



# The Absolute Reign

The Sermon

Acts 4:23-31

## 8 | Snorting Horses | Acts 4:25-26

*“Who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: ‘Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ’” (Acts 4:25-26).*

The Book of Acts gives us the history of the early church. We glean from its pages the thought process of these Christians from the beginning. While the culture and times of the early church are vastly different from ours, the Biblical principles and concepts remain the same.

### “Scriptures”

How did the early church view the Scriptures? From our previous study, we know they believed that God is the Author of the Scriptures. They quoted a Psalm, which they considered to be spoken by God through the mouth of David. They stood firm in the knowledge that God wrote the Scriptures.

Our passage is a quotation of Psalms 2, and is the eighth quotation of an Old Testament passage in the first four chapters of the Book of Acts, an average of twice in each chapter. This highlights the importance of the “Scriptures” in their lives. As in our passage, they related every event in their lives to the Scriptures. The Scriptures were the final authority; the Scriptures formed their view of life.

### “Synthesis”

The life style of the early church and the Scriptures was a “synthesis.” The Scriptures determined their attitude, controlled their decisions, and decided the ultimate meaning of every event. Since they believed God spoke the Scriptures, they believed no event was outside of His sovereign control as viewed through the Scriptures. The Scriptures were the revelation of God’s spoken voice. It was neither a book of advice nor a list of rules for life. It was the expression of the indwelling Spirit of Jesus.

### “Supervision”

The sovereign control for their reactions and choices was God’s voice through the Scriptures. The “supervision” for their every move was the Scriptures. A spontaneous response to this crisis moment (Acts 4:23) for the early church was to quote the Scriptures. They understood their past and present in light of the Scriptures, and their identity within the framework of history was found in the Scriptures. They responded according to the Scriptures.

Their quotation is the first of four sections found in the second Psalm. The history of the Psalm is unknown. According to the early church God through David sourced it. It is a Messianic Psalm. The complete Psalm has four sections each containing three verses. There appears to be a different speaker for each section giving us different perspectives.

### “Protestors”

It begins with the “protestors” as recorded in our passage (Psalms 2:1-3; Acts 4:25-26). The two opening lines of the Psalms state the same truth about the same group of people. It asks a question without expecting an answer. The Greek word “phruasso,” translated “rage,” is an expression of senseless noise. It refers to a snorting horse. The rider of the horse is in

charge with the bit and the bridle regardless of the horses' snorting. The noise making is simply *"vain things."* It is a translation of the Greek word "keno," which means empty.

The most powerful men of the world taking a stand or uniting together explain this "empty snorting". However, it means absolutely nothing, because they unite against the sovereign Lord and against the redeeming Messiah belonging to the sovereign One. Can you imagine superman holding at bay a skinny teenager who is wildly flinging his arms to destroy him? Can you imagine a three year old yelling and hitting his father in an attempt to get what he wants? The empty snorting of creatures of a sovereign God coming against Him who is almighty far exceeds these images!

The "empty snorting" is not simply a noise of irritation. There is no casual or indifferent sin. We are not a people who ignore God and want to do our own thing. We are not merely irritated when He interferes in our lives and simply go our own way in our concerns. The statement of the early church does not include the final statement of the Psalmist who records what they say:

*"Let us break Their bonds in pieces  
And cast away Their cords from us"* (Psalms 2:3).

There is nothing casual in these statements. We see the rebellion of the creature against his Creator. Both statements refer to the control of God over the life of man. All sin is contained within the boundaries of this rebellion. We are at war with Divine control. We were created to be dependent on God; any attempt to be independent is an act of war against His sovereignty.

### **"Planner"**

The next section in this Psalm records the speaking of the "Planner" describing God in His sovereignty.

*"He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;  
The Lord shall hold them in derision.  
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,  
And distress them in His deep displeasure"* (Psalms 2:4-5).

We must understand this section in light of the God's revelation in Jesus. The attitude of God toward His creation is not stimulated by His sovereignty alone. There is a plan established and executed by His sovereignty. The Trinity, as represented through the Father, said:

*"Yet I have set My King  
On My holy hill of Zion"* (Psalms 2:6).

The sovereign plan is focused on Jesus. The Hebrew word "nacak," translated *"set,"* means to pour out. It contains the idea of "anointing," which corresponds to the idea of the King. As we will see in the next section of the Psalm, Jesus, the Son, is the Anointed One. He is the King of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom in the New Covenant is a merger between the helplessness of man and the sovereign power of God. When these two unite, a new creature is created. The rebellion of man is against this plan, the ruling of Jesus as King in my life!

The words that God *"shall laugh," "hold them in derision,"* and *"speak to them in His wrath"* must be interpreted through Jesus. *"Laugh"* and *"derision"* are associated with mocking. *"Wrath"* (aph) comes from the idea of one's nose or nostrils. It portrays the idea of passion or burning. In light of Jesus, all this suggests the moving passion of God's love coupled with complete awareness that rebellion is futile. It is the picture of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39). We have no comprehension of the deep agony our omniscient God experiences over the foolish rebellion of His creation. His plan in Christ for our lives is fulfilling and complete. We must ask again, *"Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing?"* (Psalms 2:1, Acts 4:25).

### **"Plan"**

We must understand the "Planner" in light of the "Plan" (Psalms 2:7-9). The speaker in these three verses changes from the Trinity God represented by the Father to the Trinity God represented by the Son. The promises given to the Son from the Father (Trinity) are listed.

*"I will declare the decree:  
The Lord has said to Me,  
You are My Son,  
Today have I begotten You"* (Psalms 2:7).

