

*King Jesus Reigns! Psalm 2*  
Ben Reaach, Three Rivers Grace Church  
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We're spending 8 weeks this summer going through selected Psalms. Last Sunday, if you were here, you heard Pastor Gary begin this series by preaching from Psalm 1. As Gary and I thought about how to do a short series from Psalms, we decided to confine ourselves to the first book of Psalms. There are 150 Psalms, but they're divided up into 5 books. So, for this series of summer Psalms, we've selected 8 Psalms from the first book. The first book is Psalm 1-41. That seemed a bit more manageable. So over these next several weeks we'll get to reflect on a number of the Psalms from this first major section of the Psalms. Lord willing, in the future, we'll do other sermon series through the rest of the books of the Psalms.

This morning we're going to study Psalm 2. This is a royal Psalm. It's a Psalm about the King. And as we'll see, the King here is Jesus Christ. I titled the sermon, "King Jesus Reigns!"

I hope this will be an encouragement to each of us today. This Psalm is a rebuke to all who are rebelling against God. It's also an invitation to turn from your rebellion and instead take refuge in Him. And it's a comfort to all those who are doing that. For those who are submitting themselves to the reign of King Jesus, we ought to rejoice in this truth. King Jesus Reigns! All the wickedness and evil that seems to be prevailing in our world today, it will not last. King Jesus has already died and risen from the grave. He is victorious! And one day, hopefully someday very soon, He will return and make all things right.

The question for each person here today is this: Who are you looking to as the King of your life? Is it yourself? Do you consider yourself the king of your life? If that's the reality of it, that means that sin is actually your king, your master. And that is a very bad master to have.

Or are you looking to King Jesus, submitting to His reign over you? Some consider that to be bondage, but it's actually the most freeing, the most liberating, the most joyful and peaceful position anyone could ever be in.

Let's read the Psalm, and I'll make a few comments as I read it so we can understand the flow of it. And then we'll look at these 5 points that are on your outline.

You may notice, in the way your Bible structures these verses, that the Psalm breaks down into 4 sections: verses 1-3, verses 4-6, verses 7-9, and verses 10-12. Harry Ironside referred to 4 voices here. In the first section, the voice of the world. Then the voice of the Father. Then the voice of the Son. And finally, Ironside refers here to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Those final verses don't actually mention the Spirit, but Ironside is simply thinking of the Spirit's role in pointing us to Jesus. And these are words of Scripture, inspired by the Spirit. So it can be helpful to think of this Psalm giving us the voice of the world, and then the voice of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

<sup>1</sup>*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?*

<sup>2</sup>*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, [that word Anointed, in Hebrew, is Messiah; like Samuel anointed David to be King, anointed him with oil. Messiah is the word for Anointed One. And then in the New Testament, in Greek, it's the word Christ. Christ is not Jesus' last name. It's a title, meaning He is God's Anointed One] saying,*

<sup>3</sup>*"Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."*

You see there that the world is saying of God and of His Anointed, Let us burst their bonds . . . that is, viewing God and His Anointed as having put the people in bonds. The world is

saying, Let's break free from God's oppressive handcuffs. God is trying to lock us up. Let's bust out of here.

Then verses 4-6 are the Father.

<sup>4</sup>*He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.*

God the Father is not intimidated by the nations rebelling against Him. In fact, He laughs at them.

<sup>5</sup>*Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,*

<sup>6</sup>*“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”*

This is the Father putting His Anointed One on the throne. And then verse 7 we hear the Son speaking, and He's quoting what the Father has said to Him.

<sup>7</sup>*I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.*

<sup>9</sup>*You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”*

You see, that's the Son speaking, quoting what the Father has said to Him. What a wonderful thing whenever we get a glimpse into the relationships within the Trinity. Here is a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father is putting His Son, His Anointed One, on the throne. And the Son is declaring this authority that has been given to Him by the Father.

And then the last section, we can think of this as the Holy Spirit applying these truths, declaring these truths to all who will listen. It's a warning and an invitation, and for those who respond, a great comfort.

<sup>10</sup>*Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers 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 you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

Notice in that last verse a statement similar to Psalm 1:1. Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked . . .”

And here, the last verse in Psalm 2, “Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

Those statements of blessing are like bookends for these first 2 Psalms, showing how these 2 Psalms were intentionally placed together, serving together as an introduction to the entirety of the collection of Psalms. And you can see the similarities between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. In both you can see the two pathways. In Psalm 1 it's the contrast between the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous. In Psalm 2 it's the contrast between those who rebel against the Lord and those take refuge in Him.

