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## Psalm 2 - Christ the King

### Intro

The overall message of the Bible proclaims a *profound and provocative political statement*. I don't mean that it explicitly endorses a particular political party, or that it is a work of political propaganda for this nation or that type of government theory. No, that's not what I mean. But I *do mean* that the message of the Bible comes to bear on all human institutions, all groups of people, every culture, nation, tribe, and human authority. The gospel imposes a particular view of the world, including all people, all nations, and all ways of life, by confronting us with the true nature of reality. What is this powerful political statement of the Bible? Three simple, yet world-changing words: ***Jesus is King***.

Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is Lord of all as God, but also the *King* of all as the God-Man. He is the rightful ruler and the highest authority over all of Creation, over all of humanity, over every governing authority, institution, and nation. Everyone, in all the world, whether beggar or prince, whether dictator or President, is under Christ's authority and Lordship. This is the profound picture of the world that the Bible gives us.

And yet, as we look around the world, throughout the course of human history, or even watching the evening news today - what we see doesn't seem to fit this reality, does it? We don't see the kings, rulers, and leaders of nations submitting to the authority and will of God. We don't see justice, peace, and righteousness in our lands. We even see them, at times, react with hostility towards the ways of God, rejecting belief in Him, and even persecuting God's people. Some governments and nations are admittedly better or worse than others, and yet even in the best, we still see corruption, injustices, laws prohibiting what is good and upholding what is evil. We see a failure to submit to the authority of God and to Jesus as King over all. And we see this in all human authorities, cultures, and institutions, from the highest level, even down to the individual.

What we see looks much more like *rebellion* than submitting to and honoring the Lord as King and God. And Psalm 2 tells us that that is *exactly* what is going on. It tells us that this is the true reality at play in the nations and kingdoms of this world Psalm 2 shines light on the true reality of the world: **there is the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Man.**

A couple of weeks ago, we looked at Psalm 1 together, and saw how it shows us that there are only *two roads* before us: the Road of the Wicked, and the Road of the Righteous. Psalms 1 and 2 link together to form an introduction for the book of Psalms, and they overlap in many ways. In Psalm 1, we saw how everyone in the world can be divided between those who are on the road of the righteous, and those who are on the road of the wicked. Here, in Psalm 2, we see something similar, but instead of focusing in on the individual, it zooms out, and looks at this reality from a broader perspective on this same reality: **just as there are two roads, so there are really only Two Kingdoms: the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Man.** Even though the peoples of this earth are scattered and even often at war with each other, they are still playing out the scene of the Tower of Babel: they are allied together in sin and wickedness, and in rebellion against the Lord. So **our first point** today will look at this reality: 1. The peoples of this earth, as part of the Kingdom of Man, are rebelling against God, and therefore, are opposed to God's ways and God's people. But **secondly**, we see how God responds: 2. By declaring that His Kingdom is established, and that His King, Jesus Christ, is over all people and nations of the earth. And **third**, it gives us a sober warning and plea: we must all *surrender* and receive the mercy of Christ in salvation, or we will *perish* in the judgment against the Kingdom of Darkness. Ultimately we must all choose whom we will serve and which Kingdom we will be a part of.

### **I. The World is in Rebellion Against the Lord (1-3)**

The scene here pictures the “nations” raging against the Lord, the “peoples’ and “kings of the earth” “plotting,” “counseling together,” and aligning themselves *against* God. But this is not a war between equals: it is nothing short of rebellion. In verse 3, they say, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” In other words, they recognize that the Lord and the Lord's established King are exercising authority over all the nations; the nations are being bound by the authority and reign of God. The kings and rulers of this earth are subservient to a

King that is over all other Kings; namely, Jesus, God's King, the King of Kings. And yet, they want to "burst these bonds" and "cords" apart. They are rebelling against God, God's kingdom, and the authority and reign of Christ.

Every kingdom, nation, government, ruling authority, culture, and tribe on earth is composed of sinners. Therefore, they often uphold and legislate sin and oppose what is good. All authorities on earth are established by God and are supposed to uphold and enforce justice, peace, and prosperity for their people. But we all know, whether in biblical days or in our modern era, there are corrupt authorities, sinful laws, and gross injustices. When this happens, we should not be shocked. This is to be expected. Why? Because they are rebelling against the Lord. This is what sin is. Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden. Every human born since then is born a rebel and enemy of God; we rebel against the Lord every time we sin. And so, just as it is true that every individual is sinful, so is every human nation and ruling authority. Yes, some are better than other, and we praise God for this! But we also know that all fall and are stained by sin.

