

The Coming King -- Psalm 2

by A.B. Simpson

Psalm 2 presents Jesus Christ as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, emphasizing the importance of prayer and submission in the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of all nations.

Scripture: Psalm 2:1

Topics: "The Sovereignty of God", "The Authority of Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the Messianic nature of Psalm 2, illustrating the world's rebellion against God and the futility of human ambition compared to God's eternal kingdom. He contrasts the chaos of earthly rulers with God's calm authority, highlighting that while humanity strives in vain, God remains sovereign and will ultimately judge the wicked. Simpson presents Jesus as the divine King, whose love and grace offer reconciliation to humanity, urging believers to submit to Him and engage in prayer for the nations. The sermon calls for a recognition of Christ's authority and a commitment to prayer as a means of advancing His kingdom on earth.

Transcript

The Messianic character of this Psalm is established beyond all others by the frequent references to it in the New Testament, in direct connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. To none but Him could its strong language be applied without the wildest extravagance. It contains three striking pictures.

I. THE EARTH PICTURE

It is a vision of the world in rebellion against God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The first element in the picture is the restlessness of the nations. "Why do the heathen rage?"

To the Psalmist's mind, humanity is like a heaving ocean, like a troubled sea which cannot rest. The stormy deep is frequently employed as a symbol of human passion, and of the troubled, restless masses of humanity. Along with this, the Psalm expresses the idea of vanity, of unrest and strife. "Why do . . . the people imagine a vain thing?" They are like the ocean, ever fretting but never accomplishing anything by its unrest, beating against the shore in futile rage, and rolling back again into its own restless tides, rising and falling, but never any fuller.

"Vanity of vanities" indeed. Oh, how little has come out of all the world's ambition and mighty endeavor! What is Pharaoh today but a withered mummy in a glass case? What is Caesar but a particle of dust that

makes up old Rome? What has become of Nebuchadnezzar's grandeur or the very site of his splendid city? Well might the great Frenchman say as he gazed on the splendid pageant of the review of the Grand Army under the Pyramids, "Nothing is lacking here, nothing but permanence." Oh, how the smallest fragment of all that which came from God lives in immortal glory while the mightiest monument of human greatness passes away in oblivion!

Pharaoh is gone, but Moses remains. Nero is forgotten, but Paul is more illustrious today than when he died under Nero's hand. Nebuchadnezzar is but a dream, but Daniel's prophecies are only today reaching their grandest fulfillment. Pontius Pilate and Tiberias Caesar have disappeared, but Jesus Christ, their contemporary, is rising every day, every century, into still more prominence.

On the front of a Mohammedan mosque, centuries ago, was traced in gilt letters the name of Mahomet, but underneath the plaster that bore the inscription, the Christian architect secretly cut in the solid stone the name of God and a verse of His holy Word. This was the verse: "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion endures to all generations." Ages passed on, the superficial stucco crumbled from the front of the mosque and left the stone work exposed to view, and then the inscription of God's holy Word came out in all its bold relief. Today it stands before the eyes of every passer-by a memorial of the imperishable glory of the things of God, and the transitoriness of all man's boastful pride. How vain, how transient, how futile all the selfishness, the ambition, and the strife against God!

But the figure tells not only of the restlessness and vanity, but also of rebellion. "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 bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." This is the spirit of lawlessness which in every age has resisted the authority of God and is culminating today, as never before, in a thousand forms of license and lawlessness, and which is to reach its full development in the coming of the Lawless One. We see it in its most extreme forms in the anarchy and socialism of our age and the revolt of men against every form of government and religion.

We see it next in the democratic tendencies of our time. We see it in the bold antagonism of many to the authority of the Christian religion, and the popular demand for a freedom that ignores the Sabbath day, the laws of marriage, and even the restraints of morality sometimes. We see it in the insubordination of the young, the precocious freedom of the children of our land, the dissolution of parental authority and control, and the irreverence and self-will of the young.

