

The Futility Of Fighting God

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[0 : 00] And so Psalm 2 is on page 543, in case you haven't got it. Psalm 2, why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one. Let us break their chains, they say, and throw off their fetters.

The one enthroned in heaven laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I have instilled my king on Zion, my holy hill.

I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me, you are my son, today I have become your father. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance. The end of the earth your possession.

You will rule them with an iron scepter. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise, be warned, you rulers of the earth.

[1 : 08] Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the sun, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way. For his wrath can flare up in a moment.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Thanks very much, Jez.

So you can keep your Bibles open there at Psalm 2. And if you want to take notes, you can do. If there's anything you want to follow up with afterwards, delighted to chat that through with you.

Well, let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at this psalm together. Amen. Our Father God, we thank you again for your word.

Thank you for making yourself known to us so that we can not only read about you, but we can also know you personally, intimately.

[2 : 30] And it's our desire that we would experience your work in our life. And that we would be people who see you as you declare yourself to be.

That we wouldn't put our own slant or we wouldn't put our own particular view on things.

But that we would humbly come before you and let you declare to us who you are. And how we as your people should respond.

So at the very outset, we bow before you. We kneel before you.

And humbly ask that you would change us and transform us to be more and more like your Son, the Lord Jesus. So that the beauty of Christ is reflected in our lives, in everything we do and in everything we say.

[3 : 45] So help us now and pour out your Spirit generously upon us all. We ask this in Jesus' name for his honour and for his glory.

Amen. Well, my kids love to fight me. That should come as no surprise, I guess, if you've got children.

Putting their differences aside, they combine forces, gang up on me. They mock me and they threaten me. They call me chubby and baldy.

Throw cushions at me. And whatever other missiles there are to hand. Sometimes they get very brave. They even punch me and push me to the ground.

But they know it's a pointless exercise. Because Dad always wins. At the moment, anyway.

Whether they like it or not, and whether they accept it or not, I'm bigger and I'm stronger.

[4 : 54] Fighting Dad is a futile exercise. Well, Psalm 2 is all about a fight. Not a pretend fight.

But a serious fight between the people of the world and the creator of the world. It's a fight. It's a fight that we have started.

It's a fight that we have started. And that we continue to fuel despite God's offer of peace. More specifically, our fight is against God's chosen king.

And as we will see through this psalm, we can either fight him and face his wrath, or we can submit to him and find refuge.

So what is this fight all about? Well, first of all, our rebellion. Verses 1 to 3. The fight against God is seen individually, within our own lives, and also nationally.

[6 : 07] Look at verse 1. He says, Why do the nations conspire? And the peoples plot in vain. In fact, there is a worldwide united rebellion against God.

Verse 2. The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers, well, they gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

Let us break their chains, they say, and throw off their fetters, everything that binds us to him. The people of the world, that's you and me, we long to break free from God's rule and authority.

Of course, we may speak a different language, we may come from different cultures, but the world is united in a common goal to plot the downfall of God.

We could say there is an anti-godness in our world. It's what Adam and Eve sought to do in the Garden of Eden, and it's what people continue to do today.

[7 : 18] Just simply turn on the television, listen to the radio, and any influence or any talk of God, well, it's quickly shut up.

People don't want to know. We simply do not want God interfering with our lives. In fact, we react strongly when we are confronted with God's authority.

In defiance, we say, this is my life, and I will not be told how to live. Of course, the real test of whether we are fighting against God, and this is a test for us, a question that we can put to ourselves.

Am I fighting against God or not? Well, the real test to know whether we are fighting against God is how we treat God's king. Look at verse 2.

It says, The anointed one is a title.

[8 : 34] It's the Messiah, God's specially chosen king. And the identity of this king, this anointed one, is revealed to us very clearly in Acts chapter 4.

So keep your finger in Psalm 2 and jump forward to the New Testament to Acts chapter 4. And in Acts chapter 4, we read here of Peter and John who've just been released from prison because they've been preaching about the rule and authority of Jesus Christ.

And they were put in prison for doing that. And now they've been released and they get together with the rest of their disciples and in response to what has happened, they turn to God in prayer. And we're going to pick it up in chapter 4, verse 24. Acts 4, verse 24. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Sovereign Lord, they said, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David.

[9 : 55] And there he quotes Psalm 2. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

Who's the anointed one? Read on. Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed.

Jesus Christ, very clearly, is God's anointed one. And they are taking their stand against Jesus.

And here with the people described there in Acts 4, you have the most unlikely of alliances. You have the people of Israel who were the Jews and you've also got the Gentiles and the Jews and the Gentiles were completely religiously and culturally pulled apart.

Then you had Herod and Pontius Pilate who politically never got on. But together, all four of them have joined forces in a united attack on God's King, Jesus Christ.

