

“Powerful Priest Forever”

Psalm 110

Of David. A psalm.

¹The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

²The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

³Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.

⁴The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

⁵The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.

⁶He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

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

[NIV]

HOPE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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5th July, 2009

I. Introduction

As iron anchor plunges the waters, spiritual anchor pierces the clouds. As iron anchor catches fast upon a rock, spiritual anchor lodges firmly upon Christ. Spiritual anchor—hope—secures perplexed soul, as iron anchor steadies wave-tossed ship. Great King David was no stranger to perplexing waves of his society and his soul. Great King David needed a Rock greater than himself, or he was sunk. David cast his anchor far forward through the waves and waters of a thousand years. His anchor found the Rock.

That Rock—our Lord Jesus Christ—has ascended from the depths of the judgment waters and into heaven above. Behind the veil we cannot see Him, but He has given to us to know Him in whom we have believed. Casting our anchor high through the clouds and fire, it finds the same Rock and is not dislodged. Ps110 reveals the powerful position, permanent priesthood, and victorious vengeance of this Rock. The relationship between these is exceedingly comforting to believers. The pattern of the verses is important: 1–3 relate to His Kingly office; 4 His Priestly office; 5–7 His Kingly office.

II. Powerful Position

A. *Clearly the Christ*

First, vs1-3 reveal the Powerful Position of Christ in His office as King. And regarding this powerful position, let me make three observations. Firstly, there can be no doubt and no question but that this psalm refers directly to the Messiah, Christ the Son of God. Confounding the Pharisees, Jesus Himself attributes the authorship of this psalm to King David. ^{Mat22.43NIV}“He said to them, ‘How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him “Lord”? For he says, ⁴⁴“The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’””

The Pharisees had already said the Messiah would be the son of David.^{v42} Jesus confounded the Pharisees’ conclusion that Jesus could not be the Son of God. David himself had stated by divine prophecy that one of his human descendants would be greater than him. Furthermore, the writer to the Hebrews quotes this same verse to prove that Christ is greater than the angels: ^{Heb1.13}“To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’?” And the Apostle Peter preached, ^{Act2.34}“For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”” Peter saw Christ ascend into heaven with his own eyes. This psalm written by David testified to Christ.

B. *Greater than the Greatest (King David)*

Secondly regarding His powerful position, this “Lord” would be far, far greater than the greatest Israelite King David. Not only would David submit as a humble subject of this Lord, but this Lord has a very special ordination and calling. Yahweh Himself says to Him, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” Yahweh, the LORD God, exalts this Lord whom David calls Adonai, to be enthroned at His right hand. “Your enemies” is comprehensive. There will be no enemy left that is not subdued to His rule and judgment.

The greatness of this great King appears in v2: “The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.” King David ruled over Zion. He was elevated by God from lowly shepherd boy to great King. This was clearly God’s doing, and David did not forget it. But great as his rule was, if you look at a map you see it really is not a very large territory. Important, yes. At the center of significant trade-routes, yes. But sizewise, no. A speck compared to Assyrian, Babylonian, Alexandrian, or Roman dominions.

Now, according to v2, God would extend the mighty scepter, the strong rule, of this Lord *forth* from Zion. And there are no boundaries stated. David was *surrounded* by enemies, but his

dominion did not extend into their lands. This Lord's dominion is different. Even throughout the lands of His enemies, His kingdom will take root and grow. This is a *command*, an *imperative*, from God. "You *will rule* in the midst of Your enemies." This Lord, this King, who always does what His Father commands, *will build* His Kingdom—His Church—right in the midst of His enemies everywhere. And they won't be able to stop Him. Imagine that. The Church flourishing right in the midst of Portsmouth! *It is happening*, whether you see it or not.

C. His Own are Willing, Holy, Precious

Thirdly regarding His powerful position, this King will not need to coerce His citizens in the day of His power. He will not need to draft soldiers for the battle. All citizens belonging to Him will most freely and willingly volunteer to follow Him wherever He leads. They know that no weapon forged against them will prevail, and that they will refute every tongue that accuses them. ^{Isa54.17}

To His citizen-soldiers He will be the very image of majestic holiness. To them He will be irresistible. They will come and ^{Ps29.1}"ascribe to the LORD glory and strength." They will ²"ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name." In holy formation, they will worship the LORD. In a vast conventicle no building can accommodate, they will gather numerously and mysteriously as the dew upon a vast field. In one day as His power poured out, He added three thousand citizen-soldiers to His kingdom. ^{Act2.41,47} Such is the power of Christ the King. It is a very comfortable privilege to be a citizen under this King's protection and rule.

