

The King-Priest Psalm 110

(Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews)

“I wonder what sort of a tale we’ve fallen into?” Sam asks Frodo as the two friends journey together to Mordor so Frodo can drop his bling in the volcano, in Tolkien’s thrilling novel *The Two Towers*.

It’s an important question for us to ask, as well. “What kind of story have we fallen into?” The Bible shows us that we have fallen into the best of all stories: the story of redemption.

It’s what C.S. Lewis called “The True Myth.”

The story of salvation in the Bible is the greatest story of all time because the events actually happened – and we are part of it!

Psalm 110 is one of those chapters that helps us see how the Bible is a unified book.

- It helps us see some of the major themes that hold it all together.
- It refers the ancient story in Genesis with Abraham and this mysterious figure Melchizedek (about 2000 years before Christ).
- It is written by David (about 1000 years before Christ), who is looking ahead to the Messiah.
- Then during his earthly ministry, Jesus forcefully cites it to explain who he is.
 - It looks ahead to the ultimate high priest, Jesus, who would be our sacrifice, who would rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, and now intercedes for us, reigning over all things.
- It is cited by the apostles and the early church in their proclamation of the gospel, of Christ’s resurrection and enthronement.
- And it looks ahead to the final victory... for we know in the end Jesus wins, and all who are with him, win.

That’s the story we’ve fallen into, and it inspires hope, confidence, humility, and praise.

This is the most frequently quoted Psalm in the NT.

- Not Psalm 23 or Psalm 119 or another popular one.
- In fact, it’s the most cited OT text in the NT.
- Luther called it the “crown of all the Psalms, worthy to be overlaid with precious jewels.”
- **Verse 1** appears at least 25 times
 - Allusions and quotations appear in the gospels, Pauline and Petrine epistles.
 - Jesus uses it to explain who he is.
- **Verse 4** appears several times in Hebrews. (Hebrews 5:5–10, 6:19–7:28).

Melchizedek (v. 4) is one of the most important figures in the entire Bible – for helping us understand Jesus.

- But he only shows up twice: **Gen 14, and here.**

- Then only one book of the NT (Hebrews).
- He points us to Jesus; Jesus is greater than Melch, **the ultimate King-priest.**
- **I would venture to say that we wouldn't draw a massive crowd by saying "Come here a sermon on Melchizedek... it's a Melchizedek Rally!"**
- **But understanding who he is, helps us know Jesus better and so we can get excited about that!**

The Psalm is broken down into two three parts: Jesus is (1) The Sovereign King (vv. 1-3), (2) The Ultimate Priest (v. 4), and (3) The Victorious Warrior.

#1: The Sovereign King (110:1-3)

"A Psalm of David"

Authorship is important here because David says something deep and profound: "the LORD (Yahweh) says to my Lord (Adonai)"

- **A lot of people don't think David wrote it.**
- **If it was perhaps someone in David's court (like the court poet in Psalm 45), then verse 1 is saying, "the Lord (Yahweh) says to my Lord (David)"**

But Matthew and Mark do not allow for this, as Jesus tells us how to read it.

After answering everyone's questions (like a press conference), he then asks them one about Psalm 110:

³⁵ And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 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." "

³⁷ David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly. (Mark 12:35-37)

So who does Jesus say wrote it? David (under the inspiration of the Spirit)

- So who does this "my Lord" speak of?
- It's **not** David.
- It must be speaking of **the Messiah, of Jesus.**
- Jesus used this Psalm to get in their face and say, "I am Lord."
- **I'm not the Messiah you may want, but I'm the Messiah you need.**
- **He's more than a son, an offspring ... he's also Lord.**
- **As the hymn says, "David's Son and David's Lord"**

Which means you can't merely "like Jesus" as we see in modern culture - certain aspects of his character or bits of teaching; but you must bow to him as Lord.

- Like "Doubting Thomas" — "My Lord and my God."

