

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Easter Messages from the Psalms: Who is Jesus? Psalm 2:1-12

Good morning. We commence a new series today to celebrate and lead up to Easter. Easter is one of two important Christian dates in our calendar. The first is Christmas which reminds us of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then there is Easter, the time of our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection. The psalms we will consider in this series will cover the following themes over four weeks:

- Psalm 2 - Who is Jesus?;
- Psalms 40 and 41 - The Incarnation, Obedience and Betrayal;
- Psalm 22 - The Crucifixion; and finally
- Psalms 16 and 68 - The Resurrection, Ascension and Kingdom.

The above referenced psalms, along with others (Psalms 8, 24, 45, 69, 72, 89, 91, 102, 110, 118), are known as 'Messianic Psalms'. They are so termed as part or all of the Psalm could only truly be fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Additionally some of the Messianic Psalms are quoted in the New Testament clearly referring to the Lord.

In general the Psalms have always been a source of comfort to believers down through the centuries. Primarily, they are concerned with Israel and provide instruction to govern the godly Israelite in regards to worship and daily living. Imbedded in some of the psalms are the prophetic references to Israel's Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

By way of introduction to Psalm 2 we see that this is the first Messianic Psalm. There is no psalm heading to identify author, purpose or circumstances attributed to its composition. There are seven clear references to this Psalm in the New Testament (Acts 4:25-26; 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; and Revelation 2:27, 12:5; 19:15). It is in the New Testament that the Spirit of God identifies King David as the author of the psalm (Acts 4:25). David is known as the sweet psalmist of Israel (2 Samuel 23:1).

Some Bible scholars believe that both Psalms 1 and 2 should be one single Psalm. If both are read together it can easily be seen how Psalm 2 follows on in subject matter from the end of Psalm 1. Dear listener you may like to read both Psalms 1 and 2 after this broadcast is complete. Psalm 1 ends with the clear statement that the ungodly will perish (Psalm 1:6). Psalm 2 opens with the Psalmist asking a question as to why the nations are raging against the LORD (Psalm 2:1). Let us now consider Psalm 2. This psalm divides into four sections each three verses long. Our talk this morning will consider the psalm following this basic structure.

- Psalm 2:1-3 - Man's rage against God.
- Psalm 2:4-6 - God's answer to man's rebellion.
- Psalm 2:7-9 - What God has promised His Son.
- Psalm 2:10-12 - The Spirit of God giving counsel to the rulers of the nations.

Man's rage against God

Let us read Psalm 2:1-3. *"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.'"*

In Psalm 1 we have the godly and ungodly man contrasted. The godly is in a place of blessing and it is just the opposite for the ungodly. Psalm 1 clearly shows that the ungodly have no future. It would seem natural that a person would want to rectify such a situation and turn to God. But this is not the case and it is a source of puzzlement to the writer of Psalm 2. Therefore, it can easily be imagined that if it was the same writer, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he would move seamlessly to the commencement of Psalm 2 and raise the question, *"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?"* (Psalm 2:1). The same verse taken from JN Darby's translation says, *"Why are the nations in tumultuous agitation, and why do the peoples meditate a vain thing?"* The writer cannot understand how nations continue in their agitation against God and waste time and effort in conspiracy, when there is no possibility of ever overthrowing or defeating the LORD. It is a lost cause before it has even started. Yet down through the years, this

rebellion has continued repeatedly since the days of Cain, a murderer of his brother Abel and rebellious against God (Genesis 4:1-15).

This tumultuous agitation in the nations reminds me of those washing machines from years ago when the paddle swished the washing backwards and forwards making a great splashing noise. But the nations also meditate and scheme in their hopeless plans which can never achieve their desired end. God cannot be defeated, hindered or overthrown in any way at all. The futility is laughable and at the same time intensely sad as it is a pathway to doom and not to blessing.