We see it in the spirit of freedom that is entering the Church of Christ, lowering the standard of Christianity, the spirit of compromise with the world, the laxity of Christian life, the rejection of the authority of the Scriptures, the tendency to reduce even God's Word to the standard of human reason, the refusal of the human heart to submit to God's requirements of personal holiness on the part of His people, the ungodliness and unrighteousness of professing Christians, and the refusal to believe that God requires personal holiness on the part of all who claim to be His people and his followers. We see the two classes even in the Church of God: those who accept God's holy will in all its requirements, and those who do that which is right in their own eyes.

The age is rapidly drifting into license and lawlessness, and we need not wonder at the bolder forms that the daring infidelity and wickedness assume, in defying the very authority of heaven and claiming that man is able to be a God unto himself. We shall yet see greater things than these. The world is hastening to its Armageddon, "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

II. THE HEAVEN PICTURE

How different is all on the heaven side!

1. How calm and tranquil is Jehovah amid the raging of His foes! He "sits in the heavens." He is not agitated, He is not oppressed. He is not even doing anything, but calmly waiting till they have spent their force in vain, like the fretting billows against the rockbound coast.

2. He despises all their petty and futile hostility. "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." How foolish must seem to Him all the efforts of His enemies to defy Him! How ridiculous the attacks of infidelity upon the Bible, and how vain the fiercest assaults of human and hellish hatred against the cause of Christ! How God loves to confound His enemies by little things, and to laugh to scorn their vain attempt to resist Him.

Once in England, it is said, a bold and blatant infidel had amused and overawed a crowd by his defiance of God to strike him dead; and after again and again appealing to heaven to prove if there was anything in Christianity, without any apparent effect, he turned to his audience and ridiculed the God who was powerless to harm him. Some were influenced by his audacity, but God was waiting. On his way home, apparently in good health, he suddenly fell from his horse, and in a few moments expired. A medical examination was held, it was found that the cause of his death was a little insect no larger than a sand fly, which he had inhaled. This smallest of insects was sent against him to show how contemptible all his strength and opposition were, and how easily God could confound and destroy him by the feeblest of His creatures.

So, again and again, has God turned into contempt the wrath of His enemies. The very place that was once used as a meeting place for infidels in London became an office of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the very arguments that infidelity has turned against Christianity have been found afterwards to be the strongest evidences of the truth of the Bible.

3. At length God's hour will come, and His mighty voice will speak in anger and His glorious arm be raised in judgment. "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." God's judgments have already fallen upon a sinful world, and the vials of His wrath are now preparing for the days of tribulation. So daring has human wickedness become and so audacious human pride, that

"The purging fires must soon begin,

And judgment end the curse of sin."

4. God's supreme remedy for all the evils of humanity is His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. Not judgment, but Jesus, is the provision of heaven for rebellious men. So we come to

III. THE CHRIST PICTURE

1. We see the divine King. "You are my Son; this day have I begotten you." Earth's true King is no less than God's eternal Son. That which should be recognized as the height of honor has been the one object of the world's fiercest opposition. The Lord's parable has been fulfilled. "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But . . . they said . . . This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." But He shall have His inheritance in this little world, the high and eternal honor of having as its King the Creator of all worlds and the highest of all beings.

2. He is the King of Zion, the King of Israel Himself. On the cross the inscription was by the order of an overruling providence: "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS," and this shall yet be verified in the fulfillment of history. Christ is the only living heir to David's throne, and on that throne He shall yet sit in glory and majesty.

3. He is the King of His Church. Men have tried to govern the spiritual kingdom of God, but Christ is the only Head of His Church, and all her work and worship should be subject to His authority and dedicated to His glory.

4. He is the King of Nations. "Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." All earth's nations are yet to be subject to Him, and all her tribes and tongues are to have a part in the redemption song of which He shall be the theme. But let us not forget how this kingdom is to come to Him. It is to be given to prayer. "Ask of me." Is this to be His prayer alone, or is it to be His prayer in unison with the Church as inspired by the Holy Ghost? Is this not our high calling, to be the voice with which He shall ask? the priesthood through whom His prayer shall be breathed to heaven, and the world evangelized and brought to His feet?

