

The Ascended Christ Exalted and Enthroned at God's Right Hand (Ps 110)

Ps 110 *A PSALM OF DAVID. The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'*² *The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!*³ *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.*⁴ *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'*⁵ *The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.*⁶ *He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.*⁷ *He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.*

Ps 110 has been called the crown of all the psalms. It was precious to Jews. Will Varner's book *The Messiah*: 'rabbis of the ancient synagogue clearly interpreted this...as referring to the Messiah. There are many Messianic Psalms [of Messiah/Christ] (e.g. Ps 2, 16, 22, 45, 69). But the passage that served as the source of more quotations in the NT than any other was Psalm 110. There are fourteen direct quotations of this short Psalm plus dozens of indirect allusions...Every one of the...citations applies this Psalm to Jesus'¹

This passage was precious to the early church, it was quoted by Jesus at the most crucial moments of His ministry, it was preached the day the church was born on Pentecost, its truths are all over the writings of Paul and Peter and John and Hebrews. The ascension became a key part of the early creeds

- 1 Tim 3:16 *'we confess[NAS 'common confession']...He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, **taken up in glory** [the ascension]*
- Apostle's Creed (early church centuries): *'...The third day He rose again from the dead, **He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge...**'*

v. 1 by itself is by far the most quoted OT verse in the NT. Boice counts 27 direct or indirect references to v. 1 in the NT and points out v. 4 is what the book of Hebrews spends several chapters teaching on. He said we 'need to begin to think of Jesus as he is today, exalted to a position of honor at God's right hand. Most people's image of Jesus is that of a baby in a manger...a sentimental picture...Others picture him hanging on a cross ...[but] Jesus is not in a manger today. That is past. No more is he hanging on a cross... We would do well to recover this understanding of who Jesus is and where he is now...if we did, we would worship him better and with greater reverence.'²

Isaiah got a glimpse of this holy, holy, holy, Lord seated on His throne, as exalted and filling the whole earth with His glory, and Isaiah was undone, as a sinful man ‘woe is me...for my eyes have seen the King’ (Isa 6). John the apostle who was most intimate with the Lord on earth, John sees Christ now on His throne, and He falls down as a dead man, and an angel has to revive Him. John sees even the perfect heavenly beings falling on their face before the exalted enthroned Jesus, the lamb who was slain but reigns as the ‘*Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the root of David [who] has conquered*’ (Rev 5)

This is how we’re to think of Jesus now, not in a fuzzy warm manger scene, not a feminized mild-mannered man who’s all smiles, not the flannel-graph guy with white robe and blue sash who’s all love and no other attributes, and certainly not some fainting emaciated weak dying man on a cross. We need to see Him as exalted, enthroned, ruling in power and glory. What did Jesus pray right before He went to the cross, knowing He would soon return to glory in His ascension? John 17 ‘*Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed...I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they [believers] may have my joy fulfilled in themselves...Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*’³³

The great prayer and desire of our Savior in was that His people (all those given to Him as a love gift from the Father) would see Him in the full glory He now has in the presence of the Father. And Jesus said these things that our joy might be full. We need to see Him more fully as He is now to have joy more fully. And Ps 110 helps us see His glory where He is, for our joy.

The past few weeks since Ps 2 we’ve studied Psalms that exalt Christ in His suffering, on His cross, in His resurrection, and last week in His ascension. Ps 110 completes the picture, after He ascended to heaven, He sat down at the right hand of His Father. The banners behind me really give the outline for this passage: He’s the Lord Jesus who has risen, now reigns, will return. He reigns in heaven now since the ascension – that’s *the already* – but there is also a future reign when His kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven – the *not yet* (v. 5-7 close with the 2nd coming). We’ll do future weeks on the 2nd coming and kingdom to come in the psalms, there’s a number of psalms all about the end times, but for our time today let’s see 2 big truths in v. 1-4:

1. **Christ’s Present Rule (v. 1-3)**
2. **Christ’s Priestly Role (v. 4) - *and some applications for both***

First, Christ's Present Rule

Ps 110 begins *A Psalm of David*. That's not something a translator added, it is part of the inspired ancient text, and it's very important that David wrote this, according to Jesus, when Ps 110:1 says '*The LORD says to my Lord...*' *'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"?'⁴⁵ If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions'* Mt 22:41-46. All of them knew Ps 110 was Messiah, David's son, but as David calls Him *my Lord*, it's clear He's his sovereign and superior, too, not merely his son.

