

Psalm 2 and the Mockery of Christ

by Malcolm Horlock

Malcolm Horlock's sermon explores the mockery of Christ as foretold in Psalm 2 and its profound implications for understanding His kingship and suffering.

Duration: 44:26

Topics: "Mockery"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the immense love of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He emphasizes how Jesus willingly endured scorn and mockery from sinners, bearing shame and scoffing in our place. The preacher highlights the power of God displayed through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, conquering death and defeating hell. He also mentions the impact of a painting on Count Zinsendorf, which led to his transformation and dedication to serving God. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the future reversal of the mockery and dishonor faced by Jesus, as described in Revelation 19.

Transcript

Reading, first of all, please, from Psalm 2. Psalm 2, please, and verse 2. Psalm 2, verse 2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed. Verse 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Verse 7, middle of the verse, Messiah speaks.

The Lord has said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings. Be ye instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling, kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27, please.

Matthew chapter 27, verse 26. Then Pilate released Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, the praetorian, and gathered to him the whole band, and they stripped him, put on him a scarlet robe, and when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head, and after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from

him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Revelation chapter 19. Revelation chapter 19. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself, and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God, and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And that's all I plan reading from the Bible, and you should know that the meal is being delayed for ten minutes or so, just so you're clear, we'll be finished by quarter to. Twice in Matthew 27 we read that word mocked, to make sport of somebody, to have jest at someone's expense.

In his Gospel, Luke records how at the close of our Lord's so-called trial before Caiaphas, the men of the council and their attendants also mocked him. That's Luke 22, 63. But it was for an entirely different reason.

Luke says much in his Gospel about people's perception of Jesus as a prophet, following the raising of the widow of Nain's son. The multitude glorified God, saying, Surely a great prophet has risen among us. God has visited his people.

And that very chapter, which is chapter 7, ends in the house of Simon the Pharisee, who says in himself, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman it is that touched him, because she's a sinner. And he runs through, it comes right into chapter 24, wrote to Emmaus, Cleopas, he says, You a stranger, that you don't know these things which have happened. What things? Risen Lord, what things? How that Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet, mighty in deed and word, a prophet, the men of the council covered his face, and they struck him in the face, and they said, Prophecy.

Who smote you? They ridiculed the popular view that Jesus was a prophet. It's got nothing to do with Matthew 27, because now, at the close of his trial before Pilate, the soldiers of the governor, and many at least of the Roman cohort stationed at the barracks, anything up to 200 men, a whole manifold, they mocked and ridiculed his kingly claims, his supposed kingly claims. So, Luke's with the popular perception he's a prophet, this is on about, what people supposed were his kingly claims.

So, you are a king? Well, first of all, they placed around him a scarlet cloak, described in the other gospels as reddish-purple in colour. No likelihood, I guess, it was some discarded military cloak, which Jess laid to hand, and that purpose. And they did this in obvious mimicry, mock imitation, of the short purple robe, the short purple cloak, worn by the Caesars.

Tiberius was not the first. It was a distinctive garb of the emperor. And I know, from Matthew chapter 27, that the soldiers changed his clothes for him three times.

We read two of them. First, in verse 28, they stripped him. And they put this cloak on, or better, around him.

And then they took the cloak off him. And they put his own garments back on him. That's verse 31.

And later, they removed his garments again, and gambled for each piece when they crucified him. Verse 35. And I have to leave it to your imagination, what renewed pain those actions meant.

As each change of clothing opened afresh the half-dried wounds of the scourging you read about. Scourging. The scourge and murderous, barbless weapon of an instrument of torture.

Straps of leather-embedded acorn-shaped lumps of lead, short, sharp bone. They bound him. And they bent him.

And they beat him. They tore his back in every direction and reduced him to a mass of bleeding flesh. And here they are, taking his clothes off, putting a cloak on him, taking the cloak off, putting his clothes back on him, taking his clothes back off.

