

The Coronation of God's Anointed

By Rev. Nollie Malabuyo • January 11, 2009

Readings: *Psalm 2:1-12; Acts 4:23-28; Hebrews 1:1-5* • Text: *Psalm 2:1-12*

Song: "Wherefore Do the Nations Rage"

"Now, after I saw him, I felt different. I know the Lord will shower me and my family with blessings this year."

"I have diabetes, a heart condition and ulcer but I know [he] can cure me."

"[He] has blessed my family with a good life. All my children have good jobs abroad. And I was able to buy a car.

Sound like the familiar American prosperity gospel? No, these quotes are from devotees of a statue called the "Black Nazarene." The Black Nazarene is a life-sized statue carved out of dark wood supposedly by an Aztec in Mexico and shipped to Manila by friars in 1606. Now enshrined in a church in downtown Manila, most Filipino Catholics believe in its miraculous powers of healing and material blessing. Legend says that its light color turned dark due to a fire in the Mexican galleon.

During its annual feast in January, it is paraded around the city in a carriage for millions of devotees to see or touch. And as the carriage nears its church home, people wave towels and chant: "Viva Nazareno!" They declare an idol as their God and king, in rebellion against God's second commandment (Exod 20:4-6). They pledge their loyalty and allegiance to an idol, not to Christ the King. They worship and bow down to a wooden image that cannot speak or walk or do anything.

Is not this what Jeremiah 10:3-5 says? *"A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good."*

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm that Israel sang when their king is crowned. They acclaim a real king, not a wooden statue. Unlike many other psalms, this psalm has no heading, so the author is unknown. However, from Acts 4:25, we know that New Testament believers ascribe this Psalm to King David.

But during the Babylonian exile, this psalm gave the Israelites hope when they remembered the promises made to Davidic kings at their coronation: that God's Anointed, the Messiah, will rule their nation as a theocracy again. More than this, Israelites also saw that the only hope of the Gentiles is also by being subjects of this Davidic king. He will rule the kings of the earth as God's Anointed. A wooden idol carved by a pagan - a "scarecrow" that cannot speak, cannot walk and cannot do good or evil - cannot reign as a king as well.

So today, we shall consider this theme: **The Coronation of God's Anointed.**

1. The Futile Earthly Rebellion (verses 1-3)
2. The Terrifying Response from Heaven (verses 4-6)
3. The Divine Coronation (verses 7-9)
4. The Stern Warning to Earthly Kings (verses 10-12)

The Futile Earthly Rebellion

David begins Psalm 2 in perplexity: Why would the kings, peoples and nations conspire and plot against the God of heaven? Who would conceive of such foolishness? Conspire against the God of the universe who could destroy his whole creation with a word from his mouth? This does not make any sense, but total foolishness and futility - *"in vain."*

Throughout history, puny kings of the earth have tried vainly to rebel against the God of heaven. In Noah's day, God saw that "every intention of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). Pharaoh repeatedly defied God's command to let his people go. Canaanite, Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman emperors never stopped trying to destroy God's people for centuries. In our day, many nations continue their efforts to silence and even destroy believers with outright persecution and laws to hinder the preaching of the gospel.

But it was not only Gentile nations that continually defied God. In Jeremiah 2:20, God tells Israel, *"Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said 'I will not serve you!'"* And again in Jeremiah 5:5, *"So I will go to the leaders and speak to them; surely they know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God. But with one accord they too had broken off the yoke and torn off the bonds."*

God's own people Israel were as foolish and as vain in rebelling against God and his Anointed. They hardened their hearts in their rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness and after they were given the Promised Land. And when God's Anointed, the Messiah came, they despised and rejected him who came to cast off their yoke of slavery to sin and give them his yoke of redemption and rest. In the prayer of the disciples in Acts 4, they declared that the crucifixion of Jesus was what was written by David in Psalm 2: nations raging in rebellion against God and his Anointed, *"There were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel."* Even the people of God who had been given all the promises rejected Jesus as King, preferring instead to submit to rebellious earthly kings.

