

PSALM 2

SERVE THE LORD WITH FEAR

BY BROTHER ROBERT ROBERTS

“WHY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

“Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.”

“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall have them in derision.

“Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure.

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

“I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

“Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

“Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2:1-12).

THIS psalm differs from the first in being specifically prophetic. The other is prophetic but relates more to general destinies; this refers to particular events. The psalm is very comprehensive. It embraces events which lie wide asunder in the order of development, bridging a long interval of time. A part of it has had a partial fulfilment. This is evident from the allusion in the prayer of the disciples at Jerusalem —

“Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

“The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ.

For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together (Acts 4:25-27).

But while this partial fulfilment must be admitted, it is obvious that the terms of the prediction require a larger and more extensive transaction before they can be fully realised. “The kings of the earth setting themselves, and the rulers taking counsel together” seems hardly to have had its adequate equivalent in the coalition of Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Jews. We are compelled to seek a wider realization, in the prophetic picture presented in the apocalypse—

“The kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war upon him that sat on the horse.”

This extended view of the psalm is amply warranted in the sequel—

“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. THEN shall he speak to them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure.”

Now there was no manifestation of divine confounding displeasure at the crucifixion. True the rocks rent, the temple veil was torn, and preternatural darkness supervened; but these phenomena are more to be regarded as the divine endorsement of the inscription on the cross, and the tokens of the divine acceptance of the sacrifice, than as the discomfiting derision of God towards the perpetrators of the cruel tragedy. The language of the psalm seems rather to point to that still future period referred to by David in Psalm 110:2, 5

“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings IN THE DAY OF HIS WRATH.”

This psalm, in fact, is an example of a style of prophecy which is frequent in the scriptures, in which the prediction has two appropriate applications, identical in kind but different in degree and time. There was a combination of kings to frustrate Jehovah’s counsel as propounded by Jesus in the days of his flesh; and there was a triumphing over their malicious scheming in the resurrection of Jesus; but as the same Jesus is to return to the same spot of earth again to announce the claims previously put forth, and to be again antagonised by confederate powers, there is nothing incongruous in the prediction of the one being couched in such terms as to admit of application to the other.

Perhaps the proper view of the case is that the greater prediction includes the less,—that the allusion is primarily to the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty in which a grand final effort will be made by confederated kings to *“break their bands asunder and cast away the cords of the Lord and his anointed;”* while the facts connected with the preliminary stage of the quarrel 1800 years ago also found their prophetic counterpart in the same words in so far as they involved a leagued attempt on the part of men to frustrate the plans of Jehovah.

The complicity of “the people” (the Jews) in the plot is the only circumstance discrediting this view, and pointing to the rejection of Christ at his first appearing as the event contemplated. It is, however, of comparatively little moment to which epoch we apply to the first three verses, since in both, we can find a situation of affairs answering to the description employed. The real importance of the psalm arises from the light it throws on the nature of the controversy it depicts, and the result with which that controversy terminates.

It is a controversy of no abstract kind; it is a straightforward palpable issue of a political character in which the kings of the earth are arrayed on one side, and God and his anointed King on the other. The quarrel is broadly indicated in the 8th verse—

“I will give thee (my son) the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

Here Christ is introduced as “the heir of all things,” (Heb. 1:2) the rightful claimant of universal dominion (Dan. 7:13); and it is easy to understand that the assertion of this character would bring him into instant collision with the whole fraternity of kings and rulers at present usurping his lawful possessions.

As between Christ and the nations, this is the simple character of the issue raised; the profounder aspects of his mission do not enter into this quarrel. He comes as the only legitimate ruler of mankind, and finds the earth, which has been divinely bequeathed to him, appropriated by a race of pretenders who back their presumption with the strength of fleets and armies, and who of course are prepared to offer war to the knife to any such formidable disturber of their title.

The controversy has advanced a stage. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” He came upon the strength of his right, but was put down by a coalition between his own nation and the Romans, and crucified under an inscription which set forth the accusation upon which he was put to death: *“THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* (Luke 23:38.) *“If thou let this man go,”* said the Jews to Pilate, *“thou art not Cæsar’s friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.”* (John 19:12).

It is evident from this that Christ set himself before his contemporaries in the character in which he is introduced in the psalm, viz; —as a king; and the literal verity of his character as such, as apprehended by those who heard him, is apparent in the jealousy his movements excited among those in power. Instance the barbarous attempt of Herod to kill him while an infant, (Matt. 2.) which followed the enquiry of the wise men (verse 1st) “*Where is he that is born KING OF THE JEWS?*” Instance, also, the apprehensiveness of the Pharisees who said in consultation, “*If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans will come and take away our nation.*” (John 11:48.) “*THIS IS THE HEIR*” said they “*come let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours*” (Matt. 21:38.). Again, the people shouted in their acclamations, on the occasion of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, “*Blessed be THE KING that cometh in the name of the Lord*” (Luke 19:38), and on another occasion, “*They wanted to take him by force and MAKE HIM A KING*” John 6:16.

