

Enthroned Above the Embattled

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[0 : 00] Psalm 2, verses 1 to 12, let the whole psalm begin, read it out loud for us.

Why do the nations rage, and the peoples fought in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their courts from us.

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, Ask for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree, the Lord said to me, 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. Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

[1 : 29] Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 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. Amen. This is what people call an enthronement psalm, a psalm that Israelites used during the coronation ceremony of their kings.

And frequently it speaks of the theological reality, the spiritual reality of God's reign, and what seems to be the earthly reality of people not living under that reign, people revolting and rebelling against God.

And frequently we too feel very small in this world. We feel like we can't control our relationships, the trajectory of our careers. We can't control our own lives, let alone the things that happen at the national scale, the political movements, the cultural trends, the global happenings.

We feel like just little minions that have little control over the things that happen in this world. And so frequently people feel disempowered and disenfranchised. And Christians in certain parts of the world feel particularly disenfranchised and disempowered.

[2 : 55] And sometimes that leads us to turn to other champions, which may explain some of what's happening this season, you know, in the U.S. during the election cycle.

But in their best moments in church history, Christians have always turned to God as their champion and not to men as their champion. And this passage speaks about that reality. And the main point that the psalm reminds us of is that even though we battle with the sense of embattlement, that we're kind of being attacked or that we are surrounded by enemies or people that don't share our values, really we can take refuge in God because God remains enthroned as king overall.

So when we are embattled, we can take refuge in Him because He remains enthroned as king overall. So let's first look at how the Israelites felt embattled by the nations.

And then secondly, how God remains enthroned above the nations by looking at Psalm 2. So first, it tells us about the nations' rage and how Israelites felt embattled by them in verses 1 to 3.

[4 : 08] Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.

The words are telling, their nations are raging, they're plotting, they're setting themselves against God and His anointed. They're taking counsel together.

And this could be, this is not very threatening because we know that men are capable of accomplishing a lot. People are capable of accomplishing a lot when they put their heads together, when they get counseled together, when the nations gather together.

And we see an example of this in Genesis when just before Abrahamic covenant, Genesis 11, people try to build a tower of Babel. They try to build a tower that reaches the heavens for their own

glory and so that they don't have to be scattered throughout the earth, which is in direct affront to God's glory and in direct violation of God's command to spread throughout the earth.

So God punishes them, but as He does that, He says this in chapter 11, verse 9, Behold, they are one people and they have all one language and this is only the beginning of what they will do.

[5 : 24] And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. So nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them. And when the nations conspire together, and of course this is kind of general comment on the ingenuity of men, what they're able to do, not an expression of God feeling threatened by men.

And we know that, and especially in this psalm, it shows this because if you look at verse 4, starting in verse 4, it says, He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in division.

So this is in stark contrast to what the people are doing. They're plotting. They're busy. They're putting their heads to get a council together. But the Lord is not anxiously standing looking to see what can happen or pacing around in anxiety.

He's sitting. I mean, He's enthroned. That's what it literally is. He says, He sits. He's enthroned in the heavens. He laughs. He laughs at them and He holds them in division.

And it says that He's the Lord, right? The Lord holds them in division. So the word Lord occurs several times in this chapter, but this is different from the other occurrences because it's not capitalized.

[6 : 39] It's not in all caps. So that when it's all in all caps, it's referring to the personal name of God, the covenant name of God that He revealed to Israel. But here, because it's not in all caps, it's actually the word Lord that is used.

And the reason why the Lord sits enthroned and laughs and holds them in division is because He's the Lord. He's the master. He's the one in charge. And He's not afraid. He's undaunted by what these nations are plotting.

I kind of think of it in my image like these people are like busy bees buzzing around and forming, doing stuff in their honeycomb.

And God's like this 800-pound grizzly bear that just comes and takes the honey and actually grizzly bears eat not just the honey, but along with it, the bees and the honeycomb as well.

So, and in real life, it's not like Winnie the Pooh that runs away from the honeybees. You know, the grizzly bears don't care about the bees stinging them because the fur is too thick.

[7 : 40] They can't penetrate the fur. So, the bear comes, takes the honey and then saunters off.

And all he needs to do is just vigorously shake himself to shake off the dead bees, dead honeybees from his fur just like he shakes off water and then he goes off to his next destination.

He's unfazed as he sees these busy bees buzzing about him. And it's kind of like that. It's the nations raise, they plot, they counsel together, yet the Lord sits, is enthroned.

