

Conquering Priest-King

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we come to you again, Lord, this Wednesday to make use of this privilege you have made available to us of the ability to speak to you, to hear from you as your children.

And today in particular, we come to Psalm 110, eager to let you enlarge our view of Christ and his sovereign power so that he may control our attitudes, our perspectives, that he might quell our fears, that he might help us persevere.

So please, Lord, speak to us through your word and inform our prayer that we may pray according to your will. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. We're in Psalm 110. The subtitle of the psalm says, A Psalm of David. Just a short seven verses I'll read out loud first.

Psalm 110. The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

[1 : 38] The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies. Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power in holy garments.

From the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses. He will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way. Therefore, he will lift up his head. It's like a really powerful psalm, right? It's arguably the most important psalm in the Psalter, especially with messianic implications.

So verse one of this psalm is cited or alluded to more frequently than any other verse in the Old Testament. And for good reason. But before we talk about how this psalm is fulfilled by Jesus, let's try to understand the psalm in its own context first, original context first.

[2 : 50] It's divided into two main sections. And each section begins with an oracle from God. So God's speech in verse one and in verse four. So the first section, we see the enthronement of a king, verses one to three.

And then the second section, verses four to seven, we see the appointment of the priest of God and at God's right hand. So the main point of the psalm, I think, is that we should trust in the conquering priest king.

It's the same person who extends God's heavenly rule on earth. And so the first section deals with the enthronement of a king. It says in verse one, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

The first Lord, as you guys have in all caps, refers to God. It's the proper name of God, Yahweh. And the second Lord refers to a human king.

It's like master, Lord. And this seems to be being announced by some kind of court official, perhaps a prophet, since this is an oracle from God, declaring that the Lord is saying this about this king that's being appointed to reign over God's people.

[3 : 58] The right hand, he's invited to sit at the right hand of God, which means it's a position of prominence and honor. Usually the right hand is reserved for the second in command, right? So this king is very important.

But this also teaches a very radical idea in any of the nations that had a monarchy in place, because usually in a monarchy, the king has absolute authority, right?

But in Israel, a monarchy, even though it was a monarchy, was still a theocracy, because the monarch, the king, was understood to be subject to and accountable to and doing the bidding of the true king, which is God.

So it's God who sits on the throne and the king, earthly king that we see usually as supreme, is only at his right hand. So God's the real king who reigns over his people, and the earthly king is just his representative.

And God's going to establish the kingdom for his earthly representative, and he promises to subdue all his enemies by reducing them to the king's footstool, which, of course, is a picture of subjugation under your feet.

[5 : 04] And then verse 2 tells us how God will do this. He says, The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies. So God sends from his holy city, Zion, the mighty scepter with which the king, the earthly king, will exert his rule in the midst of his enemies.

And then God's granting of the mighty scepter to the king also means that an army will be raised up by God for him. Verse 3 says, Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power in holy garment.

From the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. It's a little bit complicated verse, hard to understand on its own. But the promise seems to be that the young men of the nation, the youth, will freely volunteer to serve in the military that will establish the king's rule.

And the youth of the nation will rise up like dew in the morning from the womb of the morning. And this is a cool image because the dew, right, kind of appears mysteriously in the morning.

You don't see any rainfall or hear any rainfall really at night. But then when you step out into the day in the morning, you see the dew has covered the earth. So seemingly, like in the same way, seemingly out of nowhere, this youth that will come to support this king will arise out of nowhere and cover the earth.

[6 : 22] And so that's the enthronement of the king. And then the second we see the appointment of the priest in verses 4 to 7. And it too begins with an oracle from God in verse 4. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And the subject of the psalm is still the same person. It's still the king. But it's very interesting because here we see that God appoints this king also to be a priest, right?

And this is unusual. I don't know if you guys remember the story from 2 Chronicles 26. We're told the story of Uzziah, who was a king from the line of David in the nation of Judah.

And he is an able leader. And he leads the nation to one of the most proper times of its history. But that makes him very prideful. And so it says in 2 Chronicles 26.8, it says that Uzziah's fame spread even to the border of Egypt.

For he became very strong. However, in 2 Chronicles 26.16-18, because he became so prideful, he presumes to enter God's temple, even though he's a king.

[7 : 31] And then he burns incense to God. And a true priest, Azariah, along with other 80 priests of the Lord, confront Uzziah the king that this is not right.

And so this is what they say to him. It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God.

So they boldly confront the king that he's not the one that's supposed to serve this priestly role. But instead of humbling himself, King Uzziah becomes angry and as a result gets inflicted by the Lord with leprosy.

And as that episode makes clear, there was a clear line separating the kingship and the priesthood. And a king was not supposed to usurp the priesthood for himself.

But here in Psalm 110, the king is also declared a priest forever, which is very interesting. And so this is not a normal priest. This is a messianic priest king.

[8 : 32] And that's why he is priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And the normal priests were descendants of Aaron, right? But this king is declared a priest not by the virtue of his ethnic descent from Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek.

And Melchizedek, of course, is that mysterious Old Testament figure. He appears out of nowhere in Genesis 14. He has no genealogical information provided about him.

But he seems to be a figure of exceeding importance and stature because he blesses Abraham, which implies that he is greater than Abraham, as the logic in Hebrews goes. And his name means king of righteousness.

And he's a king of a city named Salem, which means peace. So he's a king of righteousness and a king of peace. And he's described as the priest, not of some pagan god, but of the most high god, which is a reference to Yahweh, the Lord.

So then this king belongs not to, this king in Psalm 110 does not belong to the Aaronic order of priests, but to the priestly order of Melchizedek. It's a special eternal priesthood.

