

Psalm 110 “The Order of Melchizedek”
Psalm 110
Hebrews 4:14-5:10

October 7, 2018

Do you love your son?

But have you ever considered calling your son, “Lord”?

Do you ever say, “yes, Master” to your son (except in an ironic sort of jest!)?

My father is 86 – and suffers from Alzheimer’s.

But even though his children have taken over all of his finances and care –
he is still our father.

That’s what makes this Psalm so unique –
because it is:

A Psalm of David.

Last week, Psalm 109 was long enough and challenging enough
that I didn’t try to explain what it was doing in book five of the Psalms!

But also, part of the reason why I didn’t try was because I knew that Psalm 110 was coming next!
And Psalm 110 shows us what this mini-series of Davidic Psalms is doing here.

Psalms 108, 109 and 110 are “Psalms of David.”
Then Psalms 111-119 have no titles.
Psalms 120-134 are “Songs of Ascents.”
135-137 have no titles.
Then 138-145 are Psalms of David.
And then 146-150 have no titles.

So there are two short collections of Davidic Psalms
towards the beginning and towards the end of Book 5.

And as we’ve seen throughout the Psalter,
when you find a Davidic Psalm, you generally need to read the first person singular voice
in the voice of David.

In fact, that’s how Jesus reads Psalm 110 in Matthew 22.

“Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying,
‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’

They said to him, ‘The son of David.’

He said to them, ‘How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet”?

If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” (22:41-45)

Think about what Jesus is saying!

In one sense, yes, the Messiah *is* the Son of David.

But in the ordinary manner of sonship, the father has more honor than the son –
if for no other reason than that a son submits to his father – honors his father –
so no matter how great a son may become,
he will never be greater than his father!

But what Jesus is teaching the Pharisees is that the Messiah – the Christ –
is *more* than just the “Son of David” –
he is also the Son of God –

because even David calls the Messiah “my Lord.”

And while a father may love his son – and honor his son – and praise his son –
a father does not call his son “my Lord”!

In Psalm 108 we heard David’s assertion that God’s promises have not failed –
even the Exile does not cancel the promises of God!
He will be faithful!

In Psalm 109 we heard about how the Son of David identifies himself as the “poor and needy” –
the one who is falsely accused and betrayed by his close friends –
how Jesus was betrayed by Judas!

Now in Psalm 110 we hear about the eschatological future of the Son of David –
the Son who is David’s Lord!

Sing Psalm 110B

Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Why should you care about Melchizedek?

Here’s this obscure king (honestly, *mayor* would be more accurate –
since his entire kingdom consisted of Jerusalem and the surrounding villages!)
He appears for a few verses in Genesis 14 –
where he blesses Abraham and then vanishes into the mists of history.

But Hebrews seems to think that Melchizedek is really important!

In fact, the whole of the NT seems to think that Psalm 110 is important.

The NT uses Psalm 110 *a lot*.

Matthew 22:44 (and parallels)

Hebrews 1:13

Acts 2:34

Heb 7:21; 5:6; John 12:34.

And there are many more allusions.

Part of this has to do with what Psalm 110 is doing in Book 5 of the Psalter.

Some scholars speak of this as an “enthronement Psalm” –

namely the sort of song that would be sung at the enthronement of the King –
or perhaps at the annual celebration of his enthronement.

And that may well be –

but if so, then what is it doing *here*?!

Psalms 108-110 are a brief miniseries of Davidic Psalms towards the beginning of Book 5,
and Book 5 – as we have seen – is dealing with life after the return from exile.

After all, as we saw in Psalm 107,

God has *brought* his people back from exile.

And this miniseries of Psalms of David helps us to think about
what do we do with God’s promises to David –
when we’re back in the land – but we still don’t have a king!

(Hebrews uses Psalm 110 in a similar way –

how should we think about God’s promises to Jesus –
when we are living in between his ascension to the right hand of God,
and his glorious return?)

Psalm 108 showed us that God’s promises to David
are *still* active.

The steadfast love of the LORD *never* ceases.
He is faithful – and he *will* make all things right in the end.

And last week, Psalm 109 showed us how to pray for God to bring judgment
against those who seek to destroy the Son of David and his people –
which the apostles applied to Judas in Acts 1.

Psalm 110 helps *us* to understand *who Jesus is* –
and what God has promised to *him* and to *us*
as we live as sojourners and exiles
in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Psalm 110 consists of an oracle and an oath.

1. The LORD’s Oracle Concerning the Triumph of the David’s Lord (v1-3)

a. “Sit at My Right Hand” – the LORD and David’s Lord (v1)

110 The LORD says to my Lord:

*“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

In the OT, whenever you see LORD (in all caps) that represents the Hebrew name of God –
Yahweh (or yehvah – we don’t *really* know how to pronounce it).