"Says" — Within the Godhead, we see relationship, unity, communication, fellowship and partnership in this mission of redemption.

- **“From old there was mysterious fellowship between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ concerning his people and the great contest on their behalf between himself and the powers of evil” (Spurgeon)**

Yahweh makes three promises to his King, (1) He will make his enemies his footstool, (2) He will rule in the midst of his enemies (v. 2), & (3) he will have an army of volunteers (v. 3).

A. He Will Make His Enemies His Footstool (v. 1)

“Sit at my right hand” – this is the place of honor, privilege, power, authority, and victory — and equality. He’s with the Father as the divine Son.

- **Hebrews 1.3b** – **“after he finished his atoning work, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”**
- **He upholds the universe by the word of his power. He doesn’t even need to stand up!**
- **Illustration: My dad saying my middle name from his recliner...**
- **If Christ can sustain the cosmos then he can sustain us in our hard times!**

This phrase appears a lot in the NT:

- **The writer of Hebrews says this exaltation signals the completion of his sacrifice (Heb 10.12-14; cf., 1:4)**
- **Peter wraps up his great Pentecost sermon saying, “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” (Acts 2:34-35). Jesus Greater than David (Acts 2:34); he’s Lord and Christ (2:36)**
- **The author of Hebrews cites to say that Christ is greater than Angels (Heb 1:13)**
- **Peter preaches it in Acts 5 – Christ is exalted at God’s right side to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30-31)**
- **Paul alludes to it in Romans to note that Christ is now interceding for us (Rom 8:34)**
- **Colossians says, “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”**

All of these points are made about this action: **sitting at the Father’s right hand**. It speaks of his resurrection and enthronement and intercession.

A conquest is envisioned: “until I make your enemies your footstool”

- **The New Testament writers also state that God the Father places his enemies under his Son’s feet.**
- **“He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:25)**
- **1 Corinthians 15:26 (ESV): 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**
- **He has defeated it in his resurrection and he will be defeated finally in the future (Rev 21)**

“Footstool” is a symbol of complete and total victory.

- **Being in Egypt and seeing King Tut’s tomb... we saw his footstool. There were nine traditional enemies of the King and they’re all pictured on his footstool, illustrating his rule over them.**
- **The Messiah will triumph over his enemies.**
- **Much better to be raised and seated with him than to be crushed under him.**

B. He Will Rule in the Midst of His Enemies (v. 2)

Notice how Yahweh and the King are together in this: “The Lord sends forth from Zion, your mighty scepter...”

- The Lord wields the scepter, the King is to rule
- This is a picture of the king’s domination and authority.

“Rule in the midst of your enemies”

- **As king he rules over them.**
- **Not just the pagan nations, but spiritual forces of evil.**
- **Williams: “When we evangelize in His name, and pray in His name, and cast out demons in His name, and heal in His name, His reign is being extended, not in the safe realms of heaven, but in the midst of His enemies, here on the battleground of earth.”**
- **Even now, we take comfort that he’s reigning in the midst of warfare.**
- **“This power goes forth with divine energy from the church for the ingathering of the elect, and the subduing of all evil.... We need to pray for the sending out of the rod of divine strength... whenever the Lord Jesus sends the rod of his strength our spiritual enemies are overcome” (Spurgeon)**
- **Jesus is not only alive forevermore, but he is also *reigning* forevermore.**
- **And this is why the mission of the church cannot be stopped —**
- **It’s why the church has met in times of persecution, meeting in catacombs, why the church is growing in places where it’s illegal to gather, why it’s growing in Iran.**
- **Because Jesus rules in the midst of his enemies.**

C. He Will Have an Army of Volunteers (v. 3) (not TN fans)

- Jesus will have willing servants that will **join** him the battlefield.
- Probably a reference to the gospel breaking forth into the **Gentile world**.
- They are set apart in “**holy garments**”
- They’re prepared, ready to sacrifice.
- **This anticipates the kind of thing we read in the NT, like Romans 12:1, where believers are called “living sacrifices” – we give ourselves, gladly and freely in the service of the King.**
- We share in his service and his reign, as a kingdom of priests.