[11 : 20] The people and the rulers, religious and political, uniting together and they're doing everything in their power to destroy Him.

In fact, they had Him put to death on a cross. You see, at the heart of our fight with God is a worldwide active rebellion against Jesus Christ.

People may cope with the idea of a God. They may even find it comforting to know that there is a God. But as soon as we introduce and say that Jesus Christ is God's King, His anointed one and that we should submit to Him and obey Him, well, that's a step too much.

We do not want a King over us. Back to Psalm 2, verse 3. Let us break their chains, they say, and throw off their fetters.

Let us cut every bind and every tie. Let's get rid of Jesus and let's live as we choose.

[12:39] Well, second, God's response. Verses 4 to 6. Look how God responds to this plot to dethrone Him. verse 4.

The one enthroned in heaven, ha, ha, ha, ha, the Lord scoffs at them. Rather than God becoming a joke, we are the joke for fighting Him.

I remember when I used to try and fight my dad when I was small. Maybe you remember something like this. He would simply put his hand on my head and hold me at a distance.

And there I was, for all I was worth, swinging punches, punching thin air, and all I could hear was his great big laugh. Couldn't touch him. Well, fighting God is a futile exercise.

It's pointless. And the very thought of fighting God is laughable because, look at verse 6, he says, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.

[13:49] I already rule over you. I am your king whether you accept it or not. Every attempt to get rid of me, every act of defiance is like a little child swinging his powerless fists.

It's a laugh. But there is also a very serious side to this rebellion. Look at verse 5. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I have installed my king.

This is no laughing matter. God is angry at our rebellion and he is angry that we reject his king.

Now, God and anger, we don't like to put those two together, so we mustn't view God like some vindictive tyrant who picks on powerless mortals like ourselves and bullies us into submission as if we are thrown into the ring with a heavyweight boxer and we start saying, stop, stop, stop.

It's not like that. God has lovingly provided us with a king to rule over us. A loving and generous king.

[15:18] A kind king who always does what is right and best for his people. And it's under his rule, under his loving and caring rule, that we find our deepest needs met.

Here we find, living under him, we find satisfaction and security. Under this king, we find freedom and forgiveness. He's the kind of king that we all long for and dream of.

A good king. So, when we rebel against him, we're not only turning our backs on him and walking away from him, we are actually breaking what the Bible calls shalom.

Shalom is the harmony, the beauty, the order, the togetherness of the world. So, when we turn our backs on this king, we are actually fighting against his good and perfect order.

we are destroying and breaking his good design. And the results are all too common. Broken relationships, family breakup, loneliness, loss of meaning and purpose, violence and aggression.

[16:45] Nationally, we see wars, we see oppression, injustice. The shalom, the harmony, the beauty of the world is being broken by our rebellion.

And God says, I will not allow you to go on ruining this world forever. And he will judge us, as verse five describes.

But we mustn't think that God's anger is in some kind of way like a temper, as if we just push the wrong button and he just flips and he blows his fuse.

And he acts like an out-of-control madman. No, God's wrath is his just, fair, settled, and controlled response to sinners like you and me who have destroyed and ruined his good and beautiful world.

The problem is not that Jesus Christ is king. Here's the problem. When we fight the king, we face the king's anger.

[18:01] And that is no laughing matter. So what has God done about all of this? Well, third, God's decision.

If we are in any doubt as to God's rule, look what he has said and look what he has done. Verse seven, I will proclaim the decree of the Lord.

He said to me, you are my son. Today I have become your father. Well, what's that talking about? Who's the son?

What's this decree? What's this statement? Well, again, this decree is picked up and it's helpfully explained for us again in the book of Acts.

Go to Acts chapter 13. Acts chapter 13, verse 32.

[18:59] 32. Here it's been Paul who's been preaching and he makes a direct link between verse seven of Psalms and what he is saying here.

Acts chapter 13, verse 32. He says, we tell you the good news. What's the good news? what God promised our fathers, he has fulfilled for us their children by raising up Jesus.

As it is written in the second Psalm, you are my son. Today I have become your father. son is not just Jesus, but the risen Jesus.

Remember, the world thought they had got rid of Jesus when they killed him and hung him on the cross. But the good news, as Paul describes, is now that this king, who you thought you had killed, is the risen king.

And the decree, the proclamation upon him is to say, you are my son, and I am your father. His victory over death, his conquering of the grave, proves his right to rule.

[20 : 31] You cannot defeat him, and you cannot destroy him. He has broken death, and he lives and reigns forever. And look what God says about this risen king.

back to Psalm chapter 2. Two things. First, that this risen Jesus, he owns the nations, verse 8.

Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

nation. You know, every nation, including our own, has their own flag and national anthem.

