

PSALM 110 – JESUS CHRIST OUR KING AND PRIEST
(SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2011)

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 110; ACTS 2:29-39

INTRODUCTION

In two or three weeks, Lord willing, we will be looking at the end of Matthew 22, where Jesus silenced the Pharisees by asking them a question from Psalm 110. Psalm 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. According to James Boice, Psalm 110 is directly quoted or indirectly referred to 27 times in the New Testament. Another scholar has come up with a list of 33 quotations or allusions.¹ It is the greatest of the Messianic psalms, the psalms which prophetically describe the person and work of Jesus the Messiah.² Since this psalm is of such great importance and is somewhat difficult to understand because of its imagery, I thought it would be good to look at this psalm even before we come to the end of Matthew 22.

In our evening services we have been looking at the book of Daniel. Last Sunday as I closed the message, I shared some statistics, which in part describe the world and the challenges that we face as God's people.

There are over 6.7 billion people who inhabit God's earth. Of these:

Over 1 billion people living under communist rule

Over 1 billion people subjugated under Islamic rule

Over 1 billion people in various degrees of bondage and spiritual blindness through the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

Nearly 1 billion people blinded by the false gods of Hinduism

Another almost 400 million followers of Buddhism.

800 million are in darkness following other religions and almost 1 billion are either non-religious or self-professed atheists.

This leaves almost 400 million Protestants, many of whom are in apostate churches and denominations, 240 million followers of Greek, Russian, or other forms of Orthodoxy, and about 85 million Anglicans.³

In light of these statistics can we really say with meaning and total confidence, Jesus Christ is King and is ruling over this world? **Absolutely!** With total assurance and confidence, you are to declare Jesus Christ is King. He is ruling, restraining, and judging His enemies, waiting for the day when all His enemies will be made His footstool.

¹ According to Hay (*Glory*, 15) some thirty-three quotations of or allusions to Psalm 110 (vv 1 and 4) are scattered throughout the NT. Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, vol. 44 of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance/Thomas Nelson Electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 162.

² Boice, 892.

³ Statistics coming from the *CIA World Factbook*, iOS version on an Apple iPod Touch.

Do we say this after studying the *CIA World Factbook* or the *Chicago Tribune*? In part yes, as these sources show often the judgment which men and nations are facing as they live in rebellion to Jesus Christ. The ultimate assurance that Christ is King comes not from your own observations or the observations of others. Through faith we believe the clear testimony of God's Word. This faith is not just a wish or a personal feeling, but a God-given trust that what He says is true. And on the basis of such truth we then interpret the world around us, rather than making the fatal mistake of interpreting Scripture based on what we supposedly know from our observations of the world.

Psalm 110 shows that Jesus Christ is Lord, that He is our great King and Priest. The challenge is to live in light of this great reality. Live like Jesus Christ is Your King and Priest.

We will look at Psalm 110 in two parts. First, we will begin with an overview of the psalm. Second, we will see how the NT interprets and applies this passage.

1. OVERVIEW OF PSALM 110

We must begin with the heading of this Psalm. The heading of this Psalm reads, **A Psalm of David**. Does this mean that David is the author or that this Psalm is about David? Different answers are given to this question. Many say that we can't really trust the headings of the Psalms; they were later written. But what does the NT say about this issue? Scholars and others give a variety of answers, but the NT is quite clear.

Jesus in Matthew 22:43 spoke of David being the author of this psalm and that he wrote this psalm through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In perfect agreement, Peter also identified David as the author in Acts 2:34. Do we need additional witnesses or can we trust the testimony of both Jesus and Peter?

Why is this important? Since David is the author of this psalm, then we can say that David is not the subject of this psalm. If we take the psalm seriously we can also say that David was not writing about Solomon nor speaking about an ideal human king. No, David filled with the Holy Spirit, was given access into God's Throne Room and given understanding of the most incredible parts of God's plan of redemption.

