

God's Installed King

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Date: 10 January 2016

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[0 : 00] Well, if you were to go looking for a bit of the Bible that could speak directly and describe the state of the world today, you'd find it hard to go past Psalm 2, wouldn't you?

Psalm 2 speaks of nations at war against God, conspiring or raging, as some translations have it, against God and his people. And isn't that just what we see throughout the world today?

From India through to North Africa and other parts of the world, we hear of Christians being driven from their homes, robbed, tortured, beheaded, sometimes crucified.

We hear of Christian girls being kidnapped and sold into sexual slavery. We hear of Christian refugees being attacked as they flee. We hear of churches being burned and ministers being executed.

In the West, we see a rage and a conspiracy of a different kind. We see the rage of atheists as they pour forth an endless stream of hatred against God and his church.

[1 : 07] We see the strange maneuverings of the political class who believe that biblical Christianity is a force of intolerance which needs to be suppressed.

For the first time in Western history, we hear of Christians being arrested for saying that other religions are wrong. We hear of huge fines being levied against anybody who dares to resist the latest theories of sex and gender in the name of the Bible.

And just two days ago, we hear of a case in Norway where a government department has removed four children from a Christian couple and is seeking to have them adopted into other families because the Christian parents are extremists.

Extremism apparently in this case includes believing that God punishes sin. We live in an age where the nations conspire and rage against God.

Psalm 2 speaks to our time. But of course, it's been true in other periods of history too. It was true when it was written. In its first context, Psalm 2 was probably composed as a coronation song to celebrate the enthronement of one of the kings of Israel.

[2 : 19] These statements about the nations conspiring and rebelling reflect the peril of such a time. The enemy kingdoms that surrounded Israel would see the changeover, the beginning of a king's reign as a time of weakness and instability.

A good time to attack or to break away from Israelite control. Psalm 2 was true then too. Psalm 2 was true in the time of Jesus and the apostles supremely.

Actually, the apostles, as we saw in our reading from Acts 4, regarded the crucifixion of Jesus and their own ensuing persecution as a direct fulfillment of Psalm 2.

They noticed especially how the trial of Jesus united enemies as Jews and Gentiles came together to murder the Lord's anointed. A direct fulfillment, they say, of Psalm 2 verse 2.

The rulers banding together against the Lord and against his anointed. But in a broader sense, Psalm 2 is always true. The world in its fallen state hates God and it hates God's commands.

[3 : 31] It sees his good laws as slavery, an impediment to its own freedom, and it sees his people as jailers. It desperately wants to break away from God's laws.

And it hates being reminded of them. That's the natural state of humanity. That's the source of the uproar, the rage and conspiracy that we see throughout history and still see today.

Paul explains it clearly in passages such as Romans 8 and Ephesians 2, if you want to look it up later. The world is in a grim state and Psalm 2 describes it accurately.

But the writer of Psalm 2 doesn't stop there. He doesn't even linger there. He has a very reassuring perspective on this world and its rebellion. He thinks that it is utterly futile.

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? He says in the very first verse. As if it's so ridiculous that he can't quite believe they would try it.

[4 : 36] Why would they think they have a chance? Why would they even bother? It's in vain. In verse 4 he describes God laughing at the schemes of the nations.

The one enthroned in heaven laughs and scoffs at them. God can't believe it either. It is ridiculous that these people would try and rebel against him. In verse 9, in a much grimmer tone, the psalmist depicts the proud kingdoms being blasted into fragments like brittle pottery smashed with an iron bar.

The overall message of this psalm is that these rulers, these nations, these plans to rebel are a complete delusion. They are destined to fail spectacularly and laughably.

Why must they fail? What does the psalmist know that makes him so confident? Well, he knows two things.

There are two big truths here that make all the difference. The first big truth is that God is really God. In recent years, we've seen an upsurge in what's become known as the New Atheist Movement.

[5 : 51] You've no doubt come across its leading advocates such as Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and so on. Perhaps you've talked to people influenced by the movement, either among your friends or family or in online discussions.

One of the interesting things I've noticed about the New Atheist Movement is that it almost never understands the God that it is rejecting. Modern atheists continually raise arguments or ask questions which show that they think, and think that we think, that God is just a big human being. Who made God, they ask? What gives God the right to tell us what to do? A few atheists, including a couple I was talking to just the other day, suggest that if the Christian God existed, then he's so evil that the sensible thing to do would be to try and kill him.

But all these comments reveal a ridiculous misunderstanding of the very idea of God. The God of the Bible isn't just a bigger version of you and me or an angel who happens to live in another part of the universe.

It's his breath, his spirit, that gives us life. He sustains the universe. His word holds all things together, according to Colossians.