And in this age, there are people everywhere like these kings. Paul describes these people as,

lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power"(2 Tim 3:2-5).

Aren't Filipino devotees to the Black Nazarene *"having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power"*? For it is a well-known fact, admitted by many Filipinos, that the Philippines is one of the most corrupt nations in the world, not just in the government, but in all walks of life; that sexual immorality has few equals in Asia; and that drug addiction is an epidemic. Lawlessness has become a way of life. Where is the evidence of being *"the only Christian nation"* in Asia?

There are all kinds of people, whether inside or outside the church, who say, *"Let us throw away God's law because it is like a chain that binds us. We want to do what is right in our own eyes."* They want to worship God in whatever way pleases them, with all kinds of entertaining music, worldly gimmicks, and psychotherapeutic sermons, not in the Christ-centered way that pleases God.

They think of God's word as a yoke of slavery, so they take it off their necks to be free from its hindrance. To twist, resist or despise the word of God is to rebel against God himself. It is to be under the heavy yoke of slavery to sin, good works, penance, money, narcissistic pursuits, friends, and devotion to a worthless wooden idol. But Christ invites us to take his yoke and not the yoke of sin, *"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, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matt 11:28-30).

Beloved friends, the yoke of Christ, contrary to what rebellious, unrepentant sinners think, is an easy yoke and a light burden, one that gives rest for the soul. His yoke is his eternal words of wisdom and comfort, and spiritual heavenly blessings that only he can give.

The Terrifying Response from Heaven (verses 4-6)

Beginning in verse 4, the scene shifts from earth to heaven. God, who is enthroned in heaven, looks down on these puny, rebellious kings of the earth and laughs at their foolishness and vain plots. In fact, God not only *laughs* but also *mocks* and *scoffs* at them. This King in heaven is he who ordained everything that will come to pass from eternity, irregardless of what these kings of the earth conspire to do.

All their plots are in vain; indeed, they are of no consequence in the eyes of God, because *"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will"* (Prov 21:1). Even before they hatch their wicked plots in their hearts, God already knew these plots. In fact, God knew all of them and their rebellious designs long before the creation of the world.

But God's laughter, mocking and scoffing at these ridiculous fools turn into a righteous wrath, so God rebukes and terrifies them with his declaration: *"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."* Mount Zion, the highest peak in Jerusalem, was the site of the Jerusalem Temple. Israel knows that the Lord their God *"dwells in Zion, my holy mountain"* (Joel 3:17), and is *"enthroned upon the cherubim"* (Psa 80:1). In the holy of holies in the tabernacle and in the temple, there were two cherubim on the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant. These represented the heavenly throne of God, where his Anointed was enthroned as well.

Acts 4:28 is a fulfillment of the nations raging against God's Anointed. Christians praying for their persecuted brethren acknowledged that in crucifying Jesus, the Jews did *"whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."* But little did the Jews realize that they were executing God's plan, even placing a sign on the cross declaring the truth that Jesus is the "King of the Jews." In their rebellion against Christ's kingship, they did not know that God's terrible judgment would follow: Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans who massacred one million Jews in A. D. 70. God not only laughed and mocked them, but poured out his cup of wrath against the Jews. They reaped what they sowed.

But there is yet another judgment that is still to come, and this time, not only Jews will be judged, but all the nations of the earth. In Revelation, the nations are shown as kings of the earth in rebellion against God and his Anointed ever since Christ first came:

"And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army" (Rev 19:19).

"And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had

deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev 20:9-10).

When the Anointed One returns in power and great glory, he will terrify the earth with his wrathful judgment:

"Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'" (Rev 6:15-17).

Most people today think that on the day that Christ returns, all the kings of the earth will attempt to physically wage war against Christ and all his angels who will come down from heaven. This is a ludicrous teaching. When Christ comes in power in the clouds of heaven with his heavenly army, all the peoples of the earth will cower and tremble in fear! The rebellion of the Antichrist and his army in Revelation 19 and 20 is their continuing spiritual rebellion against God's word, and their persecution of God's people since Christ came 2,000 years ago.