The Father generates the life of the Son. Jesus is the first Son, the only Begotten One. There will be many to follow who will be sourced by the same generating life (Hebrews 2:10-11). Jesus established and exists as the plan of God for the Kingdom

person. The merging life of God within the Man, Jesus, is to merge with all those who will embrace their helplessness. The fullness of life in Him will also be theirs. Why are they raging against the sovereign sourcing of life?

The Sovereign God made a promise to His Creation.

*“Ask of me, and I will give You  
The nations for Your inheritance,  
And the ends of the earth for Your possession”* (Psalms 2:8).

No rebellious people will establish a dominion outside of God. Everything will be under His rule and belong to Him. It is only those who are merged with Him that will *“inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5). This will happen because all rebellious people will be destroyed.

*“You shall break them with a rod of iron;  
“You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel”* (Psalms 2:9).

The early church understood this to be fulfilled in Jesus. The *“nations rage”* is directly related to *“Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together”* (Acts 4:27). All the power of a rebellious world came together to accomplish the crucifixion and elimination of Jesus. But here is how the early church described the crucifixion: *“to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:28). In other words, the “protestors” can rage all they want and enlist their greatest power, but the “Planner” (Trinity God represented by the Father), who has a “Plan” (Trinity God as represented by the Son), is sovereign. Even their protesting plays into the hands of His “Plan.” His sovereignty is so great that they smashed themselves on the plan they tried to defeat. He does not need to war against them; He does not need to destroy them. They destroy themselves in their own rebellion.

### “Paraclete”

Then comes the final section of our Psalm (Psalms 2:10-12). The speaker is the Trinity God represented by the Holy Spirit. He gives a call to carefully consider truth.

*“Now therefore, be wise, O kings;  
Be instructed, you judges of the earth”* (Psalms 2:10).

They are to be wise, “sakhel,” to act with insight. They are to possess a spirit that is teachable. They are to recognize the sovereignty of the “Planner” and understand the wonder of His “Plan.” They are to merge with His presence and allow Him to shape them into His image. Come to Him in rebellion and you are destroyed. Come to Him in submission and you are shaped into the fullness of life.

God admonishes:

*“Serve the Lord with fear’  
And rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,  
And you perish in the way,  
When His wrath is kindled but a little.  
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him”*  
(Psalms 2:11-12).

It is a beautiful picture of submission and merging to the full life provided by the “Plan.” We are to *“serve”* (abad) Him, which means to be enslaved to Him. But in the lack of resource and the state of helplessness, why would we not avail ourselves of all He dreams for us? We are to *“kiss (hashag) the Son.”* It presents the idea of being fastened or fixed to Him. It is the idea of merging in the most intimate way.

The early church understood this prophecy to be fulfilled in their lives and an instruction to them for their moment of persecution. The plan of their sovereign God is Jesus, the Person. Even rebellion against Him is still within the scope of His sovereignty. Herod and Pilate gathering with the people of Israel only fulfilled the plan of sovereign God. So what did they gain from their rebellion? The *“nations rage”* was nothing but the snorting of a horse and an empty thing. They recognize the threats of the Sanhedrin as mere noise in light of the sovereignty of God. There is no need to panic or despair; they must *“kiss the Son!”*

In their moments of threat, the early church understood the Scriptures were instructing them and gave direction to their circumstances. Whatever your crisis or pressure, this applies to you!

## Snorting Horses

The same demonic force manifested in the crucifixion of Jesus was now displayed in the beginning persecution of the early church. Did the apostles believe the world would readily accept the message of Jesus, the Resurrected One? The resistance that caused His crucifixion would be unleashed on anyone who proposed victory through His presence. Did the apostles return to their companions shocked at this resistance? Did they consider this a “new” resistance?

What did you think would happen in your life as you surrender to Jesus? Have the demonic forces that claim you for defeat and destruction fallen asleep? Are they not working with renewed effort in this closing age? Every obstacle under the dominion of the evil one will be planted in your path. Financial difficulty, home conflicts, church upsets, physical health, family issues, and job difficulties will all become a platform for the enemies’ distraction.

We must respond exactly as the early church! Any demonic concoction of any circumstance pressuring you to turn to self-sufficiency is simply a snorting horse. Any threat that would cause you to hesitate or question His sovereignty and resource is an empty thing. God is moving in ways far beyond what you are seeing in the physical world.

## Snuggle with the Son

You must respond as instructed in the Psalms (Psalms 2). We are instructed to *“be wise,” “be instructed,” “serve the Lord,” “rejoice with trembling,”* and *“kiss the Son”* (Psalms 2:10-12). If you will live in wisdom, you will merge with the Son. He is the plan of God for all fulfillment; you are included in the plan. Will you surrender to His instruction, for He is the truth? Therefore you will not master truth as data or information, but you will be mastered by Truth as you are filled with Him. Will you serve the Lord? But what could you possibly do that He would need done? It is only in becoming one with Him that you find value in any activity, for the activity must be sourced by His power. You must rejoice! But rejoicing is only worthwhile when it is experienced in the context of trembling. You see His greatness; you are overwhelmed with His majesty. No problem or pressure creates such stress that He is overshadowed. The threats of the Sanhedrin are swallowed in the wonder of His presence. You rejoice in the context of trembling at His greatness. This manner of surrender allows you to *“kiss the Son.”*

Does the old statement apply here: “love conquers all.” In His embrace all tension is removed; worry must flee. You are His bride and the Bridegroom is magnificent. His provisions are extravagant. His protection is complete. You are safe in His arms. Please *“kiss the Son.”*

## Sovereignty of God

God is the sovereign One. Any attempt to provide for Him is a reproach to His greatness. Any thought of instructing Him is unthinkable arrogance. One moment of worry reveals self-centeredness, self-dependence, and self-sufficiency. Is He not sovereign? Will my belief about Him be determined by my circumstances or by His embrace and oneness in my life? I must *“kiss the Son.”* Here is my dwelling place.