### **[Illustration/Application]**

#### **1. They Oppose God**

We see this today, even in our nation. Our own nation, America, has passed unjust laws, institutionalized evil, and opposed what is good. If we want proof of this, we need look no further than the legalization of abortion. We are a nation that murders our own unborn children by the millions. The only sane response when looking at such an evil reality is verse 1 of this Psalm: "*Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain?*" This is a clear example of governing authorities raging and rebelling against God. And of course, there are other examples of this. New laws have been passed. Injustices and corruptions have been exposed. But this is not just a new, modern reality; even in the beginning, when America was founded, the institution of slavery existed. Yet another example of the nations raging against God's ways. And this is by no means unique to America.

#### **2. They Oppose God's People**

But we also see this in every form of persecution and hostility to the gospel and Christianity. Just as the nations oppose the Lord, so they will oppose the Lord's people. We have

numerous examples of persecution and hostility to the gospel throughout history, even in the history of the early church recorded in the Bible. Opposed to the message of Christ, they will also be opposed to those who follow Christ and live out belief in and allegiance to Him. Again, we should not be surprised. Our own nation, America, has long championed religious liberty. I am so thankful for this, and the many rights and liberties we enjoy as citizens of America. And yet, it would appear that some of those rights might be under attack today. As a war of different ideologies and worldviews rages on in our culture, we may indeed find increased hostility towards the gospel message and our attempts to faithfully live out a biblical lifestyle of truth, love, and godliness. Again, we should not be surprised. The nations are in rebellion against the Lord. And if we take our stand with Christ, as part of His people, than the nations and authorities of this world will, at times, oppose us as well. Sometimes this opposition is horrific and aggressive, such as in countries where churches are burned and Christians are even martyred to the point of death. Sometimes this opposition is lighter, yet still very real, where we face open shame and mockery for sharing the gospel, or even possibly losing relationships or our jobs for refusing to reject biblical truths.

#### **Acts 4:25-26**

In Acts 4, the early church was experiencing persecution from the nations. In fact, they were experiencing it even from the nation of Israel. And in that chapter, they quote Psalm 2, specifically verses 1 and 2. In Acts 4:25-26, they link this passage to the fact that the nations - Israel and Rome - rebelled against Jesus, the Lord's Anointed, the Messiah, by crucifying Him. And, therefore, they oppose and persecute the early Church, those whole believe in and follow Christ. So the apostles turn to Psalm 2 in their persecution; they find here not only an affirmation of *why* they are experiencing hostility from the unbelieving world, but they also find it *encouraging* and it strengthens them to persever.

[Transition] Why would this passage strengthen and encourage the early church? Or to put it another way, why should we be encouraged in light of the rebellion of the peoples of this world all around us? - **Because of how God responds to this reality.**

## II. Jesus is God's Appointed King Over all the Earth (4-9)

We should not be shocked by this reality. And we should also not lose heart. Why? ***Because God is not surprised or threatened by the vain, empty threats of the unbelieving world.*** God is not surprised or threatened by the nations rebellion. What is God's response in this Psalm? He 'laughs' (v. 4). Their raging is "vain," it's hopeless and pointless. There is nothing they can do to threaten God or thwart His purposes! God is completely sovereign over all things, especially the feeble attempts of mankind. Try as they might, God's enemies, whether man or spirit, will *never* be able overturn God's authority. The rebellion of all the kings of the world will only end in failure. And so God openly rebukes them. He declares His holy wrath against all rebels who oppose Him. God promises judgment to come upon the rebelling enemies of God in this world. This is what we see in verses 4-6.

And what is the judgment he declares? ***"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."*** (Psalm 2:6). And then the Psalm goes on to explain who this is, and why it is so significant. But the perspective of the speaker shifts: ***"I will tell of the decree; the Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."*** (Psalm 2:7). So what's going on here? Who is this King?

### Who is the King?

The first reference to this King is actually in verse 2, when it speaks of the Lord's "Anointed." This term, and phrases such as "the Lord's anointed," are frequently used in the Old Testament to refer to God's chosen leaders for His people; specifically, it is used to refer to kings of Israel that God appoint, such as Saul, the first king of Israel, and then King David. This fits with what we see in verse 6: God's "King" is establish "on Zion, my holy hill" - which is to say, Jerusalem, where the King of Israel reigned. Acts 4 tells us that David wrote this Psalm. So again, there is this clear tie to the David King. And yet, there are a couple of reasons why it doesn't seem like David is the one in view here: 1. There is no title in Hebrew for this Psalm, indicating that it is of David, which is typically present for a Davidic Psalm; 2. The King here receives all of the nations as his inheritance, so that world domination is in view - only David, nor any of the Davidic kings after Him achieved this; 3. And then in verse 7, a very interesting declaration is made: ***"I will tell of the decree; the Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I***

*have begotten you.” (Psalm 2:7).* In other words, the Lord is declaring this King as His Son, who receives from God the inheritance of all the nations in the world. So what’s going on here?

