

SERMONS FROM SELECT PSALMS

HEAVEN'S COURT IS IN SESSION!

PSALM 2

“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.” 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.” “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.’” 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.”

What do Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and their fellows, have in common with those in Psalm 1:1? Answer: they too, desire to be rid of God. Richard Dawkins’s book “The God Delusion” and Christopher Hitchens’s book “God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything,” share a set of core atheistic arguments. In their eyes religion is “man-made; its sacred texts, rather than being the word of God, are the ‘manufactured’ words of fallible men.”

“Faith is an evil” said Dawkins. Hitchens wrote: “If one must have faith in order to believe something, then the likelihood of that something having any truth or value is considerably diminished.”

Stephen Hawking gives us this bit of atheistic wisdom about creationism: “We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. That makes us something very special.” That statement is a really big ego booster, isn’t it? I know you feel better already!

Psalm 1 is about the kings of earth opposing the King of Heaven. It was written by a king, King David, according to Acts 4. He was Israel’s most famous King and song writer. The Psalm is a reflection of David’s personal difficulties and victories as King of God’s chosen people. However, there is a dual meaning and message in this Psalm which we must not miss. While it relates to David and his experiences as God’s anointed King, it also is prophetic and Messianic in that it portrays Jesus Christ God’s Anointed One.

Not only is the author of the Psalm revealed in Acts 4:24-26, but the Messianic nature of the Psalm is likewise verified by the same verses that record what Peter and John said:

“Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: (here they quote from Psalm 2) ‘Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.’”

My focus will be upon the Messianic nature of the Psalm and will be developed as follows: I see the Courtroom of Heaven in session here. The structure of the Psalm is divided into four stanzas of three verses each in the original Hebrew poetry. We have The Earth’s Crime; The Holy Judge; The Just Verdict and The Court’s Counsel.

THE EARTH’S CRIME **Psalm 1:1-3**

Here we read of the world in rebellion against God. Whoever has heard of such a thing! The creatures rebelling against their Creator? The sheep opposing their Shepherd? The recipients of light cursing their Source of light? That is what we have in the opening verses of Psalm 2. Such actions are criminal and should be brought before the Supreme Court, not the one in Washington, D.C. but the one in Heaven!

A. The Anger At God’s Rule. v.1

“Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?”

The Psalm begins with the word “why” - why do people knowingly rebel against the God of the universe, their Creator, and even their Savior. The people, nations, kings and rulers revolt against God. We are not told that all people everywhere are God-haters. People are led to revolt; there is a mob mentality reflected here. The leaders are principally addressed since they stir up people to rebel and consequently, they are severely condemned. They act out, in essence, what Jesus spoke about in the parable in Luke 19 of those who said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” (Luke 19:14)

The nations have no reason to rage against God, and they have no benefit in raging against Him. Their opposition is nothing but a “vain thing.” Since the time of Babel, men continue to band themselves together against God. Jesus is the perfect representation of the Father (John 10:30, 14:9) and if you oppose God the Father, you oppose Jesus. If you oppose Jesus, you oppose God the Father. Since God is unseen, this anti-God attitude often culminates in the persecution of those who are righteous and can be seen.

There is that about the sinful, Adamic nature of humans, that resents and rebels against the rule of God. "To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light . . . We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?" (Spurgeon)

B. The Alliance of Godless Rulers. v.2

"The kings of the earth set themselves....."

Here we see a coalition or conspiracy "against the LORD and against His Anointed." (v.2) Never has opposition, revolt and rebellion been so causeless. Never are humans more wrong than when they oppose Him Who is their Benefactor and their very salvation.

C. The Agreement To Rebel. v.3

"....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.'"

The world of Adamic-nature controlled peoples hate God because He is Truth and Authority. It is our sinful human nature that hates having a Ruler over us; we prefer to rule our own lives. We would rather do it our own way. Authority means submission; authority assaults our pride, challenges our will and corrects our sinfulness. We want none of that.