And whenever you see the Lord (with just a capital L) that represents the Hebrew word Adonai –
which means “master” or “lord.”

Yahweh is only used of God himself.

Adonai – like our English word “Lord” can refer to either a divine or a human master –
but the Hebrew writers did not like ambiguity with reference to God,
so there is a particular form that they used when referring to God.
So in Psalm 110, we have Yahweh speaking to my adoni (my master, my lord).

It’s really important to distinguish between all the uses of ‘lord’ in this Psalm.

Yahweh speaks in verse 1.

Yahweh sends forth in verse 2.

Yahweh swears an oath in verse 4.

Adoni is the one to whom Yahweh speaks in verse 1 (my lord) –

but Adonai is the one who is “at your right hand” in verse 5 –

making clear in Hebrew that *God* is the one who is at the King’s right hand.

You might wonder –

why do we translate all of these different words as “Lord”!

The simple answer is because the Septuagint did (the Greek translation of the OT) –

and that meant that Jesus and the apostles all used the same Greek word (kurios)
for both Yahweh and Adonai (and adoni).

And if Jesus thinks that it’s a good idea to use “Lord” to translate both Yahweh and Adonai,
who am I to disagree with Jesus?!!

Likewise, since Jesus says that “David, in the Holy Spirit, declared” this –

I am inclined to say that David is the author of Psalm 110.

But even if there was a different author,

Jesus is still correct (Jesus is *always* correct!)

because David is the *speaker* of Psalm 110.

As we have seen, in the Psalms of David,

the first person singular voice is the voice of David.

Think about it this way –

we frequently say that Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Well, technically, *John* is the author of those lines –

since they are found in the Gospel of John –

but even though John is the author – Jesus is the speaker.

In the same way, even if someone else wrote Psalm 110,

David is still the singer.

And so we need to hear this song as *David* singing about Jesus.

A lot of scholars want to turn the singer into some unknown “court official” –
singing about David – or about the Davidic king.

But the other Psalms of David use David as the singular voice of the Psalm.

And further, if we pay attention to what Psalm 110 is *doing* here in Book 5 of the Psalter,
it makes perfect sense!!

Because in Book 5, the exile is over –
but things are not yet the way they should be.
There is no Son of David sitting on the throne.
There is no King sitting at the right hand of God.

But God had *promised* that David's son would *always* sit at his right hand!

That's why I could easily believe that David himself wrote this.
He knows God's promise regarding his son.
And in 2 Samuel 24, David builds an altar on the site where the temple will be built –
which is identified in 2 Chronicles as Mt. Moriah –
the same place where Abraham had offered Isaac.

David had chosen Jerusalem to be his capital city.
Why?
We are not told –
but Genesis 14 tells us that Melchizedek was the “king of Salem” –
so David *chose* to put his capital
in the same place where Melchizedek had reigned.
So it is very easy to believe that David was the one who connected *his kingdom*
with Melchizedek.

We don't know how much David – or any OT prophet – really understood
about God's purposes for redemptive history,
but Psalm 110 plainly connects the role of King and Priest
through the order of Melchizedek –
and plainly states that the Son of David is both King and Priest.

The first part is the easy part – so let's look first at the LORD's oracle concerning the King.

b. Rule in the Midst of Your Enemies (v2)

² *The LORD sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!*

There are lots of echoes here of Psalm 2.
In Psalm 2 the LORD declares a decree regarding his *Son* –
the Anointed One (the Messiah) –
saying “I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill” –
and calling all the nations to submit to his beloved Son.

In a very real way, Psalms 1 and 2 stand at the foundation of the whole Psalter.
Psalm 1 says “blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked”
“blessed is the man who delights in the law of the LORD”
And Psalm 2 says that the Son of God – the Son of David –

is the one *though whom* all nations are blessed.
“blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

Psalm 110 calls these themes back to mind –
as David says to his Son –

“The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter (the rod of iron).
Rule in the midst of your enemies.”

But here in Book 5, these themes take on a more clearly eschatological ring:
this is plainly speaking of the future – not the present –
as we see in verse 3:

c. The Day of Your Power (v3a)

³ *Your people will offer themselves freely
on the day of your power,^[a]
in holy garments;^[b]*

Two things are abundantly clear:

first, it is speaking of the time when David’s Lord will arise in power
“the day of your power” –
and second, it is speaking of the way that his people will respond.

They will offer themselves freely –
in holy garments –
think of how the book of Revelation portrays the people of God
arrayed in fine linen.

The language of “offer themselves freely”

should be understood in the light of the OT “freewill offering.”

In the OT, besides all of the regular (mandatory) offerings
there were “freewill offerings” which you could offer to God
simply out of your thankfulness to him!