There is, of course, in this psalm language and descriptions that come from the time of David. David was the greatest of the kings of Israel. David in some sense did serve as a priest. But this Psalm is not about David, but rather about David's son, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.⁴

⁴J. A. Moyter writes, "If so, when David took Jerusalem (2 Sa. 5:6-9) he sat on Melchizedek's throne, himself heir to the priestly-kingship validated by Abraham. This would account for Psalm 110. As David meditated on his dignity as priest-king, it became a telescope turned on the Messiah and he looked forward to the perfect Priest-King, the full reality of what David was only the shadow cast beforehand." *New Bible Commentary*, 559. I think Moyter is correct in seeing a possible background in the life of David, but we easily fall into speculation when we try to construct the background.

Let us consider in five parts what David was given an incredible privilege to know and then write about 1000 years before the Son of God took on human flesh.

First, David in the Spirit heard a most amazing conversation, God the Father speaking to God the Son.

The LORD said to my Lord,

It is very important to pay close attention to the use of capital letters in verse 1. Almost all English versions translate the name Yahweh or Jehovah as LORD written in all capital letters. Yahweh said to **my** Lord. This second use of the name Lord is a different Hebrew word, which could also be translated as Master. David was not speaking of Solomon. He was speaking of his own Lord or Master. He was speaking of the coming Messiah.

The word **said** is also an important word. The word means a prophetic utterance.⁵ David was able to hear an important word of prophecy that would be ultimately fulfilled after Christ's resurrection and ascension.

Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.

Jesus after His resurrection and ascension was given the place of greatest privilege and honor. He sits at the **right hand** of the Father. And He is given this place of greatest honor until the Father turns all of Christ's enemies into a place for Him to rest His feet. This work has been slowly taking place for nearly 2,000 years. We are not told in Scripture how much longer it will take, but you are to say with assurance that it is happening *now!*

In verse 2, David spoke directly to Jesus Christ, His Lord.

The LORD shall send the rod⁶ of Your strength out of Zion.

Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

I like the NET Bible's translation here, "**The LORD extends your dominion from Zion.**" Zion was the mountain on which Jerusalem was built. In the OT it was the special place where God's presence and His reign were known. But here we are not referring to any specific place on earth but rather the Heavenly throne on which Christ now sits, though His dominion is being extended over all the earth.

⁵ NET Bible note: "The word נְאֻם (*né'um*) is used frequently in the OT of a formal divine announcement through a prophet."

⁶ NIDOTTE here states: In contrast to שֵׁבֶט, which when meaning rod or scepter normally involves a symbol of the figure in authority such as a father, a king, or God, מִטְּהָרָה normally refers to a shepherd's staff or the staff of a leader of lower status than God or king, such as a priest, prince, or tribal leader. NIDOTTE, s.v. "מִטְּהָרָה," 2:917-918.

Based on this confidence, David then exclaimed in praise of Christ, “Rule in the midst of your enemies.” Show your power over all your enemies. Bring your enemies to salvation, if that is your will. If not, bring them to shame and judgment as You best know how.

This Psalm is given to you not only to teach you concerning the exalted nature of Jesus Christ but also what must be your response to His great rule. We need constant instruction in both of these areas.

The language of this Psalm is difficult in many places. Thankfully this does not mean the message of the Psalm is in anyway unclear. We simply must stretch our minds and understanding as much as we can.

Verse 3 now speaks of the true followers of Jesus Christ.

**Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;**

The word volunteer is a word normally used to describe a voluntary or free-will offering. Here it seems to have the idea more of being willing. Again, I like here the NET translation, “Your people willingly follow you when you go into battle.”

Again this Psalm teaches you how you are to respond to the reign of Jesus Christ. It doesn’t mean you just sit back and watch. No, you are called to be deeply involved in the battle as Christ goes before us. Repent of your laziness and neglect of seeking first the kingdom of God. Seek to turn aside from the things which distract you and keep your focus where it should be.

Rev. 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

The second part of verse 3 is also challenging.

**In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.**

Translations, not surprisingly, can be quite different here. Unless we resort to a slight change in the Hebrew text, the best interpretation is that this is a description of Jesus Christ on the battlefield, wearing majestic and holy garments. The womb of the morning may refer to sunrise.⁷ Sunrise is also the time when the dew is noticed in its beautiful blanketing of the earth. Scholars speak of the dew of your youth either being a reference to strength and energy⁸ or perhaps a picture of the armies of Christ.⁹

Some believe that verse 4 is the center of this Psalm. Here David speaks of another amazing declaration made to Jesus Christ.

