

Author: Enyedi György. This sermon was preached in early 1597. A Hungarian language copy remained in the 5<sup>th</sup> Codex of Cluj (in Hungarian: 5. Kolozsvári Kódex) from the mid 1600's.

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This sermon is the first in the series that starts with Concio CXCI, and continues with Concio CXCVI and Concio CXCVII.

Rules applied during the translation:

The translation preserved the paragraph structure published in the transcript.

Bible book, chapter and verses indicated in parenthesis are the additions from the transcription process. These additions allow the reader to immerse themselves into the Bible passages Enyedi György has mentioned in the sermon. All Bible quotations use the English of the King James Version of the 1611 edition.

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**Concio CXCI,<sup>1</sup> a sermon from 1597 by György Enyedi, the third Bishop of the  
Transylvanian Unitarian Church**

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*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath 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 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.  
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Ps. 2:1 KJV

The testimonies of saints and countless other examples clearly demonstrate how futile and dangerous it is to tussle with God and to resist His will. Mighty nations, powerful empires, all counsels, all knowledge, all wisdom are nothing when compared to our almighty Lord, as Solomon says in Pro. 21 (Prov. 21:30): "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD." Saint David, too, proclaimed and affirmed that in the first lines of our chosen psalm; he demonstrates that those who kick and fight against God's decisions bring onto themselves dishonor and peril, instead of achieving their goals.

This psalm has three main parts. The first part is where the prophet describes how the mighty men of this world prepared to attack the Lord, and how the Lord treated them in response. In the second part he describes the glory and splendor the Lord will hand out to those whom He takes under His protection. In the third part the prophet admonishes the rulers and the powerful sovereigns to serve the Lord with fear and obedience. Before we can understand the meaning of those words and draw conclusions, we need to clarify about whom this psalm was written. According to some explanations it is about Christ, according to others it is about David. Yet others explain that it is about both of them: in the literal sense it is about David, and in the spiritual sense it is about Jesus Christ.

Among those explanations the last one, the third one is the most accurate. The first explanation that this psalm was written about Jesus Christ literally, historically and in the spiritual sense, cannot be accepted whatsoever. Here are the reasons for it: first, not only wise Jewish sages, but learned Christian scholars as well believe that this psalm befits David as well, so they explain it that way.

Second, this psalm was written long before our Lord Christ was born. Here the prophet talks about people who existed before then. In the Old Testament prophets declare when they speak about future events, or about the Messiah who is not present in their time. However, the prophet doesn't provide such declaration in this psalm.

The third reason why this psalm is not about Jesus in the literal and historical sense is that the psalm doesn't conform to the time period and to the acts of Jesus. The prophet writes that the heathen and kings rise up against the Christus of God. But we don't find evidence for that in the New Testament. Pilate, as mentioned in Act 4. (Acts 4:27) wasn't a king, and it was the Jews and not the heathen who conspired against Jesus. Historical accounts and Pilot's own words tell us that in Jo. 18 (John 18:35): "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee onto me." The other evidence is that the

heathen were in counsel to break the cords of that Christus, and to throw his yoke off their backs. However, Jesus never ruled over the Romans or the heathens, thus no one could want to throw off the yoke of Jesus.

The fourth reason why this psalm wasn't written literally about Jesus is that the writing is about a single person in a single time frame, as we can judge from the wording. But when the New Testament scholars associate this psalm with Jesus, they invoke two time periods. The beginning, (Ps. 2:1): "*Quare fremuerunt gentes, et populi meditati sunt inania?*"<sup>2</sup> – is explained, according to Act. 4 (Acts 4:25), as the time after the ascension of our Lord Christ when the high priests forbade the apostles from teaching. The part (Ps. 2:7): Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee<sup>2</sup> is placed by Saint Paul at the time of the resurrection of Christ. The part (Ps. 2:9): "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron" is placed in Apoc.2 (Rev.. 2:27) at the time of the reign of Jesus, which is in the future, as it hasn't come yet. All these prove that this psalm wasn't written literally about our Lord Christ.

However, the explanation that this psalm is exclusively about David, is also false. There are even some Jewish scholars who associate its spiritual meaning with the Messiah. And the scholars of the New Testament relate several statements from this psalm to Jesus Christ. Let us then accept that this psalm literally and historically is about David, but its spiritual meaning is about the Messiah and his disciples. We will be applying this explanation as we examine the words of our psalm.

