

Jesus the King

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Date: 29 September 2024

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[0 : 00] Well, when you turn on the news these days, what is it that you see? Well, you see nation fighting against nation. So right now the war in Ukraine, Russia, Ukraine, also Israel, Lebanon.

And sometimes you might wonder or might ask, as I often do, what is the world's most powerful nation? Is it the United States of America?

Is it China? Is it Russia? Who, in effect, rules the world? Well, we might be tempted to think that it is the most powerful rulers or it is the most powerful nations who control this world and set the direction that we're going in.

Well, Psalm 2 tells us a very different story because it reminds us who is actually in charge. And it gives us a reality check of the weakness of human power by showing us where ultimate power lies. And ultimate power lies with the king who is spoken of in Psalm 2. The king rules not just at this moment in time, but he rules over the entirety of human history, which means we should never be too optimistic and hope that good leaders will give us the world that we all want.

[1 : 22] But nor should we be too pessimistic and think that, well, bad leaders will destroy the world as we know it. Because that's not where the real power lies. Psalm 2 forces us to take our eyes off of this current world and to see a far bigger picture.

Because it shows us the unfolding drama of human history and it points us to the ultimate king, the one who is in charge. Well, who is this king?

The king in the psalm identifies himself as God's son, and so the king in the psalm is Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, this psalm is ascribed to David and it speaks often of Jesus.

Because the psalm looks beyond David and the covenant promises that God gave to David, because those promises are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

And so the psalm is frequently quoted and alluded to in the New Testament. And so the psalm is basically telling us loudly and clearly that Jesus is king.

[2 : 34] And so the issue for you and me today is, and for everybody across the world throughout all of human history, the issue is, do we acknowledge Jesus as king?

And do we submit to his rule in our lives? That's what Psalm 2 is all about. And so let's see this great drama of world history as it's outlined to us in four separate scenes.

I wonder if you noticed that each scene in this psalm has a different voice. And so we're going to look at it under four headings this afternoon. So we'll see the king's enemies in verse 1 to 3, the king's installation, verse 4 to 6, the king's speech, verse 7 to 9, and then the king's blessing, verse 10 to 12.

So first of all, the king's enemies. Look down at verse 1 and 2 again. Why do the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed.

So the scene here is one of human rebellion as the nations and the rulers of the world all come together and they unite, they join forces and they rage and they plot against God and against God's king.

[3 : 56] But this scene isn't just a snapshot or a moment in time. It is really a summary of all time because it describes all nations and kings and peoples and rulers throughout history all in opposition to God and to Jesus Christ.

So they gang up as a mob in defiance. Just think of all the riots that you've been witnessing on the news over these past weeks and months.

Angry people all coming together, uniting in protest and angry. And that's the scene here. But David asks why?

Why do they rage? Why do they plot? Because it's all pointless. It's a complete waste of time. It achieves absolutely nothing.

And it's clear when these verses are quoted in Acts chapter 4. Because there it says that the roles of kings and rulers are fulfilled by Herod and Pilate.

[4 : 59] Remember when Jesus died. They came together and they were united against the Lord's anointed, against Jesus Christ. But the application of the psalm goes further than just them and includes anyone with power.

So kings and rulers, presidents and prime ministers, armies and governments, the intellectual elites, wealthy business owners, journalists, bloggers, social media influencers, celebrities, bosses at work, parents at home, or you and me.

Anybody can be deluded into thinking that they can get away with rebelling against the God who made them. And the psalmist is saying it is the height of stupidity.

Because you might try and run from God, but you can never hide from Him. And that's what's going on here. Because this is a bid for freedom. Verse 3.

Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles. So this is a worldwide, history-long freedom movement. Trying to break free from God.

[6 : 12] And so in verse 1-3, all these voices are saying, let's be free from God and free from His King. Free from the restrictions that He and His rule impose upon us.

Let's throw off everything that stops us following our desires. Let's do what we want to do and live how we want to live. Never mind paying any attention to God.

And isn't that what our culture basically says to us every single day? You can watch it on the movies or you can hear about it in the songs. You've got to be true to yourself.

You've got to express your feelings. You've got to enthrone your passions. You've got to assert your desires. Fulfill your dreams.

You make your decisions. Pursue your will. Where the assumption is, well, basically life is going to work a whole load better if we break free from God and His rule.