Later in that week in the illegal night trial, Caiaphas asks Him if he was the Son of God. *'Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."* *Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!'* Mt 26:64-5 NKJV.

[They knew His claim to Ps 110 was a claim to be God]

Notice in v. 1 the 1st word translated '*LORD*' is in all caps, that's the Hebrew name *Yahweh*, some pronounce *Jehovah*. David writes of what God says to '*my Lord*' [another Hebrew name *Adonai*=*'my master'* or *'my sovereign'*]. One Hebrew scholar writes '*my Lord/Adonai* 'emphasizes the authority and superiority...it means he will be greater than David...Sitting...is a sign of honor and majesty...sitting at the right hand...is the position of power and prestige. Here, sitting at the right hand of *Yahweh* means that the king was to be exalted to the power and dominion and honor of heaven itself ...'⁴

[to sit on the throne in v. 1 is to reign, to rule like in v. 2]

This can't be David or any mere mortal, it's God the Father talking to God the Son just like in Ps 2, the LORD talking to my Lord, *Yahweh* to *Adonai*. We see the Trinity, the deity of Christ in v. 1, and in v. 7 there's also a hint of the humanity of Christ, He is human enough to drink water from a brook. The resurrected glorified Christ ate and drank with His disciples and rose to heaven 40 days later and that's when v. 1 began to be fulfilled, the LORD God said to His Son, the God-Man, our Lord Jesus: '*Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*' [till Rev 19-20]. To Paul it's of first importance that Jesus '*must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death* (1 Cor 15:3, 25-26).

So it's not just human enemies, He'll end death itself and even the devil. *Enemies* comes from same root word as Gen 3:15, *enmity* between Satan and the Messiah to be born of woman who would crush the head of Satan. But remember He's reigning now until then, sitting on His throne until then. He's already had His inauguration but His reign waits future consummation

² *The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!* Some take this as a future rule in a kingdom of peace after enemies at the 2nd coming are in hell and Satan in the abyss. But in context 'rule' is the same present verb tense as 'sit' in v. 1, both despite enemies. It's '*rule in the midst of your enemies,*' not after all enemies are under His feet, the Father tells His Son to rule in the midst of them in the present tense. NT says the Jesus rules earthly kings and demonic enemies now (Rev 1:5, Eph 1:20-23). It's clear in v. 1 God said this to Jesus on the day He ascended and sat down, v. 4 is also clearly what God said to Jesus about His present role, so v. 2-3 could naturally be what He tells Jesus to do now as He sits, like Ps 2, enemies rage but He sits in heaven and scoffs at puny rebellions.

So what could the mighty scepter be He sent forth from Zion or Jerusalem? NKJV '*the rod of your strength*' – maybe like Moses lifting up the rod that showed God's strength over His enemies in Egypt? That could be end times wrath, but in Esther, a king extending his scepter is the language of grace in Esther's story:⁵ '*any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law...death. The only exception to this is for the king to **extend the...scepter** to...spare...life...[in the story Esther] pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him...**the king extended the gold scepter to Esther** and she arose and stood before him...[another time the story says] **The king was sitting on his royal throne** ... When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her [and extended the scepter] that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, ...What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you...*

If we fall at the feet of Jesus, weeping over our sin, pleading for grace, He extends His scepter of grace. How did heaven's King stretch it out from the city of Zion or Jerusalem? v. 3 may give a hint when it says Christ's '*people will offer themselves freely on the day of [His] power.*' Jesus used that word power on the day He ascended to heaven, telling them to wait for the power He would send so they could extend His grace from Jerusalem to the end of the earth. Even among His enemies who killed Him, His gospel reign began

10 days after the ascension, Pentecost was a day of power as Jesus promised in Acts 1:8. Hear what Peter says in Acts 2: *Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made [Jesus] Lord and Christ...' (v.33-36).* Then the people offered themselves freely and willingly, on the day God's power pierced their heart as 3,000 of them cried out 'what must we do?' Answer: repent, be baptized.

