

Summer in the Psalms: Psalm 110
ABC 8/15/21

Correct concepts are crucial because wrong ones can be fatal. We know mercury is toxic but it was once used as a common medicine. The ancient Persians & Greeks considered it a useful ointment & in 2nd-century China it was prized for its supposed ability to increase lifespan & vitality. Some even believed that by consuming noxious brews containing mercury, sulfur, & arsenic, they could gain eternal life & the ability to walk on water. That's a wrong concept that can be fatal. Ancient civilizations around the world also engaged in trepanation, the practice of boring holes in the skull as a means of curing illnesses.¹ If I have the flu, I don't think that will help. The point being, wrong ideas can be harmful. This isn't only true physically, but spiritually as well. Having wrong spiritual ideas will lead to eternal separation from God. Therefore, it's essential we think correctly about the person & work of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, not long before His arrest & crucifixion, there was a time when the religious leaders of Israel were trying to trap Him with trick questions & He turned the tables by asking them a question: **What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?** They thought the answer was easy. **The son of David**, they replied. Jesus continued, **Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet"?' If David calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?** (Mt 22:41–45). They had no answer. Thus an apparently easy question suddenly became a profound & searching one. Later, on the Day of Pentecost, as Peter preaches, he cites the same text to prove that Jesus has been exalted to the position of authority, to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33–35). The Book of Hebrews also uses this text to prove that Jesus is greater than any angel because He alone reigns in heaven (Heb 1:13).² If David called his physical descendant (the Messiah) his Lord, & he did, it could only be because the One to come would somehow be greater than David was. The only way that could happen is if the Messiah were more than a mere man. He would have to be a divine Messiah, that is, God. The answer to the question, *What do you*

¹ <https://www.history.com/news/7-unusual-ancient-medical-techniques>

² Donald Williams & Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Psalms 73–150*, vol. 14, The Preacher's Commentary Series, p 289

think about the Christ? Whose son is He? must be, *He is both the son of David & the Son of God.* In other words, it must be the exact teaching Paul develops in the early vss of Romans, where he writes that Jesus, in His humanity was **born of a descendant of David according to the flesh... & was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness** (Rom 1:3–4).³ The most important question for all of us to answer is, *What do you think about Jesus? Who do you say He is?* Our faith in Jesus must be grounded in a true & correct knowledge of who He is. Ps 110 tells us about Him. He is the King, the eternal Priest, & the future Warrior & Judge of the earth. David, the author of this psalm, recognizes there's something bigger going on than merely his reign & that of his descendants. He himself is a picture, a foreshadowing, a type of Someone greater, Someone more important, the real King.⁴ This psalm is clearly prophetic, written 1,000 years before Jesus was born. It only contains 7 vss, & yet is the OT passage most often quoted in the NT.

1. Jesus the King (1-3) In vs 1 there is a conversation between 2 members of the Godhead. **1** In Hebrew the 1st word for **LORD** is *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*, which is indicated by its capital letters. The 2nd word for **Lord**, lowercase, is *Adonai* meaning *master* or *sovereign*. It emphasizes authority & superiority.⁵ It refers to an individual greater than the speaker. *Yahweh says to my Adonai*, is the way the psalm opens. Since David was the highest ruler in the kingdom, his *Adonai* had to be God Himself. It was this fact that Jesus presented to the Pharisees, asking them how David's Lord could also be David's son (Mt 22:41–46). The only answer is that the eternal Son of God had to come to earth as a human born into the family of David (Lk 1:26–38). As eternal God, Jesus is **the root and the descendant of David** (Rev 22:16).⁶ David is quoting God's words in which God tells someone, who is greater than David, to sit at God's right hand until God makes their enemies a footstool for Him. This person can only be a divine Messiah, who is Jesus Christ. Clearly...

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107–150: An Expositional Commentary*, 892

⁴ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, pp 391-392

⁵ Allen P Ross, *Psalms*, 3:346-347

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Exultant*, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series, p 74

A. He is God & Man (1) **The LORD says to my Lord...** The Pharisees were correct in viewing the Messiah as a descendant of David & thus as a man. But they didn't grasp that the Messiah isn't just David's son, but also David's **Lord**, one with the Father from all eternity. Jesus questions them to get them to think about the implications of this verse. He is both David's son & David's Lord, man & God. False religions today still trip over this question & refuse to admit that David's Son is also David's Lord. They deny the deity of Jesus & don't submit themselves to His Lordship. This is a spiritually fatal error. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, his conclusion is as valid today as it was then.

