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Sermon Notes

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## **God Brings Forth His Son and Gives Him the Nations**

### **Psalm 2:1-12**

When it comes to Christmas, we Christians know that things are not as they appear. The holiday has a surface feel to it that is appealing to all ages... the house decorations that light up the night in neighborhoods all over the region... the feel at the malls with Christmas music playing; the cultural aspects of the holiday season, the red and green color everywhere; the excitement of Christmas parties and carol singing and hot cocoa and all that... so many Christmas songs capture the festivities that I am close to singing right now... BUT I WON'T!

Yet we know that appearances can be deceiving... the real meaning of Christmas for us as Christians is the gift of the incarnate Son of God. The infinite mystery of Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man... Christians have wrestled with the theology since Mary held Jesus in her arms and pondered all these things in her heart. Jesus appeared weak and frail... but he was Almighty God in disguise.

When Jesus came into the world, it was a scene of amazing simplicity and weakness. Here was young Jewish couple so poor that they could not find a decent home in which for Mary to give birth. "No room at the Inn..." Perhaps the most famous words even spoken about an Inn or hotel. So it led to Joseph and Mary finding a warm dry place in a cave or a barn or something like that... a place where animals were housed. She brought forth her firstborn and wrapped him up with swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger... a box filled with feed for the animals. Here the only begotten Son of God was laid, a condition so far beneath the way most babies are brought into the world.

This was the picture of weakness, of obscurity. The Roman Empire – the most powerful empire the world had ever seen – ruled that small Jewish nation, as they ruled one quarter of the world’s population. The Emperor, Caesar Augustus, was the most powerful man the world had ever seen. His mandate had determined the motions of the Jews at that point, for months before that he had issued a decree that a census be taken of the entire Roman world. This moved Joseph and Mary to the little town of Bethlehem... an insignificant place with a bit of Jewish history, but nothing more. It was a small town in a backwater part of the Roman Empire.

The Son of God entered the world as an infant, weak, totally dependent, needing his mother to wrap him up in cloths, needing his mother to feed him and her husband to protect them and provide for them. Hardly the picture of omnipotence, hardly a threat to the thrones of the high and mighty.

And yet... from the beginning of his life to the end, Jesus had mighty human enemies who raged against him and fought him. This sermon is to show the heavenly perspective of that earthly rage, the earthly opposition to the Son of God.

As I said... appearances can be deceiving! From the beginning of the Christian faith, human rulers have exerted overwhelming force to try to stop the spread of Christ’s Kingdom... and they may seem to be very successful; their power may seem to be winning... but Psalm 2 makes it plain that the power of omnipotence is behind the spread of the Kingdom of Christ... **NOTHING CAN STOP IT!!**

Psalm 2 tells you how it’s going to be with Jesus. Almighty God has made a decree about him, that he will rule the earth. And Psalm 2 is telling the human race to get with the program and joyfully worship and serve the Son of God... lest you be destroyed in the midst of your lives.

## I. The Nations Rage Against God's Son

***Psalm 2:1-3 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."***

### A. From the Beginning, Nations and Rulers Conspired Against Him

An old man named Simon took the newborn baby Jesus in his arms and blessed him... but then said these prophetic words to Mary:

***Luke 2:34-35 "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.***

King Herod was determined not to allow this baby to grow up and challenge his throne... he was jealous and corrupt and tyrannical; he killed his beloved wife Mariamne in a fit of jealousy; and he had his two oldest sons put to death lest they should rise up and depose him. Caesar Augustus, learning about this said "I would rather be Herod's pig than his son"

It was this very man who conspired to have all the babies in Bethlehem and its vicinity murdered in an attempt to kill the newborn baby, Jesus

***Matthew 2:16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.***

But King Herod did not realize how impossible it was to kill this baby... how Almighty God stood over his Son to protect him; how he moved Joseph by a dream to take Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt to escape

### B. At the End of His Life... Another Conspiracy

1. Throughout his ministry, Jesus faced repeated attempts at his life

2. Again and again, the Jews met together and plotted to kill him

In Matthew 12, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, and the Jews went out immediately and plotted how they might kill Jesus

These plots continued day after day throughout the rest of Jesus' life, culminating in the arrest and trial of Jesus. This was the final phase of the settled opposition by the Jewish leaders to Jesus. They backed Pontius Pilate into a corner and forced him to do their will and crucify Jesus... it was exactly what these evil leaders had hoped for.