III. Permanent Priesthood

A. Greater than the Greatest (Levi) [Melchizedek]

Second, v4 reveals the permanent priesthood of Christ in His office of Priest. "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'" Again, three things about this Priesthood. Firstly, the priesthood of Christ is greater than the greatest priesthood on earth—namely the Levitical priesthood of Israel.

In the OT we don't find out much about this priest named Melchizedek. He appears seemingly out of nowhere after Abraham, vastly outnumbered, whooped up on Chedorlaomer and his allied kings' armies. ^{Gen14.18}"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. ²⁰And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."

The writer to the Hebrews explains two reasons why Jesus Christ is a greater priest than all the priests of Israel. One, God directly declared Christ a priest. ^{Heb5.5}"So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.' ⁶And he says in another place, 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'" The Levitical priests followed in succession based upon their lineage. But God Himself directly placed His Son into this priesthood.

Two, in Israel the Levitical priests did the blessing, and received the tithes. But all the Levitical priests descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So when Melchizedek received a tithe from Abraham and blessed Abraham, he in effect received a tithe from all the Levitical priests and blessed *them*. ^{Heb7.7}"And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater." Christ, then, like Melchizedek, is greater than all the Levite priests.

B. Longer than the Longest (Levitical priesthood, Old Covenant)

Secondly, Christ's priesthood is longer than the longest (the Levitical) priesthood of God on earth, enduring forever. The writer to the Hebrews in ch7 proves this. He writes of Melchizedek,

Heb7.3⁴ "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever."

Note two things about this longevity. One, the priests of the Levitical priesthood died and had to be replaced. That happened fairly regularly. Christ died once and rose from the dead... He never has to be—nor indeed can be—replaced. Heb7.24⁴ "Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

Two, not just individual priests but the entire administration of the Levitical priesthood would end and be replaced. Remember, the Levitical priesthood started with Moses' brother Aaron, a descendent of Jacob's son Levi. Now, a priesthood would arise according to the timeless and mysterious order of Melchizedek rather than Aaron, and Christ would be a descendent of Judah rather than Levi. Heb7.11^{ff} Christ is greater than the entire Levitical priesthood.

C. Promise Secured by Oath [Sworn, no change mind]

Third regarding His permanent priesthood. There is nothing in all the universe; nothing in all eternity more sure, more absolute, more dependable than this priesthood. "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind." God does not *need* to secure His promises with oaths. But for our comfort He does. Our minds are so changeable. Our decisions are so fickle. Our promises are so unfaithful. Not so with God! So the emphases He graciously gives here should serve as extreme comfort to you. *There can never be anything or anyone that keeps Jesus Christ from being the perfect, eternal priest—the perfect, eternal Mediator between God and man.*

Let me make one more note along that line. This perfect, eternal Priest is also the perfect, eternal, King. Now, in Israel, a king could not be a priest and a priest could not be a king. Num3.10¹⁰ When King Saul tried, he lost his kingdom. 1Sa13¹³ When King Uzziah tried, he gained leprosy. 2Ch26²⁶ But Melchizedek was both priest and king. The writer to the Hebrews observes that the name Melchizedek means 'king of righteousness'; and he is also called 'king of Salem' which means 'king of peace.' Heb7.2² Christ alone, after the order of Melchizedek, will govern a kingdom of eternal righteousness and eternal peace. God swore it.

IV. Victorious Vengeance

A. Intimate Immanence [at right hand]

Powerful position, permanent priesthood, and third, victorious vengeance. V5-7 return to the Kingly office of Christ. Briefly, three things. Firstly, see the intimate immanence of Christ. He is present with His citizen-soldiers. 5⁵ "The Lord is at your right hand." This enabled the psalmist to say, 16.8⁸ "I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." And, 121.5⁵ "The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand."

B. The Day the Storehouse Opened [wrath, crush, judge]

Secondly, our great King of Righteousness and King of Peace will crush all kings of unrighteousness and all kings of violence on the day of His wrath. You do not have to crush them. Indeed, insofar as it does not violate your conscience, you are to submit to the rule even of unjust and violent kings. "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay." You can count on it.

Yes, 6⁶ "He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth." Vengeance against unjust rulers is His, yet the result is not just another dictatorship whose own violence replaces the previous regime's oppression. As Isaiah says, Isa2.4⁴ "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." The victorious vengeance of this King results in true

and abiding peace. You see, then, there is something different at the heart of this Priest-King's victorious vengeance than what we expect from merely human history.

C. Refreshing Confident Victory

Thirdly, as our Priest-King engages in battle against the enemy, He will not feint, He will not become weary. He will be confident, he will be refreshed. ⁷"He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head." He will not drop disconsolately to his knees discouraged like the 10,000 warriors of Gideon. Rather, like the 300 few who stood upon their feet and quickly drew water with their hands before running back into the fight, ^{Jdg7.3ff} our King remains refreshed and resolute in His victorious endeavor. For God His Father promised Him, ^{Ps89.21}"My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him."