[7 : 14] It preserves the laws of physics, the very framework of time and space. You could no more kill this God than you could kill time or gravity. You can't get away from this God.

You can't surprise him. As Psalm 139 puts it, Where can I flee from your spirit? Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord.

Now in Acts 4, where the disciples quote Psalm 2, they really stress this aspect of God's existence, don't they?

Sovereign Lord, they say. You made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. As they apply Psalm 2 to the crucifixion of Christ, they celebrate the fact that it was all part of God's plan.

In verse 28, Herod and Pontius Pilate did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Do you see what they're saying here?

[8 : 15] God is the God of space and time. He made everything. The heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in them. So he's the God of space.

And he's in control of everything that happens in that space. So he's the God of time as well. And do you see the implications of what they're saying?

Nothing escapes God's sovereign rule. Even the murder of Jesus. The greatest act of rebellion ever perpetrated.

The most notorious example of the pattern described in Psalm 2. The most evil thing ever done. Murder of God's own son. Even this was under God's control.

The authorities who crucified Jesus were, without realizing it, secretly fulfilling God's plans. They intended it for evil, of course. But God intended it in a completely different way for the greatest good ever done.

[9 : 22] The forgiveness of sins. The restoration of people to himself. Now in Psalm 2.

This big theological idea is only made explicit briefly. We see it in verse 4, which speaks of God enthroned in heaven. Meaning that he's king and his reign is utterly above and beyond all earthly authority.

But God's sovereignty. The fact that God is really God. Is the fundamental assumption of Psalm 2. Nothing can assail him.

He makes decrees and they come to pass. When he gets over laughing about the rebellion of the nations. And speaks just a word of rebuke. The nations are terrified. When he acts through his anointed. They are blasted to smithereens. Now if God is like this. If God really is God.

[10:29] Then as the psalmist says. The only responsible or reasonable response. Is to submit to him. Serve him with fear. And celebrate his rule. With trembling. Verse 11.

Because there's no other course of action. That has any chance of success. Those who stand against him. Will either be reduced to nothing. Like pottery. Or discover that their very attempts. To rebel against him. Turn back on them. And become part of his plan. You cannot win against this God. It's not just the rulers.

Of the world. Who need to be reminded of this. Is it? All of us. Need to remember. That God is really God. When we look. At the state of the world.

And observe. Its turmoil. And we worry about what lies ahead. For our society. Or for our children. We need to remember. That God is really God.

[11:25] God. When we look back. On the mess. That we've made of our own lives. And sometimes we wonder. If we've got ourselves into a position. Where God can't really do anything good. With us anymore. Have we painted ourselves.

Into a corner. By our sin and foolishness. In situations like that. We need to remember. That God is really God. When we go through dark times. Of suffering.

Or discouragement. Of very many hues. We need to remember. That God is really God. We need the God of the Bible. Only the God.

Enthroned in heaven. Can really assure us. That it will be alright. In the end. Only a God. Who is really God. Can make promises.

That he. That all things. Will work together for good. As he does promise. In Romans 8. 28. Only a God. Who is really good. And really God.

[12:24] Can overcome. Even our sin and folly. And make good use. Of even those things. When we turn back to him. So that's the first big idea.

God is really God. The second big idea. That gives the psalmist confidence. Is this. That God stands with his Messiah. As I said before. It seems likely.

That this psalm. Was a coronation. Song. It was sung. To celebrate. A new king of Judah. A new heir. To the promises. Given to King David. And what the psalmist. Wants us to understand.

Is that this new king. Is God's chosen. Representative. He's been chosen. By God. To work. In the world. On God's behalf.

So in verse 2. Psalm 2. Psalm 2. Describes. Him as the Lord's anointed. Referring of course. To the ancient practice. Of pouring oil. On the head.

[13:20] Of a king. Or a priest. Symbolizing. That this person. Has been set apart. By God. Appointed by God. To perform. A special task. On behalf of God. We should note.

In passing. Of course. That the word. That we have. As anointed here. In Psalm 2. Is the Hebrew word. Mashiach. Or Messiah. Translated in Greek.

As Christ. We'll see the significance. Of that in just a moment. In verse 6. God speaks. About this king. And he says.

I have installed. My king on Zion. My holy mountain. What he's saying here. Is that this king. Stands at the center. Of his purposes. Zion. Is the mountain.

On which Jerusalem. Stands. It's the home of the temple. In the Old Testament. It's the place. Where God. Makes himself. Most available. Zion. Is the place. Where God.

[14:16] Hears prayers. And forgives sins. Zion. Is the place. From which God. Sends out his blessings. And his decrees. Into the world. Zion. Is the most.

Dangerous place. To defy God. Because it's the place. He watches. Most closely. And defends. Most strongly.