And then they patted, they twisted a crown of thorns. No doubt, very carefully plucked and woven by hands well protected by tough military gauntlets. So you are a king.

You can't have a king without a crown. And this crown they pressed down on his head to play the part of the laurel wreath, which according to the Roman historian Suetonius was worn by Tiberius. Now I know evidence that a previous Caesar had worn such a thing.

I know that Emperor Tiberius of the day wore a laurel wreath. You need a crown. So they gave him thorns.

One of our hymns says it well. Sinners in derision crowned him, mocking thus the Saviour's reign. But that rude coronet with its hard, sharp thorns meant not only mockery for him, but inexpressible pain the more so as they repeatedly beat down that crown with his reed staff that they had thrust into his hand and which they had now extracted from his right hand.

Matthew points out in his tense they just kept on beating him down. In an earlier meeting I said something like they gave him for his head thorns to wear and for his back a cross to bear and for his hands nails to tear for his head a crown and it was said by one of the church fathers Chrysostom that his own blood provided the rubies for his crown that day. I call it a reed staff and perhaps we ought to think of that the reed staff that they thrust into his hand.

There was nothing slight or flimsy about this reed this isn't a little bit of bamboo the thickness of your little finger, forget it. From the use of the word throughout the Greek Old Testament it is quite clear this was a thick and sturdy reed capable of being used by a man as a walking cane. For example, you launch into 2 Kings 18 Sennacherib, king of Assyria he sends three of his great generals the Tartan, the Rabсарis and the Rabshake up against Jerusalem, they just steamroll at Lachish Jerusalem's next on the agenda and the Rabshake announces Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria What confidence is this in which you trust?

Behold you trust upon the staff of this bruised reed even upon Egypt upon which if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all them that trust in him You can forget the historical reference you notice that reed is a staff on which a man would think of leaning Interestingly, Ezekiel paints the same picture of Egypt in chapter 29, I'll quote his words They have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel and in addressing Egypt, the prophet says When they leaned on you, you broke I suppose the reed was an eminently suitable picture of Egypt because the Nile, the great river of Egypt was always rich in very sturdy reeds So you are a king?

And this solid cane was thrust into my lord's right hand to do duty as his scepter the emblem of royal authority You can't be a king without the short cloak You cannot be a king without a crown You cannot be a king without a scepter And then they used the scepter to beat down his crown They bowed the knees before him in mock obeisance So you are a king? Mark says, kneeling They worshipped him Many translated, they paid him homage and I understand their reservation But certainly by the days of Tiberius The Caesars were openly acknowledged and revered as gods They were both given and accepted divine honours So for me, for what it's worth I'm happy to live with the translation worshipped him It was the soldiers' bogus, counterfeit worship And then they mocked him, saying Hail, King of the Jews Mark says, they began to salute him began to greet him, saying Hail, King of the Jews So you are a king, are you?

It was their sneering imitation of the official salute Ave Imperator Hail, Emperor Which every Caesar received from his chief men from his chief officials his leading military powers Hail, Emperor On their lips King of the Jews was itself a title of derision They had nothing but contempt for the Jews As an exceedingly troublesome race small, but creating problems for the empire out of all proportion to their size they'd always done it And by their few well-chosen words these Roman soldiers managed to mock both my lord and his nation in the same breath Hail, King of the Jews Spitting again and again at him is Matthew's turn They took the reed and struck him on the head and explained on the Lord's Day evening that I found that men in Bible days had a whole arsenal of abuse and derision and scorn that they could fire at someone and we then commented on making someone naked or part naked wagging your head at someone, hissing at someone clapping your hands at someone damaging a man's beard and all that But what my study led to was that the ultimate gesture of contempt and scorn was to spit directly in someone's face Let me remind you just one of the passages I quoted that evening It's in Numbers chapter 12 It's all to do with Miriam and Aaron when they murmured against Moses and how, as a result the Lord smote Miriam with leprosy white as snow and Aaron appealed to his brother on her behalf and Moses went to God and prayed that she'd be healed and God agreed to restore her health to her but required that she be put out of the camp as defiled for seven days and made it clear no one moves until she's readmitted so you all park yourselves here and then the Lord explained his reasoning told Moses why he insisted on her seven day exclusion and I'll quote the Lord's words Would she not be ashamed for seven days if her father spat in her face?

