

## King Jesus Reigns Over the Nations

Psalm 2

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Psalm 2 (ESV)

Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,  
“Let us burst their bonds apart  
and cast away their cords from us.”

He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord holds them in derision.  
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
“As for me, I have set my King  
on Zion, my holy hill.”

I will tell of the decree:  
The LORD said to me: “You are my Son;  
today I have begotten you.  
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
Serve the LORD with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

**Introduction: The Gospel of Psalms I & 2**

Some words are so familiar to us and yet really unknown to us. Some expressions are so commonplace and we assume their meaning, but it's unclear what real meaning they have, if any. When R.C. Sproul, now a pastor and theologian, was in college, he was intrigued by the zealous Christians who kept asking him if he was saved. Finally, after he had been asked this question a number of times, he asked, "Saved from what?" The Christian who wanted to know if he had been saved couldn't answer, "From what?"

One of my favorite expression is the contemporary fad of people who say, "I'm spiritual but not religious." Equally vague at times can be the assertion of some Christians who say of Christianity, "It's not a religion, it's a relationship." Certain words have positive or negative connotations without clearly understood definitions, so we like "spiritual" and "relationship" but we dislike "religious" or "religion." We have vague thoughts of them being stiff, oppressive, invented by people and stifling to our humanity, though we're not sure how or why.

For Christians, a word that has positive connotations but is rarely understood well is "Gospel." You may have noticed on your notetaking outline that I've labeled the Introduction of this message "The Gospel of Psalms 1 & 2." But what does that mean? These Psalms are not in The Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke & John. Those are the books in the Bible that are all about Jesus. These are Jewish poems written hundreds of years before Jesus was born. But could they still be about Him?

Is everything that's about Jesus "Gospel"? Why do we use that word and what does it mean anyway?

"Gospel" means good news. You may have heard that before. Specifically, it is the good news about what God has done in the world through Jesus Christ to save us? Save us from what? From sin, death and judgment.

To see the Gospel as good news, you have to see this world and yourself as in need of salvation, and to get the Gospel right, you have to understand what kind of saving we need. In other words, "Saved from what?" is very important. The most common Christian answer to "Saved from what?" is "Saved from sin." But what is sin and why is it a problem?

Some people hear "Saved from sin" as "Jesus wants to save us from doing all the fun stuff we enjoy and to keep us miserable by being righteous." In other words, Jesus saves us by showing us how to be an uptight religious do-gooder. Being reminded that He died for our sins makes us feel really guilty and shameful for our sin, and so it keeps us from being happy-go-lucky, carefree sinners. Instead, we become guilt-laden, shameful religious people who can't smile or have fun.

But the Gospel according to Psalms 1-2 is not a Gospel of joy-less submission to a list of rules, not if we understand how these Psalms point us to Jesus. If we can see Jesus in these Psalms and understand how He has fulfilled them for us, we can see the true meaning of "Gospel" as

good news. Jesus fulfills Psalm 1 for us by being Himself the blessed, law-keeping Man who receives life from God and gives it to us. Jesus fulfills Psalm 2 by being the Lord's anointed and victorious King who conquers all of His and our enemies and brings in His eternal kingdom and invites us to be part of it and to be blessed under His good reign.

### **Part One: Overview of Our Text**

So, last week we looked at Psalm 1, a wisdom psalm that summarizes and applies the Law. Jesus was the embodiment of wisdom and the fulfillment of the Law, and so He was in Himself Psalm 1 made flesh. Today, we are looking at Psalm 2, a marvelous Messianic Kingship Psalm about the Lord's Anointed, Messiah, King Jesus. Last week's Psalm had the word Torah in it twice, focused on the Law of God. This Psalm has the word "Anointed" in it, which is the Hebrew word "Messiah," the same meaning as the Greek word "Christ."

After Jesus fulfilled the Law of God and lived a life of wisdom, He won the victory over sin and death on the cross and in His resurrection. God installed Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, as the Anointed sovereign over the nations. But not everyone is happy about that.

The Psalm is arranged in four parts, or four stanzas. Each stanza features a different speaker making a different pronouncement. All are centered around the enthroning of Christ as the Lord's Anointed King.

**In the first stanza**, verses 1-3, we are introduced to the nations, the peoples, the kings of the earth. They are raging, they are in an uproar and they are plotting. We are told right up front that their plot is in vain, empty. They sound confident, though. They sound bold and strong as they set themselves against the LORD, against Yahweh, and against His Anointed, His Messiah. They declare their plan that they have devised in counsel together: "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." Another way to translate their scheming: "Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters."

