



## The Psalms (Part 2) – The Lord Reigns

Matt McCauley – May 26, 2019

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Let me introduce myself really quickly. My name is Matt McCauley, and I'm our family minister. It is truly a joy and an honor to be with you this morning. If you have your Bible, I'd ask that you'd open it to Psalm 2. That's where we're going to be this morning as we continue our summer series through the book of Psalms.

You might be thinking, "Matt, I'm no Bible expert, but I don't know how long *your* summer is. If we're just now on Psalm 2, this is going to be a while. There are a few of those." Well, there's a very intentional reason we are spending two weeks on Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. We'll see that in a little bit as we dive into the text. I'm going to read, and if you would just follow along and listen, let's get through Psalm 2.

**"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.' 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, 'As 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. 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."**

If you're not aware, last Sunday night, around 20 million people across the United States tuned in to watch the series finale of a show that has captured the attention of much of the nation. I mention *Game of Thrones* not to get into an ethical debate or argument about whether a believer should

watch the show or not but to simply acknowledge this powerful reality that a ton of people tuned in with great anticipation to watch this show to get the answer to one overarching question: Who will be king or queen? Who will rule? Who's going to sit on that very uncomfortable-looking but impressive throne and reign and have dominion over Westeros and Essos?

Apparently, there is a heated debate about who *should* have and who ultimately *did* sit on that throne, and there are a lot of unhappy customers. I didn't follow the show, personally, but based on what I do know I think they should have given it to Samwise. Is that the wrong show? Sorry. I apologize. Now as we settle into our text this morning, you'll quickly see that Psalm 2 deals with that very same question. Who will rule? Who will have power? Not in the mythical realm of *Game of Thrones* but in our very reality, our existence.

Here's the big question...*Will there be one who is given ultimate authority, final authority, over all creation, over everything under the heavens and on the earth?* We're all familiar with this idea of authority. No matter who you are, there's some level of authority you have to submit to. Children, we submit to the authority of our parents. Students, you're generally under the mercy of your teachers. Employees report to a supervisor. Even if you're your own boss, there are certain rules and regulations you're required to follow.

If anyone understands the idea of authority, it's those who are in the military. They have a very clear understanding of what it means to submit to authority. But is there an ultimate authority, one to whom everyone, no matter age, ethnicity, occupation, or status, must answer to, someone who has total and complete reign over everything seen and unseen, a King of Kings, if you will, or Lord of Lords? Well, not to ruin it for you (maybe somebody did that with *Game of Thrones*) but quick spoiler alert: yes, there is.

Psalm 2, what we just read, the first of the royal psalms... This song is an answer to that question. In fact, it's this ruler's coronation song. Before we get into the details of Psalm 2, I want to give you a little bit of context of this chapter within this entire book of the Psalms. Like Psalm 1, Psalm 2 is a gateway to the rest of the Psalms. It's like a doorway. It's designed to start first before you enter into the rest of the book. These two psalms, Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, are a pair.

The psalmist helps us to see this by opening Psalm 1 and closing Psalm 2 with the same word: this idea of *blessed*. We talked about it last week. We said, "Blessed is the man who..." More than them just being a pair, they're a complementary pair, and they each contain one of the two main themes

in the entire book of the Psalms: God's law (that was Psalm 1) and God's Anointed One (this is going to be Psalm 2).

In Psalm 1 you're blessed...you're the happiest, you're the most satisfied, you're the most fulfilled, you're flourishing...when you delight in and treasure and meditate on God's law, his written words, his revelation. God has spoken, and you will be blessed if you listen to and obey and delight in what he has said. Then in Psalm 2 you're blessed (this same idea) when you submit to God by recognizing the rule and reign of his Anointed One. We're going to explain what this word *anointed* means in a bit.

The tension between these two psalms, the conflict we see happening within these two psalms, plays out between two individuals, between the righteous and the unrighteous, the righteous and the wicked. So that's the context. Let's get into the actual passage itself. We'll start with verse 1. If you're taking notes and you are writing or you want to write in your Bible, over this first section, these first three verses, you can write *man resists*.