[7 : 15] And that really has been the story of humanity since the very beginning of time. The message has been, don't let God's rule restrict your life in any way.

You be your King. Don't submit to the God who made you because you don't need Him. And you see, the thing is, every single one of us has played our part in this universal rebellion.

Because we know that in our hearts, we have not given God the allegiance that He deserves and demands. And quite often we resent His rule over our lives.

We don't like it. And so we are part of the crowd that riots and rebels against Him. And yet it's a crazy bid for freedom.

It is futile rebellion. It can't succeed because it will come to nothing in the end. And so it is stupid to stand against God and against God's King.

[8 : 21] We just can't get away with being the King's enemies. And that's our first point. The second point is the King's installation. Or maybe the King's coronation might be better. So verse 4.

So the scene, you notice, shifts from earth up to heaven.

And in heaven, there is God and He is seated on His throne. And what is He doing? How does He respond to the rebellion down on earth? Well, He laughs.

Because the rebellion doesn't challenge or change His rule in any way. God is not troubled by it. He laughs. Not in a kind of funny ha-ha laugh.

Like you might laugh when you go and see a comedian like Milton Jones or somebody. Not that kind of laugh. Not in a kind of funny ha-ha laugh. No, He laughs at the absurdity of puny, weak human beings on earth thinking that they can be a match for God in heaven.

[9 : 34] Now, when my boys were small, we enjoyed wrestling. I enjoyed it more than they did because I could beat them. I'm less keen on wrestling them these days because they can beat me. But when they were younger, they would never trouble me.

I used to pretend that they could actually win. But of course, they couldn't because of my power and strength was far superior to theirs. Well, just multiply that and it's not even near what is happening in this psalm.

Because this battle, this contest, isn't even a contest. Because God is far superior to those who try and rebel against Him. And yet notice that God is furious with those who reject Him and His King.

Now, these days, people don't like the idea that God would be angry. Even if people don't believe in God, they don't like to believe in a God who would be angry.

I mean, isn't God just a God of love? Of course, God is a God of love. But God's anger is a righteous and a settled and a controlled hostility towards all that is wrong.

[10:44] His anger is not like our anger, which is often out of control and misplaced. But is God not right to feel anger at all the evil in our world?

Of course, He is. Like when children are abused or when senseless and brutal murders are committed. Well, of course, God is angry. And if it's right to feel anger then, if that's us, then how much more would God be angry at everything that is wrong with our world?

And so the psalm is saying we're meant to tremble with fear before Him. Because He is rightly angry at all who refuse to bow before the king that He has given to us to rule over us.

That's why He says there in verse 6, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain. That's God speaking. So God answers His enemies in verse 1 to 3 with this emphatic statement about His king. He has installed His royal king in His royal city. Zion is a hill just outside Jerusalem and it's the city of David. And it's a place where the temple stood up on a hill.

[12:04] And it was holy because it was the place of God's presence amongst His people. It was the earthly capital, if you like, of God's kingdom. But the earthly Zion symbolizes the heavenly Zion.

Because it's from there that Jesus, God's king, reigns. And so this verse is saying that Jesus has taken His seat on His throne.

God has exalted Him above all earthly rule and earthly power and authority and dominion. And He rules over all things.

God has installed His king. He's had His coronation. And what's He doing? Well, He's advancing His kingdom in this world until the day that He returns to bring in His kingdom in all its fullness.

So that's the king's installation. Thirdly, let's look at the king's speech in verse 7 to 9. Verse 7 says, I will proclaim the Lord's decree.

[13:09] He said to me, You are my son. Today I have become your father. So the speaker in this section, this third scene, is the Lord's anointed.

In other words, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son. He's the Son. And so these verses record a conversation between the Lord God and His Son.

Where the Son, the Lord's anointed, is the speaker. And so what is He saying? Well, He recites the Lord's decree stating that He will rule over all the earth.

And again, it's reflecting the covenant promise that God gave to David when He said, In 2 Samuel chapter 7, I will be His father and He shall be my son.

And so this promise to David didn't just have David's earthly descendants, his family, in view. It had one particular descendant in view. And that's Jesus Christ.

[14:11] Now in Psalm 2, I guess we might be confused of all of these different titles that are given here. But we shouldn't be confused. They simply confirm to us that Jesus is the one being spoken about.