[Acts 5:31 '*God exalted him at his right hand...to give repentance*']

This Hebrew word *willing* was used of volunteer armies as well as Israel's voluntary offerings besides the tithes that were more like taxes. It's in the plural form, so it emphasizes willingness in all its aspects...“voluntariness,” [like] in Hos. 14:5, “I will love them freely”...It refers to things offered to God based purely on love and devotion...It is also used in Psalm 51:14 in the prayer for God to enable the sinner to develop a “willing spirit,” someone whose self-will is broken and who willing obeys the LORD.’⁶

[willing in Neh 11:2 of voluntary covenanting together, Neh 10]

Sovereign grace doesn't drag a sinner to Jesus against His will kicking and screaming, but by God's power there was a day He worked in our hearts so we would be willing to believe, then our changed heart came freely to Him. In NT days the book of Acts often mentions power they had as the mighty gospel went forth from the city of Zion/Jerusalem. The power of God in the NT is the gospel, that's the only reality called by those terms. Spurgeon said this 'began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, and it continues even to this day, and shall yet have a grander fulfilment... We look for the clearer manifestation of his almighty power in the latter days; but even in these waiting times we rejoice that to the Lord [Jesus] all power is given in heaven and in earth.’⁷

His name above all names shall stand, Exalted more and more,
At God the Father's own right hand, Where angel hosts adore...
His name shall be the Counsellor, The mighty Prince of Peace,
Of all earth's kingdoms Conqueror, Whose reign shall never cease.

v. 3 goes on to mention holiness as marking God's people. Morning dew in OT poetry can be of an image of unity (Ps 133:3), God's favor (Pr 19:12). In prophecy it can be God's remnant like dew in a midst of the nations (Micah 5:7) or the refreshing presence of God Himself (Hosea 14:5). Ps 110, v. 4 is clearer as the book of Hebrew explains it: *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'*

This takes us from Christ's Present Role to #2. Christ's Priestly Role

The Father says to Jesus *'You are a priest forever...'* His priestly role now is interceding for us as our Great High Priest whose name is love before the throne of God above. He ever lives and pleads for me as my Advocate, as my Mediator on the throne (that's why some call it a Mediatorial kingdom)

Turn to Heb 1 for more on this. Priests in the order of Aaron or kings in the order of David couldn't share offices of priest and king, but there's another order. Melchizedek in Gen 14 was both Priest of the true God and the King of Salem (old name for Jerusalem). Jesus as true final King of Jerusalem sat at God's right hand as our Priest-King forever. What does this mean for us? Heb 1:3 says of Christ: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels ...¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?* That's Ps 110 and God would never say that to any angel. He who's enthroned at God's right hand can only be God.

Application: Remember Christ holds everything together in the universe by His power, you don't hold everything together and you can't. Give it up and give up trying. This week if you struggle to keep things together, when you can't, look up on high to our supreme sovereign Lord who sat down so you can rest in Him. He dealt with our big sin, He can deal with lesser stuff, too.

[if He can handle the universe, He can handle your problem!]

Look at chapter 4, v. 14: *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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.*

Application: He knows as fully God and man on the throne of grace to help. Are you weak? He can sympathize with your weakness? Are you tempted? He's been tempted even more, to help us as our priest on the throne of grace Ps 110 isn't the only place in the OT where Messiah is promised to be both priest and king on the throne. Zech 6:13 promised He'll *'sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices'* (NASB). His counsel is peace and His throne is of grace. He sits and rules on it now till the King returns here, Zech 14. If we come to Him in prayer in faith, the scepter of grace is always extended.

Heb 5:6 quotes again from Ps 110: *“You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”*⁷ *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*⁸ *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*⁹ *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,*¹⁰ *being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*¹¹ *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain ...*

Now we’ll stop there for a moment, but if it was hard for the inspired writer to explain everything about Melchizedek, I won’t be able to in the last few minutes here! I did 2 sermons on him in Gen 14 you can look up online, but look at 7:17 *For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ...*²¹ *but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’* [I said Ps 110 was my favorite, it seems to be the writer of Hebrew’s favorite as well] ...²⁴ *but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.*²⁵ *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them* [this is His continual ministry]

Who is he that condemns? Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us, Rom 8:34. The way we know we are saved completely and nothing can ever separate us from the love of God is not just us pleading the blood of Jesus; more than that, it’s Jesus pleading for us at God’s right hand. What saves ultimately is not a sinner’s prayer, it’s the Savior of sinners and His intercessory prayer for them saves to uttermost the who know Him as personal King and Priest. **8:1** *Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven...* Look at chapter 10 and v. 11: *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*¹² *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,*¹³ *waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet* [still explaining, expounding Ps 110]