⁷ NET Bible translation.

⁸ Robert Alter, 397.

⁹ John Calvin wrote, “The youth, therefore, which, like the dew-drops, are innumerable, are here designated *the dew of childhood or of youth.*”

**The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”**

Besides this psalm, the only other OT reference to Melchizedek is found in Genesis 14. About one thousand years before David wrote this great psalm, Abraham after returning from a great military victory met with the somewhat mysterious king and priest named Melchizedek.

Gen. 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. **19** And he blessed him and said:

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a
tithe of all.

The great truth of verse 4, which is explained in much greater detail in the book of Hebrews, is that Jesus is our great priest, but not a priest descending from the line of Aaron. He is a King and Priest. His priesthood is of the order of Melchizedek.

What is quite significant from Genesis 14 is that Melchizedek blessed Abram, showing that he was greater than Abram. And Abram recognized that Melchizedek was greater and so gave him a tithe of all.

In verses 5-7, David returns again to the theme of the victory of Jesus Christ.

The Lord *is* at Your right hand;

Pay attention here again to how the word Lord is written in your Bibles. It is not written in all capital letters. However, the Hebrew word is not identical to the second use of the word Lord in verse 1. So it may be best to understand David is speaking to God as Sovereign Lord and then declaring to God the truth of verse 1, that Messiah is at His right hand.

The NET version here reads, “O sovereign LORD, at your right hand he [Messiah] strikes down kings in the day he unleashes his anger.”

Verses 5-7 summarize Jesus Christ’s victory in battle as He fights and chases down His enemies.

Two times we read of Christ executing kings and the heads of many countries.

He shall judge among the nations. He shall pile up corpses.

This is very strong language. We don't have to understand it in an entirely literal fashion. We when we speak of Christ subduing His enemies, we know that He has a number of ways of doing so. Some enemies He brings to repentance and saving faith. Some enemies He brings to spectacular judgments. Some enemies seem to go to the grave shaking their fist at God in rebellion to Him. Christ has a variety of weapons and means of advancing His purposes. We should not expect to always be informed how God is dealing with things. Know with assurance that He is chasing down His enemies as He knows best.

I have heard that US Soldiers stationed in the Middle East drink enormous amounts of water in order to keep from dehydrating in the hot sun. In some cases they were to drink almost a gallon every hour. I cannot speak with any experience on the subject, but I am guessing that the act of fighting, especially as was done at the time of David, was a most exhausting activity. The imagery of verse 7 seems to have the idea that as Jesus Christ fights after His enemies, He pauses only long enough to take a quick drink. With his head lifted up, He continues to chase down His enemies and bring them into submission.

2. NT INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF PSALM 110

I mentioned earlier that this Psalm is the most quoted Psalm in the NT. And thankfully the NT gives us an inspired interpretation of this Psalm, not in a word-for-word fashion, but in terms of its basic meaning. The NT also teaches us how this Psalm applies to us. In summary we could almost say, that the entire NT is the interpretation and application of this Psalm.

Jesus Christ is Lord. He is King and Priest. He is reigning at the right hand of the Father until all His enemies are made His footstool. You are to bow before Him and recognize His sovereign rule. You don't make Jesus Lord of your life, but you are called to recognize His authority in all areas of your life. Those who submit in faith and in obedience to His rule are given the amazing invitation to reign with Him. They are also given assurance that He is a sympathetic High Priest who offers true compassion, help, and assurance. Those who reject His rule and His work are given the assurance that they will face Him in judgment – in this life and even more in the life to come.

Consider four passages connected with Psalm 110.

1. Acts 2:34-36

Acts 2:34 “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

“*The LORD* said to my Lord,

‘*Sit at My right hand,*

35 *Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.*” ’

36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

This passage from Acts 2 shows that the entire ministry of the apostles was based on the true understanding of Psalm 110. After the resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the apostles now understood how the OT scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus Christ and with confidence they now accepted the challenge to preach the gospel first in Jerusalem and Judea then to Samaria and to the end of the earth. If Jesus Christ is Lord and Messiah, then the message of the gospel is for Jews and for all nations. The message of the gospel is not just for any single group of people but it is for all the nations of the earth. Psalm 110 is the foundation for the gospel message that all men are called to repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ, and be baptized.

