

01.10.06 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

The King Priest of the Nations

Bible Readings = Psalm 110:1-7; Hebrews 7:1-28

Introduction:

- (1) Last time (from Is. 25:6ff.) we gave attention to the fact that the nations live under the shroud of death, and that the Lord had made a promise to remove this shroud and exchange its mourning for feasting in his presence.
- (2) We saw that this promise was fulfilled 'on this mountain' i.e. Zion and 'in this day' i.e. the Day of the Lord. In the action of Jesus on the Cross, death has been defeated.
- (3) Because the action of the cross removed our sin and its guilt, the evil one has been robbed of the weapons in which he has trusted (as in Col. 2:13-15).
- (4) The power he has exercised over the nations has thus been broken, and now his whole effort is bent on preventing the word of the Cross from being heard. This is the end point of every temptation, accusation, threat or spiritual conflict: to silence the preaching of the Cross.

This week, we see that the one who rules the nations is none other than their King-Priest. He rules forever in the power of an indestructible life.

1. Psalm 110

(1) Psalm 110 is the most directly quoted piece of Scripture in the New Testament (e.g. Acts 2:34-35; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 3:22). Between them, Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 are quoted or alluded to more often than any other portion of the Old Testament.

- The theology of these Psalms thus acts as the lens through which the apostles saw the ministry of Christ.
 - They saw (by the revelation of the Spirit) that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, but even more: that he was ascended to the position of power at God's right hand in the indissoluble bond of being both King and Priest.
§ He could not be one without the other.
- There was no direct Old Testament model for this (the Levites were not from the royal tribe of Judah, and so were not king-priests; and the Davidic line had no formal priestly function in Israel).
 - However, as Ps. 110 tells us, there is another order of priesthood, i.e. that of Melchizedek.
 - This forms much of the rationale for the book of Hebrew's description of Christ: both in terms of his person and his work.

(2) Psalm 110 has been variously understood: e.g. as a coronation Psalm or as entirely messianic.

- In my view, this Psalm is entirely messianic. By this, I mean that the Spirit gave understanding to David (whose name is appended to the Psalm) and that he saw that there was a 'lord' over him, who was appointed by the LORD (Yahweh), and that this figure would be the great Messiah who would rule the nations.

- Compare with Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36 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.’”

§ Also see similar phrases in 2 Sam. 23:2; Luke 2:26-27; Acts 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:21, indicating the Spirit’s direct role in revealing things to the speakers/writers that were yet to be fully understood or seen.

(3) Whatever the case, it is clear that both Jesus and his hearers understood the Psalm as referring to the Messiah (e.g. Matt. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).

- The difference is that Jesus’ opponents said that he could not be Messiah, but Jesus knew that he was!
 - The reason they could not conceive of him as the Messiah (apart from the foundational one of spiritual blindness) was that they could not envisage a Messiah who seemed so weak that he would allow himself to be crucified; or that God would allow such indignity to befall his anointed one.
 - However, his kingship is actually built on his sacrifice. He is king because he is priest, and likewise his priesthood indicates what true kingship is really like.

§ It is a clear testimony to the blindness of the fallen human mind, that right at the heart of the Psalm that was universally accepted as being Messianic, there was no appreciation that Jesus could be who he said he was, *particularly in relation to his priesthood*.

§ The writer to the Hebrews says this is an obvious point (a la Hebrews 7), but only *after the fact* and *after the gift of the Spirit!*

(4) His priestly kingship is shown to be entirely submitted to the Lord.

- Run eyes down Psalm 110...what does David’s Lord do, and what does Yahweh (the LORD) do?
 - *Everything* comes from Yahweh and the Lord (Messiah) simply lives under Yahweh’s command.
 - The victory and ruling over the nations, their kings etc. is *given* to him.
 - § Cf. John 5:19, 30; 8:28 (where he does nothing on his own initiative/authority) and all that come to him are given by the Father (e.g. John 6:37; 39, 45; 17:2, 6, 8, 11; etc.)
 - His people volunteer freely in the day of the LORD’s power (they are like the fresh dew of the morning: numerous beyond measure; fresh and refreshing; pure and pristine; etc).
- The Lord himself drinks from the brook along the way...he is sustained by the Spirit for joyful obedience and submission to Yahweh as he goes ‘along the way’.
 - For us, in the Rock who is Christ we drink from the brook of the Spirit day by day and our heads are lifted up.

(5) But what we must not lose sight of is the fact that the King-Messiah is so because he is a priest of a different order than the priests officiating in the Tabernacle and Temple. This is why we must give some attention to the way in which Hebrews speaks of these things

2. Hebrews 7 and the Abiding Priesthood of Melchizedek

(1) We would be familiar with the context of Hebrews:

- Members of God's Old Testament people, Israel, who have come under the word of the Gospel, but now, due to the suffering of persecution, now are tempted to go back to Judaism.
- The writer tells them throughout of the finality of the revelation which Christ has brought, and why, in his person and his work, this makes any return to the ways and worship of the old covenant impossible.

(2) Central to this letter is the figure of Melchizedek, and thus, the meaning of Psalm 110.

- As we run our eyes down Heb. 7, we see that a number of things hold together: priesthood, worship, covenant and law. Where there is a change in one, all are affected.
 - If there is a new priesthood there must be a new covenant (hence Heb. 7 leads into Heb. 8).
- The new covenant is superior to the old in that it does what the old could not do: *make the worshippers perfect*
 - In Hebrews, this use of *perfection* is equivalent to 'justified'. The idea of being made 'perfect' involves the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing from dead works, the washing away of guilt from the conscience, access to God, and a sure and certain hope of the 'rest' that is to come.

(3) But the heart of the 'better' priesthood lies its inherently 'better' nature. In Hebrews 7 (as elsewhere in Hebrews) one of the greatest limitations of the old covenant priesthood was that the priests were prevented by death from continuing.

- The fact that the old priests died indicated that they were still under the rule of sin and death, and that their priesthood would need to be replaced by a complete sacrifice to which all their sacrifices pointed.
- In the new covenant our priest lives and intercedes with the power of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). This means that we are ever assured of his intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).
- Whereas the old covenant priests offered sacrifices for sins, (for their own and also for the people) the new covenant priest (who needs no sacrifice to be made for himself), offers *himself* for his people.
 - His priesthood is entirely superior because of the nature and quality of the sacrifice, and the resurrected and ascended eternal life in which he now rules at the right hand of God.

3. How Does This Relate to God and the Nations?

(1) God only subdues the nations by the same means he subdues us: grace. Our spirits are submitted to God and we are given a new heart on the basis of the priesthood which has had mercy on us.

(2) The mistake of Israel was to look for a 'shoot 'em up' Messiah.

- When we are suffering, oppressed, weak and frail, we sometimes want a 'Rambo' to be on our side, too!

- At the very centre of the revelation that God gave to David about the nature of the Messiah-King who would come from his line, was the fact that this great and eternal ruler would be a priest.
 - His priesthood would be of a different order to the existing priesthood, because it would be superior in every way.
 - Not least, its superiority would lie in the nature of the sacrifice: the ruler is the Lamb.

(2) The victory and power over the nations, therefore, is by means of the kingship which is of the order of Melchizedek. This priest makes us 'perfect' before God, and ever lives to intercede for us.

- His priesthood is utterly secure (Heb. 7:26) and rules over the nations without any possibility of them ever undoing his work of making purification for sins.
- So, too, we live in the midst of the nations as justified people, and in the midst of our sufferings find the eternal intercession of the Son as our only strength.
- It is this that brings the knowledge of the Son to the nations, who are under his inescapable rule.