It seems pretty clear that the kings of the earth don't like the idea that God rules over them. The peoples of the nations don't like God's sovereign reign either. They refuse to serve God and they regard His holy law and His sovereign rule as a chain they want to break, as cords they want to throw off.

And so what does God think of all of this raging, all of this plotting and scheming? Well, in case we didn't catch God's verdict implied in the word "vain" or "empty" in verse 1, **God makes His judgment very clear in the second stanza, verses 4-6.** First, God laughs at them and holds them in derision- that is, He scoffs at them. In essence, He's saying, "Ha! Are you serious?" And then He shows these plotting, scheming, raging rulers who's really in control as He speaks to them in His wrath and terrifies them in His fury. From laughter and mocking to wrath and fury, the Lord is neither pleased nor threatened by the raging of the nations. He declares quite authoritatively and distinctly: "I have set my King on Zion, My holy hill."

God will not capitulate to the mutinous scheming of the nations; in fact, He doesn't even flinch. But neither will He excuse, dismiss or overlook their treachery. The Anointed King the Lord has chosen has been enthroned and now, in the third stanza, we will learn what this means for the nations.

**In the third stanza, verses 7-9, it is the Anointed King, the Messiah, who speaks.** He declares what the Yahweh has decreed to Him- That He is the Son of God and, as such, He is given the nations for the asking. "Ask of Me," God tells His Son, "and I will make these vain, rebellious nations your heritage, your inheritance." And what will the exalted Son of God do with the nations God gives to Him? Will He grant their wish for autonomy and self-rule? No! He will rule them with an iron scepter and will shatter them, dash them into pieces, like a piece of pottery. What a picture of the authority of the Son of God in contrast to the pretended power of the nations!

**Finally, in the fourth stanza, the psalmist, as a Gospel herald, speaks directly to these rebellious kings** and warns them to stop their foolish rebellion and to Serve Yahweh and Kiss the Son. The command to "kiss" means to offer religious homage and devotion. So, in essence, the psalmist is calling upon the rulers of the earth to worship Yahweh and His Anointed Son, the Holy King. The threat that is waiting for those who refuse to offer such devotion is clear, as is the blessing for those who do worship the Son of God.

And this is where the psalm ends, not with the threat of judgment, but with the promise of blessing. Even those who are rebellious and plotting the overthrow of the King of the Universe can find blessing- even great blessing- if they will instead turn and find refuge in the Son of God.

## **Part Two: The Great Truths in the Text**

So that's the summary of what is being said here in Psalm 2. Now, let's go back and see what great truths we can see that God is revealing about the world, about Himself and about us through this great Psalm.

### **I. People, in their fallen nature, hate God and resent His rule over their lives.**

The opening stanza of this powerful poem shows clearly that people hate God and resent His rule over them. God, as our Creator, has a very simple and clear request of us: He asks us to be thankful and to trust Him. God says to us, "I made you and I made this world. Now be thankful and trust me." But we don't want to. We would rather deny Him, seek to control Him, rebel against Him, be angry with Him, resent Him, redefine Him – anything but be thankful and trust Him!

Adam fell into sin and misery because he did not want to be ruled by God but rather wanted to be like God. Human beings, in their sinful nature, have not changed since. We think that somehow we can get rid of God's rule over us if we just rebel and refuse to honor Him. The rebellious cry of the kings of the earth in Psalm 2 is the natural cry of every sinful heart in the world – "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

Psalm 14 paints an even starker picture of the universal nature of this rebellion against God, using language that's picked up again by Psalm 53 and by Romans 3. God wants us to understand this so much that this same language is repeated three times in the Bible. Let's listen-

*The fool says in his heart "There is no God."  
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,  
There is none who does good.*

*The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,  
To see if there are any who understand,  
Who seek after God.*

*They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;  
There is none who does good,  
Not even one.*

## **2. The Kingship of Jesus is absolute and unrivaled.**

This world has only one true King, King Jesus. All of the other so-called "kings" and "rulers" must ultimately bow and worship this great King of kings and Lord of lords. The Kingship of Jesus is established by God and is fixed forever; no turmoil in the world, no ruler of men, no spirit of rebellion, no piece of technology, no international conference, no advancement in philosophy, no amount of political correctness – NOTHING will ever move King Jesus from His throne or even cause Him to so much as blink in His unfailing and absolute reign over the earth.