The Divine Coronation

In verses 7-9, the speaker shifts from God Almighty to his Anointed One: *"I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'" The Son of God was announcing the decree of Yahweh (LORD), on a certain day he calls "today." On which day did God decree that the Messiah is his Son? On the day when the Son was begotten of God.*

Begotten? This is a big word which is not very popular these days, and has spawned many false teachings about the nature of Christ. The modern English translations omit "begotten," as the ESV does, or change it to "one and only," as the NIV says. These two translations do not do justice to the much deeper meaning of the word "begotten." What does this word, used uniquely for God's Anointed, really mean? I will attempt a brief explanation of a not-so-simple idea.

The 4th century church father Athanasius faithfully defended the "begottenness" of the Son of God against the Arian heretics who contended that since Christ was "begotten" and "firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15), he must have had a beginning. We regularly recite the ancient Apostles' Creed which says that Christ is God's "only begotten Son." As well, the Nicene Creed affirms that Christ is "the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds... begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father." And the Reformed Belgic Confession says that Jesus "is the only Son of God, eternally begotten, not made nor created, for then he would be a creature."

What do all these mean? Throughout history, the church was firm in upholding the doctrine of "eternal generation," another big word. This term means that the Son has always been begotten of the Father (John 1:18); there has never been a point in eternity or time when the Son did not exist with the same essence as and co-eternally with the Father. The Son was never a created being. This is why Scriptures say, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2).* Jesus himself affirms this, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev 22:13).*

If the Son was never created, why then does God declare in Psalm 2:7, *"Today I have begotten you"?* In Scriptures, being begotten can sometimes mean being conferred a title or declared as

something. When was this declaration made? Paul and other writers say it was on the day of his resurrection. He affirms this in Acts 13:33, *"This he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"* And again in Romans 1:4, Christ *"was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead."* The writer of Hebrews also used Psalm 2 to connect Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to God's declaration of his Sonship (Heb 1:3-5; see Heb 5:5).

As King, God's Anointed was promised by God, *"I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession"* (v. 8). The Messiah will rule over all the earth, and rule it with the iron scepter of absolute power, so that when they rebel, he will *"dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel"* (v. 9). This is confirmed by John in Revelation 19:15, which says that when he returns, Christ will *"strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty."*

In Christ's message to the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2, Christians have a wonderful assurance that those who persevere through suffering and persecution until the end will reign as kings like Christ. We read these words that are amazingly similar to Psalm 2:9:

"The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father" (Rev 2:26-27; see also Rev 20:6).

Just as Christ will have authority over all things, so will the church rule over all spiritual forces of evil and over all of Christ's enemies. As Paul says, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us"* (Rom 8:18). Christian friends, think about this: we will reign as kings like Christ!

The Stern Warning to Earthly Kings

Because God's Anointed will surely pour out his wrath on kings and nations who rebel against his authority, God warns them not to be vain and foolish, but to be wise. Rulers and peoples of the earth are to be wise and submit to the Messiah's power and authority. How would they submit? What kind of wise actions would kings and nations have to do to turn God's anger away?

First, David tells them, *"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling"* (v. 11). The Hebrew verb used here for "serve" is sometimes also translated as "worship" (Isa 19:23). David commands the kings of the earth to worship Yahweh instead of rebelling against him. How should kings and peoples like us worship him? When you worship the Son of God, worship with fear and reverence, because he is holy and mighty. And worship with joy as well, because he is at the same time glorious, majestic and wrapped in splendor.

David enjoins us, *"Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!"* (Psa 96:9) And Hebrews 12:28-29 commands, *"Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."* We can see from these passages that, in worship, our joy must be tempered by reverence and awe for God, because he is "a consuming fire."