It says, "**Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?**" The psalm opens with a question. Our psalmist is writing with this very clear picture in his mind, which he'll share with us later. As he looks out over God's creation and sees the kings and the kingdoms and the peoples, he thinks, "Why do you resist? Why do you rebel? Why do you fight? Why do you scheme and actively oppose the authority of the living God and his Anointed?"

Because he mentions it right away, let's unpack this word *anointed*. What does that mean? Well, it comes from a Hebrew word that I cannot pronounce, so I'm not even going to attempt to try it, but it's where we get our English word *Messiah*, which is perhaps one you're more familiar with. It comes from an ancient tradition involving the pouring or smearing of oil over someone's head. (You Young Living and essential oils people just got really excited about this passage.)

It was a ritual done to identify and consecrate a particular person for a specific task or office. In the Old Testament we read of priests and kings being anointed to identify and establish their role and their authority. The people of God in the Old Testament had a lot of kings. You're probably familiar with the most famous one, David. He was anointed, but David, like all of the kings after him, would fail. He would fall. His rule and his reign would end with his life.

The Old Testament prophets and poets, like this psalmist, wrote and prophesied about a future King, a future Anointed One, who was unlike any the world had ever seen, one who would come and finally and forever conquer God's great enemies, ushering in an eternal kingdom of peace and prosperity for God's people. So, the big question for God's people was, "Who will this Messiah be, and when is he coming?" All of their hope was in him.

We get a glimpse of this hope and expectancy from a Samaritan woman in the gospel of John. You might be familiar with the story. Jesus, weary from his travels, stops in Samaria on the way to Galilee, and he sits at a well. A woman comes to the well to draw water, and Jesus asks her for a drink. They begin a conversation, and the conversation quickly becomes very personal and very spiritual.

At one point, the woman says, "**I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.**" She's so hopeful. "**Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'**" There you have it, from his own mouth. Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, born in a barn, is the Anointed One Psalm 2 references, but he is rejected by his own. These kings and rulers and civilizations see Christ Jesus' rule and reign not as freeing but as oppressive. They believe submission to God and his Anointed is like slavery. You see it in the psalm.

They say, "We must break free from these chains and throw off this bondage." I think we can take it a step further and say that complete submission to *any* authority outside of yourself, outside of your own impulses, your own desires, your own will, is completely unacceptable. Why? Because no one can tell you what to do or how to live. Only you know what is best and right and can determine and decide what will ultimately lead to your happiness and flourishing.

That was the original temptation we see in the garden with Adam and Eve. The Serpent appears, and what does he say? He says, "Did God really say...?" "**You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**"

It's almost as if the Serpent says, "God doesn't want you to eat of the fruit because he doesn't want you to be like him, knowing what he knows. He's keeping something from you, something that will make you happy. You can be your own god in charge of your own life, deciding what's good and not good for you. You don't need to answer or submit to him."

Friends, that temptation has plagued mankind ever since. We see it clearly today in what sociologists are calling the *anti-authority age*. If you're a parent, you're like, "Yeah, I feel like that's pretty true." It's this idea that no one can tell you what to do or how to live your life. You catch it in the popular lingo of the day, things like, "Just do what's best for you. Do whatever makes you happy. Live your life." Or how about *this* one? You may have heard of it. "Live your truth. Go find your best life now." The only ultimate authority is internal. If there's a throne in my reality, only I sit on that throne, and I'm going to resist and rebel against anyone who tries to tell me otherwise.

So, what is God's response to this rebellion, to this resistance? What does he think about this attitude? Well, look at verse 4. If you're taking notes, you can write *God laughs*. Verse 4 says, **"He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision."** It's almost as if God is saying, "Oh, that's cute. This little rebellion, this little coup you're working up to try to usurp my King? That's so cute. I really appreciate the work you're putting into that."