If you look at chapter 12, the greatest encouragement of all is when we look past men and their imperfections, Heb 12:2 says keep *‘looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of*

the throne of God ... ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees... [think Al Mohler's message on this at past conference]

Shai Linne at Exalting Christ Conference 2012: 'I don't think it's an overstatement to say that the purpose of the entire universe is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so that is what we are to be about in every aspect of our lives. The exaltation of Christ is why God made the world. It's why He allowed the fall. It's why Jesus Christ came into this world. It's why the church exists. It's why Jesus is coming back. It's all about the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ...the exaltation of the ascended Christ...is a key theme ...and yet as foundational as this theme is to NT theology, I find that the ascension of Christ is one of the more neglected subjects of preaching...if we neglect the ascension of Christ, our preaching is actually incomplete...'⁸

He expounded Ps 110 that day, 6 months later he wrote a poetical exposition:

Resurrected and glorified, ascended before their eyes
 [Christ] entered into the heavenly courts on high
 The conquering King was welcomed back to heaven
 Foretold by the prophets in Daniel chapter 7 ...
 Imagine the ovation that the hosts of heaven gave to Him
 Acclamation louder than a thousand packed stadiums ...
 As we speak, Jesus is seated in the heavenlies
 While the Father is steadily defeating His enemies ...
 Psalm 110:1 is massive deep, the Father's glad to speak
 To His majesty: "Your task complete, so have a seat!"...

[now v. 2-4 of Ps 110] Applying pressure, who can contend with the Lion

Whose mighty scepter and rule is extended from Zion?

at the end of [v. 2] I see, it looks like the church to me, this rule is happening currently

... We freely offered ourselves on the day of His power
 ... [and His power's why] the church remains to this hour ...

[like a] heavenly dew that slowly covers the earth

From every nation to show what His suffering's worth

That He would bleed for our deeds [and] intercedes, guarantees

indeed we'll be together ... it's even better- Jesus, He's our priest forever⁹

What's even better than all that, Rev 5 shows us not only is He our King and Priest reigning in heaven, the 24 elders praise Him with these words '*You ... have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth*' (5:10 NKJV). Christ shares His priestly role and His present role of reigning with us as joint-heirs of His kingdom, in fact He calls us His kingdom and priests who will reign on the earth in the future (Rev 5:10 ESV). In the end of Rev 2 Jesus says He'll give His faithful ones authority to rule the world

He says the believer who perseveres '*will rule...with a rod of iron, even as I myself have received authority from my Father*' (2:27). Paul says believers in the life to come will sit in judgment over fallen angels (1 Cor 6:3). Paul says even Satan won't be just under Christ's feet, he'll be under our feet, too (Rom 16:20). He says the last enemy Christ defeats is death, but even now a believer can share in His victory and say '*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?...But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*' (1 Cor 15:55-57). In the psalms we looked at last week and this week, Jesus leads a victorious triumphal procession in His ascension to His throne, but even now Paul's writings say '*thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession*' (2 Cor 2:14). Heaven's conquering King makes us more than conquerors in Him (Rom 8)

Paul prays in Eph 1 that God would open the eyes of hearts of people in the church so that you'll know '*what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 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...*' (v. 19-22). But Paul does stop there, he applies that to the day of His power in your salvation when we were made willing to believe: *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (2:6-7).

Christ says of a believer in Rev 3:21 '*I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*'²² *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*' The Spirit also says to the churches set your affections on, or '*... seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*'² *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* (Col 3:1-2).

A real practical way to do that is to think of Jesus sitting at God's right hand and think of Jesus at your right hand. Remember Ps 16 a few weeks ago: '*I set the Lord continually before me, because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken...*' Another practical exercise is to preach to yourself **Jesus is on the throne**. No one and nothing else is on the throne, **Jesus is** (no job ... circumstances ... presidential candidates ... co-worker ... health ... media ... terrorists ... foreign governments ... struggles with people, etc, etc.). He is risen! He is ascended! He is on the throne! Let's pray to the throne of grace

¹ William Varner, *The Messiah: Revealed, Rejected, Received*, p. 68.

² James M. Boice, *Psalms*, 3:895.

³ John 17:5, 13, 24

⁴ Allen P. Ross, *Psalms*, 3:346-47.

⁵ Esther 4:11, 5:2, 8:4.

⁶ Ross, 3:351.

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 2:461.

⁸ <http://www.exaltingchristministries.org/2012/>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBLgOfryPwU>