

Our God Reigns Psalm 2:1-12

Let me begin with a story, well part of a story taken from *The Book of Amazing Stories* by Robert Petterson. In the spring of 1912, the world stood in awe as a colossus set out on her maiden voyage. The pride of the White Star Line was a marvel of modern engineering. At 882 feet long, she was the largest ocean liner ever built. The docks were packed with Brits who came to watch this floating palace steam out to sea.

With Victorian smugness, the press proclaimed that the impossible had been done with the building of this unsinkable ship. It was the apex of Darwinian evolution. The captain boasted, “Even God himself cannot sink the *Titanic*.” Man was not only master of the seas; he was greater than God himself!

Through the ages, how many people have challenged God with similar words? How many question the omnipotence of God or His control over events? As we come to our text in **Psalm 2**, that is what we find in the braggadocios claims by the kings of the world. Yet we see the sovereignty of God.

Find your way to **Psalm 2**. Like **Psalm 1**, we have aren’t given the name of the author and neither do we know the occasion for its writing. The rest of the Psalms tell us the who and the why, but not this psalm. Many scholars attribute it to King David.

Also, like **Psalm 1** it encourages us to carefully consider the psalms that will follow so that we know God is sovereign and in control of everything, even the nations who stand opposed to God. This psalm looks at the danger of pride, especially when one boasts of his own power against God. We also find, like many of the psalms, how important it is that in spite of what is going on in the world or even in our own lives, that we should always and explicitly trust God and take refuge in Him. The result of such faith as we will discover from the last verse of this psalm is that we will be blessed. **Psalm 1** begins with a blessing on those who will follow God. **Psalm 2** ends with a blessing for the same reason of trusting Him.

This psalm is quoted or alluded to over 18 times in the New Testament, more than any other psalm. It is called a royal psalm looking forward to the coronation of a new king. On one hand, this psalm applies to King David. He was constantly fighting the nations who were attempting to overthrow him. This psalm is written to show the nations that it is foolish to stand opposed to the king whom God appoints to rule.

This psalm is also considered to be a Messianic psalm as it accurately points to the future time when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, will rule the nations, nations that will also conspire to cast off His rule. In conjunction with **II Samuel 7**, **Psalm 2** looks forward to the universal and eternal reign of the Messiah when God promised David that his descendent would sit on the throne forever.

Psalm 2 serves as a warning to all nations and all people who would stand in pride against God. Throughout history, pride has been at the center of man’s defiance against God. **Verses 1-3** point out the arrogance of the nations.

I. THE ARROGANCE OF THE NATIONS – vv. 1-3

The dictionary defines arrogance as an attitude of superiority manifested in an overbearing manner or in presumptuous claims or assumptions. Arrogance has made many a boast. Notice in **verses 1-2** how the nations willfully rebel against God’s rule.

A. The Nations Willfully Rebel Against God’s Rule – vv. 1-2

To rebel is to oppose or take up arms against a government or ruler. It is to disobey the one who is in authority with the intent of overthrowing that authority. In this case, these nations refuse to admit the rule of God and have taken up a position against Him and His anointed Messiah. They are in rebellion.

In the Near East, when a new king was crowned it was not uncommon for the nations that had been subjected to the rule by that nation to rise up and rebel hoping to overthrow the new king’s rule. We see that in the time of Abraham when five kings joined forces to throw off the rule of four kings.

Genesis 14:1-4

The psalmist begins with a rhetorical question:

“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?” To put it another way: How dare they think they can plot against God? Just who do they think they are anyway? Don’t they know who they’re going up against? I like how the New Living Translation puts it: **“Why do the nations rage? Why do the people waste their time with futile plans?”** In other words, their plans won’t succeed so why even try? There one word – arrogance. **Psalm 46:6 “The nations are in an uproar, and kingdoms crumble! God thunders, and the earth melts.”**

In their arrogance, they think they can rebel against the rule of God and do whatever they want, even rise up to oppose Him. They refuse to admit to and submit to God’s rule over them and so they rebel against God.

From the beginning of creation there has been rebellion against God. It all boils down to the matter of pride. In **Isaiah 14** Lucifer rebelled against God and took 1/3 of the angels with him in an attempted coup to try and overthrow God. In his arrogance he wanted to be God, to sit in the place of God, to rule as God. But **verse 14** says that he was thrown down by God.

He tried another strategy to overthrow God in **Genesis 3** when Satan tricked Eve into rebelling against God by telling her that she too could be like God that she didn’t need to have God rule over her.

Throughout history, many people and nations have attempted to throw off God’s rule either by denying his rule or denying His existence. Pride says you can be your own god and make your own rules. That’s arrogance and the psalmist says such plotting is all futile.