“from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours” (3b)

- This is a difficult phrase
- 1. It could describe the **fresh excitement of this army**
- 2. It may reflect the **beauty of these garments**
- 3. But **more likely it speaks about this King-Priest, being portrayed in royal apparel and being preserved with youthful zeal.**
- **If this is the case, then it’s saying that Jesus will never grow weary as our eternal King!**
- **He will have perpetual youth.**
- I was talking to a member here last week, “**Growing old stinks**” he said.
- **We can’t do what we used to do... but Jesus will not grow weary!**

- Kidner: “This verse ... pictures the Messiah going forth in primal vigor, holiness and glory, as the head of a host ...
- We rely on him as we give ourselves in service to him.

#2: The Ultimate Priest (110:4)

Now this would have been a great shock to the Hebrews.

- The union of the king and priest offices never takes place in the Old Testament era.
- Some try to argue that the text is talking about two different people, but that’s not what it says.
- Yahweh says, “You” — who is the “You”? It has to be the one referred to in v. 1.
- But both roles are fused together with the Messiah.
- The priests had to come from Levi/Aaron’s family
- The Kings came from Judah. (Gen 49)
- **Saul** tries to override this rule and loses his throne over it.
- **Uzziah** tries to offer incense in the temple and God judges him, giving him leprosy.

But Jesus is both!

- Kings represented God to people.
- Priests represented people to God.
- Kings were known for strength and judgment.
- Priests were known for sympathy and service; love and mercy; atonement and forgiveness.
- You won’t understand that Jesus was equally both
- Jesus combines things that no one could combine!
- He’s lion and lamb.
- He’s judge and Savior.
- He’s priest and king — he gives atonement/forgiveness and he reigns!

Only one OT figure had both: **Melchizedek**.

- He is a type of Christ — he prefigures someone greater: Jesus.

We read about him back in **Genesis 14:18-20**.

- 5 Canaanite Kings were fighting with 4 Mesopotamian overloads.
- In the process, Lot, Abraham’s nephew gets captured.
- Abraham and his men join the fight, chase the Mesopotamian kings away and reclaim Lot.
- As Abraham is meeting with the King of Sodom (Lot’s city), there’s an intrusion in the narrative.
- In fact you can just skip vv 18-20 and the narrative reads perfectly.
- But out of nowhere we read this

Genesis 14:18–20: 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And he blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
 Possessor of heaven and earth;

20 and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Melchizedek was not part of this battle. But he shows up here.

- He was “king of Salem” (that is: Jerusalem); the same turf as David!
- He was also a “priest of God Most High” who blesses Abraham, and received a tenth of his spoil. (Gen. 14:18–20)
- So he’s superior to Abraham.
- You would think Melchizedek would be giving the father of many nations the offering!
- You wonder when you read the whole chapter, “What’s this guy doing here?”
 - He’s such an intriguing figure.
 - **In Qumran, in Cave 11, a scroll was found with all of this Jewish commentaries on him – called the Melchizedek scroll.**
- Then we don’t read about him again until David reflects back on the Pentateuch and says a final Melchizedek will be both King and Priest.

Jesus will be “after his order,” that is: like him.

- Not after the order of Levi!

In what way? Notice **Hebrews 7**

7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

Hebrews 7:1-2 gives us the facts.

- He is both King-Priest.
- He met Abraham, blessed him, received an offering
- He’s the King of Righteousness and the King of Salem

Verse 3 shows us something significant: “he has no mother or father” – not literally, but that he doesn’t have a genealogy – in a book filled with genealogies!

- This figure just appears and then disappears!
- This “**resembles**” Christ who is the priest forever!
- He is the eternal priest, securing eternal salvation for his people.

