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Sermon Notes

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The Irresistible Advance of Christ's Kingdom

Psalm 2

I. Introduction

A. Testimony to Christ in Psalms

Luke 24:44-45 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

B. How to Interpret Psalms:

1. Immediate context: usually David's life
2. Ultimate context: Christ's kingdom
3. Scripture interprets Scripture
 - a. Jesus told us some Psalms are about Him
 - b. Peter on the Day of Pentecost said Psalm 16 could NOT have been about David
4. Yet David was a type of Christ... events pictured what would happen to Christ
5. BUT focus on fulfillment in Christ mostly... apart from Christ, David means NOTHING!!!

C. Overview of Psalm 2

1. Theme: Christ's Kingdom will advance no matter what the human opposition
2. Application: Stop resisting Christ's Kingdom, but joyfully surrender to His rule!

D. Structure:

1. Humanity's Strident Rebellion (vs. 1-3)
2. God's Serene Reaction (vs. 4-6)
3. God's Sovereign Decree (vs. 7-9)
4. The Preacher's Urgent Application (vs. 10-12)

II. Humanity's Strident Rebellion (vs. 1-3)

A. Rebellion's Insanity

1. "WHY...???"

People commonly ask it of God during tragedies... God asks it of us in our sin!

Ezekiel 33:11 *As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

[Jesus to His Disciples] *Luke 6:46* ***"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"***

2. Psalm 2: The utter futility of rebellion against Christ in the immediate forefront

3. Back of it... the insanity of sin itself

Illust.: [Addiction to crack cocaine??] The insanity of sin... exchanging the glory of God for earthly things; exchanging close fellowship with God for a moment's thrill

How much more insane is it to rebel openly against the God who fills the universe with His power??

B. Rebellion's Extent

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"

1. Rebellion against God and against Christ a worldwide phenomenon

2. The words mean "Gentiles" in OT; but church used them of the Jewish leaders who had crucified Christ

3. Everybody on earth starts as a rebel against God and His Christ... rebellion is worldwide

C. Rebellion's Nature

vs. 2 ***"The kings of the earth take their stand; and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One."***

1. PRIDE: Human leaders

a. pride runs deep in these people

- b. ambition has led them to the top of their nations// professions
- c. pride leads to presumption: they assume that success is possible!!

“Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.”

2. RAGE

vs. 1 “Why do the nations rage...” [LXX]

- a. pride and anger run closely together
- b. the rulers of the earth HATE God and Christ
- c. their rage is certainly demonic... the rage of Satan

Revelation 12:12 But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.

Satan’s pride and rage against God & against Christ is the root of his own rebellion; earthly rebels take on Satan’s character in their rage against Christ

3. MEDITATION

vs. 1 “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot...”

- a. Hebrew word = meditate, to murmur over; to rack your brains deeply; to muse

Psalm 1:2 The godly meditate on God’s law day and night; the rebels meditate on rebellion day and night... how to throw off God’s law!

Illus. Modern “think-tanks”... all focused here on rebellion against God & Christ

- b. all mental powers given over fully to rebellion

Tragic misuse of brain: supposed to ***“love the Lord your God with all your mind”***

4. ORGANIZATION

vs. 2 “The kings of the earth take their stand and the ruler gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One.”

- a. Tower of Babel: incredible power of human organization

Genesis 11:6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."

- b. here, the Hebrew means to assemble & sit closely together to hatch a plot
- c. human cooperation at its worst

5. DETERMINATION

"[they] TAKE THEIR STAND"

- a. settled stance... set with legs apart, grim look on their faces

Like Goliath, who for forty consecutive days came forward and took his stand

- b. determination utterly resolute: human will steeled to its sharpest

BUT... determination about what?? FREEDOM FROM GOD'S RULE OVER THEM!!

vs. 3 "Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters..."

- c. sinners want freedom from God's rule as King! Freedom to do as they please

D. Rebellion's History

1. Christ's enemies: Acts 4: Pontius Pilate and Jewish leaders
2. Roman emperors: Nero, Decius, Valerian, Diocletian
3. Barbarian tribal leaders persecuted converts under Ulfilas
4. Military tyrants: Japanese shoguns who executed Christians
5. Communist despots: outlawing God, Mao and Stalin
6. "Free democracies": America step by step resisting God

E. Rebellion's Futility

1. Yes... humans working with all mind power and will power in total cooperation is powerful
2. God's statement in Genesis 11:6 true on earth but NOT in this case!!