But listen to the prayer of the church about these plots. After the persecution of Peter and John, the church gathered to pray. They quoted Psalm 2 and then applied it

***Acts 4:25-28 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' <sup>27</sup> Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup> They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.***

DID YOU HEAR THAT? In plotting against Jesus and crucifying him, these evil rulers were doing exactly what God had ordained would happen! This is the same perspective as Psalm 2

C. So... from the Beginning of Jesus' Earthly Life to the End... His Enemies Plotted Against Him

D. So It Is Today

1. Christmas is a chance to see more and more how much the world hates Christ and plots against him
2. The aggressive secularization of America... I'll not focus on trivial things like nativity scenes being declared illegal in public places; or more and more stores forbidding their employees from saying

“Merry Christmas”... far more troubling is the aggressive agenda of anti-Christian people forcing Christians to violate their consciences in order to keep their jobs

I heard a week ago from a church member that his mother had lost her job with the UNC Healthcare system because she refused to sign a document saying that she would refer to transgender people by their preferred pronouns.

It seems like we are nearing a repeat of the earliest days of the spread of the gospel in the pagan Roman Empire in which the emperor Decius, in the year AD 249, required all Roman citizens to burn a pinch of incense to Caesar and declare “Caesar is Lord” (that is, divine)... and obtain a certificate proving that they had done it

3. So in America today, we are heading toward a fork in the road in terms of our surrounding culture
4. But these efforts are mild compared to the plots made by the rulers of China to crush the Christian church... in October, the Chinese government sent bulldozers and destroyed a large church building in Funan Anhui while the congregation was worshiping inside; its pastors, Geng Yimin and Sun Yongyao were arrested and imprisoned on the charge of “gathering people to disturb social order”... this is just a part of the effort made by the very powerful leaders of the most populous nation on earth to stop the spread of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ
5. Or the leader of Muslim nations who persecute people who turn from the darkness of Islam to the light of Christ and the gospel; to imprison them, or torture them; to make laws against expatriot Christians assembling for worship in their cities
6. It could be as small as minor Indian officials refusing to grant visas to a missionary couple seeking to return to India... they grant the wife a visa but not the husband; Russian officials have been known to do the same thing
7. Behind all this is the rage of Satan and his demons against Christ and his people... a rage clearly depicted in Revelation 12 with a

massive dragon ready to devour the Christ child the moment he is born; and that same dragon pursuing the followers of Christ with the same murderous rage

## II. God Laughs at their Rage... and Threatens Them with His Own Rage

***Psalm 2:4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.***

### A. What an Amazingly Comforting Picture of Almighty God

1. The nations are organized in raging and plotting against the Son of God
2. The reaction is a laugh of derision from the throne of God
3. It is impossible to measure how infinitely above their plots and rage the throne of God is
4. God is the eternal, infinite, ineffable Creator and Ruler of the Universe
5. As A.W. Tozer put it in *The Knowledge of the Holy*

“Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite.”

6. God’s throne doesn’t show the slightest tremor at the collective rage of the nations against him and against his Son
7. If every human being on the face of the earth all gathered together in one place and at one signal, all 8 billion jumped at the same time on the surface of the earth, could they make the earth tremble? Could they crack the mantle of the earth’s crust?