Verse 4 – see how great He is!

- Christ is superior.

Like Melchizedek, Jesus is the King-Priest – the final King-Priest, the King of Righteousness, the King of Shalom, the Eternal Priest.

As our high priest, Jesus is the mediator and Savior for all who believe in him

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. (**Heb 5:9–10**).

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. (**7:25**)

As our Great Priest, Jesus entered God's presence, showing believers the way to heaven:

¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (**Heb 6:19-20**).

Our assurance is grounded in the fact that Jesus is our Great high Priest!

"The Lord has sworn an oath." Listen, a divine promise is coming.

- He adds Lord adds "[I] will not change [my] mind"
- Here's the promise: **"You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"**
- No one will ever come after Jesus – a priest forever, and priest of all nations.

- **We read further in Hebrews and we find that he's not only the priest, but he's the sacrifice.**
- **What we need is something that the OT priests could never provide: full and final atonement.**
- **We need a sacrifice not with blood and goats, but with the spotless Lamb of God.**
- **We need a sacrifice that works!**
- **And Jesus our Great High Priest provides it.**

- **You just stand in awe of his work.**
- **You marvel at the providence of God – all of this prefigured in Melchizedek 2000 years before Christ was born in a manger.**

#3: The Victorious Warrior (110:5-7)

We now look to the future victory of the Priest-King.

- **It's like we move from Hebrews to Revelation.**
- **There is a scene here of final judgment and victory.**
- **Kidner: "The Priest-King's enthronement is not the final scene but the prelude to world conquest."**

"The day of his wrath" (v. 5).

- **This speaks of his coming return, and the wrath of the Lamb (Rev 6:16-17)**
- **Recall Psalm 2 – Kiss the Son lest you perish in the way; blessed are all who take refuge in him.**
- **He can be a refuge and Savior or you will face his terrifying judgment.**
- **The same is true here. As priest, he can be your mediator and advocate or you can face him as a terrifying judge.**

5: The Messianic King is now “at the right hand” of God – They act as one.

5-7: What will this King-Priest do to his enemies? Five Things:

1. He will “shatter” kings on the day of his anger (v. 5).
2. He will “execute judgment” on the nations (v. 6)
3. He will fill the the nations with corpses (v. 6a; see Rev 19)
4. He will crush leaders over the entire world (v. 6b)
 - See Rev 19
5. He will drink from the brook by the way (v. 7).
 - Refreshment is his after the victory.

Following this victory, he will “lift up his head” – in victory, now to enjoy his rule (v. 7).

- **Because he will lift up his head; we can lift up ours!**
- **And we triumph in him (Rom 8; Ps 3)**

The baby born in Bethlehem is our King, our Priest and our Victorious Warrior.

- **Right now the battle still rages. But we have the hope of glory – one day it will end!**
- **We fight in the strength of the King, not with weapons but with love and gospel hope.**
- **Right now, we have a great mission – and that is to tell the nations of this priest king – who grants forgiveness and eternal life to all who call upon him.**
- **Right now, we tell the nations about this King who reigns over all, and who will establish a new heaven and new earth.**
- **Like those who verse 3 – we willingly offer ourselves up in this mission of love, service and truth until that day happens.**

That’s the kind of story we’ve fallen into.

Final Reflections

There are several take aways from this text.

1. **Come to Christ. He has provided a way to have forgiveness of sins and eternal life.**
2. **Worship this King. He’s worthy. David’s Son and David’s Lord.**
3. **Persevere by looking to our sympathetic high priest.**
 - **That’s one of the dominant themes in Hebrews.**
 - **Because Jesus is enthroned; because he is our sympathetic high priest, don’t cave in and don’t’ turn back.**
4. **Allow his sovereignty to bring you peace. He reigns.**
5. **Proclaim the good news of salvation among the nations. “Say among the nations, the Lord reigns!”**