Protected By The King

Matt Mobley · Psalm 2:1-12

AT A GLANCE

Matt Mobley closes the summer series in the Psalms with Psalm 2, which zooms out from Psalm 1's rooted tree to the whole human condition: nations raging and plotting to throw off God's anointed King. Whether we rebel or merely obey for reward, we are crowning ourselves. Yet the enthroned Son who judges is the very King who takes the storm upon himself, so that 'blessed are all who take refuge in him.'

- The runaway and the rule-keeper are the same at root: both save themselves, and neither believes they need God's Messiah to rescue them.
- God's laughter at rebellion is not bullying; it answers the folly of creatures made to glorify and enjoy him trying to live apart from him.
- The King who judges the nations is the King who bore that judgment on the cross, so wrath and refuge meet in one person.

> *"The King in the Psalms who brings about judgment is the very same King who provides refuge."*

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

> Psalm 2:1-12 — [1]Why are the nations so angry? Why are the people making such foolish plans? [2]Their kings and leaders join together to fight against the Lord and his chosen king. [3]They say, "Let's rebel against them. Let's break free from them!" [4]But the one who rules in heaven laughs at them. The Lord makes fun of them. [5]He speaks to them in anger, and it fills them with fear. [6]He says, "I have chosen this man to be king, and he will rule on Zion, my holy mountain." [7]Let me tell you about the Lord's agreement: He said to me, "Today I have become your father, and you are my son. [8]If you ask, I will give you the nations. Everyone on earth will be yours. [9]You will rule over them with great power. You will scatter your enemies like broken pieces of pottery!" [10]So, kings and rulers, be smart and learn this lesson. [11]Serve the Lord with fear and trembling. [12]Show that you are loyal to his son, or the Lord will be angry and destroy you. He is almost angry enough to do that now, but those who go to him for protection will be blessed. (ERV)

The argument

Human Rebellion Is Premeditated, Not Accidental — Psalm 2 zooms out from the planted tree of Psalm 1 to the whole world's posture toward God's anointed

Where Psalm 1 pictured the righteous as a firmly planted tree, Matt Mobley says Psalm 2 'zooms out and gives us a picture of the world as a whole.' The nations do not merely rage; they plot. He gestures at the Hebrew for 'take counsel together,' suggesting the same word is translated elsewhere as laying the temple's foundation: careful planning, here turned toward evil rather than beauty. It is the difference between second-degree and first-degree murder, passion versus a plan. 'Nations' and 'kings' simply mean everyone, and the target is God's anointed. The root is verse 3: 'we as human beings want to no longer be under the bonds of God's anointed king. And we want to be our own kings.' He traces the same impulse from Eden through the golden calf, Judges, and Israel's demand for a king.

> **Insight —** *Rebellion against God is rarely an accident of weakness; at its root it is a shared, deliberate wish to be our own king.*

The Runaway and the Rule-Keeper Both Crown Themselves — Two roads of self-salvation that end in Pharisaism or hopelessness

Mobley asks how ordinary people share in this rage and answers with the two sons of the prodigal parable. The younger forsakes his father's ways; today that looks like calling Scripture antiquated or casting off Christianity as an oppressive system. The older stays home and keeps the rules, but his relationship to the father is 'merely transactional,' and he is angry when he doesn't get his way. 'They both commit the same error because they both express that neither needs his father.' Both roads mean self-salvation, with 'absolutely no need whatsoever for someone to save you,' and both end in legalism or hopelessness: 'If you devote your life to freeing yourself from religion, you ironically will make a religion out of it.' 'We're no different,' he says.

> **Insight —** *Defiance and dutiful religion can be the same project, because each makes my performance, not Christ's rescue, the ground of my life.*

God's Laughter Answers Folly with an Enthroned Son — The King inherits the nations, and his kingdom is not the crusader's

God laughs, Mobley says, as we might at a small dog barking at a larger one, except here the creature is trying to find life apart from the One who made it. This is not bullying. Citing the Westminster Catechism's first question, humanity's chief end is 'to glorify God and to enjoy him forever,' so rebellion is 'just silly,' against our original design. God's answer is enthronement: 'I have set my king on Zion.' The Son inherits the nations, so nothing in your life, 'including the very smallest aspects,' lies outside his sphere. Yet he notes that crusaders shouted 'Christ is

king' while killing, and insists this is not the psalm's call. An earthly kingdom can be invaded, corrupted, and fall; the heavenly one has no borders.