Let’s look back at the Lord’s “Anointed” The Hebrew word for “Anointed” - “*meshiach*” - is also where we get our word “Messiah,” or “Christ.” The “Lord’s anointed” is a theme throughout the Old Testament that develops into a picture of the coming Messiah, and it is explicitly linked to the King of Israel; specifically, to the promised Son of David, the true Davidic King over God’s people. In **1 Chronicles 17**, the Lord makes a covenant, a promise, to David: God promises that one of David’s offspring will be raised up as King, specifically as God’s King, in God’s house and Kingdom forever:

“When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.” - **1 Chronicles 17:11-14**

I think that David had this promise from God in mind as the Holy Spirit inspired him to write Psalm 2. He is pointing us to the “Lord’s anointed,” the Messiah, the promised Davidic King who is God’s Son and reigns as God’s King over the earth forever. And who is this promised King? *Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the true Son of David, and the true Son of God.*

The writers of the New Testament make this very clear as they reference this Psalm and claim that Jesus fulfills it. Jesus Christ is the Lord’s Anointed, God’s King over all the Earth. We already saw how Acts 4 quoted verse 2. Verse 7 is quoted three separate times in the New Testament. This verse can be a little perplexing at first. The King is called God’s Son. This makes sense, seeing the parallel with God’s promise to David about the Messiah (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17). But why does the Lord say, “Today I have begotten you?” (2:7) “Begotten” typically means, “to have caused to be born.” But that doesn’t fully fit the context here does it? It seems that the best way to understand this verse is to take it as meaning, “I have appointed you to be....” This is how the verse is interpreted in the New Testament. In the opening verses of the book of Hebrews, the author writes, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us *by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things.*” (Heb. 1:1-1). And then, in verse 5, to prove the point, the

author quotes this verse, Psalm 2:7, showing that it was prophesying that Jesus, God's Son, was "appointed" by God. The verse is quoted again in Heb. 5:5 to show that Jesus is "appointed" by God. And then, in Acts 13, Paul quotes this verse, showing that it is fulfilled when God raises Jesus from the dead.

So how do we put all this together? Jesus is the eternal Son of God that also became a man, being born of the line of David. He lived a perfect life, obeying and fulfilling the Scriptures, and ushered in the Kingdom of God as David's promised Son. And yet, he did not bring about this Kingdom through force or violence; he did so by bearing the sins of the world and the wrath of God upon himself. Israel, along with the other nations, rejected Him as King. He was crucified on the cross. And yet, three days later, God raised Jesus from the dead! When Jesus was raised, God was declaring to the whole world that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the true Davidic King! The Son of God has always, for all of eternity, been God's Son; and yet, when he took on flesh, and was born, and then raised up from the grave, God was appointing and establishing him as God's Son as a Man, specifically, as the promised Davidic King. He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man, God's King over all the Earth! This is what verse 8 means, when it says that he receives all of the "nations... to the ends of the earth" as his "heritage" and "possession." Even though the Kingdom of man rages and rebels against Christ, they do so vainly; His Kingdom is established, He has all authority over all of Creation, and one day, they will give an account to Him in Judgment.

And so, this brings us to our last point:

### **III. The Gospel is a Call to Surrender (9-12)**

#### **A. Salvation and Judgment**

The declaration that Jesus Christ is God's King is wonderful news for the people of God. It encourages us; it reminds us that our hope and our Kingdom will never be shaken, because Christ is King over all things, over all of Creation, and His Kingdom never ends. It is a promise of Salvation for us! And yet this salvation comes through bearing judgment upon God's enemies. This point is clear throughout the Psalm. Look at *verse 9: The King shall "break them with a*

*rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*" This verse is referenced several times in the book of Revelation; it prophecies about the Second Coming of Christ when He will deal with all of His enemies, once and for all, on the Day of Judgment. Sin, Satan, Death, and all who align themselves with such, as sinners opposed to God and God's people, will be punished. There will be *justice* against those who commit evil, who slaughter the innocent and oppress the vulnerable. There will be true peace in Christ's Kingdom.

And yet, until that day comes, as the nations continue to rage and rebel - it is a time for *mercy*. In verses 10-12, a *warning* is given. It is a call to surrender; a sober warning that all who oppose God and Christ will "perish" and face the "wrath" of God. But all who turn to Christ will be show *mercy*.

We are given a warning: "Be wise," be "warned," and "serve the Lord with fear." "Kiss the Son." What does this mean? Essentially, it is a demand that the rebels bow their knee to Christ as the true and rightful King. It is a call to lay down arms, to surrender, and bow in allegiance to Jesus alone as the true King over all. You can think of the act of kissing the signet ring or the hand of a King. That is the idea here in verse 12. Bow down to God's King, and receive refuge in Him, or continue to oppose Him and face His sure wrath. There is no middle ground: bend the knee to Jesus as King, or face the Wrath of the Lamb.