You might find it interesting that the word **“plot”** (NIV) or **“imagine”** (KJV) is the same word for **“meditate”** found in **Psalm 1:2**. We can imagine a lot of things that will never happen.

I imagine I can win a one-on-one game against Michael Jordan.

I imagine I can run faster than Jim Ryan.

The nations imagine and plot an overthrow of God, to get rid of God. The word also means that such

planning is premeditated, something they have thought out in advance. They are determined to throw off His rule. But the psalmist opens by saying that any ruler, any nation who tries to do that is out of their mind because such plans are in vain. Only in their arrogance could they ever think that they can overthrow God.

Verse 2 additionally says that it’s not just one king but that all the kings of the world have joined forces to stand against God and His anointed one.

Revelation 17:12-14

They want to be their own god, master of their own fate, captain of their own destiny. They want to make their own rules. They not only willfully rebel against God, they willfully resist God’s rule.

B. The Nations Willfully Resist God’s Rule – v. 3

Any person or nation who chooses to rebel against God and resist His rule is essentially saying that they don’t fear God, nor are they concerned about what God might do to them.

In **Genesis 20** we have the story of Abraham moving to Gerar, a place ruled by King Abimelech. He and Sarah lied to the king saying they were brother and sister. When the king found out that they were actually husband and wife, he confronted Abraham about his deception. Abraham replied **“I said to myself, ‘There is no fear of God in this place.’”**

Beginning in **Exodus 7** we have the plagues that God brought on Egypt to bring His people out of slavery. Every plague served only to infuriate Pharaoh and further harden his heart. In **Exodus 9:30** Moses said **“I knew that you and your officials still do not fear the Lord God.”**

Deuteronomy 25:18 says the Amalekites had no fear of God.

Psalm 36:1 says that the wicked have no fear of God. (**Ecclesiastes 8:13**)

Psalm 55:19 says that **“men who never change their ways have no fear of God.”**

Proverbs 1:29 says that the fool has no fear of God because they hate wisdom.

In **Isaiah 57:11** God says the Israelites didn't fear Him.

Jeremiah 2:19 says that Israel lost their fear of God and had forsaken Him.

Jeremiah 5:23-24 says the Israelites were stubborn and rebellious people who did not fear the Lord.

Jeremiah 44:10 says that they committed idolatry because they had no fear of God.

In **Luke 22:30** the one criminal hanging on the cross next to Jesus did not fear God.

Pharoah, Goliath, Belshazzar, Herod, Pilate, Stalin, Hitler, Idi Amin, Putin, Xi Ping, Kim Jung Un and many more like them have all resisted the rule of God because they have not feared God. They sit in defiance against God, blinded by Satan's schemes to make them think they can rise up against God in opposition to His sovereign rule. They stand in awe of themselves and spout the same misguided notion that Nebuchadnezzar did when he stood on his terrace overlooking his vast city priding himself about the great kingdom he had built never even considering that he, like every king in every kingdom is a servant of God and the psalmist states that their plotting against God is all in vain. It's nothing but empty gibberish.

The arrogance of the nations makes them believe they can stand against God and oppose His rule. God isn't concerned at all about them as we see in **verses 4-9** the amusement over the nations.

II. THE AMUSEMENT OVER THE NATIONS – vv. 4-9

Do you ever wonder if God has a sense of humor? I think **verse 4** tells us that he does. It's couched in the context of His wrath on the nations for their arrogance.

A. God's Wrath On the Rebellious Nations – vv. 4-5

Psalm 37:12-13

These kings and their kingdoms rise up thinking they're all that and a bag of chips, thinking they're

something special and can overtake God. And God just laughs at them.

Proverbs 21:30 "there is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord."

I Chronicles 29:11-12 "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all."

Daniel 2:20-21 "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His, He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them."

In His sovereign control all He needs to do is move a finger and this nation falls or have a thought and that nation rises up, all for His own ultimate purpose. Man stands up against God and puffs out his chest thinking he can oppose Him and overthrow Him and God just looks at man and laughs. They are mere pawns on His chess board. They will never be able to say "checkmate" against God.

In **I Peter 5:5** we discover that God is opposed to the proud and humbles them in their arrogance. As we look at **verse 4**, God is so unconcerned that He doesn't even get up from His throne. He is not worried in the least at their plans to oppose Him.

You have maybe heard the saying that "man proposes, but God disposes" meaning that man can make all the plans he wants, but at the end of the day, God is the one who determines whether those plans will happen. He is in control of their outcome and so when man opposes God, He just laughs because He knows those plans will never succeed. At times it may look like their plans are succeeding, but God just let's them go on for a bit because He knows their plans will ultimately come to nothing.

