

The Great King-Priest of Psalm 110

- Psalm 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament, vs. 1 (at least 25 times) and vs. 4 (5 times). It shines Christologically as bright as the noon-day sun. Here King David plays the role of poetic prophet, receiving from God in heaven a revelation of the coming Messiah that joins company with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.
- In Matthew 22: 41-46 Jesus: 1) affirms Davidic authorship of Psalm 110, 2) affirms the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and 3) makes clear that Messiah, a human descendant of David, would be more than just a man. So crucial was this event in the life of Jesus that all 3 synoptic gospels see fit to record it (Matt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).
- Psalm 110 is a purely Messianic, prophetic psalm with *Yahweh* as the speaker throughout. Luther was so taken by it he wrote 120 pages of commentary on it (Boice, 896). This “Lord” (*Adonai*) is a King-Priest. This Lord sits at Jehovah’s right hand, watches Jehovah strike down all His enemies and is an eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). Yes, He is human for He descends from David. And yes, He is God for He has co-authority with the LORD and His priesthood is of eternal duration.
- Even the Jews of Jesus’ day believed Psalm 110 was messianic. They just did not see how awesome Messiah would truly be both in His person and His work.
- The psalm naturally and easily divides into 2 stanzas with each stanza functioning as a divine oracle. The pattern in both is the same: there is a promise and result. Stanza one rejoices in Messiah as the great King in the manner of Ps. 2. Stanza 2 exalts Messiah as the Great Priest after the order of the mysterious Melchizedek. He is coronated as King in vs. 1-3 and consecrated as Priest in vs. 4-7.

I. Messiah Jesus is our great King. 110:1-3

- Stanza one sings of *Yahweh* and His chosen King. Here the Father makes 3 promises to His Messiah-Son: 1) I will defeat your enemies (v. 1), 2) extend your kingdom (v.2), and 3) give you a great army (v.3).
- Verse one, in particular, played a significant role in the New Testament as the identity of Jesus as the Messiah is made plain.
 - 1) Jesus cited this verse to prove that Messiah is more than a mere physical descendant of David (Matt. 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).
 - 2) Peter quoted Psalm 110:1 on the Day of Pentecost to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah-Lord (Acts 2:34-36).
 - 3) The writer of Hebrews quoted the verse to argue that the Messiah (who is Jesus) is greater than the angels (Heb. 1:13).
 - 4) The writers of the New Testament cited the verse in order to show that after Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (Acts 2:33-35; Heb. 6:20), He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven.
 - 5) In addition New Testament writers stated that God the Father places His enemies under His Son Jesus’ feet (1 Cor. 15:25-28; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 10:13).
- In this psalm God clarifies and makes plain just how He would fulfill His great promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 that He would thru David’s son, “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (v 13, 16).

1. He is enthroned by God. 110:1

- “*Yahweh* said to my *Adonai*.” Jehovah says to Messiah. Says is a word often used to note a divine oracle or word of revelation.

- Sit at My right hand – “sit” is an imperative. The “right hand” is the place of honor, authority, and power. The Messiah-King is granted His power and authority from God by virtue of who He is (King) and what He does (Priest). (cf. Philippians 2:9-11).
- Footstool is a symbol of complete and total victory. God’s chosen King will place his feet on the necks of His defeated enemies and all of this is the work of Jehovah. In the New Testament this promise is applied to the risen Christ no less than 7 times (Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:13; 8:1; 10:12-13).

2. He is empowered by the Lord. 110:2-3

- Verses 2-3 proclaim a great reversal. The world’s evaluation of this King-Priest is set on its head by heaven.
- “Rod of your strength” is better translated “your strong scepter” (NASV), or “your mighty scepter” (ESV). Further, the phrase is at the beginning of the verse for emphasis. “Your strong scepter, Jehovah shall send.” The scepter is a picture of the King’s domination, strength, power and authority. Note once again this is Jehovah’s doing!
- Rule in the midst of your enemies – “Rule” is another imperative. Messiah will sit with His feet on His enemies neck and He will rule as King right there among them.
- Vs. 3 Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power. Messiah Jesus will have willing volunteers who freely join Him in the day of battle. Cheerfully and promptly they obey Messiah’s commands, consecrating themselves in “holy array” (NASV).
- In the beauties of holiness (ESV, “in holy garments”). What follows is subject to varying interpretations. This phrase may refer to the fact that as their priestly king is holy, so His servants are to be holy. Exodus 19:6 and Revelation 5:10 both identify Messiah’s followers as a “kingdom of priests.”
- From the womb of the morning, You have the dew of your youth. This phrase is unclear as to its precise meaning. It could be describing the freshness and enthusiasm of His large army of volunteers. It may even refer to their beauty, brilliance and attractiveness as it relates to their holy garments. However, it is also possible that it is our eternal King-Priest who is the object of this picture. If this is correct, we should back up and apply to Messiah the whole of the description beginning with the phrase, “In the beauties of holiness.” Our King-Priest is thus portrayed as clothed in royal, priestly apparel perpetually preserved in His youth and vigor. This King-Priest does not grow old, tire or faint. He does not need a break, timeout or mid-day nap. He is perpetually and forever empowered by the very life of God in Him.