Psalm 2:2 identifies those of greater responsibility in this opposition: *"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed."* Kings and rulers are identified as the prime movers in the rebellion. Today we would liken kings and rulers to anyone who had some authority or influence in the world of men. This broadens the scope to numerous so called leading figures in the world and even celebrities so called. In many ways, they will counsel together and form alliances in promoting their views. Their target is *"against the LORD and against His Anointed."* Today we would express this as against God and His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. For the psalmist it is Jehovah and His Anointed. 'Anointed' is a reference to the Messiah.

Psalm 2:1-2 are quoted by Peter in Acts 4:25-26 to illustrate the opposition that was seen at the time of the crucifixion. Peter then continues, *"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done"* (Acts 4:27-28).

Here we see four groups of people who normally would not see eye to eye on anything, yet conspiring together against God and His Son.

In Psalm 2:3 the psalmist identifies their purpose, *"Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us."* What are these bonds and cords? They are the godly laws and guidelines that God has laid out in His Word which provide a framework for safe living and the opportunity to worship the one true God. These have been given by God so that mankind might honour and worship God his creator. As we consider the world around us, we see a pattern of violence which traces its origin back to Cain (Genesis 4:1-15). That violence is seen in man's inhumanity towards his fellow man. Throughout the world today we have violence by individuals, groups or nations perpetrated upon others. There seems to be a never ending cycle of violence in this world.

This framework for safe living found in the Bible does not only address violence and warfare but teaches and provides the guidance to respect other human beings, the sanctity of life from its conception, that we should live together in peace and have a caring attitude towards others. If we are honest with ourselves the very opposite is rampant in our world.

We can send a probe on a ten year journey to land on a comet but we cannot make the journey to prevent abuse happening in the homes and on the streets of our villages, towns and cities! A sad reflection of the fallen nature of mankind!

God's answer to man's rebellion

Let us read Psalm 2:4-6, *"He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 'Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.'"*

A friend of mine recently remarked that when you read in the Bible that God laughs, it is the prelude to God's judgment. So it is here in Psalm 2:4 that you gain a sense of God finding it incredible that mankind would seek to rise up and oppose Himself. So Psalm 2:5 clearly states that God is going to rise up against such and punish those who reject His overtures of mercy. Yet this is not what God wants to do, He pleads for a change of heart and He is slow to let His anger rise as we read in Joel 2:13, *"Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm."*

We stated earlier that the purpose in the heart of unregenerate man is to break off all restraint in order to do their own thing. It is little realised that such a course leads to total chaos and the complete universal breakdown of society and law and order in the world. It is against this background that God makes an unalterable statement, *"Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion"* (Psalm 2:6). God's intention has always been to exalt Christ as universal King with a universal kingdom of righteousness the very opposite of man's purpose! God's statement is unalterable and cannot fail to be accomplished - it is as good as done. The Lord Jesus will be the King in Zion. To try to change God's intention is like King Canute trying to stop the tide coming in. He got his feet wet! In a similar way, this world will see the waters of judgment wet their feet.

When the Lord Jesus was here in this world He came to preach peace through repentance. When Jesus entered the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah, He stopped in the middle of a sentence. Luke 4:16-20 states, *“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.”* If we look in Isaiah 61:1-2 we see the Lord Jesus stopped before the phrase declaring God’s day of vengeance. God’s judgment on this world is coming but not when the Lord Jesus was here. Today we are still in that same period of God’s grace.

What God has promised His Son.

Let us look at the third section and read Psalm 2:7-9, *“I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”*

Here we have the record of God’s promise to the Son of God. This promise was to be publicly made known by the Son. The Son is given the authority and He takes up that responsibility to make known what is true and what will come about at God’s appointed time.

There are many religions in the world, ranging from some who have a single god to those who have many gods. Christianity has one God but in that one God there are three distinct persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This revelation of three persons and yet fundamentally One God is a theme which runs through the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The fullness of the revelation of three persons in the Godhead comes to light in the age of Christianity (see John 14-16).

God’s purpose stated in Psalm 2:6, *“I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion”*, will be accomplished through the judgment outlined for us in Psalm 2:8-9. But first we must consider two important statements in Psalm 2:7. These statements are:

- *“You are My Son”;*
- *“Today I have begotten You.”*

The first statement declares what is eternally true, the Lord Jesus Christ is eternally the Son of God, He had no beginning and He has no end; He always exists. The second statement, obviously prophetic, declares God’s intention of the manifestation of the person who will sit on Zion’s throne.