As I stated before, the first part is about how worldly rulers rise up against God and His Christus. The prophet marveled at that (Ps. 2:1): "Why do the heathen rage, why do they prepare themselves"? Christians know this well, how God defeated King Saul, and in his place, with the help of the prophet Samuel, He anointed David to be King of Israel. After the death of Saul the people of Judea, and then all the people of Israel chose David as their king. When the Philistines, the killers of Saul and his followers, together with the neighboring heathens, the Moabites and the Ammonites, learned about that, they thought that they could easily eliminate David who was new as a ruler. They killed Saul while he was ruling over them, and David had just begun to rule. They held counsel, formed an alliance, and started to seriously prepare to throw the Jewish Kingdom completely off their backs, and to bring an end to their rule. When David learned about that and saw that, he began the psalm by singing the words (Ps. 2:1): "*What's gotten into the heathen, why do they rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?*"<sup>2</sup>

Let us first conclude from this that when someone rises up to oppose a person anointed by God, that someone is in fact rising up to oppose God Himself. While the Philistines, the Moabites and the Ammonites held counsel against David, the prophet states that they held counsel against God. Saint Paul writes in Ro. 13 (Rom. 13:1) that all rulers are ordained by God. Those who rise up against such rulers are in fact rising up against God's decree. That's why the Lord God tells Moses (Exod. 16:8) and Samuel (1Sam. 8:7) when people rose up against them: "Their murmurings are not against you;

they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me". David knew he was chosen and anointed by God, and that's why he says about those who rise up against him are, in fact, rising up against God. And from this all true and faithful Christians may gain comfort and courage. If they received without deception or manipulation an appointment or a title, they should know that if anyone opposes them, those are, in fact, opposing God. Thus, they have a powerful patron and protector against whom no one can stand, because once He takes them under His wings, He will protect them against all.

No one should be astonished when I inferred that David was the christus of God, because I have mentioned frequently that the words christus, and messiah are common words in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, where kings, high priests, prophets and even heathen rulers are given that name. In a few passages of the Bible Saul is called the christus of God, and Cyrus was also called by that name in Isa. 45 (Isa. 45:1).

Furthermore, David was often called that as we see it in Psalm 17 (Ps. 18:51): "Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore." While in the New Testament only Jesus is called christus, the Old testament, the focus of our explanations, uses that name commonly. From now on, do not be astonished if we use the name christus to describe David.

Let us secondly conclude that these words teach us about the different characteristics of the godless and of the faithful. There are some foolhardy and wicked people who understand that they are fighting against the common truth and God's will, but they do not think about it and continue their headstrong opposition. Those heathen rulers saw that God was helping David, advancing his cause and protecting him from enemies, yet they still held counsel, and set themselves against him. The faithful, seeing such a foolhardy action, can only marvel at them and mock them. How could they possibly so bold? As he saw the heathen rulers preparing against him, Saint David said (Ps. 2:1): *"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"* It is like, he is thinking: *I'm amazed at your foolishness, and I'm astonished by your actions.* But they don't only rage and hold counsel but speak recklessly and brashly (Ps. 2:3): "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They remember when Saul lived and was in God's graces the sons of Israel ruled over the neighboring heathen. But once they killed Saul they became reckless and they said (Ps. 2:3): "Let us cast away their cords from us." While they did hear that God took David under His protection, they still presumed that they would be victorious. They were not unlike that godless Capaneus who took Thebes under siege, and entered the city yelling that he would sack the city whether God wanted it or not. In that minute a lightning bolt struck him dead, and his army was cut down and defeated by the city.

The enemies of David will suffer the same fate, as we will see below. However, before we talk about that, we need to contemplate the words we have examined.

Recall that this psalm was literally and historically written about David, and was describing David. However, the apostles explain the relevance to Jesus and to the setting of the New Testament the following way: When the Philistines killed king Saul,

they thought the kingdom of the Jews had come to an end; they then heard that God anointed David as christus, as king, so the Philistines gathered, raged, and decided that they would end the rule of Jews. Likewise, at the time of Lord Jesus, the Jews, the high priests didn't rest until they killed Jesus, and when they crucified him they believed both he and his teachings were gone. But when they heard that God made Jesus rise from the dead, and his disciples conducted miracles in his name, they didn't think that was God's will, and they rushed to meet, they held counsel, they dragged the apostles in front of them, and ordered them to stop teaching in Jesus' name. When the apostles heard that they raised their voices to God and said in Act. 4 (Acts 4:24): "*Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*". Their words likened Jesus to David. God made both of them mighty, anointed them to be kings from modest beginnings; one was anointed by oil, the other by the Holy Spirit to become the Messiah.