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, & having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see & hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: *The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for your feet."* Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord & Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified (Acts 2:33–36).

When the people were convicted by his preaching they cried out, **What shall we do?** (37) Peter answered, **Repent, & each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins** (38). Jesus is now...

B. At the Right Hand of God Sit at My right hand... Clearly this is a prophetic invitation to reign, which is fulfilled when Jesus conquers sin, Satan, & death & is then exalted into heaven. There He assumes the position of authority at God's right hand. This is to the present position of Jesus. 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven where He was seated at the right hand of the Father, far above all rule & authority (Eph 1:20-22). As a proof of His exaltation, He sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:32-36). His ascension into heaven & the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit was proof that God had made **this Jesus whom they crucified** both **Lord & Christ** (Acts 2:36). Ps 110:1 looks to our time, where Jesus the Messiah is risen & ascended, Lord over all, & at the right hand of the Father. What does it mean to sit at the **right hand**? In the ancient world, this was to occupy a place of honor. But to sit at a king's right hand was more than just honor; it was to share in his rule as well. It signified participation in the royal dignity & power.⁶ How did Paul put it in Phil 2?

⁶ JJ Stewart Perowne, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 2:304

God highly exalted Jesus, & bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of JESUS EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven & on earth & under the earth, & that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (9–11).

What a difference between God’s evaluation of His Son & the scorn people had for Him when He was on earth & still have today. When He was here He was despised & rejected, harassed & hated. He was unjustly arrested, tried, & executed. But God reversed all that because He raised Him from the dead, received Him into heaven, & then said, **Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet** (Ps 110:1). To make the enemies a **footstool** is a metaphor for absolute control. Originally the victorious king placed his foot on the neck of his vanquished foe. From this arose the idea of making one’s enemy one’s footstool.⁷ Under His feet, they submit & are humiliated. It isn’t up to us whether Jesus will be Lord. He is Lord. We can fight that lordship & ultimately be broken by it & made His footstool or we can submit to it in humble obedience & worship. We must think of Jesus as He truly 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. Others see Him hanging on a cross. Both are wrong. Jesus isn’t in a manger or on the cross any longer. That’s past. Jesus came once to die for sin & after that to ascend to heaven to share in the fullness of God’s power & glory. When Stephen, the 1st martyr, had his dying vision of the exalted Christ it was of Jesus what? **Standing at the right hand of God** to receive him into heaven (Acts 7:55). When John had his vision of Jesus He was so overcome by Jesus’ heavenly splendor that he **fell at his feet as though dead** (Rev 1:17). We’d do well to recover this understanding of who Jesus is & where He is now, as we do, we’ll worship Him better & with greater reverence.

C. The King Uses His People Sitting signifies rest from Jesus’ atoning work but it doesn’t mean complete inactivity. A king rules from his throne, sitting upon it, & that’s what Jesus is doing now. He’s ruling from His throne in order to extend His kingdom throughout the whole world through the witness of His followers. **2-3**

⁷ Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, vol. 5, p 814

This is the marching order for the church. Jesus is to rule over all things, since all authority has been given to Him (Mt 28:18). If this psalm were about a mere earthly king, it would never speak of ruling **in the midst of ... enemies**. That isn't how earthly kings rule. They make boundaries, defend them, & confront, fight, & overpower enemies. But here is a King who rules in the midst of His enemies. This can only mean that His is currently a spiritual rule that infiltrates the evil powers of this world in a nearly invisible fashion. It's a rule He exerts indirectly, not by coming in power Himself (although He will one day do that), but through His people, the church. Jesus rules today **in the midst of His enemies** through you, if you've placed your faith in Him & offered yourself **freely** as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2) under His authority. Notice they're clothed in **holy array**. It's the beauty of holiness in the lives of Christ's followers that attracts & conquers His enemies. The church has always gotten into trouble when it's tried to conquer & Christianize society. From time to time believers think they can impose their idea of a just society on others by enacting laws & enforcing them. That isn't our calling. Paul pointed out the right way when he wrote to the Corinthians, **though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses** (2 Cor 10:3-4). God rules through His people as they live holy lives in a sinful world & are His witnesses wherever He sends them. When we evangelize in His name & pray in His name & live holy lives, His reign is being extended, not in the realms of heaven, but in the midst of His enemies here on earth.

