

The Reign of the King

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[0:00] The Christian Church has known persecution right from its beginning.! Early in its ministry, the witness of the fledgling Christian church met opposition from the civic authorities.

! Remember King Herod's cruel execution of the apostle James and the imprisonment of his fellow disciple Peter.

That was just the start. Before Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the Roman Empire was very hostile to Christianity and fed Christians to the lions.

The last century saw the rise of atheistic regimes of fascism and communism, both of which were diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God.

And today, for example, the North Korean state is vehemently opposed to Christianity, and owning a Bible can result in imprisonment, or even worse.

[1:11] We are all aware of the powerful People's Republic of China, where the state's business is to control churches to comply with its atheistic principles.

And failure to do so can result in imprisonment. To worship freely in that land, Christians have to meet in secret.

In autocratic Islamic states such as Iran, Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, for example, Christians can pay a heavy price for their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

In 21st century Britain, the political candidates all set out their stalls with the policies they wish to see legislated.

Sadly, our rulers in Westminster and in Holyrood promote some policies which do not sit happily with biblical Christianity, and are really an attack against God.

[2:17] And it's in the light of this increasing secularism and atheism in the UK today, highlighted by the policies and events of recent years, that has led me to consider this psalm with you this morning.

This psalm puts things in God's perspective, and what we are, and what our leaders need to learn. Psalm 2 is a powerful text that addresses God's sovereignty, the futility of rebellion against Him, and the ultimate authority of Christ as King.

So let's look at this psalm and see how relevant it is for us today. I've got four points. God challenged, God's response, God decrees, and God's advice.

The reign of the King. First of all then, God challenged. Verses 1 to 3. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

[3:31] The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and His anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.

Notice three things about this challenge to God. Firstly, it's premeditated conspiracy against God by earthly rulers.

As we've noted, there are regimes and power today where freedom of worship does not exist, and where any Christian witness can mean lifelong imprisonment and insidious persecution.

Converting from Islam to Christianity can be very dangerous, even fatal in some countries. And as we've mentioned, in our own society today, there is an attack on God's authority and anti-God theories on gender, marriage, and the sanctity of life.

Let us burst their bonds, they say, and cast away their cords from us. Doesn't this psalm resonate with us today? The movers and shakers of this world try to persuade us that obedience to God shackles us and limits our freedom.

[4:52] In reality, as Tim Keller has said, liberation comes only through serving the one who created us. But secondly, in God's challenge, we read of a premeditated conspiracy against God by nations and individuals.

This conspiracy against God is not confined to rulers. Nations and individuals are called to task here too. Ordinary people and pressure groups bear a responsibility for promoting ideas which are ungodly, anti-God and unchristian.

But notice also, in verse 2, there is a premeditated conspiracy against God's anointed one. Capital A and capital O.

God's anointed one. In Old Testament times, when a monarch was installed, the monarch would be anointed with oil as an act of consecration, being set apart from office, as happens with the coronation of our own monarchs.

But who is this anointed one? In Hebrew, the word Messiah, that's M-A-S-I-A-H, if translated into its Aramaic form, when translated into the Greek, becomes Christos, or Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one.

[6:35] So this anointed one, even in Psalm 2, hundreds of years before Christ himself came into this world, but who had existed, obviously, from before the foundation of the world, in heaven.

This anointed one is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. This opposition that we are reading about is not only anti-God, but it is anti-Christ.

The rulers are taking their stand against the Lord's anointed, the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. The nations believe that the Lord and his anointed one are restricting their freedom to behave as they wish.

Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords. Let's abandon God's rule for living. But how does the Lord respond?

Secondly, God's response. Verses 4 to 6. Notice how the Lord responds. He responds with laughter.

[7:52] Do you ever consider God laughing? He responds with scoffing and derision. He who sits in heaven laughs. The Lord holds them in derision.

No wonder the Lord laughs and scoffs at them. Their raging conspiracies are nothing but vanity. Do they not realize they are conspiring against the all-powerful creator and sustainer of the universe? Who do they think they are? You rebellious, puny leaders. You earthly kings. Don't you realize you are offering opposition to the king of kings?

Don't you realize that you are under his lordship? No wonder God laughs and scoffs at them. It's a joke.

It's no surprising then that during the persecution of the early Christian church, Peter and John quoted these very words in Acts 4, confirming that the persecution by human rulers was in fact an assault against the Lord Jesus Christ.

[9:08] But what about us? By disregarding God's laws, by continuing in unbelief and opposition to our creator, by placing our hope in things temporal and not eternal, we are no better than the people described in this psalm.

And the Lord will be laughing with sadness at our empty lifestyles and our rejection of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In reality, this is no laughing matter. Notice that the Lord's response is also one of anger and rebuke. We must never remember that the Lord is a holy God who cannot tolerate sin.

Then we read, He will speak to them in His wrath and terrify them in His fury, saying, As for me, I have enthroned my king on Zion, my holy ill.

Yes, even in this pathetic and godless situation, we have a glimpse of hope. The Lord, we read, has installed or enthroned, as in a coronation, a king on Zion.

[10:26] Who is this king? We understand, in the first place, it's a reference to the installation of King David. Yes, but more than David.

God promised that after David died, He would raise offspring to succeed him and establish the throne of His kingdom, which will last forever.

forever. In 2 Samuel 7, 12 to 14, when God promised to David that His family line will reign forever, we read these words, I will raise up your offspring after you, I will establish His kingdom, I will

establish the throne of His kingdom forever.

I will be to Him a father and He shall be to me a son. You see, God's response to human pride, conspiracy, and rejection is to install His son on Zion.