Genesis 11:6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."

3. These chains CANNOT be broken... God will rule over humanity!!

III. God's Serene Reaction (vs. 4-6)

God's absolute serenity & our constant anxiety

1. Founded on total sovereign power
2. Unshakable by earthly events
3. Perfect unity within Godhead... never any shifting shadow of care or worry

He sits... He laughs... He mocks... He speaks... He terrifies... He decrees

A. He sits

1. Lit. "He who sits in the heavens..."
2. True picture: God seated on His heavenly throne

Isaiah 40:22-23 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

3. Foundation of the throne: absolute sovereign power

Psalm 47:7-8 For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. ⁸ God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.

Isaiah 14:26-27 This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. ²⁷ For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

4. God's absolute power is the foundation of His serenity
 - a. we are constantly tossed and turned by events
 - b. the world's rebellion against Christ makes it seem that God is out of control
 - c. NOT SO!!!

Charles Spurgeon: "OBSERVE, dear friends, the wonderful contrast between the violent excitement of the enemies of the Lord, and the sublime serenity of God himself. He is not disturbed though the heathen so furiously rage, and their kings and mighty ones set themselves in battle array. He smiles at them: he hath

them in derision. You and I are often downcast and depressed, and our forebodings are dark and dismal, but God sits in his eternal peacefulness, and serenely overrules tumult and rebellion. The Lord reigneth, and his throne is not moved, nor his rest broken, whatever may be the noise and turmoil down below. Notice the sublimity of this divine calm. While the heathen and their princes are plotting and planning how to break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from them, he has already defeated their devices, and he says to them, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." "You will not have my Son to reign over you, but nevertheless he reigns. While you have been raging I have crowned him."

B. He laughs

1. Ultimate confidence in His own power
2. ALSO measure of humanity's feeble weakness
3. God's "sense of humor"??

Psalm 37:12-13 The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; ¹³ but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.

4. Laughter a sign of disdain over trouble & danger

Lilliputian rebellion: Picture God sitting enthroned over the circle of the earth and gazing down at these tiny humans shaking their collective fists at Him; "Gabriel, did you hear what they said? They're going to fight me every step of the way?!"

C. He mocks

1. Rebellious sinners frequently mock God
2. Yet their mocking has a hidden barb to it

Gal. 6:7 "Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked, for a man reaps whatever he sows."

3. NOTE: God's laughter and mocking are actually a form of grace to His enemies
 - a. delay between laughter & mocking of vs. 4 & wrath-filled judgment of vs. 5
 - b. now is the time of God's laughter... the rebel should see quickly how futile is his efforts to resist
 - c. God laughs and mocks by His sovereign control over daily life events

Example #1: Acts 23:11-35 forty conspirators face a nasty choice: die of starvation or give up their vow!

Example #2: Mao Tse Tung & Christian church

Example #3: Voltaire's house

As these rebels see God's sovereign control over events, they should fear that they are fighting such a powerful God & lay down their weapons of rebellion before His wrath comes!

D. He speaks

1. God speaks to them a word of judgment

Matthew 25:41 "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and His angels."

2. All God has to do is speak a word, and they are finished

Isaiah 40:23-24 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. ²⁴ No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

E. He terrifies

Illus. "No fear"... arrogant rebels feel they have nothing in life or death to fear; God is able to make them afraid... more than that, able to bring them to terror

1. Hebrew = word implies suddenness, haste, shocking speed of the terror
2. It comes upon them before they know it, while they are quite unprepared
3. No one can measure the terror the rebels will feel when the wrath of God is unleashed

Revelation 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

F. He decrees

1. The basis of the sudden judgment is God's prior decree

2. God has already decided that Christ will rule
3. CONTRAST: “You rage, and foment rebellion against my Anointed One;

BUT AS FOR ME, I have established my King upon Zion, my Holy mountain!!