Ok, with that introduction and overview, let's look now at these specific points that emerge in this Psalm.

### **Rebellion (verses 1-3)**

First of all, in the first stanza, there's a vivid description of the world's rebellion against the Lord and against His Anointed. The nations rage against God. The peoples of the world plot against Him, oppose Him, even cooperate and conspire together against Him.

In the summer Olympics in London 2012, a man from North Korea, Kim Un Guk, won a gold medal in weightlifting. He set a world record, and afterwards he told the reporters, “I won first place because the shining supreme commander Kim Jong Eun gave me power and courage.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Psalms, Vol 1, James Johnston

Here is an example of an athlete, and his country, that blatantly deny the power of God and instead put themselves in the place of supreme power and authority.

Make no mistake . . . the nations, the peoples, are in open rebellion against God. They will not always say that. In fact, many people in the world will say emphatically that they are NOT rebelling against God. But rebellion can look different from person to person. There's the aggressive rebellion of atheists who outright deny the existence of God. Our family was recently watching the movie, *God's Not Dead*. One of the main characters in that movie is an atheist philosophy professor at a university, and his mission is to convince his students that God is dead.

But then there's what we might call the passive-aggressive rebel. Here's someone who might give lip service to God, may even give lip service to the Bible. This person could very well be a regular attender, even a church member in a Bible believing church. But this person, after affirming the truth of the Bible and singing praise songs to Jesus, this person then goes and lives directly contrary to what they've just given lip service to.

Is that person you? Are you a church goer who is, in reality, still raging against the Lord, still setting yourself against the Lord, rebelling against His will and His commands?

And here's a specific way of trying to tell if that's the case. Do you see the Lord's instructions as a burden, or as a delight? Is your reaction like the rebels in verse 3, who say, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us"? Is that your attitude? Nobody's going to tell me what to do! Not even God.

Or is your attitude like the blessed person in Psalm 1, who delights in the law of the Lord?

Listen, friend, if you're still rebelling against the Lord and against His Word, if your fundamental disposition toward God is that of rebellion, pushing against His instruction, redefining His standards . . . then you're in a very dangerous place, as we'll see very clearly in the next section.

You may think that you're entitled to your independence, and that you can be king of your life. But the true King will not let you live under that delusion for very long.

Before we go to the next point, I need to show you where these verses appear in the New Testament. They're quoted in Acts 4. Peter and John were being interrogated by the Sanhedrin. Then they were released. And when the believers heard that Peter and John were released, they all rejoiced. And this is what they 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'—[and then they describe how they've seen this play out in their immediate context] for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."* (Acts 4:24–28, ESV)

Well there's so much to talk about there. The main points are to see that the ultimate raging against the Lord and against His Anointed is seen in the way these rulers and groups united together to convict Jesus and sentence Him to death on a cross. Here's where we see so clearly the nations and rulers raging against the Lord. They took the perfect, innocent Son of God, and they murdered Him in a most humiliating and excruciating way.

But let's not miss the wonderful thing that those believers included in their rejoicing. Yes, the nations raged against Jesus. But none of it was outside of God's control. None of it

was outside of His predetermined plan. Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel were acting according to their own sinful desires, but they were also acting in ways that fulfilled God's plan of redemption.

### **Wrath (verses 4-6)**

Moving to the next point, about wrath, and to the next section of the Psalm, we see how the Father views this rebellion. The nations are raging against Him. They are plotting against Him, conspiring together to break loose from His bonds (that's the way they see it, at least).

For an earthly king, this could be pretty scary. An earthly king would be pacing the room, consulting with his advisors . . . what are we going to do? How are we going to survive this? Do we have enough military power to withstand this opposition?

But not God. God doesn't even stand up. He's sitting in the heavens laughing. Not a happy laugh. An angry laugh. His response is basically this: Who do you think you are, rebelling against ME!? How silly it is, how absurd, that you would pretend that you can pose any threat to me.

I saw a recent news report of a guy in Ireland, a 23 year old young man who drives a Volkswagen Passat. And in order to make his car "look fresh" (those are his words), he lowered the ride height to just 4 inches off the ground. And that may have looked pretty cool, until he went over some speed bumps in his hometown and the speed bumps damaged the bottom of his car. Here's the interesting part: this young man, Christopher, then demanded that the city pay him \$2,500 for the damages. The city put in the speed bumps. The speed bumps damaged his lowered car. The city should have to pay to repair his car. That was Christopher's rationale. The town officials, who refused to pay, of course, they probably just sat back and laughed when they heard this one. Who does this guy think he is?