And this points beyond Israel's king to Jesus, God's true son. One day, He will put everything right, but He will do this by first going to Zion, to Jerusalem, to die on the cross.

[11:53] Notice thirdly, God decrees. Verses 7 to 8, God decrees. Now this king issues a decree, and I must admit it's not easy to understand at first reading.

In verse 7, it is the Lord's anointed who is speaking, and we notice that the Lord's anointed is the Messiah. The Lord said to me, that is, to the anointed one, you are my son.

Today, I have begotten you. In other words, I have become your father. The words here may have been read out by the king in the coronation ritual as the word today suggests.

to mark the moment when the sovereign formally took up his inheritance and his titles. If we move into the New Testament to Christ's baptism and transfiguration, on those occasions, the father proclaimed him, Christ, to be his son.

With these words, this is my son whom I love, with him I am well pleased. And this is corroborated by Peter in 2 Peter 1.17 where he heard these words spoken at the transfiguration.

[13:19] So here we see clearly how this psalm, although originally referred to the coronation of David or Solomon, is messianic, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul clarifies this with a sermon in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. This is what we read. And this is what he said, We bring you the good news that what God promised has been fulfilled by raising Jesus also is written as also is written in the second psalm.

Here is Paul quoting from the psalm. You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Here Paul links these verses of the Old Testament and Psalm 2 with the resurrection, thus doubly connecting them with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 8, the Lord promises to make the nations the inheritance of the anointed one, the ends of the earth his possession. Now did not Christ commission his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth?

The church down through the ages right up to the present day has embarked on missionary endeavor in response to this and the great commission of Jesus in Matthew 20 28.

[14:51] Messiah's rule will be strong and victorious as indicated in verse 9. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

This reference to ruling with a rod of iron is quoted three times in Revelation, once in 227 to refer to the victorious Christian and twice in 12.5 and 19.15 to the victorious Lord Jesus.

Jesus. So, these were what God decreed. And finally, we have in verses 10 to 12 God's advice. God's advice. Verse 10. On the basis of all that, the psalmist issues a warning to earthly rulers. Kings, be wise.

Be warned, you rulers of the earth. Remember who you are, weak human individuals who are accountable not to electorates, but to the king of kings.

[16:03] Submit to Yahweh, his son, King Herod, whom we mentioned at the outset was responsible for the execution of James the apostle. He believed himself to be all-powerful.

But you know what happened to him and his horrible end in Acts 12. Today's rulers, no matter how powerful they may appear, will all have to submit to the authority of King Jesus and give an account of their lives to him.

Verse 11. You should serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. An interesting exhortation, isn't it? Serving the Lord with fear but rejoicing with trembling.

It conjures up a startling yet quite appropriate mixture of emotions in face of serving so great a king. And verse 12, we have this amazing exhortation, kiss the son.

A kiss of homage, pay true homage to the king of kings, the Lord's anointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. You've seen in our television screens, the rulers of the world meeting each other, they embrace each other, they embrace with a kiss in each cheek.

[17:29] But that's not really what's mentioned here. This kiss is one of total commitment and adoration. We are to treat the Lord Jesus Christ with reverence.

We are to bow down in thankful adoration. We are to close in with him, to love him, to serve him, to rest in him, and to live for him. But remember that this psalm is for the people as well as for nations' rulers.

It's for you, it's for me. And the question that I ask today, have you kissed the son? Have you embraced the son?

Have you bowed down in homage and adoration to the Lord Jesus Christ? Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.

This is serious. There's an urgent warning here. As Kidner says in one of his commentaries, the quick anger may sound the touchiness of a despot, but the true comparison is with Christ, whose wrath, like his compassion, blazed up at wrongs.

[18:52] The fiery picture is needed alongside that of the one who was slow to anger. And how we rejoice that on the cross, the Lord Jesus took that anger, took the punishment that we deserve on his own body, on the tree.

In that wonderful series, and the wonderful book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which I'm sure many of us have read by C.S.

Lewis, remember, the children in Narnia meet a pair of beavers who describe Aslan as a lion, the lion, the great lion.

It's the representation of Christ. Susan says, is he quite safe? I should feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.

Mrs. Beaver responds, if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they are either braver than most or else just silly.

[20:06] Then he isn't safe, says Lucy. safe, said Mr. Beaver. Of course he isn't safe, but he's good.

He's the king, I tell you. A lovely description of the Lord Jesus, who was strong and powerful, intolerant of all that is unjust and evil, but who was sympathetic and compassionate to his people. the psalm concludes with an encouraging verse, blessed are all who take refuge in him. Here is the only place of blessing which our leaders need to know.

It is through the work of Christ on the cross that God's anger has been dealt with. On the cross, that righteous anger of God was placed on his begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah.

The earthly rulers at the beginning of the psalm sought freedom by breaking free of God's rules. But true freedom is only found in Christ.

[21:22] He is the way, the truth, and the life, and the truth will set you free. Are you paying homage to the son today?

Have you and are you bowing the knee to King Jesus? Is he the one you are worshipping with your time, your talents, your wealth? There is no one better to serve than he.

Have you crowned him as your Lord and Savior? Remember that if we don't live for him, we end up fighting God himself, and there is no refuge from him, only in him.

One day, Paul reminds us that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

May all of us now here bow to King Jesus in loving adoration and service. Amen. Let us pray.

[22:34] Our Father, we thank you for the Lord Jesus, your anointed one, your son, the Messiah. How we thank and praise you that it is he we come to serve, and that it is he we all should bow down to worship.

So help us today to realize what this means by confessing our unworthiness, confessing our false ambitions, confessing our sin, and helping us to put our trust in him, to embrace him as our Savior and our Lord.

In his name we pray. Amen.