Then he says, **"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."** "It's not up for debate. I have my champion. The throne is occupied. Christ Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is sitting comfortably in that spot." That begs the question...*Why Jesus?* How did he get there? What makes him so special? What did he do to get the seat in that rightful place of authority?

Well, I'm going to quote Paul here. I think he says it best. This is from Philippians, chapter 2. **"...though he [Christ Jesus] was in the form of God..."** Meaning, he was equal to, he was the same as. **"...[he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."**

**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

Jesus gets that seat because he earned it. Let me break down what just happened in Philippians 2. Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who has existed from eternity past and will continue to exist through eternity future, did not count his equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he let go of it and became like us. He became a mortal man. When mortal Jesus carried his cross to God's holy hill

and was held up for all the world to see, he, the sinless, died for the sinful, satisfying forever the wrath of God toward those who would call Jesus the Christ, the Messiah.

Not only that, but three days later God would resurrect Jesus, and upon his ascension back into the heavens, it says, God would highly exalt him, giving him the name that is above every name. Today, right now, as we gather in this room, Christ sits at the right hand of the Father as his Anointed One, ruling and reigning over heaven and earth. So, let's look at this reign. What is Jesus' reign? This is verses 7-9. If you're taking notes, you can write *Jesus reigns*.

**"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.'"**

This is what God the Father says to his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, regarding his rule and reign: "Everything is yours. The nations will be your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession." That's a big kingdom. That's everything. The Father is saying that everything will be given to Christ. Over the centuries, a lot of people have tried to do this, and a lot of people have failed. Many kings, many rulers, many conquerors have tried to bring the whole world, all of the nations and peoples, under their rule and reign. Many have tried, and many have failed.

So, is it believable that this carpenter from Nazareth can do this or is capable of this? Well, I don't think it's too hard of a stretch to believe at all. Think about it. Right now, Jesus Christ claims more followers than any person, religious or political, in history. Millions of people across the globe and billions over the course of human history already call him Lord, and that is without even lifting a sword.

If the reality is that Christ Jesus is God's Anointed, this King of Kings, what is our response to that? Well, the psalmist helps us. This last section, verses 10-12. If you're taking notes, you can write *blessed submission*. He 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 right response to King Jesus is to not be like the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God." Be wise. Instead, repent and believe. The Bible says to confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. It uses the phrase *kiss the Son*. It's a sign of submission, a recognition of his rule. In ancient and medieval times, a subject would kiss the king's ring as a sign of submission and reverence to him.

Then it says to serve the Lord, and then my favorite little phrase out of this entire passage, one the Lord has been working in and on me all week. It says to rejoice with trembling. I love this idea. This is the right and proper response to Jesus Christ's true and full glory as God's Anointed King. It's to rejoice with trembling. What is that like? What is it like to rejoice with trembling? Well, you may have experienced a little taste of it in your life at some point.

I've never seen it, but I've heard people describe standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon and looking out in total awe and majesty of the immensity of this object, and then they describe there's like this sense of terror that accompanies it. The same with maybe seeing the Rocky Mountains for the first time or standing on the edge of the Pacific Ocean and looking out over its vastness or seeing a storm roll in over the plains of Texas and hearing the thunder.

There's this awe. There's this draw to this thing that is so much bigger than us, but there's this pairing of a little bit of terror, a little bit of fear. I get this a lot when I go to the zoo with my kids. I could watch the elephants, the lions, and the tigers for hours, because I'm just amazed by their size and power, but there's a little bit of fear, a little bit of terror in there at the same time. I think that's what he means by this: to rejoice, to be in awe, to celebrate, but tremble as you do.

This has been my prayer for us as I've prepared this week. I've prayed it a lot. I've prayed it for myself. I've prayed it for you over and over again, that there would be an awakening to the true and full glory of Jesus Christ as God's Anointed, as King of Kings. To help get us there, I have a question I want to put before you. When you think about Jesus in your mind... Maybe you picture him or imagine him. Maybe it's either in prayer or as you worship.

