

The Coronation of the King

Scripture: Psalm 2

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People of God, it has been a long time since we have witnessed a coronation of a British monarch. The last one was in 1952 for Queen Elizabeth II. A coronation is full of long-standing rituals and traditions. One of them developed from the coronation of King George II in 1727. In those days, the monarchy was more powerful than it is today. Everything had to be the very best for the crowning of the new powerful King George II. Even the music had to be the best. And so they sent for the best. They sent for George Frederick Handel who was working in Italy at the time. He had to hurry over to England and in less than four weeks compose the music for the coronation.

On that day, Westminster Abbey was filled with dignities and guests from many different countries. George II was sitting on the throne. The archbishop was about to anoint him as King over British Empire. But before he did that, the coronation anthem began. The music began softly, but it grew louder and more intense. The choir joined in, singing at the top of their lungs: God save the king, long live the king. Only when the last words of this chorus echoed throughout the stone chambers of the church did the Archbishop anoint George II and crown him as king of the British Empire.

Every coronation ceremony has its prestige and grandeur. A coronation is an announcement to the people and to the surrounding nations of the new person who rules the land. This was also the case for the nation of Israel in the OT. Beginning with King Saul, God used the office of king to rule his people. The king was to be God's representative; acting on behalf of the Lord. When a new king was to be installed, the people of Israel would gather together to witness this great event.

We do not know many of the details of the coronation ceremony for

Israel. But we do have various psalms that were composed for the coronation. Psalm Two is one of them. Perhaps it was first heard at the coronation of David, for the words of this psalm echo the promises that God had given to David.

This evening, we hear this psalm not just as a coronation psalm for the kings of Israel but as a coronation psalm for the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Jesus stood in the line of King David. The promises given to David are fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Jesus is king. That is the point of Ascension Day. When Christ ascended from this earth, forty days after his resurrection, he was welcomed into heaven as the victor over sin, death, and the devil. The ministry of Jesus reached its final phase. Christ entered into heaven--not to rest but to rule. To rule not just over heaven but over earth as well. Christ now reigns at God's right hand. Today, we remember the coronation of the King of Kings.

As we remember this coronation event, let us look again at Psalm Two and consider how it applies to Christ our king. The psalm is divided into four parts. The first part, verses 1-3, speak about the nations rebelling:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

Now it might seem strange to you that when the king is being crowned with authority and power that we hear these words of rebellion. Yet it was at this time when a new king was being installed that there was the greatest potential for political instability. The old king who once held the country or the empire together was gone from the scene. The new king had to yet to assert his power and authority. If part of the country or empire wanted to separate this period of transition would be the best time.

For example, it was when Rehoboam became king after his father Solomon had died that the northern ten tribes rejected the leadership given by the tribe of Judah. Instead, they separated to form their own country.

Now remember that the kings crowned in Jerusalem over God's people were acting as God's representative. David and his sons after him were to rule in the name of the Lord. But it seemed that the nations around Jerusalem were constantly conspiring against God's chosen king. Whether it was Egypt on the one side or the Assyrians on the other side, there was a constant threat to the kingship of David's royal house.

This rebellion against the Lord's anointed representative continued when the Messiah arrived on the scene. When Jesus was born, Herod tried to kill him. As Jesus began his public ministry, the devil tried to tempt him.

When Jesus preached and performed his miracles, the religious leaders of Israel rejected his claims to be the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Instead, they had him crucified on the cross with the title "King of the Jews" hanging over his head. It was a rebellion that failed. Because Christ arose from the dead, victorious over the enemies of God. He ascended to receive his crown of glory and honor.

Yet even now as the King of Kings reigns at God's right hand this rebellion continues. The gospel message is proclaimed: Jesus is king. Yet many of the nations and peoples of this world refuse to hear this claim. They refuse to acknowledge the rule of the King. Instead, they seek to go after their own way; following their own rules.

Don't we see that rebellion continuing in our own society? Is Christ recognized as king? Are the rules of the King followed? No. Instead we see the name of Jesus being used as a swear word. We see a total disregard for God's law. The idea that Christ is King over the entire creation is a completely foreign idea to many people.

Now in the second stanza of this psalm, we discover the attitude of the Lord God towards this rebellion against his anointed king. In verses 4-6, the Lord mocks the rebels:

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger, and terrifies them in his wrath, saying: "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."