The idea here is that Christ’s people will offer themselves as “living sacrifices” to him.
(Indeed, Paul’s use of that term in Romans 12 may be drawn from Psalm 110)

d. The Dew of Your Youth (v3b)

*from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.*

And then comes that great line,

“from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.”

Pretty much everyone admits that they are perplexed by that line!

But Calvin is on the right track

when he suggests that it refers to the stupendous growth of the church.

After all, it’s talking about what will happen when the eschatological Son of David

sits at the right hand of God!

So in the oracle of verses 1-3,

The LORD tells David's Lord to

“Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

This should bring *us* comfort –

because we *know* that God has done this!

Jesus is now sitting at God's right hand!

And *we* are the people who offer ourselves freely to Christ –

on the day of his power in holy garments –

clothed in the righteousness of Christ!

And that is where we need to hear part two –

because, to everyone's surprise, we discover that David's Lord is also a priest!

2. The LORD's Oath Regarding the Priesthood of David's Lord (v4-7)

⁴ *The LORD has sworn*

and will not change his mind,

“You are a priest forever

after the order of Melchizedek.”

A king who is a priest.

Many have struggled with this.

After all, there was a son of David who tried to exercise the priestly office.

2 Chronicles 26 tells us that Uzziah went into the temple

to burn incense before the LORD –

which only the priests were allowed to do.

And so God struck him with leprosy –

thereby excluding him from the sacred assembly.

So it might seem rather odd for a Hebrew Psalm to talk about a king being a priest!

But if you think about it,

there is no contradiction!

Verse 4 says, “you are a priest forever after the order of *Melchizedek*.”

The temple in Jerusalem must be staffed by priests of the order of Aaron.

Think about it this way – in the ancient world there were *lots* of temples –

lots of priesthoods –

and everyone understood that a priest from one temple

had no right to serve at another temple

(without a proper invitation).

A priest of the order of Melchizedek cannot do

what is only allowed to the order of Aaron.

(It is entirely possible that King Uzziah was operating with some idea of this –

that he was a priest according the order of Melchizedek –
so shouldn't he be able to offer incense?!
Of course, the answer is: *no*, God *said* only the sons of Aaron may offer incense!
If God says *don't do it – don't do it!!*)

Again, David had chosen Jerusalem as his capital city.
Jerusalem was the city of Melchizedek –
where Melchizedek had been both King and Priest.

But while David may have some sense that his *line* – the sons of David –
has some priestly role,
that's not exactly what verse 4 says.

After all, as Jesus pointed out in Matthew 22,
David refers to the Christ as “my Lord.”
And it is *very* unusual for a King – a founder of a dynasty, no less! –
to refer to his *son* as his *Lord*.

All the kings of Judah are referred to as “sons of David” –
“the house of David.”

This is why Psalm 110 fits *so well* in Book 5.
Because it is becoming clear to the faithful
that there must be a great fulfillment coming!
If God is going to be faithful to his promises,
then we need a King who is also a priest after the order of Melchizedek!

What is meant by the “order of Melchizedek”?!
In Israel, how did you become a priest?
Did you go to seminary and study theology?
Did the king simply appoint his best friends?
No.
You became a priest because you were born a priest.
It was all about genealogy.
If you were descended from Aaron, then you would be a priest.

So the very phrase “order of Melchizedek” is somewhat ironic,
given the fact that the “order of Melchizedek” is an order of one.

But that's the point!

The order of Melchizedek, by its very nature, can have only one member.
Because a priest in the order of Melchizedek can have no priestly genealogy.
If your son becomes a priest after you, then you are not in the order of Melchizedek!
This is especially poignant because the word translated “forever” (you are a priest forever)
is a dynastic word, suggesting an uninterrupted lineage

(Your priesthood will continue without interruption).

So Psalm 110 is *not* saying that the Davidic King will become a Levitical priest!
Rather, Psalm 110 recognizes that there is a need for a unique priest –
one who continues forever in his own person.

Perhaps Uzziah had thought that *he* was the fulfillment of Psalm 110.
He wasn't!

In the 2nd century before Christ, the Maccabean dynasty tried to blend King and Priest.
That didn't work either!

What was needed was precisely what our Lord Jesus recognized:
Whose son is the Christ?

They said to him: "The son of David."

But "If David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"

Yes, in *one sense*, Jesus is certainly the Son of David.
He is the rightful heir of the throne of David.

But David had recognized that the Christ would be far more than just "the son of David."
The Christ would be "my Lord."
He would be the Son of God.
He is as much greater than David as he is also greater than Aaron and Moses.

David's kingship was but a pale shadow of Christ's kingship.
Aaron's priesthood was but a dim foreshadowing of Christ's priesthood.