This is a very sobering reality, isn't it? The reality is, all of us have sinned; we have all rebelled against God, declaring allegiance with those that oppose God. We all start out as *enemies of God*. When we sin, we are shaking our fist in rebellion at God, opposing His authority, and declaring war against Him. And that is a very foolish thing for us to do! The King is coming, and we will face His wrath for eternity in Hell!

Unless, we surrender to the King! For this King is no cold-hearted tyrant. Jesus is the King, and when He came the first time, He came to die for us - He died for us while we were still His enemies! He bore God's wrath against our sin. If we will turn to Him - repent and turn away from the Kingdom of Man, the Kingdom of Sin, and Satan, and Darkness - and turn instead to Jesus, bowing down to Him as King and Lord, as our God and Savior, in faith - then He will show us endless mercy and grace! For as the last part of verse 12 says, "***Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.***" If we surrender our lives over to Jesus, acknowledging Him alone as Lord,

Savior, and King in our hearts, trusting in Him alone, then He not only spares us the wrath of God, but declares us righteous, holy citizens of the Kingdom, even children of God, heirs of all things with Him! We are not sentenced to be prisoners of war, but are adopted into the very home of the King! This is the powerful declaration of the gospel! We all sin; all who sin are God's enemies and will face His holy wrath in Hell; and yet, Jesus, God's King, lived, died, and was raised for us so that if we turn to him, in repentance and faith, He shows us mercy! He brings us into His Kingdom, where we will not perish, but will be Saved by Him! The gospel is a **warning** of judgment, a **call** to surrender to Jesus, and a **promise** that He will show us incredible mercy if we do!

This is a powerful perspective of the gospel message, which we find here in Psalm 2, and elsewhere in scripture. But I don't think this is how we commonly think about the gospel, or share it with others. This biblical truth has major implications for our understanding of the gospel and our evangelism.

**B. [III.] Lee's illustration of a war scene as an illustration of the gospel; emissaries proclaiming victory; if the enemies will lay down their arms and surrender, they will receive mercy, but if they continue to rebel, they will be destroyed**

One of my former pastors, back in Tennessee, once gave a powerful illustration of this point that I think is very helpful, and it goes something like this:

Imagine we are part of an army. We have been at war, but the capital city of the enemy army has just been taken. Our side has won the war; his victory has been won! Yet word of this has not reached all of the places where the war is being fought. There are still strongholds of rebels and enemies that are opposing the victorious army; they still think they have a fighting chance! And so you and I have been sent ahead as emissaries, as messengers, to declare this victory out in all the places where the fighting rages on. We are to show up and declare: "The war is over! Victory has been declared! Our side has won! Any day now, tanks are going to roll in over that hill, and if anyone still fights and opposes the army, then the tanks are going to let loose their fire, and all who still stand as enemies will be destroyed. **But**, if you will lay down your arms and surrender, then you will be shown mercy! Bend the knee, and bow in allegiance to

the King, who has already conquered and won the victory, and He will spare you! Not only that, but He will give you complete pardon! You will not be a prisoner or an enemy, but a citizen of the victorious Kingdom! So surrender! Because if you don't, then you will die, because your side has already been defeated!"

This is the gospel that we proclaim! We are not to be self-righteous or cruel towards the unbelieving world around us that rage as God's enemies. No, we are to be moved with pity to warn them that they are on the losing side! But to also plead with them to surrender to Jesus as King, and they will receive His mercy and grace!

### **C. Application:**

- 1. Implications for evangelism and how we share the gospel** - When we share the gospel, we always do so in love; but we must make it clear what is at stake. We must plead with people to bow the knee to Jesus as Lord, so that they will be saved, or else they will perish and face His judgment in Hell! For this is the same fate that *we* deserve! And so let us call our neighbors to repent and believe, to surrender to Christ, just as we do!
- 2. For Unbelievers** - And so, if you are not a believer this morning, please hear the Lord's warning: turn away from your sin, and trust in Jesus alone as King, as Lord, as God, and as Savior! Bow your knee to Him as Lord over your life! Trust in Him, and He will save you! He will shower you with mercy, and forgive you all your sins, because this same King died for you! And He was raised, being declared the victorious King, winning salvation for all who believe in Him!
- 3. Daily surrender to the Lord over every area of your life** - And this surrender is not just something we do once in our lives; it is not just the way we become Christians. No, all of us as believers are called to bow our knees to Jesus as Lord, and surrender every part of our lives to Him, every day, as God! So let us all respond to this passage by trusting the Lord each and every day! Look to Jesus! Turn away from the Kingdom of Man and Sin! Trust in Jesus as King and live in the Kingdom of God.