This is the picture of absolute and unfailing rule that we see in the Book of Revelation and elsewhere in the Bible. In Revelation 4 and 5, we see the great worship service that takes place around the throne of God and we see Jesus, pictured as a lamb that has been slain, receiving the worship and praise from His people day and night forever. The worship scene reaches a crescendo of praise in Revelation 5:11-14-

*“Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads and myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I hear every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshipped.*

### **3. All people are called to repent and to seek refuge in King Jesus.**

The absolute nature of Christ’s reign over the nations and the complete and utter rebellion of humanity against Him come together in the warning and invitation at the end of Psalm 2. Here we see both the wrath of God and the grace of God clearly displayed. Too often, we neglect one or the other of these two great truths- either we strip God of His wrath and terrifying judgment of sin or else we hear nothing but hell fire and brimstone without the offer of mercy. But the blessing of refuge makes no sense unless there is something to fear from which we need refuge.

God’s wrath is real, His justice final and eternal and His anger is something to be feared- not just with polite respect but with trembling and terror. Man can do nothing compared to what God can and will do to His enemies. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 10:28- “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

But if we will fear Him, if we will bow the knee and confess His name, if we will Kiss the Son in reverent honor and will serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling- then we will find a blessing that nothing in this world can ever touch or take away. If He is our refuge, then we are secure, no matter what the raging nations may do to us.

### **Part Three: Application**

And now, what about you this morning? Where do you stand with King Jesus and what difference does this Psalm make to you?

**For Unbelievers:** If you are here this morning and you have never bowed the knee and given homage to the Son of God, you need to know that today is the day of salvation. King Jesus is not only full of power and full of wrath, He is also full of love and mercy for those who will bow the knee and confess His name. The Bible says, in Romans 10 that “Everyone who believes in

him will not be put to shame” and that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

You need to know that He is the King. God has set Him on His throne and He reigns forevermore. You need to know that only His death on the cross is sufficient to forgive all of your sins and that only His resurrection from the dead is sufficient to give you eternal life.

You need to believe that only by His kindness, only by His favor can you be saved from His judgment. You can't do anything to earn His favor or force Him to be kind to you. King Jesus has already done all of the work. He lived the perfect life you cannot live. He died the horrible death you deserve. He conquered death and rose again, to give eternal life to all who trust in Him.

Come to Jesus today. Look to Him and find in Him a refuge, a shelter- peace with God and rescue from sin and death.

If you want to talk to someone about how to do this, I would be very happy to talk with you after the service, as would any of our elders. Please make sure you speak to one of us before you leave today.

**For Believers:** If you are here this morning and you know that Jesus is your King. If you can praise God for the salvation and life you have found in Christ, then rejoice! And yet rejoice with trembling, not forgetting what you deserve and what Jesus took on Himself for you.

For those of us who belong to King Jesus, I see this psalm calling us to two things: Greater reverence and awe in our worship of Him and greater boldness and courage in our witness for Him.

We need to be more reverent and more in awe of Jesus. Too often, Christians are guilty of being flippant, cheap, trite or routine in our worship of Christ. The man who comes to worship so bored that he can't be bothered to stay awake and the Christians who wears the t-shirt that says “Jesus is my Homeboy!” both have the same problem- they are not giving Jesus the honor He is due! The Majestic King of the Universe is not “my homeboy” and if I really understand the eternal judgment from which I have been redeemed and what cost Jesus paid to redeem me, I dare not gather with His people and complain of boredom. Let our worship reflect both the awesome nature of our King and the incredible gratitude we have for our redemption!

Finally, we need to be bolder and more courageous in our witness for Him. Too often, we keep our mouths shut when we have opportunity to tell the truth about Jesus because we're afraid of what people will say. Do we forget that we are ambassadors of the King? Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Let us not be intimidated by

what others may say or think. We do not need to be obnoxious, making ourselves offensive and rude to others, but neither do we need to be afraid.

And our boldness and courage should not just be in our personal testimony locally to our family, friends and co-workers. No, we also need a bold and ambitious plan for taking the Gospel to the nations. After all, the nations of the earth are the rightful inheritance of our King! The nations belong to Jesus and all people everywhere are called to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior. He wants to use us, His church, to spread this message to the nations. What a privilege and what a joy that we need to embrace passionately and enthusiastically.

### **Conclusion: Knowing and Serving King Jesus**

Knowing and serving King Jesus is the greatest blessing and highest privilege we can know in this life or in eternity. That does not mean that a life lived for Jesus will be easy. Often the world's raging opposition to Jesus means that His children are caught in some terrible circumstances. Yet we know they are never caught in a circumstance beyond God's control or beyond His blessing.

Because God is absolutely sovereign and His rule is unchallenged by the schemes of the nations, His children can rest secure, knowing they are held in their King's almighty hands. As Jesus Himself said in John 10:27-29: ***“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”*** Praise God that, if you belong to Jesus, you are always in His hands, and may this knowledge fill you with greater boldness and courage to stand for Him in the face of a hostile world that hates Him and yet desperately needs Him.