Vs 3 is difficult to translate & I'll let you do your own study of it. But we may infer from the military language that the royal troops are numerous. The people come voluntarily on the day of battle. They consecrate themselves, are fully prepared, & place themselves at the service of the king. They will be abundant, youthful, & valiant for battle. The king's army is prepared, strong, & numerous.⁸ Jesus is now reigning, sitting on His throne in strength & splendor. He's already had His inauguration but His full reign waits a future fulfillment & it will come. We must rightly know

⁸ Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, vol. 5, p 815

that Jesus is the King of the earth, the God-man who was crucified, resurrected, & ascended to the right hand of the Father, & who now rules His people from His heavenly throne. We must see Him as exalted, enthroned, ruling in power & glory. What did Jesus pray before He went to the cross, knowing He'd soon return to glory? **Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.... I come to You; & these things I speak in the world so that they (Christians) may have My joy made full in themselves... Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world (5, 13, 24).** The great prayer & desire of our Savior 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. & Jesus prayed these things so that our joy might be full. We need to see Him more fully as He is now to have joy more fully. & Ps 110 helps us do that. Think of it this way: Right now, at the right-hand of God the Father, there's a human being. Yes, He's fully divine, but He's also fully human forever. In all of our weaknesses & infirmities it should be an encouragement to know that Jesus reigns in human flesh at the right-hand of God.

2. Jesus the Priest (4) Vs 4 records the 2nd statement of the LORD (Yahweh) to David's Lord (the Messiah). **4**

No matter what God says, it's important & we must listen. When He swears something, & Scripture adds that He won't **change His mind**, we'd better take notice! What is it that God wants us to see? That He has declared His Messiah to be **a priest forever**. Jesus the King is also Priest & His priesthood is forever. He not only reigns, He also represents us to God, making eternal intercession for us. His priestly role now is interceding for us as our great High Priest before the throne of God above. He ever lives & pleads for us as our Advocate & Mediator on His throne. There's no way that vs 4 can be understood apart from its messianic fulfillment in the NT. What kind of priest is He? A descendent of Aaron, a Levite? No, He's a priest **according to the order of Melchizedek** (4). What's that mean? Melchizedek is mentioned only in Gen 14, here in this psalm 1,000 years later, & then after another 1,000 years he's mentioned more extensively in Hebrews. In Gen 14 Abraham successfully rescued his nephew Lot, his family, & possessions from a coalition of 4 kings who'd

attacked & overcome 5 other kings, including the king of Sodom, which is where Lot lived. On his way back from the battle, Abraham is met by Melchizedek, who's identified as **a priest of God Most High**. Melchizedek blesses Abraham, & Abraham gives him a tithe of the spoils of the battle.

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread & wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him & said, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven & earth; & blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' He gave him a tenth of all (Gen 14:18–20).

One of the problems with Melchizedek is we have no idea who he was other than what's said here. He seems to come out of nowhere, refreshes Abraham with **bread & wine**, blesses him, & receives a tithe of Abraham's spoils. Remember, a priest acts as a mediator between God & man. Melchizedek stood between God & Abraham to pass God's blessing to Abraham & to receive the tithes from Abraham to present to God. The name **Melchizedek** means *king of righteousness* implying that Melchizedek stood for God's righteousness. Melchizedek was also the **king of Salem**, which means *king of peace*. By becoming our righteousness & by His death on the cross, Jesus has made peace between God & us (Rom 5:1-2). The author of Hebrews explains that Melchizedek served as a type of Christ. He was writing to Jewish Christians who were facing persecution (10:32-36) & were tempted to give up on Christianity & return to Judaism. The author wants to convince them of the superiority of Jesus over the Jewish system. He uses Melchizedek to show that Jesus, as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, is superior to the Levitical priesthood. He's superior in that, unlike Jewish kings who weren't to act as priests, & priests who couldn't be king, Jesus is both Priest & King. Jesus is superior because He's an eternal Priest (3, 17, 21, 24) who offers a better covenant through which we may draw near to God (22, 25). The author of Hebrews continues his exposition of Ps 110:4, focusing on the word **forever**. He makes 2 points: 1) Because no genealogy of Melchizedek is given, this ancient king becomes a symbol of an eternal priesthood, one without beginning or end. **Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually** (7:3). 2) Unlike the priesthood of Jesus, the ancient Jewish priesthood wasn't forever, since the priests followed one another in long succession & each died. Their deaths signified the fleetingness of what they represented. We read in Heb 7,

The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (23–25).