So what God. Is saying here. When he says. That he has installed. His king. On Zion. Is that this king. Is under his. Full protection. Zion. Is like an embassy.

Of heaven. On earth. Which means. That the king. Is like God's. Ambassador. To attack this king. Is to attack. God himself. To honor.

This king. Is to honor. God. In verse seven. The king. Speaks. And he tells us. That God. Has adopted him.

[15:11] As his son. This too. Tells us. That God. And his king. Stand together. In ancient times. It was fairly common. For. Kings and queens. To claim.

That a deity. Of some kind. Was their parent. Their adopted. Patron. The idea was. That the king. Or queen. Would act. On behalf. Of that god. And the king.

And the god. God or goddess. Would give. The monarch. Special affection. Protection. And authority. The original metaphor. Of course. Is the relationship.

Between a king. And the crown prince. The firstborn son. The heir. Of the kingdom. Well. Israel had that idea too. In 2 Samuel 7. God promises. King David.

That he will raise. Up a son. To succeed him. And that this son of David. Will also be. God's son. I will be his father. And he will be my son. I will never take my love from him.

[16:04] Through him. Your throne. Will be established forever. He promises. David. These are the promises. That are being invoked. In this statement. You are my son.

Today. I have become your father. But the psalmist. Has something even greater. In mind. You see. If this king. Is the son.

Of the God. Of the Bible. Then he isn't just heir. To a kingdom. Or to a region. His inheritance. Must include.

The whole world. Because God. Is the God. Of the whole world. And so. That's exactly. What we read. In the next verses. Reading from verse 8. Ask me.

Says God. And I will make the nations. Your inheritance. The ends of the earth. Your possession. You will break them. With a rod of iron. You will dash them. To pieces. Like pottery.

[16:56] Therefore. You kings. Be wise. Be warned. You rulers. Of the earth. Serve the Lord. With fear. And celebrate his rule. With trembling. Kiss the son. Or he will be angry. And your way.

Will lead to your destruction. Because he's God's representative. And God's son. This king is as unstoppable. As God himself.

All rebellions against him. Will fail. And must fail. The earth will come under his control. The only hope for the nations.

Is for them to bow down before him. To receive him. In welcome. And submission. With a kiss. To submit to him. Is to submit to God.

To resist him. Is to resist God. God. He stands with God. And God stands with him. But these great promises. We see.

[17:51] Verses 8 to 12. Raise an obvious question. Just who is this psalm. Talking about? No Israelite king. Ever possessed. Anything like.

This kind of power. As we look at the history. Of Israel. What we see. Is not an expanding. Empire. To cover the world. But a shrinking kingdom. The few nations.

That Israel did control. Soon got free. They did break. Israel's chains. And shackles. So if you read it. In its original context.

Psalms 2. Can only be a kind of. Poetic exaggeration. A poetic overstatement. Or aspiration. Of the way things. Ought to be. But aren't. Kind of like the statement.

O king. May you live forever. That we see in the Bible. Sometimes. But it is. A genuine aspiration. For the way things should be. If God is God.

[18:47] And his promises. Are true. There should be. A king. From David's line. Who will rule over the world. With justice. In the name of God. There should be a king. Who will destroy. The power of tyrants.

And bring the nations. Back to God. God. And so from. Very ancient times. Psalm 2. Has always been seen. As a prophetic psalm. A messianic psalm.

A psalm. That looks forward. To a greater king. A time when God. Is going to do something. Radically new. And these poetic. Overstatements. Become literally true.

And from our vantage point. Of course. It's a prophecy. That has already been fulfilled. And is being fulfilled. With the coming of Jesus. Jesus is the one. Who doesn't simply.

Fulfill the terms. Of this psalm. But he overflows them. Notice how. Jesus exceeds. The categories. Of psalm 2. Psalm 2 speaks.

[19:44] Of a man. Anointed by. With oil. To be king. But Jesus is the true. Messiah. Anointed. Not simply with a symbol. And with oil. But with the Holy Spirit.

From God. So that every thought. And every action. Of his. Honours God. Reflects God's will. And God's character. Psalm 2 speaks.

Of a man. Enthroned in Zion. But Jesus. Is God's. True representative. He's been enthroned. Not simply. In an earthly. Embassy. Of heaven. But in heaven.

Itself. In the very presence. Of God. As Paul puts it. In Ephesians 1. 21. God raised him. From the dead. And seated him. At his right hand. In the heavenly realms. Far above all rule.

And authority. And power. And dominion. And every title. That can be given. Not only in the present age. But also in the age to come. Psalm 2 speaks.

[20 : 39] Of a man. Adopted as God's son. And given. Special authority. And protection. Well in one sense. This is true for Jesus too. All authority. In heaven.

And on earth. Has been given to me. Says in Matthew 28. But it's also true. That Jesus is God's. Literal. Son. From all eternity.

