-12. He does so in order to

accomplish the essential reconciliation – the only way for any human heart to have genuine peace.

## **Practical Studies 101, an Introduction to Wisdom**

**<sup>10</sup> Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in Him.**

The world is aflame with rage, but Psalm 2 shows you how to find peace: think wisely, choose well and embrace God’s Son as your only Savior.

### **Five Majestic Commands for Mankind**

The word, “therefore” connects the commands in verses 10-12 with the rest of the psalm. Humanity is in ardent rebellion against the Most High God and His Son. But the God of heaven scorns this petty mutiny and warns all rebels about the dire consequences of their revolt. Therefore, what must happen next? Can man challenge the unchangeable God? Can man dethrone the One who sits enthroned in the heavens? Mankind vainly imagines that it can overthrow the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God. But it cannot. And the wise choice would be to heed these warnings. Therefore, these verses call upon men and women everywhere to repent of their sin and embrace the Son of God by placing faith in Him.

Derek Kidner wrote, “In view of the foregoing [verses], the mutinous nations of the prologue are offered their only hope, which is submission. But it is an invitation rather than an ultimatum; grace breaks through completely in the closing line.”<sup>v</sup>

The first two majestic commands are parallel to each other. They teach us to think wisely.

#### **■ Be wise, O kings**

**“Be wise now therefore, O ye kings . . .”**

The word translated, “wise” means to “*wisely, understand, prosper.*”<sup>vi</sup> The word refers to the use of the mind and intellect. It is “the ability to direct one’s mind toward a full understanding of human life and toward its moral fulfillment. Wisdom is thus a special capacity, necessary for full human living; it can be acquired through education and the application of the mind.”<sup>vii</sup> Being wise is to use the mind to guide you toward the God-given goal of life. It involves the ability to discern what is right in God’s eyes and good for all mankind.

Wisdom begins with the understanding that God is the Creator, Sustainer and Sovereign over all life (Romans 11:36). Jeremiah 23:5 translates the word as “prosper.” David behaved himself “wisely” (1 Samuel 18:5). What if today’s national leaders would follow David’s example? What if each president, premier or king would respond to the present crises as a statesman rather

than a showman? Being wise involves living for the glory of God rather than personal glory. It is “to give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name” (Psalm 29:2).

In the context of Psalm 2, to be wise is to end one’s long war against God. The kings of the earth have set themselves against the Lord and His anointed (vs. 2). This first majestic command to mankind in verse 10 calls upon the leaders of the nations to use their minds. They have taken counsel together against the Lord (v. 2). They need to repent, to turn from their war against God, and be wise. And every one of us need to think wisely as well.

■ **Be warned, O rulers of the earth.**

“ . . . **be instructed, ye judges of the earth.**”

The word translated “be instructed” refers to warning, admonishing, discipline or correction. Leviticus 26:23 uses the word to express it this way: “you will not be reformed.” The word is used in Proverbs 19:18 and Proverbs 29:17 to refer to correcting or chastening a child. This second command amplifies and intensifies the first command “be wise.” To think wisely, we all need to be instructed and warned by God’s Word.

[In a recent message](#), we studied how Daniel responded to King Nebuchadnezzar. We sought to answer the question, “How should we respond to our leaders when they seem to have lost their minds?” Pompous Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself as king of the greatest nation on earth. But his advisor, Daniel, showed him what he must learn: “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men” (Daniel 4:25).

To all the pompous potentates of today, the Biblical message is clear: “be instructed, oh rulers of the earth.” Perhaps Jesus had this in mind when He said that whoever would not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will not enter the kingdom (Mark 10:15). Naaman learned this lesson in 2 Kings 5. Struggling with leprosy, Naaman finally humbled himself and followed the instructions of God’s prophet, Elisha. When he did so, he was healed. This second majestic command to mankind calls upon the world’s rulers to humble themselves and learn from the Lord. They need to learn how to think. Recently our president stood before reporters and held up a Bible in a symbolic move. Now let us pray that he will open that Bible to read it and learn. Remember, when the world is in an uproar, Psalm 2 shows you how to find peace: think wisely, choose well and embrace God’s Son as your only Savior.

■ **Serve the Lord with fear**

**<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.**

The next two commands appeal to the will. They command you to make choices. These commands are also expressed in parallel: the second amplifies and intensifies the first. The nations are commanded to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, to serve Him. And this service should not be casual or perfunctory (as if it would be acceptable to the Most High God to serve Him with a minimum of effort). This humble service to God is to be done in

the respectful fear of God. Psalm 111:10 declares that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endures forever.” (See also Proverbs 9:10-11). We are commanded to choose to serve the Lord with reverence. The word “beginning” indicates a first step or first phase.