My NIV study notes includes this thought: "With derisive laughter the Lord meets the confederacy of rebellious world powers with the sovereign declaration that it is He who has established the Davidic king in his own royal city of Zion."

God laughs at them knowing that they are really subject to Him and His anointed one, the Messiah, as we learn from **Philippians 2**. While today they may all stand in rebellion against Him, one day they will all bow in reverence to Him.

God is on His throne biding His time while His divine plan unfolds waiting for the day when He will pour out His wrath on those who have stood to oppose Him, who have thumbed their nose at Him, who have rejected Him. He has a predetermined plan of when that will be and what that will be.

You may have heard on the news back in the middle of December about the Turkish lawmaker who died two days after delivering a speech in parliament in which he claimed that Israel would not escape the wrath of Allah. At the end of his speech that was streamed live he suffered a heart attack.

Coincidental? I'd like to think that God let him finish his rant, all the while laughing, and then bringing swift judgment on him to show who was really in control. God laughs at the plans of the wicked and metes out judgment in his own time.

Church family, you may think at times like everything you are going through is out of your control or that someone else is in control. We may think that other nations are having their way, we may think that things look bleak around the world or in our world. Don't be dismayed, because our God is in control, so trust Him, wait for Him, let His plans unfold. Stand back and watch the salvation of the Lord.

Verse 5 says that God rebukes them in His anger and terrifies them with His wrath. He is enthroned on High and no one can usurp His authority or overcome His power.

Scan through Scripture and you begin to understand the power of God and His wrath on those people and nations who rebel against Him. Read Exodus and you see how the 10 plagues were part of His wrath against Egypt culminating in the death of all the firstborn. Follow the Israelites to the far shore of the Red Sea and watch how God completely destroyed the Egyptian army by causing the Red Sea to collapse on them as they chased after Israel.

Or when Korah, Dathan and Abiram defied God and stood up against Moses. God opened the ground and swallowed them up along with their families and all their possessions.

Read in **II Kings 6** when God caused the entire Aramean army to be blinded or the account in the next chapter when they laid siege to Samaria. God caused them to hear the sound of chariots and believe Israel had hired an army making them flee.

The book of Revelation tells us of a day yet coming when God will pour out His wrath on the nations for their rejection of His Son. He will unleash seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, and seven bowl judgments. It will be a time of unprecedented death and destruction on the nations for their rejection of the Messiah. That we have been given this prophecy serves as a warning to prepare now so that we won't experience His wrath.

Warren Wiersbe writes: "If people will not accept God's judgment of sin at the cross and trust Christ, they will have to accept God's judgment of themselves and their sin."

Ecclesiastes 8:13 "Because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow."

Jeremiah 2:19 "Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of Me, declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty."

Psalms 55:19 "God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and afflict them."

God's wrath will be meted out on all who oppose Him. Why? The answer is in **verses 6-8** where we notice God's will for the nations.

B. God's Will For the Rebellious Nations – vv. 6-9

These verses speak both to the immediate nature of God's choice in David as king sitting on the throne in Jerusalem and a future prophecy of the Messiah who will rule all the nations from His throne in Jerusalem

during His 1,000-year rule.

Yes, there are captains of nations who say that not even God can sink their ship. But God is telling us that His choice of ruler will sit on the throne and rule the nations.

In **verse 7** God is speaking and says that He has a decree. A decree is an official order given by legal authority. In other words, the sovereign ruler is making an official statement that His Son will inherit the nations. This is a decree of coronation. The Father/Son relationship spoken of here was used in the Near East to describe the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings. The latter ruled with the same authority as the great king. In David's case, he ruled under the authority of God, but also ruled with the authority of God who had put him in that position. But these verses specifically refer to the Messiah who will rule the nations as His inheritance from the Father.

Two important statements support the equality of God the Father and God the Son.

Athanasian Creed **"The Son is from the Father alone; neither made, nor created, but begotten...from eternity from the substance of the Father."**

Nicene Creed **"The only begotten Son of God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."**

There are two possible interpretations of this verse. John Walvoord states that it refers to the day of the eternal decree, when Christ was declared to be the Son of God and begotten or, as John Calvin writes, "this day" refers to the time when Christ's identity was manifested, when the Father bore witness to Christ as being His own Son, which was primarily through the resurrection. Both views hold that Christ is eternally the Son of God.

These verses tell us that God's predetermined plan to deal with man's rebellion was through His Son who came into the world to pay the penalty for sin. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and is awaiting the day when He will return not to redeem mankind but to deliver the punishment that awaits those who rejected His plan of redemption.