In the time of David it was the Philistines, Moabites and Ammonites who roused up against him, and attacked him; it was Herod, Pilates and the high priests who roused up against him, and attacked Jesus.

Let us conclude from this that the authors of the New Testament do use statements of the Old Testament. But not how the Papists explain by claiming that the two have the same message, and one should be interpreted exactly like the other. What you just heard shows that they are, at best, similar.

Let us conclude secondly that we can apply the words and examples of the Bible to our own lives. The apostles applied it to their circumstances, and we can learn to do that as well. Were there people at the time of David who set siege to his kingdom, and damaged it? Similarly, there were people at the time of our Lord Jesus who envied his authority and didn't want him to rule over them and they told him so, as we see in the description by Luc. 19 (Luke 19:14): "We will not have this man to reign over us." Isn't there a David in our time? Isn't there a Jesus? In other words, aren't there people in our time whom God has taken under His wings? There certainly are. As our Lord Christ said (Matt. 10:40) those who affirm his disciples, they affirm himself. Thus, Christ is present today in his disciples. Even today there are Philistines, Medianites, Herods and Pilates who resent the authority of Christ, and the spreading of his teachings. They gather to meet, they hold counsel, and they prepare. And the present day believers in God are astonished, stare at their disturbance, and say together with David and the apostles (Ps. 2:1): "Why do the heathen rage?" etc. Just how fruitless their counsel is, and how and futile their struggle will be, is pointed out by the following lines (Ps. 2:4): "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision*".

Let us first consider from this psalm the differences between the almighty God and the worldly rulers. The prophet writes that there are many of those who rage, such as heathens, nations, kings, and nobles. God, however, is all by Himself. They dwell in this world, God dwells in the heavens. They rage and rise to their feet, God is sitting idle, He is calm. Fourthly, they are upset and gloomy, God is smiling and laughing. Fifth, they

hold counsel, form an alliance, God mocks them. Sixth, they want to break their bonds and yokes, but God installs over them His anointed king. All these demonstrate that God is very different from humans, and that worldly rulers, their power, and their counsel are nothing compared to Him.

The Lord breaks the resistance of His opponents three ways. First, by laughing at them, second, by wrecking their minds, and third, by demonstrating His might.

The prophet writes in this manner about the first (Ps. 2:4): "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh." Understand that as a kind of laughing like humans would do. When powerful, high-ranking people see that puny worms are scheming and maneuvering to harm them, these powerful people will just smile and laugh. Likewise, when God sees people fighting His will, He considers that an empty threat. As that heavenly voice told Paul (Acts 26:14): "*Durum est tibi contra stimulum calcitrare.*" "It's hard for thee to kick against the pricks." When He mocks them (Ps. 2:4), He is declaring that human intent and action are not carried out if they oppose God's will. Rather, only amusement and mockery will come of them. This is also expressed in a common proverb: "*Parturient montes nascetur ridiculus mus.*" <sup>2</sup>

The second way the Lord breaks them is told by the prophet this way (Psalms 2:5): "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." <sup>2</sup> While the speech of any human may not be very powerful, yet a tough, angry talk may frighten the feeble. Are you surprised that it is even more frightening when God speaks? Even when He speaks kindly it resembles thunder, as we saw in Joan. 12 (John 12:28-29). Furthermore, upon hearing God's words when He handed down His commandments at Mount Sinai, the people of Israel said (Deut. 20:19): "But let not God speak with us, lest we die." Indeed, the word of God is so powerful that what He pronounces instantly happens (Ps. 2:5): "*He speaks unto them in His wrath*", and immediately "*vexes them.*" When the prophet says, He speaks unto them in His wrath, he means that He intends to bring onto them the power of His anger and to deliver punishment at the same time. And when he says (Ps. 2:5): "*vex them his sore displeasure*" <sup>2</sup> that means He will scramble their orders, their decisions, their counsel. He will confuse their thoughts, and make them lose their minds, because He treats like this all those He wants to defeat. As we see in Isa. 19 (Isa. 19:11-13): "*Surely, the princes of Zoan are fools.*" <sup>2</sup>

Third, once God has mocked them and made them lose their minds, He will install over them His own prepared and chosen son (Ps. 2:6): "*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*" <sup>2</sup> He calls him His king, the one that He anointed Himself, and with this He heralds His power that only He can anoint a king of His choosing. When He calls Zion His own holy hill, He wants to declare that in this world He possesses the fortresses and countries, and, thus, He has the freedom to give, as all that is His own, His heritage that He may give away.