The origin of this popular view of the Messiah will be evident to anyone who realizes the full import of the New Testament declaration, that he was the Christ. That declaration is misunderstood by the generality of readers. It is, in fact, a proposition highly intelligible to the Jew, but carrying little meaning to the Gentile ignorant of the prophets where the idea it expresses originates.

The word “Christ” is not a mere name, as supposed by the majority of religious people. It is an adjective expressive of Christ official standing. It means anointed, as also does the Hebrew word “Messiah.” If then we would understand the proposition, we must comprehend the full compass and intention of the anointing. The anointing of any great personage is of no significance apart from the purpose or function for which he is anointed. Therefore, to understand Jesus as the “Christ,” we must understand his mission as delineated in the prophets who oracularised his approach.

Philip said to Nathaniel on apprizing him of the appearance of Jesus, “*We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the PROPHETS did write.*” Now a very striking feature of what the prophets wrote relates to the very aspect of his mission under consideration. Witness the testimony of Isaiah, chap. 9:6—

“*Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given, AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER . . . of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and his kingdom to order it and to establish it with justice and judgment from henceforward even forever.*”

Take again the statement in Jeremiah 23:5—

“*I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment IN THE EARTH.*”

And again, the prophecy in Micah (chap. 5:2.)—

“*And thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto thee THAT IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL.*”

These prophetic announcements, which might be multiplied almost indefinitely, clearly show that Christ’s anointing included the kingly element; therefore, we need little wonder that when he presented himself to an undiscerning generation who had no apprehension of his sacrificial character, (to be preliminarily manifested for the sealing of the promises by the taking away of sin), they developed an instant and jealous antagonism, and leagued themselves to circumvent his royal pretensions.

That the death of Jesus had a deeper and more precious import than appeared upon the surface of things is one of the most glorious facts of the gospel; but this must not be taken into account in judging of the proximate controversy raised. The mission of Christ has many bearings, and each must be kept in its proper individual place. We are now dealing with the most external of all its aspects, viz.: its political bearing upon human affairs.

The fact so far apparent, is, that in the initiation of the controversy between man and the Lord and his anointed, for the possession of the earth, the power of man prevailed in the death of Christ, and for the time, the kings of the earth seemed to frustrate God and cast away the cords of divine authority. It would have appeared so in the eyes of an unenlightened bystander, but we are privileged to know that the very failure which apparently befell the divine procedure was the infallible guarantee of its ultimate success; and that the

very triumph of human malignity was instrumentally the very agency of God's ultimate glory and man's ultimate redemption. So true is it that "he maketh the wrath of man to praise him."

As a matter of history humanly considered, Christ's claims were successfully repudiated, and God's plan to "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained," and to whom he has covenanted the utmost limits of the globe as his possession, effectually frustrated; but there is a history beyond, prophetically accessible, which apprizes us of a coming resumption of the controversy and tells us of the glorious triumph of "*the Lord and his anointed.*"

"He that sitteth in the heavens SHALL laugh. The Lord SHALL have them in derision. THEN SHALL HE SPEAK TO THEM IN HIS WRATH, AND VEX THEM IN HIS SORE DISPLEASURE."

This tells of the coming trouble which has already been under consideration in the pages of the *Ambassador*, a trouble which is spoken of as "The day of the Lord's vengeance and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." (Isaiah 34:8). The result of this vengeance is indicated in the 6th verse of the Psalm—

"Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

When this is accomplished, "the sore displeasure" will be past. He that sitteth in the Heavens shall have triumphed over the combination of the heathen and closed the controversy by the complete vindication of Christ's royal claims to the throne of David.

It is customary to believe that Christ is now upon this throne, but the absurdity of this supposition will be at once apparent on a slight consideration of the bearings of the psalm. When has God vexed the heathen in sore displeasure? When has he spoken to them in his wrath? For it is after such an event that he is said to have set his king upon his holy hill of Zion. The answer is that no such manifestation has ever taken place. The controversy is pending; man has triumphed; God is waiting; and at the appointed time, will, in the words of Zechariah (3:8) "assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them his indignation even all his fierce anger."

This is "*the battle of the great day of God Almighty*" spoken of in Rev. 16:14, which results in "*the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of the Lord and his anointed.*" It is in view of this approaching crisis that the kings of the earth are exhorted in the Psalm to be wise and submissive when "the Son" is manifested as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" to enforce with judgment the will of God upon a reprobate and refractory world.

This exhortation is unheeded now, because it has not been officially proclaimed. This will not be done till Christ comes to judgment. Then the summons will go forth, "Fear God and give him glory for *the hour of his judgment IS COME*" (Rev. 14:7.) and well will it be for those rulers who understand the message, and meekly surrender to "the King of Kings and Lord and Lords;" but woe to those who in the ignorance of these "enlightened" times, mistake the Son of God for a fanatical impostor, and scorn a manifesto which is the voice of God, full of impending destruction for the corrupt systems of human wisdom and authority, but at the same time full of joyful tidings for a groaning world.

When his wrath begins to burn, blessed indeed will those be who have kissed and put their trust in him. They shall be followers of the Lamb whithersoever he goeth even in these times of tribulation. — *Ambassador, 1864*