When the nations, when his people feel embattled, when the nations seem to wage war against him, he sits enthroned and laughs and holds them in the nation. And similarly, God responds that way if you look at verses 5 to 6.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. God speaks to them in his wrath and then just terrifies the people that are plying against him.

And how he responds is by setting up his own king. As the earthly kings rage against him, he sets up his own king on his own holy hill. And this is significant because Israel, though it was a monarchy in a sense, they had kings, it was strictly speaking not a monarchy, it was a theocracy because the king was viewed not as a sovereign ruler, but as God's representative.

[9 : 10] He ruled as God's representative. And that's the case here. So if you look at verses 7 to 9, the anointed one, the king that God puts in place, then speaks about the decree that God gave him.

So verses 7 to 9, read with me. It says, I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, 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. And this has very clear Christological implications.

It speaks of Christ. This is why Psalm 2 is one of the most frequently cited Old Testament passages in the New Testament. And Christians throughout the ages have seen a prediction or prophecy of Christ in this passage.

And the connection is very obvious in verse 7, he calls this, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. There is, of course, the kings were referred to as sons of God, but Israelite kings were distinctly earthly.

[10 : 25] They were humans. They were not considered divine like some of the pagan nations consider their kings to be divine. Yet here, it speaks of him being begotten, which later in John gets picked up as language of the unique son of God.

And not only that, it looks forward to the time when Christ will come because this sonship language is the language of God originally used when he made a covenant with King David saying that Solomon will be to him like a son.

He'll be like a father to him. And he promised him an everlasting kingdom. Yet, of course, no earthly kingdom is everlasting. So the kingdom here in view, the king here in view points ultimately to Christ who alone reigns forever.

So he's the son that's in view here. And Christ, as it says here, also inherits nations. It's verse 8. It says, I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. And if you look at the book of Acts, it chronicles how the gospel of Jesus Christ goes from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[11 : 36] So he goes to all nations. Christ inherits all the nations because he reigns over the entire universe. And then finally, God promises, you shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

This is a really powerful image of unbreakable iron shattering something that's weak and brittle like pottery. I mean, when you take an iron to pottery, you know what's going to break.

And that's Jesus. He destroys his enemies. And even though he died on the cross and that seemed, appeared to be like a defeat, yet he was triumphing over sin and death.

He was defeating his enemies because the true enemy is the world flesh and the devil, right? It's not ultimately the people, but it's the world flesh and the devil that are the enemies of God that lead people astray, that lead people in this rebellion against God.

And Christ definitively destroys and defeats the enemies sin and death. And that's, and so Christ is the ultimate anointed one.

[12 : 40] So anointed one, actually Christ means anointed one, right? And he's the ultimate anointed one in view as this passage was used in the coronation of Israelite kings.

It envisioned the time when the ultimate king, the ultimate anointed one would come. And then verses 10 to 12 conclude this passage. It says, Now therefore, O kings, be wise, be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. 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.

the language of kiss the son means be subject to him. You kiss loyalty. You kiss your suzerain king, the king that reigns over you.

And he's basically calling his earthly kings to become vassal kings as kings who are subject to this high king. And because Christ reigns, even in our embattlement because Christ is enthroned, because God is enthroned, those who take refuge in him are blessed.

[13 : 48] So he concludes, Blessed are all who take refuge in him. And so if we think about that, we need to apply this to our lives. In a way, think of our world, our lives, as kind of a virtual reality.

I mean, it seems like the world we live in is real, it's raw, that's what's most real in our lives sometimes. But really, things are not as they seem.

When we feel oppressed by the daily pressures at work, where maybe they herald the values that are contrary to the values of Christ, or when we are oppressed by society where their own vision of human flourishing and goodness contradicts that of God and that of God's word, when you feel grieved by people's sinfulness, maybe your own sinfulness in your life, when you feel embattled by all the things that are going on around you and in you, we remember that Christ came to destroy sin and death, that he's the one that breaks them with the rod of iron and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We have to remember that Christ, who broke the potter of sin, killed death, and he subjected the spiritual powers and authorities of the world. And that's why no matter what situation we're in, we can take refuge in God when we are embattled, because we remember that God may be enthroned as king over all.

So with that in mind, let's sing, sing glorious Christ and let's begin a prayer in response to Christ.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[15 : 27] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.