This is the great force, dear friends, through which the Gospel is to be spread among all nations. This is the mightiest force of Christianity today: believing prayer prompted by the Holy Ghost. This is the mightiest missionary lever. And this is something that every Christian may wield if he will, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It will be found by a reference to the history of missions, that all the great triumphs of the Gospel have been in answer to prayer. It will bring money, it will bring men, it will bring openings for the Gospel, it will bring millions to accept it. Let us mention two simple illustrations.

A few years ago, two or three earnest women were led to ask in united prayer that God would lay it upon the hearts of some men of wealth to give largely to foreign missions. In the town where they held their little prayer meetings there was a very rich man who was opposed to foreign missions and had often spoken of the folly of giving so much to the heathen when there was so much need at home. After a time this man died; and when his will was probated, it was found that he had left many thousands of dollars to foreign missions, and that the will was made at the very time these ladies were praying about this matter. God had quickly answered their prayer and touched his heart, without his knowing whence the impulse came.

Again, in a little town in Ohio, an old minister had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and spent his last days in continued prayer for the world's evangelization. It was customary for him to write his prayers in his diary, and this he did with systematic order, going around the world and covering in turn every mission field. It was found after his death that in the very order of his prayers God had poured out His Spirit upon each one in the form of missionary revivals, leading to the conversion of many souls. Thus God had answered his prayers with such literal exactness as to encourage us in claiming definite results.

Oh, do we realize how much Christ depends upon us to give completeness to His intercession? He is but the Head in heaven, we are the body on earth, and He needs us to fill up the unity of the prayer and make it the cry of the whole body -- not only the Head in heaven but the Bride on earth, with the Holy Ghost inspiring her cry. Beloved, do you realize that your Master needs your prayers? You have prayed much for yourself; do you ever pray for Jesus? He is asking you today, Will you pray for Me and My kingdom? It is one of the promises of the seventy-second Psalm, "Prayer shall be made for him continually." How much are you praying for Him? How much have you been delivered from selfish prayers? What fruit are you claiming in heathen lands which you may never see?

5. "He is the King of kings." "Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, O you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." How marvelously God has put His hand on earth's kings and shown His ascendancy over all human power! How easily He came to the house of Pharaoh, through the infant Moses, and used a child to humble the monarch! How quickly He came to Babylon, through the three Hebrew children, and by their victorious faith compelled Nebuchadnezzar to proclaim the true God through all his dominion! How easily He stepped into the palace of Xerxes, and by the influence of a Hebrew maiden controlled the mighty monarch of the world and saved a whole race from destruction! How manifest His providence in the career of Alexander and his successors, and the minuteness with which He made them fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah to the letter! How easily He arrested the career of the great Napoleon and caged him on a lonely isle when He had accomplished His purpose through him! How quickly He humbled the pride of the Papacy in the very hour in which it claimed infallibility with impious audacity! How mightily within the last few decades His hand has moved upon all the nations and shaken all the thrones of earth, and how easily some day He will cause them all to crumble before His touch and give way to Messiah's throne!

O beloved, let us take hold in mighty prayer for earth's kings and governments. There is a promise in the book of Proverbs which we may claim for the evangelization of the world: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will." Our King has sent us forth not merely to the people of this world, but to its nations and sovereigns. "Go you therefore and disciple all nations," is His royal commission. Like ambassadors of a great king, we go forth to take not only individuals but nations for our Lord.

How much depends upon the attitude of the governments of the earth to the Gospel, and we can control this by the ministry of prayer. Let us claim the hearts of earth's rulers for Christ, the King of kings.

6. He is the King of love and grace. So far the picture has been one of majesty and, in some degree, of terror; at least, of power and judgment. But suddenly it all changes, and an appeal of infinite and surpassing tenderness closes the whole wonderful drama.

It reminds one of the scene toward the close of our Savior's life when He had just been honored and worshiped as the King of Israel, and, amid the plaudits of the multitude, was marching into Jerusalem. But suddenly, on the side of Olivet as the city burst into view, His whole demeanor changed, and the procession paused at His command. For a moment He gazed at the city at His feet and, bursting into a flood of passionate weeping, cried: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!"