4. Man wars, God makes the final decision... no one has power to remove God’s King

IV. God’s Sovereign Decree (vs. 7-9)

- A. The Fact of the Decree: God’s unshakable law

vs. 7 “I will proclaim the decree of the Lord.”

God rules this universe by His unshakable decrees... His laws cannot be broken

- B. The Content of the Decree

1. The Eternal Sonship of Christ

“He said to me, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’”

- a. quoted by author of Hebrews to refer to Christ’s eternal sonship

Hebrews 1:5 “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’”

- b. there was NEVER a time when the Father did not beget the Son

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Note: the early church fought this battle hard... Athanasius defeated Arius’s false doctrine: Arius taught that there was a time when the Father existed and the Son did not... then, one day, the Father begat the Son

“You are my Son; **TODAY** I have begotten you.”

This heresy resurfaced 130 years ago when Charles Taze Russell began the Jehovah’s Witness movement

c. so... what does "TODAY I have begotten you" mean?

Paul's answer: "Today" is the day of Christ's resurrection

Acts 13:32-33 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: " 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'

Romans 1:4 "...and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord."

When God raised Christ from the dead, He declared Him to be His Son... this is the foundation of Christ's spreading Kingdom: His powerful resurrection

2. The Extent of Christ's Reign (vs. 8)

vs. 8 "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance; the ends of the earth your possession."

Rest assured, Christ has asked, and the Father has granted the request!!!

- a. Christ purchased men for God from every tribe, language, people, nation
- b. His Kingdom is to spread to the very ends of the earth
- c. we are His possession, His inheritance, BOUGHT WITH HIS BLOOD

Isaac Watts: "Jesus shall reign wher'ere the sun does his successive journeys run; His kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more."

This is the OT foundation of the modern missions movement... to spread the Kingdom of Christ to its rightful extent... right to the ends of the earth!

3. The Execution of Christ's Power (vs. 9)

vs. 9 "You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

- a. context: rebellious nations who resist His rule
- b. His scepter in Hebrews is beautiful righteousness

Hebrews 1:8 "Your throne O God will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your Kingdom."

Perfect glorious righteousness the scepter

BUT HERE... a scepter of iron; an unbreakable rod with which to smash all foolish rebellion

V. The Preacher's Urgent Application (vs. 10-12)

"Therefore..." This is the application to the sermon!!!

A. Five imperatives

1. Be wise: PUT AWAY FUTILE REBELLION... gain a wisdom that leads to salvation

2 Timothy 3:15 "The holy scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

Proverbs 22:3 A wise man sees danger and takes refuge, but the foolish keep going and suffer for it.

Judgment Day is coming, and the basis of judgment will be "What did you do with Christ?" Be wise and stop rebelling!

2. Be instructed (warned):

- a. Christ: allow my words to change your heart

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and LEARN FROM ME

- b. stop trying to throw off my authority... rather, learn from me and find rest!!

3. Serve (worship) with fear

- a. Hebrew = worship or serve
- b. word means both... serve with your bodies, worship with all your hearts
- c. fear = deepest reverence for the power and person of God

4. Rejoice with trembling

Amazing expression... there is incredible joy in fearing the Lord!!

5. Submit to the Son

- a. lit. “Kiss the Son”
- b. Ancient Near East: Kings that laid down their weapons and became allies, vassal kingdoms would kiss the hand of the ruling King
- c. glad submission to Christ

B. One warning

vs. 12 “Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish in your way... for His wrath can flare up in a moment.”

1. Christ’s wrath can flare up in an instant
2. The threat: suddenly perishing in your way

No warning... a sudden heart attack; a car coming around the bend and no skid marks... just a sudden end to life; stricken in the prime of life with a terminal illness, and no time to repent; suddenly dragged to the bottom of a lake and life is snuffed out

C. One promise

“Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.”

This is the blessedness of salvation in Christ! Refuge from the wrath to come... refuge from death, judgment, and hell... refuge from all your sins!

D. Summary applications

1. For the non-Christian: Be Warned
2. For the Christian: Be Bold for Christ
 - Bold in your prayers “Ask and I will give you the ends of the earth”
 - Bold when facing obstacles
 - Bold when facing persecution
 - Bold in outreach plans
 - Bold in spending yourself