Because Psalm 2 is the one place in the Old Testament where you get these three titles, all referring to Jesus in the same place. They're all coming together.

So there's the anointed in verse 2, meaning the Messiah. And then there's king in verse 6. And then there's son in verse 7 and verse 12.

And these are all titles that the New Testament part of the Bible uses to refer to Jesus. Because Jesus is the anointed. He's the Messiah. He's the Christ. Jesus is God's king.

And Jesus is the Son of God. And so God has appointed the Son, Jesus Christ, to rule as king. But despite David being God's king, he was flawed.

[15:16] He was sinful like every other king after him. So the Psalm is not about David. He failed to live up to the high expectations that are here in the Psalm.

Because only God's Son can fulfill this Psalm. That's why Jesus is not only great David's greater son, but he's also the second Adam.

Remember the first Adam at the beginning of the Bible was made in the image of God. And God gave him the responsibility to govern over the world. But he failed.

And so here we have the divine son, the true and better Adam, and the true and better David, who would not fail to govern and rule over God's world, but would rule as the perfect king.

And so God is father to this king. And we see this in the New Testament. So the baptism of Jesus, what did God the Father say?

[16:18] He said, this is my son. And the words are drawn from Psalm 2. And then again at the transfiguration of Jesus. He said, this is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. Listen to him. And so what does it say there, verse 7? What does it mean when it says, today I have become your father?

Well, it's not saying that there was ever a time when Jesus was not the son of the father. Because Jesus is the eternal God who's always existed. And so it's referring to the installation of Jesus as king.

Because Jesus was appointed king by his resurrection from death. That's what Paul says when he quotes this verse in Acts chapter 13.

And so the king's speech goes on, verse 8. Ask me and I will make the nations, your inheritance, the ends of the earth, your possession. Saying that the son, Jesus, will inherit the whole earth.

[17:25] And as king, his rule is being established as his work is being done. Well, what is his work if he's king here on earth? Well, it's the work of his church in proclaiming the message about him to the ends of the earth.

So that men and women are brought into this kingdom. And so acknowledge Jesus as their rightful king. And so this psalm is basically telling us what our purpose in life is.

And maybe you're here today and you're asking questions like, well, why am I here? What is my life for? What is my purpose? Well, Psalm 2 tells us by pointing us to this divine king, Jesus, who rules over us.

Whether we like it or not. And it's telling us that Jesus will reign forever. Whether we bow to his authority or not. And so I must acknowledge his rightful rule over my life.

Or I'll pay the price for rejecting him. And that's what verse 9 is all about. You will break them with a rod of iron. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. So God the Father has entrusted all judgment to God the Son.

[18:42] And so he's got all power and authority to smash those who reject his rightful rule. The image here is of your nice plates.

Your Denby crockery being smashed to smithereens with a hammer. Utter devastation and destruction. And yet the word here in verse 9 for rod is actually the same one that's used in Psalm 23 to speak of shepherding.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. And so the breaking of Psalm 2 could be read to rule or to shepherd them with a rod of iron.

So perhaps the judgment shouldn't just be seen in completely destructive terms. Like in Revelation where these words are echoed to speak of those who do submit to King Jesus because they will share in his rule.

And so however we read this, the final judgment of the Son, the final judgment of Jesus, will be good news for some people. But it will be bad news for other people. But either way, no one will be able to resist the rod of iron that is wielded by Jesus in the judgment.

[20:00] And so if Jesus is the judge of the world, then we don't want to be on the wrong side of Jesus, do we? There's no future in that because the Psalm is saying to us, he will crush all rebellion against him.

Now, we might not see ourselves as a rebel. But these words refer to all who will not submit to Jesus as King of their lives.

And so there's a window of opportunity that we all have, and that is our lifetime on this earth, to respond to Jesus. And that's what the final verses of this Psalm are just to do.

And so we see the King's blessing in verse 10 to 12, fourthly and finally. Now, the speaker in this section is David, and he's telling us how to respond.

And there's only one right response. And that response is to submit to God's King. So verse 10 says, Therefore, you kings, be wise, be warned, you rulers of the earth.

[21:10] So the kings and the rulers of this world are summoned together to listen, told to be wise and to be warned, to be sensible and to listen to what's being said.