V. Doctrine

Powerful position, permanent priesthood, victorious vengeance. So bright a proclamation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But have you seen the glory? Has it remained hidden before your very eyes? Look again! I pray your heart has been gripped by the power and the victory of our Great High King. Vs1-3, and vs.5-7 open to you a bright, bright future that you may know today. They also present a dreadful terror to any who are not found in submission to this King. If you would continue in your sin and your rebellion against Him, if you would try to remain your own ruler, then you may be sure that all such foolish vanity will be the laughing stock of this powerful King. He will work His infinite vengeance against such ugly arrogance.

But the glory of this poetical picture is not complete until you see the Prophetic Word as it stands in this poem. At the heart of His Kingly power of v1-3 and 5-7, lies His eternal Priesthood in v4. This is no mere accident; this is the deliberate design of the Divine Word. It is not to be missed. The entire Psalm portrays the glorious power of our great King. V4 almost seems out of place for such a psalm... except for the fact that it is smack dab in the middle, at the very heart of the psalm. This is the glory of the psalm, and this is what I pray you will remember:

At the heart of our King's power is his eternal Priesthood.

VI. Receiving

At the heart of our King's power is his eternal Priesthood. Herein lies our hope. Herein lies our confident expectation of His favor toward us. Herein lies our eager anticipation of His return for us. All the powerful and unstoppable endeavors of our great King have at their heart the eternal, priestly mediation of Christ, between God and man. That is to say... *everything the Lord Jesus Christ does with all His power, He does for the glory of God and for the gracious benefit of His people.*

At the heart of our King's power is his eternal Priesthood. At the heart of Christ subduing us to Himself, ruling and defending us, restraining and conquering all His and our enemies... at the heart of all this is His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God, and making continual intercession for us. ^{wsc25,26} You would be well rewarded to spend a lifetime meditation upon this. But let me just give a simple implication or two.

A. Power through Priesthood: Prayer Mediator

First is this: Your prayer access to Divine power is only through Christ's priestly mediation. This goes both ways: receipts and returns. Firstly, receipts. This Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek grants you full privileged access to the infinite divine power of the majestic King of kings and Lord of lords. Such privileged access can *never, ever* be removed from you who trust in Jesus. The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind.

There is a very pleasant implication: *whatever you want God to do in accordance with His will... if you ask Him through our great Priest, He will do it with all the infinite power of our great King.* He receives your prayers.

Secondly, returns. What do we long for from God when we offer our service—including our prayers—to Him? We long for a favorable response. Yet usually we fear that our service is shameful, unacceptable, wanting, unworthy. No wonder. We are born into a Covenant of Works relation to God in which we are indeed guilty and shameful, and we have a hard time daring to believe the favorable mercy we receive when He transfers us to the Covenant of Grace. Furthermore, even now we live in a world that operates on a CoW principle, where all reward depends upon the quantity and quality of our works.

But the blood of Christ our Priest, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, has cleansed your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.^{Heb9.14NAU} There is a very comforting implication: *whatever service you offer to God, Christ removes the dross and adds His perfection. And God is very, very pleased with you.*

The other day at our Prayer Watch a couple in the congregation related to me how the wife has difficulty praying in public, even when "Public" means the two of them alone. They found a happy solution. The husband asked his wife to tell him what she wanted to pray for, and then he offers the prayer according to what he understands God's will to be. This is a precious picture of Christ our Priest taking our halting, stumbling, frail prayers, removing their imperfections, adorning them with His knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and presenting them to His Father.

His Father, then, with deep delight and pleasure, says to the Son: "Make it so... and use all Your infinite and holy power to accomplish the request. It *shall* be done."

B. Kingdom through Priesthood: Precious Mediator

Second and last, let there be no question and no doubt, Jesus Christ has established His kingdom, and He *will* continue building it until it is complete. He acts, and who can reverse it?^{Is43.13} He will use all the power of the Majestic, Sovereign King... but His priesthood will be at the heart of all this power. He *will build His church* in all the nations, cities, towns, and villages of the world amidst all the persecuting enemies... and He will do it by freeing souls from the condemnation of sin through His shed blood. Yes, even in Portsmouth. All the enemy's accusations of failure will fall harmlessly like flaming arrows bouncing off a Kevlar shield.

All terrors of those who can kill the body but not the soul will only arouse the pity of those who rest in Him, who in divinely righteous vengeance can cast both body and soul into eternal hellfire. How will your comfort come? How will your desires for completion come? Very simply by you requesting, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." All the infinite powers of God will be directed to that end, because of your prayers raised to the very heart of His power... namely His gracious Priesthood forever. For His is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.