Perhaps we could illustrate it this way. If you were to step down to our school library you would find hundreds of books. And all of these books have twenty-six things in common. Mixed and matched in wonderfully creative ways throughout these English volumes are the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Before you learned to read the works of Dickens and Bronte, or the detective mysteries of “Encyclopedia Brown,” your first step was to learn “the ABC’s.” Learning the fear of the Lord is like learning the “ABC’s.” But once you learn them, you have a golden key for future learning. You can learn to understand, and you can take action with that new understanding. It is as if it opens up a whole new world to you. Choosing to serve in the fear of the Lord – the beginning of wisdom – allows you to understand and to serve the Lord in new and wonderful ways. The parallel command helps us to understand this:

#### ■ Rejoice in the Lord with trembling

**<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.**

This fourth command makes the third command more vibrant. We are commanded to serve the Lord, but not out of mere dry and dusty duty. It’s a choice; choose wisely. Why should we rejoice and tremble in the fear of the Lord? Proverbs 14:26 declares that “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children have a place of refuge.” The next verse reminds us that “the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death.” One of the most scenic vistas that we can see by faith is found in Hebrews 12:22-24. There we find a remarkable description of the Heavenly Zion – where every believer is already a citizen! When the writer of Hebrews contemplated the remarkable privileges summed up in these verses he made an appeal:

**“<sup>28</sup> Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: <sup>29</sup> For our God is a consuming fire”** (Hebrews 12:28-29). Humbling ourselves under the hand of the Most High God and calling upon His Son to save us brings us into the right relationship with our Lord. We can be wise, heeding His warnings. We can serve the Lord with the greatest of respect and rejoice so greatly that it causes us to shudder. And we are commanded to know the joy of doing so.

This brings us to the fifth majestic command for mankind. The world is aflame with rage this morning, but Psalm 2 shows you how to find peace: think wisely, choose well and embrace God’s Son as your only Savior.

#### ■ Kiss the Son of God, Embracing Him by Faith

**<sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.**

The first two commands were directed to the mind. The second two commands were directed to the will. This final command is directed to the heart. The expression, “kiss the Son” reminds us of the Biblical emphasis to embrace Christ by faith.<sup>viii</sup> When you share the Gospel with someone, do not leave out this very important appeal: embrace Christ by faith.<sup>ix</sup>

The Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead, embraced us at the Creation (John 1:1-3), and the Incarnation (when God became a man, John 1:14), and at the Crucifixion (Luke 23:34-35). Now we are called upon to “kiss the Son” – embracing Him. This is no “Judas-kiss” of betrayal, but the kiss that leads to blessing. One author noted, “The term *kiss* refers to the solemn token or sign of honor which subjects were wont to yield to their sovereigns. The sum is, that God is defrauded of his honor if he is not served in Christ.”<sup>x</sup> The promised blessing is for all those who embrace Christ – putting their trust in Him. The word “trust” is from the Hebrew [chasa] meaning “to take refuge.” This psalm has given us strong warnings about disregarding the Son. He will return to rule the earth with a rod of iron. But here, God’s grace shines through with the appeal to “kiss the Son” embracing Him and taking refuge in Him.

## **Conclusion**

This is an introduction to wisdom, Practical Studies 101. The world is aflame with rage, but Psalm 2 shows you how to find peace: think wisely, choose well and embrace God’s Son as your only Savior.

This is the beautiful progression by which rebels return. God’s light shines out in His majestic commands to mankind. Those who would turn from their rebellion need to

THINK WISELY – Use your mind

- Be Wise
- Be Warned

CHOOSE WELL – Use your will

- Submissively serve the Lord.
- Obey Him joyfully in the fear of God

EMBRACE GOD’S SON AS YOUR ONLY SAVIOR – Use your heart

- Kiss the Son: embracing Christ and His finished work

Knowing the petty rebellion of humanity, and the majestic glory of God and His Anointed Son, would you turn to embrace Him by faith today? Nations rage, but God reigns.

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<sup>i</sup> Alexandra Sternlicht, “Over 4,400 Arrests, 62,000 National Guard Troops Deployed: George Floyd Protests By The Numbers” Forbes, June 2, 2020, accessed at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandrasternlicht/2020/06/02/over-4400-arrests-62000-national-guard-troops-deployed-george-floyd-protests-by-the-numbers/#10491869d4fe>

<sup>ii</sup> “Boogaloo” refers to civil war.

<sup>iii</sup> Robin Foster and E.J. Mundell, “Many Protests Happening in Cities With High Numbers of New COVID-19 Cases” U.S. News & World Report, June 3, 2020, accessed at <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-06-03/many-protests-happening-in-cities-with-high-numbers-of-new-covid-19-cases>

<sup>iv</sup> Several of the items here were reported in a BBC article “Do today's global protests have anything in common?” November 11, 2019, accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-50123743>

<sup>v</sup> Derek Kidner, [\*Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 68.

<sup>vi</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., [\*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament\*](#) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 877.

<sup>vii</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, [\*Tyndale Bible Dictionary\*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1304.

<sup>viii</sup> Matthew 11:28-30, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23

<sup>ix</sup> As noted in previous messages, the emphasis in both the Bible (the Word of Grace) and the Gospel (the Gospel of Grace) is G – the Glory of God, R – the Rebellion of mankind, A – the Awful Penalty for that rebellion, C – the Christ who paid the penalty, E – Embrace Christ by faith today.

<sup>x</sup> John Calvin and James Anderson, [\*Commentary on the Book of Psalms\*](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 24.