II. Messiah Jesus is our great High Priest. 110:4-7

- The union of the offices of king and priest was never realized in the Old Testament era, and yet it is prophesied and anticipated not only in Psalm 110, but also in Zech. 6:12-13.
- To unite the office of king and priest was simply not on the Hebrew radar screen and yet... back in Gen. 14:18-20 there was a King-Priest from Salem (Jerusalem) by the name of Melchizedek. He shows up out of nowhere and is gone in a flash. He is only mentioned 3 times in the Bible: 1) Gen. 14; Psalm 110 and the book of Hebrews. There he is mentioned no less than 8 times.
- Like verse one, verse 4 was crucial in developing the Christology of the New Testament. There we see:
 - 1) Jesus was given the title of High Priest (only expressedly stated in Heb.), a title after which He did not grasp but that the author of Hebrews clearly saw belonged to Him (Heb. 4:14-15; 5:10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 10:21).
 - 2) By being the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus is the mediator and source of salvation for all who believe in Him (5:9-10).

- 3) Jesus, having become a Melchizedekian priest, entered into the presence of God in order to show the way for believers to enter heaven (6:20).
- 4) By becoming a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus initiated a new order (7:17).
- 5) Jesus' priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, is a greater priesthood than that of the Levitical order which followed Aaron (7:15-21). It is eternal in Him and will never end.

1. His priesthood is irrevocable. 110:4

- Verse 4 is the heart of the psalm. It sends a seismic shock throughout our spiritual system with its beginning: "The Lord has sworn." Here is a solemn divine promise or oath.
- To reinforce the binding nature of the oath the LORD adds to His oath, "I will not relent", "I will not change my mind."
- And what is the promise the LORD makes to Messiah, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, ("King of Righteousness"). You and no other. You and only you. As Melchizedek was a King-Priest in his day you shall be a King-Priest forever!

2. His priesthood is invincible. 110:5-7

- The last 3 verses of Psalm 110 transitions us from the book of Hebrews to the book of Revelation.
- Our great High Priest is a militant priest as are His followers. He is a Warrior Lamb!
- He is Messiah-King-Priest Jesus. Sitting at God's right hand should strike terror to His enemies as it brings joy to His people.
- "The day of His power" (v. 3) is now identified as "the day of His wrath" (v.5). There is a fixed day and time when He will be made known for just who He is. Revelation 6:16-17 calls it "the great day of the wrath of the Lamb." Moving from the right hand of Jehovah six bold affirmations are declared concerning what this King-Priest will do to His enemies.
 - 1) He will execute (*NASV, ESV*, "shatter", break to pieces) kings in the day of His wrath (v.5).
 - 2) He shall judge (*ESV* "execute judgment") among the nations (note Ps. 2:8) (v. 6).
 - 3) He shall fill the places [the nations] with dead bodies (corpses). This language anticipates the Armageddon judgment of Rev. 19:17-21 (v. 6).
 - * 4) He shall execute the heads (Heb. "*rosh*", sing.) of many countries. Lit. "the head over many lands." Is Gen. 3:15 and the protoevangelium in the shadows? (v. 6). I believe so! The head of the old serpent and all who follow in his lying, deceitful, and evil path will be crushed by the thorned crowned head of a risen King-Priest.
 - 5) He shall drink from the brook by the wayside (*NASV*). Following his great victory, He is refreshed as He returns to His throne (v. 7).
 - 6) Therefore, He shall lift up the head (Heb. "*rosh*"). In verse 6 a head is cut down, executed, "crushed" (!) recalling the language of Gen. 3:15, a promised proclaimed in Rom. 16:20. Now, another head, the head of a crucified, risen King-Priest is lifted up, raised, exalted. And why? Because this King Priest:
 - as Heb. 5:9 says is the author of eternal salvation.
 - as Heb. 6:19 says is the hope we have as an anchor of the soul.
 - as Heb. 7:16 says has the power of an endless life.
 - as Heb. 7:22 says is the guarantee of a better covenant.

- as Heb. 7:25 says is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God thru Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (cf. Rom 8:34).
- as Heb. 7:26 says is holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners and has become higher than the heavens.
- as Heb. 9:14 says, by His blood... offered Himself without blemish to God to cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
- as Heb. 9:26-27 says appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself... offered once to bear the sins of many.
- as Heb. 10:12 says after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting til His enemies are made His footstool.
- as Heb. 10:19 says makes it possible for us to have boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by His blood.

Conclusion:

A perfect kingdom needs a perfect King.

A perfect temple needs a perfect Priest.

Jesus Our Great King-Priest

- 1) There is a great High Priest
Who saw that sin would cease
To whom saved ones from every tongue
Will one day come
Before the Lord we'll sing
Made perfect thru our King
Believing hearts find promised grace
Salvation comes
- 2) And like Melchizedek
Our Priest forever set
We'll honor Him in perfect praise
Our voices raise
This one our sin atoned
Now sits upon His throne
The Priest who is our Shepherd King
We'll reign with Him

Refrain

Here heaven's voices sing
Their grateful anthem rings
To our Great Priest and Awesome King
Our praises rise
All glory, wisdom, pow'r,
Strength, thanks and honor are
To our great King, our Priest on high
Forever more