To spit in the face was the extremity of humiliation and disgrace So you are a king and the soldier's filthy spittle took the place of the kiss of homage and allegiance which the emperor was accustomed to receive from his chief men They would approach him and they would kiss his cheek it was their expression of submission to his absolute authority My Lord received no kiss they spat on him and throughout this whole disgusting spectacle My Lord, the object of their scorn and their sport maintained his dignified silence As Isaiah put it in chapter 53 but down to verse 7 Twice He opened not his mouth He was oppressed and he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth He is brought as a lamb to slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is done so he opens not his mouth But I tell you My Saviour felt that keenly He may have said nothing but it hurt him I noticed that he had been stung very keenly by the insult that Simon the Pharisee delivered him in Luke 7 to which I referred for another reason just now He says to Simon I entered your house You gave me no water for my feet You gave me no kiss for my cheek You gave me no oil for my head Our Lord felt that insult Our Lord was, I think it's probably safe to say an extremely censored man He felt that Well, how do you think he felt this?

When they held him up was their object of ridicule When he was approaching Jerusalem for the last time he specifically warned the Twelve what was going to happen to him in his most detailed prediction His

words are these He would be delivered the Son of Man would be delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked to be scourged and to be crucified and the Lord brackets together three things How keenly he felt that mockery So make no mistake their mockery stung him sharply How do you think the Father felt about all this?

How did God feel about this maltreatment of His Son? The Lord prayed prophetically Psalm 69 Thou hast known my reproach my shame my dishonor Grab that word, hold it my dishonor Jesus taught that the Father has given all judgment to the Son that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father That's John chapter 5 That's God's agenda That's God's purpose that all men honor the Son And how do you think the Father felt when he saw his beloved Son so dishonored and abused but amazingly God didn't intervene No fire falls from heaven to burn these men to a crisp The earth under the praetorium doesn't open to swallow them alive down into the pit What did God do?

Nothing Absolutely nothing Ah But one day One day God is going to throw into reverse every fine detail of that cruel mockery When the Almighty God will reverse every detail of this parody of His Son's majesty We sang hymn 98 Every mark of dark dishonor told in answering glory now I know what the hymn writer meant but it's not accurate Not now But certainly one day And we've read of that day In Revelation 19 When heaven opens for a magnificent pageant It is the coming of the great mighty warrior king And then you'll see the changes Then he will appear clothed not in some discarded scarlet cloak but with his garment dipped in blood Possibly better sprinkled with blood I suggest the blood not his blood but the blood of his enemies Now I know the sequence of Revelation 19 I know this comes before you read of his confrontation with his foes which you get in verses 19 to 21 But I suggest that all this imagery and you're in a book of images that this imagery points to alerting his foes to alerting the beast and the false prophet and all the assembled Gentile armies alerting them to the imminent and absolutely sure destruction which is about to fall on them and which did fall on them Speaking of our Lord's second advent Prophet Isaiah in chapter 63 asks the question as he opens the chapter Who is this that comes from Edom?