The last vs of the chapter combines the idea of God’s oath with the idea of forever, saying, **For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever** (7:28). Jesus is superior in that He didn’t need to offer daily sacrifices for His own sin before He offered sacrifices for the people as the Levitical priests did (27). Jesus’ priesthood is superior because it didn’t need to be repeated. Jesus’ priestly work was done once for all. Jesus made full atonement for sins & when He’d completed His work He sat down at the Father’s right hand. OT priests were never done. Day-after-day every other priest had to stand & perform his religious duties. Again & again he’d offer the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered the one sacrifice for sin for all time, He sat down at the right hand of God. Since then He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool, because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being sanctified (Heb 10:11–14). If Jesus were on earth, He couldn’t minister as a priest because He was from the tribe of Judah & not from Levi. But because His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, who was both a king & priest (Gen. 14:18–24), He can minister in heaven today. No Aaronic priest was a priest forever because each high priest died & was replaced by his eldest son. Being a mere human, Melchizedek died, but there is no record of either his birth or death in the Scriptures. This makes him a type of Jesus, the eternal Son of God & High Priest forever. In Jesus, David has a throne forever (2 Sam 7:13, 16, 25, 29; Lk 1:30–33) & is a priest forever, & all who’ve trusted Christ share in those blessings. He is our glorified King-Priest in heaven, interceding for us (Rom 8:34). His throne is a throne of grace to which we may come at any time to find the help we need (Heb 4:14–16).⁹ What’s the conclusion of all this?

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new & living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, & since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience & our bodies washed with pure water. Let

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Exultant*, 1st ed, “Be” Commentary Series, pp 75–76

us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; & let us consider how to stimulate one another to love & good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; & all the more as you see the day drawing near (Heb 10:19–25).

Have you trusted Jesus as God's appointed Priest who died to make atonement for your sins? If not, you have nothing to look forward to but judgment. If you reject Him as Savior He will condemn you as your Judge. The author of Hebrews reminds us that **the Lord will judge His people**, adding, **it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God** (Heb 10:30–31). The bottom line is, **Jesus is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them** (25). David in Ps 110:4 & the author of Hebrews are saying that Jesus isn't just a human priest. He is God in human flesh & He is the only way that sinful people can draw near to God. To think correctly about Jesus, you must understand He is a divine, eternal Priest between God & man. God has sworn it & won't change His mind about it. Jesus, as the true & final King of Jerusalem, sits at God's right hand as our Priest-King forever. What does this mean for us? Heb 1:3 says that Jesus is **the radiance of God's glory & the exact representation of His nature, & upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels... & then he asks, to which of the angels has He ever said, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"?** (Heb 1:3-4, 13). That's Ps 110 & God would never say that to any angel. He who's enthroned at God's right hand can only be God Himself in human flesh. To think correctly about Jesus, we must know He is the King (1-3) & the eternal Priest (4).

3. Jesus is the Warrior/Judge (5-7) The scene now shifts from God's throne to the battlefield. **5-7**

If vs 5 is still addressing the Messiah, which seems to make the most sense, the fact that God is now on the Messiah's right hand, instead of the reverse as in vs 1, is simply a Hebrew way of saying God is Messiah's strength in the battle against His enemies. The scene has moved from the book of Hebrews to Rev 19, the 2nd coming of Christ, when He'll forcibly subdue His enemies & establish His kingdom rule. The psalmist describes stacks of corpses on the battlefield with nobody to bury them. This isn't a pretty picture. The King of peace is engaged in a terrible war. These vss recall Ps 2, which says of Jesus & His enemies, **You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall**

shatter them like earthenware (9). There will be a judgment on the nations at that time (Mt 25:31-46; Joel 3:1-2). Later, after the 1,000-year reign of Christ, will be the Great White Throne judgment of Rev 20:11-15. Ps 110:5-7 describes the judgment of the nations. 7

