

The Birth of a King! A Study in Psalms, Psalm 2
Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on December 21st, 2008

Invictus

By William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
**I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.**

*"My first allegiance is not to a flag, a country, or a man
My first allegiance is not to democracy or blood
It's to a king & a kingdom"
Derek Webb*

Intro:

Christmas and Easter are the two holidays that bring up the most interesting conversations regarding God. It certainly seems like the targeted holiday dates for every skeptic to up his or her campaign to "Prove" something that doesn't exist. For believers however, both of these holidays are incredibly important to our faith (especially Easter as it represents the resurrection of Jesus; see **1 Corinthians 15**).

Easter of course is vitally important to the Christian faith in that it is the foundation for redemption (**1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2**).

Christmas reminds us that God fulfilled an Old Testament promise to send His Messiah in the flesh (see **Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 49:10; 22:16-18; Psalm 2:7; 45:6-7; 102:25-27; Isaiah 7:14; 9: 1, 2, 14; 61: 1-2; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1**). Emmanuel means "God with us" (**Matthew 1:23**). Christmas represents the incarnation, a very important belief of the Christian faith. Many religions report that their founder, or person they follow, was a deity of some sort, but there are a couple of things that are different from the Christian story. First, most of these stories (found in pagan, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs), believe in a completely different cosmogony that often mitigates the importance of the 'Deity' they worship. Secondly (as a result of the first), the gods they worship don't really gain anything from their deity, and subsequently if you took the god-status away from them, it would do little or nothing to the main story. However in the Christmas story, the deity of Jesus Christ is paramount to the main story of universal redemption for the 'Nations.'

Also we are reminded that the dates used in these two holidays coincide more readily with pagan notions of 'Solstice' or Spring rebirth myths, ostensibly 'Proving' that these gospel stories are rip offs. Again the gospel stories are radically different and very important to the overall stories, while the 'myths' are not. Secondly, the dates of these holidays are irrelevant. Most likely churches (As they have done since the bible writers - **John 1:1; Acts 17:28-29**, to name a couple) have utilized pagan concepts to missionally contextualize their 'True' story in their context. This has led C.S. Lewis to quip "*Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also fact.*" The pagan myths were never rooted in detail and historical reality, but the gospels are. I am not concerned here today about the accuracy of Jesus' birthday, I am concerned that He is being worshipped as our king! Though He was willing to become a vulnerable little baby for our sake, He must be seen as the King and Ruler that He came to be. Our Psalm today reveals Him as the King (In Davidic line) that would come to rule His kingdom in justice.

From the Head...

Why Psalm 2? Psalm 2 is tailor made for Christmas. It explains the sending of a Son to rule the earth. This is what Christmas is about (See **Isaiah 9:1-7**). This is God's promise. We can easily get caught up with the "Birthday of Jesus" mentality and forget that first, this date has nothing to do with His birthday, and second, the emphasis here is His reign, not His birth. This does not mean that we can't celebrate His birth, but I hope that we see God's greater story here, and not segment this day with no connection to what God intended for the ages, which is calling a people for Himself to glorify His name, and point to another kingdom here on earth and for eternity. Our Psalm today gives us the reason for the season in four parts:

PT. 1 The Voice of Humanity (Psalms 2:1-3)

'Nations' and 'Kings' in our passage represent those who reject God for their own devices. This is the heart of the fall of man. The fall isn't about eating fruit from a tree, the fall of man highlights the idea that human reason, and certainly not any kind of god, can tell us what to do. The fall assures us that "*We will be like God,*" knowing good and evil. The fall cries out "*We have no king but Caesar*" (**John 19:15**), reminding us that we will even take the rule of a tyrant over the rule of any kind of god in our lives. At least that tyrant is one of us, and the product of our own tribal reason. The world is at war, not because of religion, but because of rebellion. We war because our "*passions are at war among us*" (**James 4:1**). Our 'Passions' are misapplied and looking for rest in stuff (Money, power, recognition, etc.) instead of God, so we individually, as well as systemically, cause evil in our desire to please ourselves. Religious wars (Christian and non-Christian) are also caused by discontent and bitterness brought on by living a graceless life, bent on pride (Usually more cultural than religious), and the desire for power instead of the glory of God. Freedom and justice is the rally cry for every war and uprising (religious and non-religious), and they most often result in oppression. Man's devices and solutions for justice most often crush those who don't agree. In the gospel we are called to abandon our cultural, national and religious identity to be defined by God as His children; humbly working toward justice by loving those who hate us and serving those who condemn us. We can only do this if we understand the truth of the gospel, which is a humbling, grace filled story. We are created to worship God, and to receive our identity in Him; when we don't, we become skewed in our perspective, and will clamor to find worth and joy in something or someone else, which on many occasions leads us to oppressing others. If my identity is in a culture, race, nation, ideology, epistemology, etc., I will tend to oppress others who don't align with the paradigm that defines me. This is why God hates sin (Idol worship), and why God is perfectly just in His judgment of humanity.

PT. 2 The Voice of Yahweh (Psalm 2:4-6)

Here we see God's sense of humor. It's one of the few places we see that he actually laughs. We do see His humor often in sarcasm and irony throughout the bible, but here we see Him actually laughing. God reacts in laughter to reason apart from revelation.