It's like the voice of a parent speaking to their child. But if the child is young, the parent will say to them, don't be silly. Or if they're older, the parent will tell them, don't be stupid.

Don't make a big mistake by failing to do what you know you should do. So this is an invitation to everybody to do something, to be wise and to heed the warning.

Because while we might be the King's enemies, there's an opportunity to know the King's blessing. In other words, there's hope for everybody who has lived a life in rebellion against God.

It is never too late. Christianity says to us, not that, well, you've lived a life away from God. You've done this, that and the other. God's angry with you, tough luck.

[22 : 18] There's no hope for you, there's no future. That's not what Christianity tells us. It tells us that we've all failed to live God's way in God's world, despite the fact that he made us and loves us.

It tells us it's not too late. And so here's what we must do. It says in verse 11, serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. It's saying there's a need to decide, whoever we are, where our allegiance lies.

Will we serve the Lord or will we serve ourselves? Will we choose to live under the authority of the one who made us and loves us?

Or will we turn away from him and be our own Lord and our own master? Will we celebrate his rule with trembling? Or will we resent his rule, arrogantly thinking that we should rule ourselves?

I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul. And it's fleshed out further in verse 12. Kiss the son or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction.

[23 : 29] For his wrath can flare up in a moment. Kiss the son sounds kind of weird, but it's a sign of homage. It's an act of submission to God's king.

It actually reminds me of the opening scene of The Godfather. I don't know if you've ever seen The Godfather trilogy. I think The Godfather is probably my favourite film.

But the opening scene of the first film begins with a man, Bonasera. And he wants The Godfather to help him because some guys have beaten up his daughter.

And he wants justice for her. And The Godfather, played by Marilyn Brando, he's sitting down at his desk and he's stroking his cat. But he takes his cat off his lap and he stands up and he goes over to him and he says this.

He says, What have I ever done to make you treat me so disrespectfully? If you come to me in friendship, this scum who ruined your daughter would be suffering this very day.

[24 : 31] And if by chance an honest man like yourself should make enemies, they would become my enemies. And then they would fear you. Of course, The Godfather said it far better than I could say it.

But then Bonasera says to The Godfather, he takes his hand. He says, Be my friend, Godfather. And then he kisses it. And The Godfather says, Good.

Because Bonasera knows he needs The Godfather's friendship. He needs The Godfather's help. And so kissing his hand is a sign of his submission and his allegiance to The Godfather.

So back to Psalm 2. Because a refusal to give homage and to submit to the Son is a massive insult. It is to treat God disrespectfully.

Because since Jesus is king, if we refuse to submit to his rule, then we continue in a rebellion against him. And yet it's stupid because it leads to destruction.

[25 : 39] And so the Psalm says there is only one way to be safe. And the very last line of the Psalm points this out by saying to us, Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

And so while the warning is strong and it is severe, the Psalm ends with this note of hope. The king's blessing comes on all who take refuge in him.

That's the only way to avoid destruction and to avert his wrath. Because no one can find refuge from this king.

There is only refuge in him. And so when Jesus sang Psalm 2, he was singing all about himself.

And so this Psalm is his story. It's his CV. Because it graphically portrays his life and his work as God's king. And it outlines for us God's purpose in history, which is to gather a people for himself as part of his kingdom who live under the rule of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 52] And so it's pointing us to the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, but also to the return of Jesus when he comes and brings in God's kingdom in all its fullness.

And so as we read Psalm 2 and then as we sing Psalm 2, we're actually declaring that Jesus is our king and we belong to his kingdom.

We join the heavenly choir of Revelation 11 to say, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.

Psalm 2 shows us that Jesus is the majestic and powerful king, and he will reign forever. And so our vision here at Christ Church Glasgow and our hope is that people from every nation in this great city of Glasgow will bow the knee to Jesus as king.

It's got to be our prayer. It's got to be our mission. Because we love people and we want them to know the king's blessing. If you were here last week when we looked at Psalm 1, we began with a reference to blessing.

[28 : 13] Psalm 1.1. And it's the same word that's used in Psalm 2 verse 12. And it's indicating that the Psalms come together as the gateway to the book of Psalms to say to us and to show to us where blessing is ultimately found.

It's found in recognizing that Jesus is king and submitting to him. Let us pray.