Hence, the "order of Melchizedek" – a unique order – with a membership of *one*.
David seems to recognize that *one of his sons* will be a unique individual.
One who is more than just a "son of David."
One whom he himself will have to call "Lord."
How do you get greater than David?
Sure, there are good kings after David –
Hezekiah and Josiah are even called "greatest" –
but none of them qualify as "David's Lord."
Think of George Washington.
"Father of his country"
He was elected *unanimously* in the electoral college!
That's *not* going to happen again!

But verses 5-7 then explain how this Priestly King of the Order of Melchizedek
will be so much greater than David.

a. The Lord at Your Right Hand (v5a)

⁵ *The Lord is at your right hand;*

David had promised us in Psalm 109
that the LORD God stands at the right hand of the needy one,
to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.

And now, here in Psalm 110, we see why our Lord could be so certain of this!
Because David assures Jesus that the Lord God is at your right hand.

You might wonder, why would Jesus need David to tell him this?!
After all, Jesus is God!
Yes, but Jesus is also a man.
He needed to learn obedience through what he suffered (Heb 5).
And from all that we see in the gospels,
our Lord Jesus took great comfort in what David had told him!

He realized that all the Scriptures were spoken concerning himself.

I don't pretend to understand the inner life of our Lord Jesus during his incarnation!
All I know is what the scriptures tell us –
and the scriptures tell us that Jesus understood the Psalms to refer to himself.
He frequently quotes the Psalms – and indeed, all of the scriptures –
as being summed up in his own life – and death – and resurrection!

So it is safe to say that Jesus needed to hear this from David:
“The Lord is at your right hand...”

Yes, God had promised (in verse 1) to seat Jesus at *his* right hand!
That's referring to how Christ now sits enthroned at God's hand.

But here, in verse 5, we see that God is also at Christ's right hand –
shattering kings on the day of his wrath:

b. The Day of His Wrath (v5b)

he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

In the oracle of verses 1-3,
we heard of the “day of your power” –
which corresponds to the proclamation of the gospel among the nations.
Now we hear of how God shatters kings on the day of his wrath.
Some say that this is referring only to the final judgment –
but I would include all sorts of judgments in this.
Yes, there will be a final “day of his wrath” –
but every time a king is shattered –
every time the powers of this age falter and fail –

we see King Jesus asserting his eternal rule!

c. Judgment Among the Nations (v6)

⁶ *He will execute judgment among the nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs^[d]
over the wide earth.*

The phrase “shatter chiefs” is actually “crushing heads” –
an allusion to the promise of Genesis 3:16 –
that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head.

Verse 7 concludes:

d. Drinking from the Brook (v7)

⁷ *He will drink from the brook by the way;
therefore he will lift up his head.*

This may contain an echo from Judges and the story of Gideon’s men who drank from the brook.
Those who knelt down to drink were dismissed from the army.
Only those who kept their heads up were retained.

But in this way, the theme introduced in Psalm 108 –
What will happen to God’s promises to David? –
is now answered with the assurance that David’s Lord will come –
and he will bring judgment to all the earth.

And even though we do not yet see all things in subjection to him,
yet we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death,
so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (Heb 2:9).

And King Jesus is still in the business of crushing heads over the wide earth.
But the way he does it is not the way of the world!

Today there are more Christians in China than there are in any other country on earth.

How did Jesus do it?

He raised up Mao Zedung!

It is arguable that Mao Zedung was a more successful evangelist than Billy Graham!

Of course, the difference is that chairman Mao was an atheist –

and was actually *trying* to destroy the gospel!

Well, to put it more accurately, he was trying to destroy *all religion* –

but he only succeeded at a cultural revolution

that obliterated traditional Chinese religions –

leaving his people *longing* for a message that would satisfy

better than his Marxian materialism.

And so, through the humiliation and suffering and persecution of the church in China

through the 20th century –
the gospel spread like wildfire through the world's most populous nation!

So, when you hear the Psalms speaking of how Christ executes judgment on the nations –
remember that the *way* he does this is *not* the ordinary way of military or political power.

He uses weak and foolish methods.

He uses insignificant people – at least insignificant in the eyes of the world!

When the missionaries were forced out of China after Mao's takeover,
they feared that the church would collapse without them.

But 30 years later, when the first glimpses were seen of what had happened
during those dark years of persecution –
the results were staggering!

It wasn't the missionaries – it wasn't "great evangelists" –
it was simple, ordinary (and often confused) Christians –
who had borne witness to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ!

In the same way,

God will use weak, frail, ordinary Christians here in South Bend –
ordinary Christians who are willing to bear witness to the faithfulness of Christ –
as Hebrews says,

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus, the Son of God,
let us hold fast our confession.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,
that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Sing PHSS 196 King of Glory