God sits and laughs at the nations who rage against Him. And we must not miss this clear biblical point that God is a God of wrath. He hates sin. He hates rebellion against Him. And He will unleash that wrath upon all those who continue to rebel against Him. When all is said and done, those who have continued to reject Him and rebel against Him, they will spend eternity separated from Him, cast out of His presence. They will be punished forever in hell. *"But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."* (Romans 2:5, ESV)

So if you've been under the impression that God just winks at sin. If your assumption has been that God doesn't really care about your disobedience to Him. That He's like the grandfather in the sky who may casually disapprove of your promiscuity, of your dishonesty, of your drug use, of the way you gossip and slander others, but in the end He'll just give you a big hug and say it's alright.

Well, that's not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible will terrify you in His fury, as verse 5 says. The God of the Bible has fire in His eyes as He observes the way humanity scorns His holy Name.

Now, stay with me to the end of this sermon, to the end of this Psalm, because God's wrath is not the end of the story. It's a crucial piece of the picture. But it's not the whole picture. We have to understand God's wrath. And that should be a warning to turn from our rebellion, to repent and find refuge in Him, which is possible because of His Son, His Anointed One.

### Reign (verses 6-9)

Moving to the next heading, Reign. King Jesus Reigns! The next section of the Psalm is verses 7-9, but I included verse 6 here because it introduces the King who reigns. Verse 6 is still the voice of the Father, saying “I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

And then do you notice the change in voice when we move to verse 7. This is now the voice of the Son, the voice of the Anointed One, the King, who says “I will tell of the decree.” And now the Son quotes the Father. The Lord (God the Father) said to me, (the Anointed One, the King), “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.”

This is the authority and power and inheritance which the Father has given to the Son. There are so many connections to explore here, I don’t have time to share them all with you. That statement in verse 7, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” It’s quoted 3 times in the New Testament – in Acts 13 and Hebrews 1 and Hebrews 5. You could look those up this week and think about how the New Testament applies this verse from Psalm 2. And we find similar statements at Jesus’ baptism as well as the transfiguration. God the Father declaring His approval and pleasure in His Son. “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

And then, regarding this inheritance . . . the Father saying to the Son, in verse 7 of Psalm 2, “I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.” This connects with the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Remember how Jesus introduces those commands? He tells His disciples [us!] to go and make disciples of all nations. But first Jesus reminds His disciples of this glorious reality. Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Who gave Him that authority? The Father gave Him that authority!

And the Father has given Jesus this inheritance, that He will one day have worshipers from every tribe and language and people and nation, as Revelation 5:9 describes.

Jesus’ reign, His rule, His kingdom, is so exciting for us to think about. And we get to play a role in seeing Jesus’ reign impact the lives of more and more people, in a redemptive way. When we share the Good News of Jesus crucified and risen, of His sacrifice for sinners, and as people are saved, that’s part of Jesus collecting His inheritance from the Father.

That is the wonderful side of it, the saving part of it. There’s another side as well, the judging part. Verse 9 describes that with strong imagery. “You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Again, this is the Son quoting what the Father has said to Him. This is the authority and power that the Father is giving to the Son. It includes absolute authority over the nations. And for those who continue to rage and rebel, the Anointed One will break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

You know how you cringe when you hear a glass shatter on the floor. One of my jobs in high school I worked as a dishwasher at a restaurant. It was called the Sweet Onion. It was kind of like a Chili’s. And every so often one of the salad plates, which were all glass . . . one of those salad plates would accidentally slip off the stack and shatter on the floor. It was never pleasant. But at least it was accidental. Imagine an Olympic shot-putter intentionally hurling a piece of pottery onto a concrete floor. That’s the righteous wrath of King Jesus who will come someday soon to judge the nations.

There’s a two-fold application here. First, just to reiterate what was stated before in verse 5 about the Father’s wrath. Here it’s the Son’s righteous hatred of sin. Don’t minimize this reality about the God of the Bible. God sees every sin and will deal with every sin, either by punishing you in hell for all eternity, or by placing your sin upon Jesus Christ on the cross.

And that's the second application to consider here . . . For all who are trusting in Jesus, with the assurance that our sin is covered by the blood of Jesus, we have the hope and peace and comfort of knowing that King Jesus reigns. He is more powerful than the evil in this world. When we weep over the injustices of this present age, and we're heartbroken by the horrible choices people make, including ourselves, and the damaging words that are spoken and the hateful actions . . . when we're tempted to despair because the wickedness seems to be so strong, we can find courage to continue because King Jesus is mighty, and He is just, and He will prevail!