***Psalm 104:5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.***

8. Christ’s throne is more secure than the surface of the earth

***Hebrews 1:10-12 "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. <sup>11</sup> They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. <sup>12</sup> You***

***will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."***

9. And all the nations are as nothing before the sublime infinity of God's majesty

***Isaiah 40:15-17 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. <sup>16</sup> Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. <sup>17</sup> Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.***

#### B. God's Laughter Also Means He Turns Their Rage Around

1. As the nations rage and plot specific things against Christ and Christ's people, God uses their own plots to establish Christ's kingdom all the more
2. Clearest example: Tertullian's statement, "The blood of martyrs is seed for the church"
3. Specific plans made against the church end up only advancing the church more and more

A missions leader I was speaking with recently told me of one way that the enthroned God has been laughing at feeble efforts to stop the gospel

The Islamic Republic of Iran has seen an amazing, even explosive growth of Christianity within its closed borders for the last twenty plus years. More and more Iranian Muslims are turning away from Islam to Christ. Now of course it is impossible to send missionaries and Christian leaders into Iran to work with the Christians or to spread the gospel more and more. The Islamic government of Iran makes that illegal and impossible. But God laughs at their restrictions. How? Well, Iran has a close relationship with the Communist government of Cuba, and has requested them to send trained medical workers to help with certain medical crises in Iran. But as it turns out, there is an evangelical revival going on in Cuba... many Cubans have

come to Christ. And among them are many skilled doctors. Now who do you think is volunteering to meet the call of their own communist government to go help sick Iranians? Christian doctors! So, the Communist government of Cuba is unwittingly paying the fees for Christian Cuban doctors to go to the Islamic Republic of Iran and heal the sick and preach the gospel in the name of Jesus Christ!

THAT is the laughter of God!

***Psalm 18:25-26 To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, <sup>26</sup> to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.***

C. God Also Threatens Them With His Own Wrath

***Psalm 2:4-6 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. <sup>5</sup> Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, <sup>6</sup> "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."***

1. At the end of this Psalm, this threat is made plain
2. But God will not take the attack on Christ and his people kindly... he will wait patiently, but at the right time, he will overwhelm all human enemies with his wrath and his judgment

***Psalm 110:1-2 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." <sup>2</sup> The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.***

At the end of the world, the persecution on Christians will reach its highest crescendo under the reign of the Antichrist... he will rage against God himself and declare himself to be God; Daniel 7 says he will also wage war against the people of God and slaughter many of them:

***Daniel 7:21-22 As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.***

***Daniel 7:25-26 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. <sup>26</sup> "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.***

God will pour out his wrath on planet Earth because of these attacks... the sixth seal of the scroll is broken open and look at what happens:

***Revelation 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup> They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"***

So appearances will be deceiving right to the end of human history... it will seek that the kings of the earth and the rulers taking counsel together will be completely effective... but God is on his invisible throne

### III. God's Decree About His Son

***Psalm 2:7-9 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. <sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. <sup>9</sup> You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."***

#### A. God Has Made an Eternal Decree About Jesus Christ

1. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him
2. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords
3. The text speaks of a DECREE... that is a kingly decision, binding on all his realm; a sovereign determination... more unbreakable than the edicts of the Medes and the Persians or any human government

B. Foundational to the Decree: The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth as the Eternal Son of God

1. "You are my son... today I have begotten you"
2. The ancient creed says "Begotten, not made"
3. Jesus is not a created being, but eternally existed as the Second Person of the Trinity

***John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."***

***John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."***

4. There was never a time that Jesus did not exist... yet this text says TODAY I have begotten you; what does that mean?
  - a. He said it at Christ's birth

***Hebrews 1:5-6 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? <sup>6</sup> And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."***

- b. He said it again at Christ's resurrection... as the Apostle Paul made plain in preaching at the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch

***Acts 13:32-34 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers <sup>33</sup> he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.' <sup>34</sup> ... God raised him from the dead, never to decay***

- c. Both of those moments tied to the commitment that Jesus should be HUMAN... in a human body
5. This status as BOTH the Son of God and the Son of Man uniquely qualifies Jesus to be the ruler of all the world

### C. God's Invitation to His Son

***Psalm 2:8-9 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. <sup>9</sup> You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."***