The Lord begins with laughter. From his vantage point over heaven and earth, he can see what the nations are trying to do. When the nations attacked King David, they might have thought that they were attacking just another nation. They failed to see that the Lord God, the Creator of all things, stood behind the King. The Lord saw their ignorance. He laughs and scoffs at them.

Today, when the world looks at the church, when the forces of rebellion attack the church, they may only see a frail human institution, divided into numerous bickering factions, some of whom are facing serious problems because of scandal. Yet behind the church stands Jesus Christ, the King, who promised that not even the forces of hell will be able to overcome the church. But the world does not see this. And so God laughs at this ignorance.

He also causes terror in their hearts. How does he do that? Merely by making the announcement: *I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.* This declaration alone should have been enough to produce a sense of awe and respect in the hearts of others. When David became king in Jerusalem, it was an act of God. God's was setting up David as his royal representative.

David's kingdom was to be the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

(But this plan did not succeed because of the limitations of David and his sons. They were sinful and could not fulfill the requirements of God's law. They could not reign with complete justice and perfect righteousness. But that obstacle was overcome with Jesus. With Christ, the announcement can be made: The kingdom of God has come. God has installed his King, not in an earthly Jerusalem but in a heavenly one.)

This announcement that Christ is king in heaven over all creation should cause fear and dread in those who are rebelling against the Lord. The forces of evil and injustice should be worried. Those who trample on the law of God should re-evaluate what they are doing. Because Christ is king.

But there is more to be heard. In the third part of this psalm, in verses 7-9, the coronation decree itself is heard:

You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; and dash them to pieces like pottery.

This decree speaks the special relationship between God and his royal representative. David was viewed not only as the servant of the Lord, but also as his son. He had that intimate relationship with God. But it is of course Jesus who is the true Son of God. At his baptism and at his transfiguration, God affirmed this, saying "This is my Son, with him I am well pleased."

This coronation decree also speaks of the realm over which the king would rule. David ruled over the promised land. But this land was but the beginning of reclaiming the entire world for God. According to God's plan, all the nations will be included. God's kingdom under Christ would extend to the ends of the earth. In the words of one song: Christ shall have dominion over land and sea; earth's remotest regions shall his empire be. Let us not underestimate the far-reaching claims of Christ the king. As Abraham Kuyper often said: There is not one square inch of this creation that Christ does not claim as his. How often we fail to have this grand vision in front of us. This world belongs to God. And he rules it through his Son.

As a result, we should not underestimate the power of Christ the king. He rules with full authority and power. As Psalm 2 says: *You will rule them with an iron scepter, you will dash them to pieces like pottery.* This is very powerful imagery. Christ has crushed the serpents' head through his death and resurrection. Satan is now bound. And one day soon, all the forces of evil and sin will be removed from the face of the earth.

The coronation decree has been made. It is now the church's

responsibility to make this declaration known. It is the church that proclaims Christ as king. The church is the means Christ uses to establish his kingdom on earth. We are gathered here this evening, as servants of Christ the king. We go from here to boldly proclaim to our world: Christ is King.

This thought leads us to consider the final stanza of the psalm where we read:

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.
 Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are they who take refuge in him.

Submission is required before the king. That's the key response this final stanza is looking for. Rather than serving other gods, the world--including us--are called to serve the One True God. We are to hail the Lord as King with joy and song. We are to come before him with awe and respect. Kiss the Son, we are told. That's an act of humility, because this kiss was given upon the feet, as an act of submission. That's what we're to do: to submit to the King.

Why do the nations conspire against the Lord's anointed king? Why, indeed. Because the King has been crowned. The victory of the cross and the resurrection was sealed when Christ entered into heaven to sit at God's right hand. On this Ascension Day we are reminded of the coronation day of the King of kings. Over 180 years ago King George II was crowned, king of the British Empire. The choir sang: Long live the king. But king George II died. His empire is no more. The kings, the presidents, and the prime ministers of this world come and go, but the King of Kings--Jesus Christ lives and reigns forever. Nations and empires rise and fall, but the kingdom of our God will triumph over the ends of the earth.

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? Because Jesus is King. Kiss the Son and submit to him. As Philippians 2:9-11 says about Jesus:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.