If you imagine him, what does he look like? I know that may be an odd question, but I'm sure you've done that before. You've imagined Jesus. After all, he was a physical person with a body. We have descriptions of him in the Gospels and in the Old Testament, so I'm sure you've done that before. You've imagined what Jesus might look like.

If you're like me, when you think of him you probably see him as he walks the earth 2,000 years ago. It's a familiar Jesus. We read about him in the Gospels. There's an old hymn that I think captures this idea of him really, really well. It uses the line "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." That's a perfectly accurate picture of him. It's generally how we see him portrayed in art and a lot of media.

One of my favorite pieces of art where we see this is in the sculpture of Jesus or the painting of Jesus and the little children. Maybe you've seen this before. You have Jesus in his robe and his long flowing hair and sandals, and he's usually seated on a rock somewhere. There are children playing around him, and everyone is smiling, and the children are dressed in contemporary clothing, which always is weird to me. It's the part I don't understand, but I get it.

You're trying to capture this idea that we see in the Gospels of children being drawn to Jesus because of his gentleness and kindness. Why they're wearing Old Navy outfits I don't understand, but I get it. That's a true, accurate picture of Jesus. There's nothing wrong with that, but I don't think it's complete. That is a picture of Jesus *then*. By *then* I mean during his incarnation. Theologians call this the *humiliation of Christ*, his incarnation, his life, his death, his burial.

I think we're very familiar with that idea of Jesus. But what about *this*? How often when you think of or about Jesus, maybe as you pray or worship, is the idea or picture of him in your mind like the biblical description of him in Revelation 1 or Revelation 19 or maybe that brief glimpse the three disciples got on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17?

This is the resurrected, ascended, and exalted Christ Jesus. I call this Jesus *glorious King Jesus, mighty and majestic*. His eyes are blazing. His face and clothing are glowing with glory, almost too bright to even look at. He's described as seated on heaven's throne at the right hand of the Father. How often do you consider or picture or imagine Jesus in *this* way, his full and true glory?

Friends, it's important, because this is who Christ is *now*. This is who Jesus is *now*. Jesus doesn't become this majestic, exalted, glorified, all-powerful King (what we see in Psalm 2) at his second coming. That's not what he will be like one day. This is who he is *now*. After his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, there was an exaltation. There was a restoration of the glory he had and had concealed or veiled while he was on earth.

Jesus himself talks about this. In the final hours of his life, he prays a prayer to the Father. I want you to listen to one of the lines of Jesus' prayer to the Father. This is John 17:5. "**And now, Father,**

**glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."**

Jesus Christ's full and true glory. We don't have to wait till his second coming to worship Jesus and see him in this way.

To help get us there, the Bible gives glimpses of that true and full glory during his incarnation, and a handful of people got to see it. In three of the four gospels there's this fascinating story about Jesus taking three of his closest disciples up on a mountain. While they're up there, this really odd thing happens. Matthew 17:2 describes it like this: **"And he [Jesus] was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light."**

If that wasn't crazy enough, it says that Moses and Elijah, who had been dead for a while... These two guys appear, and then a voice from heaven speaks and says, **"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."** The three disciples at this point are so overwhelmed they literally fall on their faces as if dead. They're terrified.

As quickly as all of that happened, things return back to normal. As they're coming down off the mountain (I love this), Jesus looks and says to them, "Hey, what you just got to experience and see up there... Yeah, don't tell anyone. Don't tell anybody." He specifically says, "Don't tell anyone until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." At that point, they have no idea what he's talking about.

What is Jesus saying there? He's saying, "What you witnessed and experienced over there was a glimpse of my true and full glory as the eternal Son of God. Moses and Elijah were there to represent the Law and the Prophets, because they testify and point to me as the Christ. And God the Father? Yes, he is pleased with me and my atoning work on the cross, and he will make me King, giving me all authority. So, yeah, do what the Father says and listen to me and to what I have to say."