But how do we worship in both joy and reverence? When we sing songs of praise and thanksgiving, we are to "sing to the Lord with cheerful voice." But when we hear God speak to us in Scripture reading and in preaching, we are to be filled with reverence and awe. When we hear God's laws, we mourn over how we break them in our sinful words, deeds and thoughts.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we solemnly remember Christ's sufferings and sacrifice for our sins. At the same time, we rejoice that he rose from the grave, that he is in heaven as our Mediator, and that we are also heaven-bound because of his blood.

Second, we are to *"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled"* (v. 12). To kiss the Son means to pay obeisance, honor and respect to God's Anointed Son. When we worship Christ in fear and trembling, we thus "kiss" him. In the Old Testament, to kiss someone's feet is to show submission to that person, as in 1 Kings 19:18, where God tells Elijah, *"Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."*

We find an incident in the life of Jesus that serves as a warning to us too. In Luke 7:36-50, while Jesus was eating in the house of Simon the Pharisee, a sinful woman came in and poured oil on Jesus and kissed his feet. Jesus pronounced forgiveness to the woman, but he rebuked the Pharisee for not washing and kissing his feet.

If the kings of the earth do not worship the Lord with joy and trembling, and if they do not obey and honor God's Anointed, he will be angry and pour out his wrath on them, and they will be destroyed. When the great day of God's wrath comes, no mountains and rocks will be able to protect rebellious kings and nations from the fury of the sharp sword of the Warrior on the white horse. On that day, not only the living rebels will perish, but all the pharaohs, the emperors of Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome, the Catholic Inquisition, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Muslims who massacred Christians in Indonesia, Hindus who burn and pillage Christian villages in India, presidents and rulers of the modern world, and all who persecuted and beheaded the beloved saints of Christ, will be judged and thrown into the lake of fire that will never be quenched. *"The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged"* (Rev 11:18).

Conclusion

But there is a way in which God's wrath will not fall on you. David ends the Psalm with these words, *"Blessed are all who take refuge in him."*

To all who serve and worship the Lord with joy and trembling, and kiss the Son of God in obeisance and respect to him as King of kings, he is a refuge. David exhorts and invites you to come to Christ because he is your strong refuge and strength, your hiding place from the raging storms of life. He is the cleft in the rock in which you could hide yourselves from the wrath of God when the Anointed One returns to judge the nations. The rocks and the mountains will not be able to hide the raging nations from God's wrath, but for you, the righteousness of Christ – accounted to you through faith in him – will be your hiding place.

But if you acknowledge another king or an idol or a saint or money as your Lord and Savior, God's holiness and righteousness would consume a sinner like you. In the end, the Son of God will terrify you who continue to declare your independence from God's holy laws and continue to live in the passions of the passing ungodly world.

We should thank God and his Anointed not only for blessing us, but also for warning us of impending judgment if we persist in our futile rebellion against him. Be wise, and the Lord and his Anointed will bless you. Be foolish, and the Lord and his Anointed will terrify you in his wrath.

Wherefore Do the Nations Rage

Psalm 2

Tune: St. George's Windsor (Elvey)

*1 Wherefore do the nations rage
and the people vainly dream
that in triumph they can wage
war against the LORD supreme?
His Anointed they deride,
and the rulers, plotting, say,
"Their dominion be defied,
let us cast their bonds away."*

*2 But the Lord will scorn them all;
calm, he sits enthroned on high.
Soon his wrath will on them fall;
angered, he will then reply,
"Yet according to my will
I have set my King to reign,
and on Zion's holy hill
my Anointed I maintain."*

*3 My LORD speaks, "You are my Son;
yes, I have begotten you.
I will give you every one
of the nations as your due.
From your rule, now let them learn:
break them with an iron rod,
dash them like a potter's urn,
crush those enemies of God."*

*4 Therefore, rulers, kings, come near,
listen to God's holy word.
Come with reverence, come with fear.
Kiss the Son and serve the LORD,
lest his anger quickly flame
and you perish in your way.
All are blest who trust in him;
yes, supremely blest are they.*