> **Insight —** *Christ's kingship claims every corner of life, but it is a kingdom established by God and entered by trust, never by force.*

The Judge and the Refuge Are One King — Verse 12's 'kiss the Son' is a call to rely on the One who bore the storm

Mobley says he chose this psalm for verse 12, 'Kiss the son, lest he be angry.' He offers 'pay homage to' or 'kiss sincerely' as renderings and reads it as a call to reliance and faith. Here the Old Testament's tension, a God who punishes all sin yet is gracious, resolves in one King: 'The King in the Psalms who brings about judgment is the very same King who provides refuge.' This King relinquishes power for those he serves: 'He would take the storm upon his own shoulders on the cross.' Mobley recalls sheltering first on a useless ledge in a Memphis downpour, then in a hotel lobby; that refuge was temporary, while this one is eternal. So the invitation stands: come and 'do business with God.'

> **Insight —** *The wrath the psalm describes and the refuge it offers meet at the cross, so the safest place from the King's judgment is in the King himself.*

Cross-references

- Psalm 1:3 — The planted tree of Psalm 1 contrasted with Psalm 2's zoomed-out view of the whole world
- Acts 4:25-26 — Cited as the place where David is named as the psalm's author, and its rod of iron noted
- Genesis 3:1-6 — Adam and Eve listening to the serpent as the first attempt to be like God
- Exodus 32:1-6 — Israel's golden calf as another bid to throw off God's rule
- Judges 21:25 — The refrain of everyone doing what is right in their own eyes
- 1 Samuel 8:4-7 — Israel demanding a human king like the nations around them
- Acts 1:6 — The disciples still asking whether Jesus would now restore the kingdom
- Luke 15:11-32 — The younger and older sons as two forms of the same transactional rebellion
- Matthew 11:29-30 — Jesus' easy yoke and rest as the gospel answer to the bonds we try to burst

DEVOTIONAL

A corner ledge looks like shelter until the wind turns. Then it is only a place to stand and be soaked, convinced all the while that it was the right place to stand. Psalm 2 is about every ledge we have ever trusted: the career that was supposed to hold, the record of faithful attendance, the quiet conviction that our own hearts could chart a better road than the one we were given. We did not call it rebellion. We called it prudence, or freedom, or doing our part. And above the storm, someone laughs. Not cruelly. It is the laugh of a Father who made us to know him and enjoy him, and who watches his creatures strain to live as though they were made for something else. But the laughter is not the last word. The same voice says, 'I have set my king.' This King is not like the kings of the earth, tempted to spend power on himself. He gives it away. He walks into the very storm the psalm describes and takes it upon his own shoulders. So the strange command at the end, kiss the Son, turns out to be an invitation to set down a weight we were never built to carry. His yoke is still a yoke, and still it gives rest, because everything else we have shouldered cannot lift us and this can. Refuge in this psalm is not a doorway out of the weather. It is a person. Blessed are those who run, soaked and out of options, to him.

Reflection

- Where have you looked for refuge in something that seemed sturdy but left you standing in the wind, and what did you hope it would give you?
- Which son, the runaway or the rule-keeper, is closer to your own instinct, and what would it look like to need your Father rather than his inheritance?
- What small corner of your life have you treated as outside the King's claim, and what might it mean to place it under his yoke?

Closing prayer

Father, we thank you for your word and for the opportunity to come before you alongside your people. Comfort us. Help us recognize the yoke you place over us, and that this very yoke gives us rest, while everything else we put on our shoulders cannot rescue or save us. This one can. Help us respond to your generosity and your gospel with faith. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

Because Jesus is already king over every part of your life, the wise response is not more performance but running to him as your refuge.

This week

This week, read Psalm 2:10-12 aloud each morning and pray it back to God. Name one thing you have quietly made a requirement for happiness—a career, a retirement, a religious record—and

hand it to Jesus as King, thanking him that he took the storm for you.

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