[9 : 34] And then things get even more interesting starting in verse 5. It says, The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses. He will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way. Therefore, he will lift up his head. So the question we need to ask is, who is this Lord mentioned in verse 5?

Is it Yahweh, the Lord, God? Or is it the Lord, the Messianic King? Right? On the one hand, the word Lord here is the same word as the second Lord in verse 1.

Sit at my, where Yahweh said to the human Lord, sit at my right hand. And it makes sense then that this Lord here who is at your right hand, meaning at the right hand of God, because God invited him in verse 1 to sit at my right hand.

So it could be the human Lord, the same human Lord. And in verse 7, it says that he will drink from the brook by the way. Therefore, he will lift up his head. So this is likely a reference to drinking water from a brook in a conquered land, in a foreign land.

[10 : 43] And usually foreign nations would have been up in arms about a foreign king drinking from them without permission. But here they can do nothing about it because they've been subdued. They've been conquered. And so now the king raises up his head in victory, in triumph.

So this seems to be referring to a human king. And so that's one view. But on the other hand, even though the word Lord here is the same as the word in verse 1, the spelling of it is slightly different in the original Hebrew.

And in fact, the Jews used this variant spelling of the word Lord exclusively in the Old Testament when it was referring to God, the Lord God. And furthermore, the mention of the day of his wrath suggests that this is a reference to the divine Lord because that expression, the day of his wrath, the day of his anger, is frequently used throughout the Old Testament to refer to the judgment of God.

So then it could be that in verse 1, the Lord God invited the king to sit on his right hand, the earthly king. And then in verse 5, the Lord God comes to the aid of the king at his right hand to help.

So this is incredibly difficult to settle. And there have been good interpreters on both sides with strong arguments throughout church history as really early as you can trace it.

[11 : 58] But I believe that there is an intentional ambiguity here that's wonderfully explained and fulfilled by Jesus. And in fact, in Mark 12, 35 to 37, Jesus himself uses Psalm 110 to argue that he is in fact the Messiah and is greater than David himself.

And this is what he says in Mark. Jesus says this, How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself in the Holy Spirit declared, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son? So look at the superscription, the subtitle again. It said the Psalm of David.

So Jesus takes this to mean that David is the author of the psalm. And if David is the author, this is even more interesting. Then who is this Lord that David, the king, he is supposed to be the king that leads God's people.

If he's calling him Lord, the Lord God says to my Lord, sit at my right hand. So who is this king that's greater than even David himself? And numerous New Testament passages refer back to the psalm and say that it's Jesus who is seated at the right hand of God.

[13 : 11] Acts 2, 33, Romans 8, Ephesians 1, Colossians 3, Hebrews 12. And in Hebrews 6, 27 to 28, it tells us that Jesus is in fact the one who is appointed priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

And so Jesus, then it makes, isn't that amazing how that psalm just makes sense when you see it in light of Christ, when it's like, it doesn't make any sense when you're trying to figure out what it actually means on its original context. And then, so then this psalm provides wonderful assurances for us, for those who have been united with Christ through faith.

First is it gives us assurance of salvation, assurance of pardon. The author of Hebrews tell us in that passage I mentioned that Jesus, because he's the resurrected Lord, and he sits forever at the right hand of God, unlike the Aaronic priests who died and therefore couldn't continue in their priesthood, his intercession, Jesus' intercession on our behalf is unceasing.

And that's why in Romans 8, 34 to 39, he puts it this way, Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

[14 : 30] For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We're used to losing people who used to have our back, right, in our world. I mean, you have maybe in your workplace, you used to have a supervisor or a manager that really looked out for your interest, and had, and looked out for you, supported you, advocated for your promotion, and things like that.

But then he or she moves on to another job, or leaves, and for one reason or another, and then you get a new manager or supervisor that cares nothing about you and doesn't know you. And then you feel like you lose that supporter, that patron.

Or maybe it's a mom or a dad that raised you and was always in your corners, and your biggest cheerleader, and they get old and they die. Your wife or husband, the one who was always by your side, and then for most of your adulthood, and then they get sick or they die.

But Jesus, who is for us, who is in our corner, and who gave himself for us as the atoning sacrifice, has been raised from the dead so he doesn't die ever again, and he reigns forever from the right hand of God.

[15 : 45] So that means we have nothing to fear that should give us assurance. Not even death can separate us from the love of Christ. So even though our sins, all the time, every day, they clamor for our condemnation before the throne of God, but Jesus, our faithful intercessor, is always there at the right hand, saying, no, his blood pleads our acceptance, our forgiveness.

So that's assurance. And he also gives us assurance of victory that should help us to persevere to the end. Ephesians 1, 20 to 22 says that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

And this is the implication, the application of the fact that Jesus is at the right hand of God. Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet, remember the footstool, and gave him as head over all things to the church. So that means all authority on earth, including all the evil authority, have been subjected to Christ, submitted by him, subdued by him, and have been given over to his people, to the church.

And so that means we don't need to fear anything, any subjection to evil powers. Evil has been overthrown and Christ has taken his throne. And of course, when the new king is on the throne, the regime change has taken place, but the effects of that are still getting worked out, which is why we still see evil in our world, which is still why we see sin in our own lives.

[17 : 14] But it's now a matter of when that will be completed, not a question of if, because the king has taken his throne. There is a new regime in place. And that certainty should motivate us and comfort us when we are discouraged by the sin and evil in our own lives and in the world.

And so that's why this is a really powerful psalm. It's short. It teaches that we can trust in the conquering priest king who extends God's heavenly rule on earth. So with that in mind, let's sing a song and pray.

Let's pray.