Jesus has been. As we read in places like. John 1. Or Colossians 1. Or Hebrews 1. The exact image. Of the father. The living word of God. The radiance.

Of God's glory. Jesus is the true son. Psalm 2. Imagines an impossible dream. Of a kingdom. That covers the whole world. But the kingdom of Jesus.

Is a reality. For the last 2,000 years. That kingdom. Has been. Spreading around the globe. Like a great wave. Like a great tide. It's outlasted empires.

[21 : 34] And transformed kingdoms. Hasn't it? One day. It will be complete. Jesus will destroy. All rebellion. All hostility. Against God. And we will shout.

With the angel. Of Revelation 11. Verse 15. The kingdom of the world. Has become the kingdom. Of our Lord. And of his Messiah. And he will reign. Forever and ever. So Jesus is the ultimate representative of God.

In a way that the other heirs of David never were. He is the focus. Of all God's plans and purposes. God's ultimate representative. And this makes things very simple.

God's ultimate. That means everything turns on him. I wonder if you. Like reading manuals.

Some people like reading manuals. When they get something new. I like to find out all the details of this new appliance. Some people. Like me. Don't like reading manuals.

[22 : 35] We just want to know the minimum. We want the least you need to know. And so I love manuals. Where you have a quick start version. The least you need to know version.

Psalm 2 gives us. The least you need to know. The least you need to know is Jesus. He's God's representative. God's plans for him will succeed.

Everything focuses on Jesus. Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. He's God's son and representative. Do you want to know.

Whether people from other religious traditions. Worship the same God as us. That's a hot topic at the moment. The question to ask of course is. What do they think of Jesus? Do they kiss the son in honor and reverence?

Do they honor him as they honor the father? If not. They worship a different God. As the apostle John puts it in 1 John 2 23. No one who denies the son has the father.

[23 : 37] Whoever acknowledges the son has the father also. Echoing the theology of Psalm 2. Psalm 2 gives us a theology. That will help us make other parts of our lives simple too.

Do you get anxious. As you think about the future. And its uncertainties. The future belongs to Jesus. Keep your eyes fixed on him. Do you want help sorting out the priorities of your life.

And making decisions. Which things are worth pursuing. The answer is. Jesus and his kingdom. There are lots of good and worthwhile things in this world to do. But the only sure things.

Are the future that belongs to Jesus. The Lord's anointed. And the kingdom that God will bring in. Through him. And give to him. Do you sometimes worry.

About what God thinks of you. And your many failings. Do your circumstances make you wonder sometimes. Whether God is against you. Psalm 2.

[24 : 40] Would have us. Look away from ourselves. And look to Jesus. It's his relationship that counts. Not yours and mine. Look at the very last line of the psalm.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Because of Jesus there's a way. Not simply to escape the destruction coming on the world. But to be friends with God.

To be blessed. Blessed. There's a way. Not simply to escape the hostility. And the rage. Of the nations. But to participate.

In the great victory. That God is going to win for his son. Through his son. Psalm 2 is a great companion psalm. To Psalm 1.

That we looked at last week. Isn't it? In Psalm 1. The emphasis. Is on the life of the individual. The blessed person. Is the one who turns away from evil. And who meditates. On God's law. Psalm 2 reminds us.

[25 : 43] That we aren't. Just individuals. God hasn't left us. To fend for ourselves. He's anointed a king. To save us. And to bring the nations. Back to himself.

If we put our trust in him. He can deliver us. He can restore us to God. Blessed are all. Who take refuge in him. Last week.

Andrew encouraged us. To try meditating on the psalms. Well he's a great psalm for meditation. Great thing for us to try to do. I think would be. To go over all the things that. Are on our minds. We'll have. Our own concerns. And worries. And things that keep coming back to us. Let's spend time. This week. Thanking God. That he's in control of them. That he really is God.

Please. And we could ask God. To please show us. How to think about the different parts. Of our lives. In light of his plans. For the world. And for his son. His unstoppable plans.

[26 : 42] If all that's too complicated. A simple way to meditate on this psalm. Would be to simply. Try meditating on each word. Of that last line. What does it mean. To be blessed.

What does it mean. That those. Who take refuge in Jesus. Are already blessed. Not simply in the future. But now. Do I really believe.

That all who take refuge in Jesus. Are blessed. Even me. Even my sins. And so on. The world. As Psalm 2. Describes it.

And as we find it. Is a dangerous and hostile place. But the great news is. That God is really God. He stands with his anointed. And victory.

Is certain. Jesus. The Savior reigns. The God of truth. And love. When he purged our stains. He took his seat above. Lift up your heart. Lift up your voice.

[27 : 40] Rejoice. Again I say. Rejoice. Amen. Amen.