We are called to "**Never pay back evil for evil...never take your own revenge,**" because "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord...but if your enemy is hungry, feed him...*" (**Romans 12:17-21**). Judgment of people is left to God. He alone has a right to 'fury and wrath.' We don't! We are part of the problem and saved by grace. This should humble us before humanity, not make us proud, which is the heart of the problem. Basically the author is relaying the fact that man's reason leads to God's entertainment. Man's solutions are what lead to violence and oppression, yet we turn and blame God for the problem. This Psalm reminds us that none of this goes unnoticed. He "*has set my King on Zion, my holy hill!*" The idea here refers to the kingly 'Davidic' line that is set by God to have an everlasting throne (see **2 Samuel 7:16**), and would ultimately be filled in the sending of His eternal King (**Isaiah 9:1-7**), who would rule and judge, which is true of Christ (**John 5:22; 12:47ff; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:8**).

PT. 3 The Voice of the Messiah/King (Psalms 2:7-9)

It is God who determines the "*appointed times, and the boundaries*" of humanity's kingdoms (see **Acts 17:26**). It is laughable from God's point of view to watch mankind posture for power and position, when in reality, He and His will prevail on the earth, even when He allows humanity to 'Rule' only to watch them fail time after time. This is much of what the story of God tells us; whether it is kings, judges or national powers, they always fail, including godly kingdoms like David's and Solomon's. There is only one hero in the bible, and that is God, who is the only one who can bring forth redemption, healing, justice and salvation to this land. This is why it is crazy to say there are many gods, and many paths to god(s). That very statement is designed to mitigate the "Truth" of the one true God, the knowledge of whom brings forth salvation and 'Eternal Life' (**John 17:3**). I believe that both "Reason" and revelation tell us that if there is a God, there is only one, and all other attempts to create a god comes from the limited mind of men, which is why their gods end up being a lot like them.

This passage tells us that one day God would reveal His Son, and that Son would rule forever (See **Hebrews 1:5**). Throughout scripture the phrase 'Sons of God' was a moniker attached to those who represented God in covenant on the earth. See God's Covenant People (**Exodus 4:22-23; Deuteronomy 14:1; Psalm 80:15; Hosea 11:1**), Kings (**Psalm 89:27**), and Jesus Christ (**2 Samuel 7:13-16; Mark 1:11; Romans 1:4**). What have seen in God's story is that kings, judges, and His covenant people have always failed to justly represent Him, but He remains faithful to His promise (**2 Timothy 2:13**). Kings, prophets and priests were given by God to represent and reveal who He is, but they (We) have all

failed. Christ is revealed as prophet, priest, and king as the final one who would bring redemption and “peace on earth.” Like the covenanted people of the past, we are to demonstrate the new kingdom in which we serve, albeit weakly, until the king returns (**Revelation 21**). Our allegiance is to a king and a kingdom, neither of which is of this world!

PT. 4 The Voice of the Spirit To Man (Psalm 2:10-12)

God has not left man without a solution. He loves His creation and gives man a chance to free him/herself from the shackles and bondage of sin. He calls all men to Himself, while man continually rejects him in this world (**Matthew 11:23**). This is the Spirit's call, which convicts man of sin, righteousness and judgment (**John 16:8**). This is God's gentle warning, but we aren't listening. As one commentator said, ***“Our ears have become so accustomed to the sounds of the earth, that they are not attuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”***

The “warning” is to do what we are created to do; *“Serve the LORD with fear,”* and then you will *“Rejoice with trembling.”* This is an incredible picture. It is a picture of the rejected King who reaches down a nail-scarred hand of mercy to rescue those who call on Him as their savior. This is not the hand of judgment, but the hand of mercy. It's an honest plea to tell humanity to “Kiss the Son” (which is a sign of bowing down to a king, and kissing his hand in obedient and reverent honor). This is a sign of peace, but there will be a time when He comes a fierce warrior and will righteously judge the world with an exacting wrath that will be well placed, perfectly just, and undeniably righteous (See **Revelation 19:11-21**).

...to the Heart

In our Psalm (written by King David), though understood at the time through the eyes of their own story, where kings are the raging gentile nations and the Israelites are the “Chosen Ones,” we see the Spirit led truth of the future-coming Messiah. **Acts 4:25-26** reinterprets this Psalm, showing us that at the core of His plan, it was not intended as an “us against them” mentality, but that in reality all of collective humanity (see **v. 27**) has rejected Christ and placed Him on the cross, and even that was the result of His own “predestined” plan (**Acts 4:28**). Amazing, God sent His King/Messiah the first time to be rejected, beaten and killed in our place, so that we could be His broken, humble body to a dying world, and that one day, He would return, and we would rule with Him in eternity. That's what Christmas is about, the **Birth of a KING!**

Books for Further Study: Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, Wisdom and Psalms, Psalms Vol. 1-2, John Goldingay; Answering God: The Psalms As Tools For Prayer, Eugene Peterson; The Message of the Psalms: A theological Commentary, Walter Brueggemann, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Praying the Psalms, Thomas Merton; Bread in the Wilderness, Thomas Merton, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, Peter C. Craigie, New International Biblical Commentary, Psalms, Craig C. Broyles, The Book of Psalms, Robert Alter, Psalms Volume 1, James Montgomery Boice, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, Phillip Keller

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