At the beginning of the sermon I mentioned that fact that there are almost 7 billion people living today. By God’s grace there is a very large number who do truly know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The majority of people today, clearly, do not know Jesus Christ in a saving way. God does not expect you to come up with some plan to reach a billion, million, or even a thousand people. But are you doing what you can do to reach your friends, family, and neighbors with the gospel message?

Let us make sure that as a local church we do not become lackadaisical and lazy with respect to evangelism and the support of world missions.

2. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

24 Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. **25** For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. **26** The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. **27** For “*He has put all things under His feet.*” But when He says “all things are put under *Him*,” *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. **28** Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

What we have here in 1 Corinthians 15 based on Psalm 110 is the basic outline of the future, the basic message of eschatology. There are many things that God has not told us. There are things we will disagree about as we try to study Scripture. But all Christians must agree that Jesus Christ is not waiting to be King over all the earth but that He is now the King.

John Calvin commenting on Psalm 110 wrote,

Doubtless our condition in this world is connected with many hardships; but as it is the will of God that Christ’s kingdom should be encompassed with many enemies, and that too with the design of keeping us in a state of constant warfare, it becomes us to exercise patience and meekness; and assured of God’s aid, **boldly to set at nought the rage of the whole world.**

Paul states that the final enemy is death. That enemy has not yet been destroyed though for the believer its terrible sting has been taken away. So it is clear from this passage that we have not reached the point of the end, because death is still a present enemy.

Can you see effects of Christ's present reign from Heaven over all the earth? Yes, I think we see His present reign in two main ways. First, we can see that the gospel message has made tremendous progress since the time of Acts 2. The fact that there are Christians in every nation on earth is a witness to Christ's present reign over all the earth.

Second, I believe we are to see His reign even in the chaos, confusion, and calamities found over all the earth. They are aspects of judgment coming to those who seek to establish their own plans and goals in opposition to Christ's law and rule. The wicked at times do seem to prosper but we should see instead the wicked only prospering as they for a time are used by Christ even as a means of bringing judgment to other nations who persist in their rebellion.

This doesn't mean that we can come up with a simple reason for every fire, flood, and furious storm. History is messy, complex, and far from simplistic. But we are to look to see the clear evidence of God's Providence.

3. Colossians 3:1-4

Col. 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. **3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

These are challenging commands aren't they? The reign of Christ over all the earth means that you should not just focus on things here on earth but rather that your focus should be more on heavenly things. Your life here on earth is to be understood as life with Christ in God.

Paul did not intend his readers in Colossae to simply sit around in a circle all day thinking about heaven. But he did intend for them to structure all that they did from a heavenly perspective. He intended that they would often be in prayer. He did intend that they would give much thought to the application of Christ's heavenly reign to their daily actions.

I suppose there are people who are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good. I think more dangerously there are far too many earthly-minded Christians who are of little heavenly good.

4. Hebrews 7:20-25

Heb. 7:20 And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath **21** (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

*“The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek’ ”),*

22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. **24** But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. **25** Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

There are at least 11 verses in the book of Hebrews that are connected with Psalm 110. Since the author was writing to Jewish Christians who were being tempted to turn away from Christ, the author emphasizes especially the superiority of Christ to the old system of worship and the Levitical priesthood.

The temptations that you face are not identical to the original readers of Hebrews, but the remedy to your temptations is still the same. You are called to see the glory of Jesus Christ and his constant help for you, as both your King and also your Priest.

I recently came across a new application for the iPhone and iPad called **Confession** that has been given an imprimatur (official approval) by a Roman Catholic Bishop. This is the first app to be given such an honor. The application is designed to help you prepare for and participate in the Rite of Penance. Such is the world of religion today. Actually this application may have a small amount of value in that I believe it contains the 10 commandments.

We do not need a human priest like God’s people did in the days under the Old Covenant administration but you still do need a High Priest – a heavenly priest to whom you can confess all your sins, weaknesses, and fears, and in response know that He lives in order to make constant intercession. Are you quick to come into the presence of your heavenly High Priest and make your confession?

Live like Jesus Christ is King and Priest. He reigns over all the earth, over all men and nations, and over your life.

Closing Hymn: 116

Benediction – Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.