Revelation 19:15-16

Eventually all those who have opposed Him will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is His final and eternal judgment. God's will is for the Son to inherit and rule those nations. This iron scepter refers to authority and power that won't be broken, but instead as **Revelation 2:27** points out, His rule will smash anyone, any nation that tries to resist Him, just as an iron bar smashes a clay pot.

Revelation 2:27 "He will rule them with an iron scepter; He will dash them to pieces like pottery."

This scepter, His rule is something that all kings should fear. By it He will crush all who oppose Him. No one will defeat Him. His rule will be both just because His reign will be one of righteousness, and it will be firm.

The arrogance of the nations cause them to believe that they can oppose the Sovereign Ruler who sits amused at their plans. His wrath will be poured out on their efforts because His will for the nations will stand without opposition.

With that in mind, God has an admonition for the nations in the remaining verses.

III. THE ADMONITION TO THE NATIONS – vv. 10-12

These closing verses serve as a warning. When they actually consider who they are in comparison to who the King of kings and Lord of lords is, they need to give reverence to the King.

A. Give Reverence to the Eternal King – vv. 10-11

It's sound advice for us as well. Give Him the reverence that He deserves and is due to Him. This admonition is to everyone. We are all to bow in reverence to Him and as we noted earlier from **Philippians 2:10-11**, every knee will bow before God's anointed, every person will revere Him, every person will confess that He is Lord and sovereign ruler of everything in heaven and on earth. The picture here is of submission. It is an admonition that we should express joy over the Sovereign ruler whose reign will be one of righteousness and justice. Heed the warning to give reverence to the Eternal King. And because of how He will rule, the final verse points to the need to take refuge in the Eternal King.

B. Take Refuge in the Eternal King – v. 12

The word ‘**kiss**’ used here is not a sign of affection but a sign of submission. To submit is not only a sign of submission but also a sign of refuge, that you are relying on His protection. But there is in these closing verses a sense of urgency, revere Him and submit to Him before it is too late, before He comes in His wrath. We can escape that wrath by taking refuge in Him. If or when you do that, you will be blessed. As I said last week, you can be blessed or banished, pardoned or punished.

I began with a story about the arrogance of those who thought the *Titanic* could never be sunk, even by God Himself. Let me finish the story and make some application.

Some forty-eight hours later, on a clear April night, the ship *Titanic* grazed the side of an iceberg. It was so slight that most passengers hardly felt it. Yet it tore a three-hundred-foot-long gash in the hull. Within three hours the “unsinkable” *Titanic* sank four hundred miles south of Newfoundland, taking 1,500 people down to a watery grave.

It was a voyage doomed by pride. The *Titanic* exuded the class system of the late nineteenth century. On its luxurious top deck were opulent staterooms reserved for society’s elite like Vanderbilt, Astor, and Gould. Below them were the second-class decks for the more moderately well-off bourgeois. In the *Titanic*’s bowels were third-class decks crammed with poor immigrants and ship’s workers.

The White Star Line was so paranoid about keeping the social classes separate that the doors between the decks were locked and chained. As a result, hundreds of passengers were trapped below. Hundreds more died needlessly because arrogant shipbuilders were [overconfident] that they had built a megaship that even God couldn’t sink. As a result, they didn’t think it necessary to provide enough lifeboats.

When news of the tragedy reached England, frantic relatives rushed to the Liverpool offices of the White Star Line to discover if their loved ones had survived. Outside the office was a single wooden board. On it were listed two columns of names. At the top of one

was the word “**SAVED**.” Topping the other was the word “**LOST**.” No one was listed according to status or wealth. Astor, Vanderbilt, and Gould were listed among immigrants, waiters, and maids.

Only one thing mattered to those who rushed to the White Star offices to learn their loved ones’ fates: were they lost or saved? It would do us all good to stand there at the offices of the White Star Line with those folks on a cool April morning in 1912. We should realize that the SS *Earth* is like an ocean liner plowing through cosmic seas. She is divided into social classes: winners and losers, haves and have-nots, celebrities and nobodies. So many of us are striving to move up to a higher deck. But there’s an iceberg out there. Sooner than we think, a sinkable SS *Earth* will collide with the end of time. Only one thing will matter on that day: Are you saved or lost? Before we hit that iceberg, we need to grab hold of this: Jesus Christ is not one of many ways to heaven. He is the only way.

Before it’s too late, we must submit to Christ, make Him Lord and King by placing faith in Him. We cannot hide nor run away from His wrath when it comes. A couple desperately wanting to avoid a nuclear holocaust searched the world for a safe place to live and moved to a small island off the coast of South America. It was just months before Britain bombed the Falkland Islands. The only way we can avoid God’s wrath isn’t to try and run from it but to run to Him. You can trust God because His sovereign plan never fail. Take refuge in Him and you will be blessed.