It's not straightforward the actual sequence of events and our Lord's second coming in glory You don't need to worry about it this morning Just live with Isaiah 63 Who is this that comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah the capital of Edom this that is glorious in his apparel travelling in the greatness of his strength I that speak in righteousness mighty to save Why are you red in your apparel and your garments like him that treads in the wine vats I have trodden the winepress alone of the people there was none with me for I will trample them in my anger and trample them in my fury and their blood, their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiment for the day of vengeance is in my heart So it won't be then in the language of Isaiah 61 quoted by our

Lord the year of the Lord's favour the acceptable year of the Lord it will be the day of vengeance of our God and then he will appear crowned not with thorns but with many crowns many diadems on his head not now the woven crown of Matthew 27 that word would have been used to describe the crown of victory for which men competed in Greek and Roman games no but with many diadems of regal dignity now don't get it wrong a diadem's not made of gold and it's not embedded with precious stones a diadem was a narrow band which was worn around the head it was, dates back to the Persians as far as I can track it it came in through the Greeks and the Romans that adopted the practice it was the distinctive badge of royalty and it was quite common for a sovereign to wear more than one of these bands one

or more of these diadems as an indication of his authority over more than one country so for instance you go back to 169 BC in Antioch Ptolemy VI Philometer came in wearing two diadems one signified he was

king of Asia well he'd always been that let's get Malcolm one signifying he was king of Egypt he'd always been that and the other because he was king of Asia because he just knocked the stuffing out of the Asian army diadems in this book, the book of Revelation the great red dragon of chapter 12 is portrayed as wearing seven diadems and the beast that comes out of the sea in chapter 13 wears ten but the diadems adorning the brow of the mighty warrior king of chapter 19 cannot be reckoned they cannot be counted he has many diadems and then he appears not with a reed rudely thrust into

his right hand but wielding a rod of iron firm inflexible unbending with which he will rule the nations, we read a point already made at the beginning of chapter 12 but that's another story not a reed but a rod and that expression, rod of iron I hope you noticed it is a throwback to Psalm 2 it's an echo from Psalm 2 thou shalt break them with a rod of iron and many of the features of the great warrior king of Revelation 19 are borrowed from Psalm 2 and then he will appear not to be greeted by a handful of men who kneel before him in mock obeisance but in God's time in better at the name of Jesus thus, every knee shall bow and they will confess him every knee and in that day you will not find seven thousand refusing to bow as that gallant resistance movement in the days of Elijah refused

to bend their knees to Baal every knee shall bow these Gentile soldiers bowed their knees in mockery in that day, every knee will bow and then, it will not be a mere handful of men who snigger as they salute him Hail, King of the Jews but every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and you will not hear one dissenting voice you will not hear one voice say Caesar is Lord Domitian, Emperor while John's writing the Revelation the main driving force behind the persecution which martyred many of his brethren and sent him to Patmos Domitian required that confession it was allegiance to the state it was a political, a civic statement Caesar is Lord you say that, you're fine you not say that, you're in hot water the Christians didn't say it, so they suffered but in that day nobody says

Caesar is Lord every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord the warrior king of Revelation 19 has a name written on his garment and thigh that's a place you'd normally look for someone's sword it's a place where a sword would normally hang but in the imagery in the picture language of Revelation 19 my Lord has on his thigh and on his garment a name that declares to all not that he is king of the Jews he is king of kings he is Lord of Lords and then no band of puny little men will spit in his face according to Psalm 2 in that day the kings of the earth and the judges of the earth will be exhorted and the penalty is great for non-compliant they will be exhorted kiss the sun not kiss the cheek of Caesar as a token of your allegiance not draw near to Tiberius and kiss his cheek kiss the sun

God's sun lest he be angry and you perish from the way no longer then will it be said he opens not his mouth because out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword that with it he might smite he might strike down the nations now I know that though the I quote the armies of heaven have to hit him at their head they wear no armor and they bear no weapons this is an interesting army they're neither dressed nor equipped for conflict any weapons they carry would have been redundant they were unnecessary only the king carries a weapon on his thigh there's no sword there's a name his sword is in his mouth and with what Isaiah in chapter 11 calls the breath of his lips remember he once spoke a universe into being that way with the breath of his lips he visits withering destruction on all these assembled

armies of the Gentiles that have come up against his city his word carries a destructive power far more terrible than anything invented or harnessed by men and as you know some men have some very powerful weapons in the year 2003 they're like a box of fireworks compared to the breath of his lips as the united Gentile nations will find to their great cost once as the Lamb of God he was done before the

