

SESSION EIGHT

A God Who Keeps His Promises (*Psalm 110*)

"Hark the herald angels sing, 'Glory to the new-born king.' Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!." ~ Charles Wesley

I. Overview

Psalm 110 is arguably one of the most fascinating psalms in the psalter. Due to its theological richness, it is little surprise that this psalm is the most frequently quoted or referenced Old Testament passage in the New Testament!

Indicative of other messianic psalms, Psalm 110 is characterized by the following:

- The psalm will be referenced in the New Testament as referring to Christ (e.g., Psalm 2, 69)
- The word "anoint", the Hebrew notion behind the term "messiah", occurs.
- References to the Messiah clearly depict someone who is more than merely human (cf. Psalm 72).
- Royal Davidic ideology will be found. Ultimately, the Messiah serves as the ideal Davidic king.

II. The Content

A. The Lord will exalt the future king (v. 1).

v. 1 – Scholars have debated to whom did David refer to when he speaks of "my Lord"? Strong arguments have been made for either a reference to David himself or to a future king, that is the Messiah. While we must be careful not to strip the psalm from its historical context, the canonical value of the psalm as a messianic promise must be recognized.

- The opportunity to "sit" is a sign of honor and majesty (cf. 1 Kgs 2:19). "To sit at the right hand" only accentuates this position of power and prestige.

We should also note that Yahweh's invitation for the king to take up a seat of honor beside Him underlines the fact that God is the real king. David does not rule in his own right, but as a co-regent and representative.

Further support for this "co-regency" is seen in the next phrase: "I will make your enemies a stool for your feet". First, the enemies of God's people are His enemies. Six, if not all seven, references to enemies in the psalter are God's enemies, not the foe of a human ruler. Second, "footstool" is used elsewhere in reference to God and His reign (cf. 1 Chron 28:2; Pss 99:5; 122:7; Isa 66:1; Lam 2:1).

Ultimately, David's success as a ruler is directly linked with Divine presence (cf. 2 Sam 5:10; 8:6, 14).

B. The Lord will give authority and power to the king (vv. 2-3).

v. 2 – The royal scepter is strong and martial authority (cf. 2:9; Jer 48:17; Dan 7:13-14). Note once again that it is Yahweh who ultimately is in charge (i.e., extending the scepter).

v. 3 - Contrary to these enemies, holiness is required of those who will accompany the Lord in battle (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-11, 14). The righteous will “willingly offer themselves”. One commentator notes: “The actual word in the text is ‘freewill offerings’ . . . this is figurative then, meaning that those who belong to the king willingly offer themselves to him in service . . .” (*Psalms*, 3:351).

- The “dew of the morning” could indicate their sudden appearance, their youthful vigor, or even their time of appearance.

C. The Lord will appoint the king as high priest forever (v. 4).

The psalmist makes two declarations concerning the Davidic monarchy. First, he mentions the permanence of the Davidic dynasty (also, cf. 89:29-30 and 2 Samuel 7:13, 15-16). Secondly, the psalmist links the royal line of Judah with the priestly line from Melchizedek—the priestly king of righteousness and peace (cf. Gen 14). This union of the offices of priest and king in the Messiah was prophesied later in the Old Testament (cf. Zech 6:12-13).

D. The Lord will destroy any opposition to the king (vv. 5-6).

v. 5b – The “right side” signifies divine protection (cf. 16:8; 121:5). This priestly king is more than an individual who is confined to cultic rituals, but is a military might, ready for battle.

vv. 5-6 – Observe three ways in which the psalmist highlights the Lord as a judge. First, the psalmist clarifies how Yahweh will judge nations (i.e., “fills the valleys with corpses” - cf. Eek 39:12). Secondly, the psalmist repeats “he will smite” (i.e., v. 5b and v. 6b). Finally, the psalmist escalates his description of whom the Lord judges—first it was kings, then nations, and ultimately the “heads,” or confederation of nations (cf. Rev 19:13-15).

Indeed, the Lord is qualified to judge, is capable of judging, and will ensure the execution of that judgment.

E. The Lord will refresh the king (v. 7).

The psalmist concludes with a “refreshment” metaphor that he used in verse 3. Also, note the contrast between the enemy who loses his head and the Lord’s head which is exalted.

III. Intersect

A. This King of Psalm 110 is our King—the Lord Jesus Christ!

The New Testament refers to Psalm 110 to identify clearly this king as the divine Son of God, Jesus Christ!

- Jesus cited Psalm 110:1 to prove that the Messiah is more than a mere physical descendant of David (cf. Matt 22:41-45).
- Peter quoted Psalm 110:1 on the Day of Pentecost to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 2:34-36).
- The writers of the New Testament cited Psalm 110 in order to show that after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven (cf. Heb 8:1).
- The New Testament writers stated that God places His enemies under Jesus' feet (e.g., 1 Cor 15:25-28).
- Jesus was given the title of High Priest, a title which He did not grasp (e.g., Heb 4:14-15; 5:10; 7:26; 8:1).
- By becoming a priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus initiated a new order (Heb 7:17).

Martin Hengel writes, "The effectiveness of Jesus as the priestly intercessor and advocate is not only a consequence of his atoning death, but also the expression of his participation in the dominion of God, which he gained through 'sitting at the right hand.'"

B. Our King is the Promise Keeper.

1. The One who promises to do what is best for us (cf. Jeremiah 29:11).
2. The One who promises that which will be fulfilled (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-9).
3. The One who promises with the power to keep His word (cf. Romans 8:38-39). No matter how evil or difficult this world might appear, the final outcome is certain!

"Faith receiveth the promise, embraceth it, and comforteth the soul unspeakably with it. Faith is so great an artist in arguing and reasoning with the soul, that it will bring over the hardest heart that it hath to deal with. It will bring to my remembrance at once, both my vileness against God, and his goodness towards me; it will show me, that though I deserve not to breathe in the air, yet that God will have me an heir of glory."

~ John Bunyan