There was another guy who experienced the true and full glory of Christ Jesus. His name was Saul. In fact, this encounter was so powerful it literally changed and transformed him. He got a new name. Saul was an enemy of God's Anointed. In Acts, chapter 9, Saul is riding his horse. He's headed to Damascus to persecute those who would call Jesus the Christ and worship him. All of a sudden, he is knocked off his horse. He's blinded by an all-encompassing light from heaven.

Then he hears a voice that says, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Blinded by the intensity of the light, Saul replies, "Who are you?" The voice says, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Then he

says, "Now go into Damascus and do what I tell you to do." So he obeys. He stumbles into Damascus where he meets a guy named Ananias, a believer who lays hands on him and says...

**"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized..."** Think about it. Hundreds of people saw the resurrected Jesus and encountered him. Paul encountered the risen, ascended, and exalted Christ, and there was something very different about his encounter.

Believer, how you see, imagine, and picture Jesus right now will have significant implications for your life. How you approach him in your prayers, how you sing to him in worship, how you talk about him to your children and the lost. Unbeliever, has anyone shared this reality with you, the true and full glory of Jesus Christ, or have you only heard about gentle Jesus, meek and mild? How you see Jesus will affect how you spend eternity.

If you're like me, perhaps you only consider and imagine the incarnate Jesus before his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Now this is good. I don't want to negate this. This is good and necessary, because we need a high priest made like his brothers in every respect. As Hebrews said, he needs to become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God.

We do not diminish the miracle of Jesus' incarnation. I'm not saying we do that, but I think A.W. Tozer captures it really well in this quote: "Christians today appear to know Christ only after the flesh. They try to achieve communion with him by divesting him of his burning holiness and unapproachable majesty, the very attributes he veiled while on earth but assumed in fullness of glory upon his ascension to the Father's right hand."

This Thursday, May 30, is Ascension Day. It just happens to be the day we mark and celebrate when Jesus ascended to the Father and was exalted at his right hand. What if our entire church spent that day reading and meditating and thinking on passages like Revelation 1 and Revelation 19 or the transfiguration account that describe him, like this psalm, as God's Anointed One, sitting on his throne, ruling and reigning with all authority? It's possible that it might change some things. Let me give you some very specific examples.

Let's say you're fighting or wrestling with sin or temptation. Imagine the effect a true and full understanding of Christ's glory might have on that struggle. It might look like this: "King Jesus, this fleeting pleasure pales in comparison to the joy and satisfaction of worshiping unhindered and unobstructed before your throne. Today I choose you and obedience to you over this sin, because better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere."

Or maybe you're consumed with sins of self-absorption or self-reliance or self-rule. It could look like this: "King Jesus, you sit on the throne and are the only one worthy of all glory and honor and praise, so I turn my eyes off myself and onto you and look full into your wonderful face." Maybe you're thinking of the hymn.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in his wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace.

I think you have it right there: the perfect balance, the full and true picture of Christ Jesus, his glory and his grace. You rejoice at the amazing grace of God in Christ Jesus while trembling at his matchless glory. I close with this final thought from a good friend, Richard Ross:

"If I could only think of Jesus as he was in the flesh [his humiliation], it's possible that I might just be worshiping a butler who just exists to meet my needs or perhaps an EMT I only call on when I need help or maybe a Santa Claus I just expect to bring me the things that I want. *This* Jesus was made for me. He's kind of my mascot. But if I can think of Christ Jesus as he was in the flesh and his burning holiness and unapproachable majesty on the throne of heaven as the Son of God, I'm no longer worshiping a mascot; I am worshiping a monarch. I was made for Jesus, to serve, adore, and worship him." Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, would you awaken us to the full and true glory of your Son Jesus Christ, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at your right hand? King Jesus, your name is matchless. Your reign knows no end, and we joyfully submit to your rule and rejoice with trembling. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. To you be the glory forever and ever, amen.