The world, under the counterfeit Christ, the Anti-Christ, will attempt, one last time, to break the bonds of divine restraint and be free of God forever. To sum it all up, all this reflects how nations and their leaders have, for the most part, felt throughout the course of history. Christ's yoke has not been esteemed easy and light by them but a burden to bear, which burden they want to throw off.

THE HOLY JUDGE Psalm 2:4-6

The crime of created beings against their Creator must be judged. Who is qualified to adjudicate a case and a charge on such a grand scale as this? Who better than the Judge Who sits at the Head of the Supreme Court of the universe?

A. He Sits Sovereignly. v.4a

"He who sits in the heavens...."

The Judge of the universe has not been harmed by the crime of His creatures. What does heaven have to fear from earth? He has not been moved enough to rise from His throne. "He is said to *"sit in the heavens."* This picture communicates calm and serene dignity. He isn't pacing back and forth in the throne room of heaven, wondering what He should do next. He sits, not because He is an absentee Landlord Who cares little for His creation, but He sits as One Who is in absolute control. He is the sitting Judge Who will judge righteously.

B. He Laughs Derisively. v.4b

"He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision."

The Lord, the Judge, is represented as being amused at the foolish rage and rampage of His enemies. He "laughs"; He "derides" them. "He does not even rise from where he is sitting. He simply 'laughs' at these great imbeciles." (James Montgomery Boice)
God simply laughed at their schemes and their efforts knowing that they were futile. The laughing God is soon to show that He is also the wrathful God.

Psalm 37 also pictures God as laughing: "But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming" (Ps. 37:13). God knows His own power and ability to quash any rebellion. However, He refrains from judging the rebellious because He is patient and longsuffering, giving the rebels a chance to repent.

C. He Speaks Wrathfully. v.5

"Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure."

God will not always be silent and He will not "keep His anger forever." (Psalm 103:9) Wickedness moves God to anger. God's wrath comes because people hate righteousness. He holds all of us to account and will rebuke those who rebel against Him. God always has the last word. To the righteous and compliant He will speak peace: "I will hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly." (Psalm 85:8) To the rebellious "He shall speak to them in His wrath." (Ps.2:5)

D. He Acts Authoritatively. v.6

"Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion."

God's answer to earth's sin is always His Son. To the ruler's rebellion "against the LORD and against His Anointed" (v.2) God says, "I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." King Jesus is God's Anointed and He cannot be eliminated or forever ignored. He must be reckoned with! Walking away from Him is an impossibility. In rejecting and walking away, we only approach Him from another direction. Any pathway we take will eventually lead us again to face the One Who inhabits eternity!

"There He stands, holding
Forth His wounded hands;
God is *love!* I know, I feel,
Jesus weeps and loves me still."

THE JUST VERDICT

Psalm 2:7-9

Wrong cannot forever be on the throne, truth forever on the scaffold, to reverse the order of James Russell Lowell's poetic lines. Lowell continued: "Yet behind the dim unknown, standeth God....." God, the Judge, changes His tone from one of anger to one of the loving care of a Father. He pronounces His sovereignty and the sovereignty of His Son, the Messiah. Notice in this regard:

A. The Unusual Proclamation About The Son. v.7

"I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"

The verdict is in; the Judge says in essence: "My resurrected Son, the Messiah, will now take charge; I have appointed Him to execute judgment." Jesus said when on earth: "The Father

judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” (John 5:22-23)

In Acts 13:33 Luke repeated a verse from Psalm 2. He wrote, "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.'" Luke was quoting what Paul preached in the synagogue in Antioch. Paul said that the words "You are my son; today I have begotten you" came true when God raised Jesus from the dead."

Paul said that God "has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

B. The Universal Dominion of The Son. v.8

"Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession."