### **Warning (verses 10-12)**

The next thing I want us to see is the warning. This point will be brief, but we need to notice the grace of God, that His Word makes these gracious appeals to us, pleading with sinful humanity, reasoning with the kings, the rulers who are opposing Him and leading others to oppose Him. See verse 10, "Now therefore . . . [in light of the Father's wrath, and the wrath of the Anointed One, the Messiah, in light of their power and their determination to bring judgment upon their enemies] . . . Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth."

This is the kindness of God to issue this warning. It's the kindness of God to reveal His intentions. And it's our responsibility now to respond in repentance and faith. To turn from rebellion, and instead submit to the Lord. Recognize Jesus as the reigning King of your life.

Verses 11-12 describe what this response looks like. Here is the appropriate response to King Jesus.

Verse 11, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Isn't that a striking combination of emotions there! Fear, rejoicing, trembling as we serve Him. These things are not at odds. The person who serves the Lord in this way is not emotionally confused. Rejoicing and trembling, together, are fitting when you're a servant of King Jesus. We rejoice because we're on the winning side! Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the King. He has won. He is winning. And He will win completely in the end.

But don't ever forget that He is King. He's not your buddy who you can casually ignore and disrespect whenever you want. He is your King, and He deserves your absolute allegiance. Verse 12, "Kiss the Son [this is a symbol of respect and honor shown to the King] lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

This last stanza of the Psalm is a gracious warning to the rebels. Don't persist in your rebellion, because divine wrath will consume you. But if you turn there will be a different outcome. Be wise. Be warned. Instead of opposing King Jesus, submit to Him. Take refuge in Him. If you do, you will be greatly blessed.

### **Redemption (verses 11-12)**

Lastly, as we conclude, let's talk about redemption. For those who respond appropriately to the warning in this passage, there is redemption. For those who are in bondage to sin . . . they think that God is the one who wants them in bondage, and they're determined to break free from those bonds (verse 3). But in reality they're in bondage to sin . . . well, King Jesus can set you free from those chains. And you can become a servant of the King. You can become one of His. You can find refuge in Him, and there will be much blessing that comes with that, eternal blessings.

And how is this possible? We've learned about God's wrath against the rebels and how King Jesus will destroy His enemies. How is it that those very enemies can become the ones who receive blessing and who take refuge in the Son?

This leads us to the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, God's Messiah . . . He took the punishment we deserve. Isn't that amazing! God's wrath, His holy fury against sin, He directed that wrath against His own Son.

How mysterious and glorious this is! God's wrath against the rebels, absorbed by the one human being who never rebelled in any way. Jesus is entirely submissive to the Father, honoring the Father in every way. The perfectly submissive One stepped into our place to pay the penalty for our rebellion.

And here's another striking irony. King Jesus who reigns supreme, He made Himself a servant on our behalf. Listen to these familiar verses from Philippians 2, about Jesus: *"who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:6–11, ESV)

King Jesus reigns! Let's believe this wonderful truth and share it with others. There is much rebellion against God in the world. And we must not forget about God's righteous wrath. Let's warn people of that wrath and also share the amazing grace of God, the offer of redemption that is possible because of the death and resurrection of our Servant King, Jesus Christ.

#### Questions for Personal Reflection and Small Group Discussion

- 1) Why do the nations rage? List some ways you see the world opposing God and rebelling against Him.
- 2) See the quotation of Psalm 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25. What do we learn about the authorship and application of Psalm 2 by the way it is used in Acts 4?
- 3) In verse 3 the world leaders are speaking against the Lord and against the Lord's Anointed. The world leaders view the Lord as holding people in bonds. What is fundamentally wrong with that assumption? How would you speak to someone who views Christianity as a constraining list of rules and regulations?
- 4) Verse 5 speaks of God's wrath and fury. Many people do not like to talk about God's wrath. And many people will not accept the fact that the God of the Bible is a wrathful God. How would you seek to convince someone of the truth and goodness of God's wrath?
- 5) See the way verse 7 is quoted in Hebrews 1:5. What is the significance of Jesus, the Son, being God's Anointed King? How should this encourage our faith? How can this calm our fears as we face the fierce evils in our world?
- 6) There is warning in Psalm 2, but also the hope of redemption. How do you see God's grace in this chapter?