We sing it proudly, we wave our flags with pride. It's a reflection of independence, a statement of sovereignty.

And every nation gets to make up their own rules and they decide who's allowed to come into their country and who has to go. But you know what? In reality, our flags and our anthems are just like a kid waving a banner and blowing a trumpet.

[21 : 43] To God, our attempt to own our nation is just a game. No nation has true independence. no nation has absolute sovereignty because Jesus, verse 8, is the rightful owner.

He has possession upon every nation. He owns Ireland, he owns America, China belongs to Jesus, and Brazil belongs to Jesus.

It all belongs to him. But not only does he own the nations, nations. Jesus also rules the nations as the risen Lord, verse 9.

You will rule them with an iron scepter. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. Before the days of Xbox and PS3, we used to play board games.

Do you remember what they looked like? They came in boxes and you kept them in cupboards.

And one of those board games that we used to play was a game called Risk.

[22 : 54] Maybe some of you played it. It was a game about world domination. And the way it was, you were all assigned different countries or parts of the globe. You were all given certain armies of value and strength.

And the object was to fight each other by the throw of dice and to control the whole world. And whoever controlled the whole world, well, they were the winner and it could go on for days and weeks this game.

But at the end, what happened to the board game? It got simply closed up and the armies got put back into their box and the countries got put away.

It was just a game. The most same power games happen in reality. One side calls it the war on terror.

Another side calls it jihad. we see it played out on our TV screens as North Korea threatens to nuke South Korea. The allied forces threaten to invade Syria.

[23 : 57] And that's not to mention every border skirmish and every revolution taking place across the globe. But to Jesus, as he looks down on all our acts of power and control, to Jesus, it's as if we're playing risk.

It's like a board game to him. Our attempts to rule are just a game and one day the board is going to close over and every army and every nation will be crumpled up.

We may ignore the risen Jesus. We may even reject the risen Jesus. But that does not mean he is not king.

So what is our response to this awesome, mighty and great king?

Well, God's rule expressed through his son Jesus Christ requires our very careful and wise response, verse 10. Therefore, you kings, be wise, be warned, you rulers of the earth.

[25 : 13] Because fighting God is a futile exercise. So how are we to respond? Verse 11. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way for his wrath can flare up in a moment. You know, in the days of kings, there were two ways you could come and approach the

king.

First, you could simply come in and you would make a bow at your service, your majesty. It was an act of submission to one greater than you.

Second, you could also come in and not just bow, but you would actually kneel and kiss the feet of the king. Oh, great and mighty king.

It was an act of honour. So to serve the Lord, verse 11, and to kiss the son, verse 12, describes how we should come to the risen Lord Jesus.

[26 : 30] He deserves nothing less than our full submission of bowing down and our complete honour. And we declare to him, at your service, Lord Jesus, for you are a great and mighty king.

We can point the finger at the rebellious world, but I think we all know that we still live in defiance. Every sin, every thought, every word that we say out of temper, every action that is unloving, is an attempt on our part to simply dethrone Jesus.

In defiance, we say, this is my life, and I will not be told how I should live. love, and so we regularly need to come back, and we need to bow in humility, and kiss the feet of the sun, at your service, Lord Jesus, for you are the great and mighty king.

king. And should you ever question why? Well, because of this, because this king died for you.

This very king, who rules over all, came into this world for us, and stood in our place, and exchanged places with us, and suffered God's wrath for us.

[28 : 20] He is the one who deserves to be served, but he is the one who came to serve us, and to give his life for us. He is the one who deserves to be kissed, but he is the one who kissed us, and embraced us, and welcomed us into his family, treating us, as his own son.

This king has reached out, and has made peace with us. Jesus is the perfect king, wise, good, kind, the kind of king we all dream of, and so he deserves our full submission, and our complete honor. to defy this king, well, remember, his wrath can flare up in a moment. It simply means that we do not know the day or the hour when Christ will return, and your life will have to be given an account for.

But, to rest in him, look at the end of verse 12, look how the psalm finishes, blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Do not ignore the king's command to continually bow down and kiss the sun. Let's pray together.

[30 : 02] let's just take a moment in personal reflection, perhaps for the first time, but maybe we come back again and in our hearts and in our minds we simply bow before the risen king Jesus.

Jesus we kiss the feet of the sun at your service, your majesty, for you are the only great and mighty and awesome king.

Thank you for serving us. Thank you for dying for us. Thank you for giving your life for us so that we might have life in all its fullness so that we may no longer fear your wrath but enjoy you forever.

We thank you in Jesus name. Amen. Well our song that we're going to conclude with before we gather around to continue our worship of the Lord around his table around the Lord's supper.

Could you flick on to the chorus there for me?