When Satan was banished from heaven, he took up his residence on earth. He is "the god of this world." (II Cor. 4:4) He energizes the rebel rousers against God. However, His earthly domination is going to come to an end. When King Jesus returns, the nations of earth will be His inheritance and the ends of the earth His possession! What does Isaac Watt's hymn say?

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does its successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

C. The Unparalleled Retribution By The Son. v.9

"You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."

This verse is quoted in Revelation 2: "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels." (Rev.2:27) To rule with a rod of iron conveys the meaning that the Ruler will rule with invincible power and authority. The rulers of earth had gathered together to oppose Omnipotent rule; here they are seen as scattered as broken pieces of pottery.

This is now the victorious reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. The analogy of a smashed potter's vessel, are prophetic words of judgment that refer to the smashing of a pottery bowl. This was an ancient custom when victors would celebrate their victory by writing the names of their enemies on pottery bowls and then smashing them, symbolizing the defeat of their enemy.

The King is coming! When King Jesus returns to mete out judgment upon His enemies, He comes "with power and great glory." (Luke 21:27) Jude records Enoch's prophecy concerning

the extent of His judgment in these words: “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14,15)

There is coming a “settling up day”; the day called “the day of the Lord” in scripture, when rebels against God will be severely and swiftly punished for their rebellion; when anti-God edicts will be erased; when evil doers will receive the just rewards for their evil deeds; when injustices will be justly rectified and when the righteous will be vindicated. In that great and terrible day, I want to be up in the air with Him looking down, not down here on earth looking up!

THE COURT’S COUNSEL **Psalm 2:10-12**

This session of heaven’s Supreme Court is now ending and the Judge gives His final counsel. He calls the Kings of the earth before the bench and gives them the Court’s ultimatum.

A. The Leaders Are Instructed. v.10

“Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.”

The King of kings and the Judge of judges addressed these leaders because they are the leaders of the nations who set themselves against the Lord and His annointed. These leaders led the people on the God-defiant course which they pursued throughout history and their day of reckoning has finally come.

Some 1,600 years ago the Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus wrote: “The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind small.” A 17th century poet, Friedrich Von Logau, wrote a poem, titled, interestingly, “Retribution,” in which he changed the word “gods” to “God” making it read: “Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.” And he added these words: “Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all.”

B. Their Labor Is Commanded. v.11

“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

God, the Supreme Judge, He Who laughed at the evil machinations of puny men, now is seen as the stern Judge giving His final counsel. The yoke they had tried to cast off is now heavier than ever; He from Whom they had tried to sever themselves, they must now serve; He Whom they had hated they must now honor.

They are commanded, not only to serve, but to serve with fear, that is reverence, and to “rejoice with trembling,” meaning to have utmost respect and awe for the Lord. The message for us Christians is to maintain a right relationship with God and out of gratitude, serve Him joyfully.

C. Their Loyalty Is Expected. v.12

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

These rebels must now “kiss the Son” Whom they had conspired to kill. In ancient times, defeated foes were required to kiss the outstretched hand of their Conqueror, or kiss the hem of the his garment, as a sign of their submission and loyalty to him and his rule. This is the kissing of the Superior by the inferior. There is no greater act of folly than to oppose God and no greater sign of submission than to kiss the Son, “lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” (v.12)

There are two types of kisses that one may bestow upon the Lord Jesus Christ: A kiss of betrayal, as seen in Judas’ kiss (Luke 22:48) or the kiss of submission. He Who is the lover of our souls deserves the willing kiss of our love and loyalty. God wants us to recognize our proper place before Him, but to also rejoice in Him and be affectionate in our relationship. Earthy kings rule by authority and demand allegiance; God also demands allegiance, but rules us in the context of love that a good Father gives to his children.

CONCLUSION

Court now being ended, the Court Stenographer turns to the Courtroom, filled with observers of the trial proceedings, and says to all: “***Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.***”

Those who defy God are *broken*, but those who depend upon Him are *blessed*. The psalm ends leaving the choice with everyone: do you want to be broken or blessed? Side with God – He always has the last word!

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