This statement in Psalm 2:7 is referred to three times in the New Testament all in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ: Acts 13:33 which highlights that He is a great Saviour; Hebrews 1:5 which declares that He is greater than angels; finally in Hebrews 5:5 where He is a priest who is greater than the Aaronic priesthood. But Psalm 2 tells us that He is a great King, greater than Solomon (also see Matthew 12:42).

In Psalm 2:8 we have a conversation between divine persons, *“Ask of Me ...”* and the promise is to give all the nations as an inheritance to the Son, Israel’s Messiah. It is the Son who one day will rule the nations. As the mighty God and Creator of all the world, the nations are His by divine right. We do not see this today and this world is miles away from giving God His due respect and worship. But in the Bible we have it clearly taught that this state of affairs will not go on for ever. Many Bible scholars believe that the day of Christ’s return is drawing very close.

Psalm 2:9 brings to our attention that opposition to Christ’s rule will be severely dealt with. How, you say, can a loving God do such a thing? Because God is holy and righteous as well as loving. He will not tolerate forever mankind’s continuous rebellion against Himself. God is loving and does not desire the death of a sinner but where there is constant rejection of His love, mercy and grace, eventually God will say *“Enough”*. God did it in Noah’s day and He will do so again (see Genesis 6:1-9:17).

The Spirit of God giving counsel to the rulers of the nations.

The closing section, Psalm 2:9-12, bring before us a new speaker, God the Holy Spirit. *“Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges 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, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”*

The Spirit of God goes back to the opening scene of the Psalm and exhorts the kings and judges to be wise and instructed in the realities of life and the revelations that have come from God. There is only one sure and safe course of action, not just for rulers but for everyone. It is to give God His rightful place in our lives. Proverbs 1:7 states, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*”

In the world, it is expected that in the presence of a monarch or head of state we give them due respect because of the office they occupy. How much more the mighty God of the universe who made all things! Because of who God is the normal response for mankind should be to serve the Lord and rejoice in that service. It was the Queen of Sheba who observed Solomon’s servants and declared that they were happy in that place of service, see 1 Kings 10. Solomon’s reign was a little picture of what Christ’s reign will be and what Christians should be today.

In the Psalm 2:12 we have both a final warning and a note of encouragement. The warning is proclaimed to all the nations that they should give homage, or worship, to God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Better to do so willingly and not be forced to do so! In the day of the Lord’s reign, everyone will be compelled to worship bowing the knee to own allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords. In the day that the Lord comes in judgment, just prior to establishing His kingdom, the nations and peoples of the world will be divided into two groups - those who accept Him and those who oppose Him. It is the same today. There are those who own Christ as Saviour and Lord and there are those who reject Him.

So we end the Psalm with a blessing. “*Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him*” (Psalm 2:12) This statement is true for all time, past, present and future. The favour of God rests upon such people because their faith or trust is centred in God and His Son.

To conclude

This psalm is both relevant for all time but it is also prophetic concerning events still to take place in this world. The Son is the Messiah whom the nation of Israel once looked for. This is not a national desire today but is only confined to a few. But this Messiah is the Lord Jesus Christ who came 2,000 years ago. He was Israel’s Messiah but the majority did not recognise Him (see John 1:11) and rejected the lowly carpenter from Nazareth by crucifying Him.

What is important today is to see clearly that this same Jesus, who was crucified, God the Father has made Him Lord and Christ (see Acts 2:36). Blessing can only come through faith, repentance and seeking forgiveness and is only found at the feet of Jesus, owning Him as Lord.

Let me close with well-known lines from Isaac Watts’ hymn:

*Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

*To Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head;
His Name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.*

*Blessings abound where’er He reigns:
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blessed.*

*Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honours to the King;
Angels, descend with songs again
And, earth, repeat the loud Amen.*

May the Lord’s blessing be upon you as you consider this series during Easter time.

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