He could not enjoy the grandeur of the spectacle before Him. He saw not the enthusiasm of the multitudes and the glory of the city and the temple. He could see only the gathering legions of Rome, soon to encompass the beleaguered city, the famine and the terror of the doomed inhabitants, the streets running red with human blood, the pillage and horror that were soon to follow, the captives going forth unto all nations, the ashes of the temple and the desolation of the city for nearly twenty centuries. All this He saw; and as if He would save them even yet from its horrors, He poured out His heart in one last appeal of tender compassion and love.

Such is the picture of this Psalm. Suddenly all the figures of royal majesty are changed, and, bending from His throne, the Savior reaches down His lips of love to rebellious men and, offering the kiss of

reconciliation, cries: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way." It is mercy in the midst of majesty. It is love triumphing over judgment.

He sees the coming tribulation. He sees the iron hand that will break rebellious men like a potter's vessel. But He would save us from it. He would gather us to His bosom and shelter us in the coming storm if we would accept His love. He would spread out His wings for the little birdlings and shield them from the cruel hawk and the angry tempest if they only would. His highest prerogative is mercy. His dearest attribute is love. His most kingly glory is to forgive and save.

These are expressed by this beautiful figure: "Kiss the Son."

1. It speaks first of submission. The kiss is the Oriental token of absolute submission; and so our first attitude toward Christ must be surrender. He will lead us into a closer union and lift us to a higher friendship, but we must begin with submission and unconditional surrender; then shall we find that He will welcome us with tenderest love and lift us up into His royal favor.

Bunyan has given us in the allegory of the Holy War, a picture of the surrender of the town of Mansoul to King Immanuel. Long it held out against Him and tried to resist His authority. But at length it was forced to surrender unconditionally and its citizens compelled to march in single file into His presence, with ropes around their necks, acknowledging themselves as worthy of death, and submitting themselves to His sovereign will. But then, to their astonishment, as they lay prostrated at His feet, He caused the herald to proclaim the decree of forgiveness to all the transgressors, through His clemency and mercy. The herald was also to add that King Immanuel had not only forgiven the rebellious town of Mansoul, but had also determined to bestow signal honors and privileges upon the city that had submitted to Him, and make it henceforth His capital and home, and lavish upon it the highest privileges of His kingdom, accepting its citizens as His own personal children, and sharing with them all the riches of His glory. He requires of them that they shall yield unreservedly to Him, and then He rewards them with His richest blessings and fondest love.

2. The figure expresses reconciliation. It tells of friends divided meeting in love and forgiveness. It recalls the picture of Jacob and Esau falling upon each other's bosom in the embrace of mutual love. It tells us of the prodigal and his father meeting in each other's arms with the kiss of reconciliation. It tells of the Savior waiting to forgive and ready to receive the poor sinner to a higher place than Adam lost or angels ever knew. He, at whose feet holy angels fell in adoring awe, bends His lips to kiss the vilest sinner.

Once at the door of a police court a refined lady met a poor abandoned girl in the hands of the police. The poor creature looked so dejected and ashamed, that the lady threw her arms around her and kissed her lips, with some tender words of compassion. The girl was so overwhelmed that she burst into tears and said: "You are the only one who has kissed me since I left my mother. How could you do it?" And that kiss saved her precious soul and brought her to receive her Redeemer's love.

Down in a police court in New York City, a man was on trial. His wife had testified against him, and the judge was about to pronounce a very severe sentence, when the babe in the mother's arms caught sight of its father in the prisoner's dock, and began to cry and to reach out its little hands to go to him. The mother allowed it to climb over the railing. The father took it in his arms. The little one was overjoyed, and in the presence of the court began to caress him in a very tender manner, putting its arms around his neck and kissing him with childlike love and freedom. The court was deeply moved.

The judge even felt the tender appeal, and, after a moment of silence and deep feeling, he said to the man, "You may thank that child for your freedom. I was about to punish you severely for your inexcusable conduct, but the kiss of that little child has saved you from a long term of imprisonment. A man that can be so loved by a pure child cannot after all be utterly hopeless." So, dear friends, there is One who bends from heaven and offers you the kiss of His love. "God's holy Child Jesus" will stand between you and your doom, and the Judge upon the throne will spare even the vilest sinner who accepts that kiss of reconciliation. Oh, do not refuse such love. How easy it is to come back to God in that simple way! How easy it was for you as a little child to go to your father and your mother and by a kiss of reconciliation know that all was forgiven.