Shearers but now as the Lion of Judah he, the Lord shall roar out of Zion I'm not making this up, this is Joel chapter 3, it's the same incident the Lord shall roar out of Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem and when this Lion roars his foes fall even if you're a beast or you're the false prophet once God watched and listened as men derided and laughed at his son but in the day of

reversal Psalm 2 assures us he that sits in the heavens shall laugh he will have them in derision and the whole thing swings back every mark of dark dishonor to Sam well, pick them off what about the cloak on his back garments dipped in blood what about a crown, what about those many diadems what about a reed staff hmm a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of his kingdom men bowed their knees before him in mockery mock obeisance every knee will bow they said hail king of the Jews and sneered every tongue will confess then he was silent he responded with with no ridicule, with no word but when he comes again he will speak and he will speak destruction to his enemy fine, but why we must ask, Lord, why why did you submit to all that indignity and all that humiliation why did you let

these puny little men do it to you and I believe that if the risen Lord deigned today to answer that question he would say, Malcolm there were two reasons I did it for God you quoted Malcolm from Psalm 69 so you must know thy said, for thy sake I abhor and reproach shame is hovered my face I did it because I loved my father but in another sense, Malcolm I did it because I loved you who for the joy sat before him endured the cross despising the shame the joy of having me with him for him like him forever and my Lord endured all that shame for that and if that does not move us to wonder and adoration then I despair but is that enough is it enough for us to say, thank you Lord is that enough might he want more no doubt you've either heard or read many of you at least of the great painting of

the crucifixion done by one German artist by the name of Sternberg it hung in the gallery at Dusseldorf it is a good while ago very wealthy young man went into that a titled young man and counts in from Dorf with everything before him he had lands, he had title he had wealth Zinzendorf's life was changed because he entered that gallery and he gazed at the picture he gazed in a sense at what you've been gazing at this morning but it did something to him it's probably done nothing to you he heard the master say he stood there mesmerized by just a painting and he heard the master say all this I did for you what have you done for me and it broke him and he went out a different man he went out to serve God he founded what's known as the Moravian Mission which impacted John Wesley and blasted

the United Kingdom in time we still got the effects of it today so what's the issue? the issue is, well, if he did all that if he suffered all that what what can I do? what have you done for me? what if? what a horrible thought! what if the risen Lord came this morning and we saw him and he said to us how come you saved over 40 years I remember that road where you came to me at first tell me Malcolm write it on one piece of paper what have you done for me? and the issue for me this morning is am I prepared to do anything that would involve me in some cost some sacrifice some self-denial do I not love him that much? the one who willingly faced the scorn and mockery of men for me one day God's throwing it into reverts point by point sinners in derision crowned him man of sorrows we sing

bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a saviour what a saviour you've seen him in two places we did in the earlier session you've seen it again you've seen him stand the lonely sufferer you see him in his glory what a wonderful saviour let's pray Lord we come to give our praise not just thanks Lord we want to go beyond that we want to have in our hearts a sense of the wonder of what you have achieved you went down so low but there in weakness crucified through weakness we see the mighty power of God where are my sins now? and

you've laid low our great foe you've conquered death you've defeated hell you've broken the power of the grave you've torn its bars from its windows you've wrenched its doors from its hinges

Lord you are the mighty conqueror but one day this world will feel the impact of that we've read of it oh Lord we come and bow our hearts in your presence we had bread we had wine and Lord some of us may never have seen anything more than the bread and wine forgive us Lord so may you not fire in condo and consume us we come Lord to remember you we pray that you write some of this on our hearts now we come to food mundane ordinary supply for the body stuff the Lord you've opened your hand and provided it so we give you thanks and pray we retain something of your word in our hearts Amen

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