This is a poetic way of making the point that the Messiah will carry out this judgment swiftly & none will escape. The picture is that of a warrior in hot pursuit of the enemies who've escaped the initial slaughter. He stops briefly at a brook along the way, is refreshed, & continues His pursuit until all His enemies are slain. Then He lifts his head in victory. This means the Messiah will gain a swift, total victory over His enemies when He returns. None will escape. We must understand that while we're now in a time of grace, when God is withholding His wrath on sinners, a day of judgment is coming when everyone opposed to God & His Son will be crushed. To think correctly about Jesus, you must understand He is the future Judge of the earth & its inhabitants.

John Locke said, *The ideas & images in men's minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them.*¹⁰ He's right. How you think determines how you live. What you believe impacts how you behave. It's vital we all think correctly about Jesus the Messiah: He is the King, the eternal Priest, & the future Warrior & Judge of the earth. Let's look at 3 quick implications for our lives based on these things:

1. Since Jesus is King, we should submit to His Lordship willingly. In Is 45:22-23 God says, **Turn to Me, & be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, & there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness & will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.** God has sworn that will happen. Either you turn willingly to Him now & are saved or you'll be crushed into submission when King Jesus returns. It's a sure thing: **Every knee shall bow** (Phil 2:9-11). Submitting to Christ's lordship isn't just for a few super-committed believers. Every Christian must be growing in submission to King Jesus. It's a lifelong process that begins at conversion. Growth comes as the Holy Spirit reveals to you more of your sinful ways & more of His righteousness, & you increasingly yield yourself to Him. A person

¹⁰ *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*

who calls Jesus **Lord** but isn't growing in obedience maybe in for a rude awakening come judgment day when Jesus may say, **I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness** (Mt 7:23).

2. Since Jesus is Priest, we should appropriate His mediation gladly. Jesus is the Mediator, the only go-between between you & God. The fact that He's a priest after the order of Melchizedek means He's secured, once & for all, forgiveness for your sins (Heb 7:27; 9:11-18). When you sin, you have an Advocate with the Father who's there pleading His blood as the just satisfaction for the penalty of your sins. You no longer need to feel condemned before God because Jesus is your Priest. Confess your sins to Him & appropriate His cleansing forgiveness. Jesus' priesthood also means He's your access to the Father's presence. Heb 4:15-16 assures us,

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy & may find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus is interceding for us (Heb 7:25; Rom 8:34). Think of it: Jesus is praying for you. It's great if you have a faithful mother or grandmother who prays for you. But it's even better to have the Lord Jesus praying for you. Robert Murray McCheyne, the Scottish minister of the past, once wrote, *If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!*¹¹ Thank God that Jesus is our high priest! We can appropriate His mediation gladly & often.

3. Since Jesus is Warrior & Judge, we should fear facing His judgment. Since we live in the day of God's grace, it's easy to put off coming to Christ. Perhaps you're thinking, *I still have time. I don't see God judging me or anyone else, so what's the hurry? Besides, isn't God a God of love? & I'm a pretty good person. God wouldn't judge me, would He?* That's a wrong & eternally fatal concept. Our psalm, as well as the rest of Scripture, shows that although God's judgment is currently delayed, when it comes it'll be swift & certain. None outside of Christ will escape that awful day. The reason God delays His judgment is so more people can come to repentance & faith in Him (2 Pt 3:9). But even though God's judgment is delayed because of His grace, it's certain & will come suddenly & swiftly in His perfect time.

¹¹ *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations*, p 206

Consider Jesus' question to the Pharisees: *What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?* He is David's son, but even more, He's David's Lord. But is He your Lord? Jesus is the King; we must submit to Him. He is the eternal Priest; we must draw near to God through Him. He is the coming Warrior/Judge; make sure you're on His side. Jesus Christ is exalted & enthroned in heaven. One day He will come & conquer the devil & his minions & establish His kingdom on earth. Hallelujah, what a Savior! Is He your Savior?