Some years ago a minister was called to see his boy die, as was supposed. He was a young man just out of his teens, but did not know the Savior. The father was told as he entered the hospital that the boy could not live many hours, and that if he had anything to say, it must be said quickly. He entered the chamber and took the cold hand of his child with deep emotion. The son looked up and said: "Father, they tell me I am dying, and I know I am not saved. Tell me in the fewest words you can just how to come to Christ, and tell me as if I had only five minutes to live."

What a responsibility for a father's heart! But he sat down and quietly said, "My boy, my dear boy! You remember once when you were a child how you grieved and disobeyed me. I had to treat you with severity and refuse to let you come to me as you used to, and sit on my knee and put your arms about my neck. You saw that it hurt me to be stern and distant as much as it hurt you, but that I had to do it for your good. But you remember how at last you could not stand it any longer, and you came to me, threw yourself into my arms, and said: 'Papa, forgive me. I am sorry. I will try never to do it again.' You remember how quickly I forgave you without a word, and just took you in my arms and loved you more than ever, and it was all right between us. Just one kiss settled all the trouble. That is all, my dear boy, that you have to do with your Savior. Just as you came to me, go to Him, and He is more willing than I was to take you to His love and make you know it."

"Is that all, Father?" the son answered. "Then pray for me, and I will do it." He covered his face, closed his eyes, and all was still for a few minutes. Then there was a little sob. He threw the covering from his face, opened his eyes, and, with a cry of joy, said: "It is all right, Father. He has received me, and I know that I am saved." That was all, but it was enough. The soul passed from hell to heaven, from sin to salvation forever, and so blessed was the effect of the transition that it lifted him above the power of disease and death. In a few days he was recovering and became one of the most prominent devoted Christian men of this country, not ashamed to tell others the wonderful story of his simple conversion. Oh, who is there that, as he reads these lines, will "kiss the Son" and come into the love of God, of a God who waits to be gracious, with more than a father's love?

3. But the figure means more than reconciliation. It tells of intimate friendship and tender love. So Jesus is calling us into the inner circle of His friendship. Soon He is coming in His glory, and the world will see Him as a mighty King. But He wants us to know Him as a tender, welcome Friend. Clad in his war-like armor, Ulysses met his child. It cowered and fled from his father. The old hero could not stand it. Tearing the helmet from his head and the breastplate from his bosom, he clasped the little one in his arms and said, "Darling, you must not fear me." Then it looked in his face with smiles of joy and said, "Papa, I am not afraid of you now because I know you."

O beloved, shall we meet Him in the armor of His might and the glory of His majesty, and cry to the rocks and mountains to "hide us from the face of him that sits upon the throne"? Or shall we meet Him with the loving confidence of happy children; and as we look up to that majestic throne, shall we catch the glance of a loving welcome that will seem to say, "I know you; you are mine"?

It will be a dreadful day for those to whom He shall say, "I know you not." Job could say in blessed contrast, "Whom I shall see for myself . . . and not another." He is longing to know you now and take you into the inner circle of His friends, so that when that day shall come, you shall look up with transport and say: "This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Yonder is a steamer reaching the dock. I see two persons on board. But, oh, with what different feelings they view the landing! One is a prisoner in charge of an officer. On that dock are standing the officers of justice who are to carry him to the gloomy prison to bear the punishment of the crimes for which he has been arrested, and brought from far-off lands. Oh, how he dreads that landing!

But another is standing near. It is a daughter returning home. Her father and mother are waiting on that pier. Her husband also stands there with smiles of welcome, and many loving friends are waving their handkerchiefs and sending their welcome across the narrow space as the ship draws to the shore. Oh, what a different meeting!

So it will be when Christ comes again. Some will meet Him with horror and dismay; some, with rapture and delight. To some it will be a day of judgment and an everlasting prison; to others, it will be the Bridegroom, the wedding, and the homecoming.

"Oh, shall we be found of Him in peace,

Spotless and free from blame?

Shall we meet Him with loving confidence,

Or with tears of grief and shame?"

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