1. After Jesus Christ died on the cross as an atonement for our sins, God raised him from the dead
2. God lifted Christ from the surface of the earth and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places
3. God said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."
4. Along with that, he invites him to ASK OF ME... Ask me for the world, and I will give it to you... ask me for all the nations, and they are YOURS as your inheritance
5. Christ HAS asked, and the Father has granted it to him

***Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.***

This gives him the right to save his chosen people from every nation on earth

***Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***

***Revelation 5:9-10 "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."***

D. He Rules the Nations with the Rod of His Power... He has the Power to Dash them to Pieces Like Pottery

E. The Second Coming of Christ... Much Different Than the First

***Revelation 19:11-16*** *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

#### IV. God's Invitation to Joyful Worship

***Psalm 2:10-12*** *Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son*

##### A. Christmas is an Opportunity to Worship the King

1. God invites us to fall down and worship him
2. This is simple WISDOM... to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling

##### B. Join the Angels in Worshiping the Son of God

***Luke 2:10-14*** *But the angel said to [the shepherds], "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

##### C. Join the Shepherds in Worshiping the Son of God

***Luke 2:15-16*** *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> So*

*they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.*

***Luke 2:20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.***

D. Join the Magi in Worshiping the Son of God

***Matthew 2:11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.***

E. This is the Purpose of Christmas

1. To call us away from the idols of our age and the temptations of our hearts
2. To call us to simple worship before Christ... to KISS THE SON with our worship

V. God's Warning to the Rebels

***Psalm 2:10-12 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup> 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 all who take refuge in him.***

A. Kings Pride themselves in their Wisdom... their shrewdness... playing chess while their adversaries are playing checkers

B. Well... this is TRUE WISDOM

***Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.***

***2 Timothy 3:15 the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***

C. Be Warned... Death Can Find You in an Instant

1. The text says plainly that his wrath can flare up in an instant
2. Without warning, the end comes
  - a. A sudden stroke or heart attack
  - b. A freak accident... a brief illness
  - c. Suddenly the plans that king had made all vanish like smoke
  - d. So it is for all of us... our lives hang by a thread

The ancient orator Cicero told a tale of a wicked king named Dionysius II, who ruled over the Sicilian city of Syracuse four centuries before... that would be 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. Though this king was very rich and powerful, he was also extremely unhappy. His tyrannical rule had made him many powerful enemies, and he was tormented every day by fears of assassination. One day a flatterer named Damocles came to his court and showered the king with compliments. Dionysius became annoyed with this man and asked if he wished to experience the life he enjoyed as king. Damocles said he did, and the king had him set up on a golden couch and had a bevy of servant wait on him hand and foot. He was anointed with costly ointments and ate whatever he wanted to his heart's delight. But at some point he looked up and noticed a razor-sharp sword dangling from a thread of horsehair right over his head. This represented the constant danger the king felt... at any moment, the thread could snap and the sword would fall and swiftly end his life. Needless to say, Damocles didn't want the life of a king anymore.

But the fact of the matter is, every king lives constantly under his own imminent death... and this is especially true of those who use their power to fight the kingdom of Jesus Christ:

***Psalm 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.***

However, this is actually true of every single human being on the face of the earth:

***James 4:13-15*** Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." <sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

At any moment, life can end. Not one of us is guaranteed another day.

D. Closing Invitation: Find Refuge in Christ

***Psalm 2:12*** *Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

1. The word refuge is poignant... like a shelter from a hurricane... like a cellar in a prairie home when the tornado comes; like a life raft when the ocean liner has gone down... a picture of life in the face of imminent death
2. Refuge from the coming wrath of God
3. Refuge from Judgment Day... when all our secrets will be laid bare and we have to face the Holy Judge
4. This is what these words mean

***Luke 2:11*** *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*

5. Savior = Refuge

***"Blessed are all who take refuge in him!!"***

VI. Applications

- A. Appearances Can Be Deceiving... See Through All the Christmas Wrapping to the Invisible Truth... Christ Was Born to Be a Refuge for Sinners
- B. Take Refuge in Christ!... and WORSHIP HIM YEAR ROUND!!