That is why when the palestines and kings from surrounding countries attacked David, the Lord laughed at them, mocked them, made them lose their minds, broke them up,

and destroyed them. He made David, who was anointed through Samuel in Zion, a powerful king of Jerusalem. The Lord acted similarly with Jesus. The high priests, Pharisees, and scribes raged against him, and they tried to prevent him from becoming their Messiah and king, as they shouted (Luke 19:14): "We will not have this man to reign upon us." And they harassed the apostles as well, they chased them, they threatened them, they caned them to stop them from teaching in the name of Jesus. But the Lord laughed at them, mocked them, and the more they wanted to suppress the teachings of that Christos, the wider it spread. The Lord spoke unto them in His wrath, and unleashed the Romans onto them, and destroyed them. And then He made Jesus into the Christ, the Messiah not only over the Jews, but over the heathens as well. Thus, the holy hill of Zion doesn't only represent that physical hill in Jerusalem, but also the spiritual holy hill, the ecclesia, the collective presence and company of the saints, as the apostle explains in Heb. 12 (Heb. 12:18-20): *"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart."* <sup>2</sup>

You can learn from this, in addition to many other examples, that Jesus did not become a Lord on his own, but that he received all his powers, grace, and authority from God, as the Almighty Lord says it (Ps. 2:6): "Yet have I set my king", and Saint Peter affirms it (Acts 13:22). Further affirmed by our Lord Jesus in Heb. 5 (Heb. 5:5): *"Non semet ipsum clarificavi."* But we will discuss this further sometime later.

Right now, however, let us conclude that the writings of the apostles show us how we ought to be living by the example of David. Let us remember that anything that God intends to accomplish will be accomplished, even when there is opposition against the people who conduct their lives according to His will and proclaim His righteousness. No matter how furious the world may be, no matter what alliances they may form, no matter if they form a League of Saints, no matter how they might hold counsel, how they might rage, because the Lord, who resides in the heavens, will only laugh and mock them. And then He will speak unto them in His wrath, frighten them, and destroy them. At last He will make His holy righteousness and His followers victorious, and He will exalt them in the face of any opposition. You could say to this: no matter how much you fortify yourself with that thought, until that victory happens many of you will perish, because the powerful, the ones with weapons in their hands, will torment a great many. Listen to me well! Those tormented people will have a similar fate to what happened at the time of our Lord Christ. Although they did kill him, they did persecute the apostles, and they killed some in a terrifying manner, they would have died anyway, eventually. Yet, those blood thirsty and blood spilling butchers didn't achieve their goals, because the teachings of Christ spread even wider, the number of followers grew day after day, and God even miraculously saved many of them from the hands of their tormentors.

Therefore, even if the kings of our time rage, hold counsel, and torment the innocent to carry out their wicked plan, this will not block the path of truth or interrupt God's will. No one has been successful in carrying out their plan if they opposed God, as Gamaliel said to the counsel of wise Pharisees (Acts 5:38-39): "If it is by God, you can not

overthrow it.” In those words we see that people who oppose God have two worries. One is that their struggle is pointless, as no counsel or power may succeed against God. The other is that God will destroy them for their recklessness. May the Lord bring such wrath upon those who oppose Him in our time, and who rise up against His christus. Amen.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was preached in early 1597. A Hungarian language copy remained in the 5<sup>th</sup> Kolozsvár Kódex from the mid 1600’s. In 2018 a contemporary Hungarian transcript of Concio CXCI was published in: Lovas Borbála (2018) Enyedi György Prédikációi 3., MTA-ELTE Humanizmus Kelet-Közép-Európában Lendület Kutatócsoport, Budapest. ISBN 978-963-508-885-0. The contemporary transcript was used as the basis for the translation.

<sup>2</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> Kolozsvár Kódex some Bible quotes were written in an abbreviated form, because it was common practice that preachers wrote their own handbooks for preaching. The abbreviated quotes are expanded to show how the sermon was delivered, and to provide a more complete understanding of the arguments advanced by Enyedi.

<sup>3</sup> The authors wish to acknowledge the copyediting assistance of Ms. Mary Johnson and Karen C. Burton.