

Text

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,^[a]
in holy garments;^[b]*

*from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.^[c]*

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^[d]
over the wide earth.*

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

Main Point – The Enigmatic Royal Priest

The Enigmatic Royal Priest

Introduction (300)

Hook

Who here likes riddles? Or mystery stories with great detectives such as Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot?

I quite enjoy them, not so much because I can solve the mystery, but quite the opposite. Throughout the whole story the hints and clues add up. The tension builds. Everything seems to be contradicting itself and you wonder how this can all makes sense.

And then the most fun part of the whole story: The detective finally explains how every thing fits together. He gives the key that unveils the mystery. What was once a mystery now seems obvious and plain. The more obvious it seems the more you kick yourself for not figuring it out.

Often prophecies in the Bible are a bit like riddles or mysteries. They are full of hints and clues pointing to an event or a person.

Ps 110 is such a prophecy. It is like a riddle with many hints and clues about the promised Messiah. You can imagine the tension building for 1000 years as people wondered how all these clues fit together.

The New Testament, like a great detective, has explained part of the mystery to us. In fact this psalm is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. Again, and again the authors of the NT show how Jesus fulfils the prophecies spoken of in this psalm.

Today we have the privilege to look back to this psalm with the added light form the New Testament and to examine these hints and clues which give us great and

profound insight about our Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

Outline

So to help us work through this psalm, we are first going to do a brief overview of the psalm. We will look at it's general structure and themes.

Then we are going to dig a bit deeper into two specific points.

First we will look at the statement of verse 1:

The Lord says to my Lord:

*"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool."*

And then secondly, we are going to look at the statement of verse 4.

⁴ The Lord has sworn

*and will not change his mind,
"You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek."*

So much could be seen from the entire psalm but verses Verse 1 and verse 4 are somewhat of the entrances of goldmines, which are screaming for our attention, so we will dig into those portions in a bit more detail and hopefully dig up some treasure.

Part 1 – Overview of the Psalm

Exposition

So let's begin with a bit of an overview of the Psalm.

David the Author

First off we need to establish who is writing this psalm.

Sometimes who the author is really makes no difference, but in this case it makes a big difference.

Some have argued that the author could be someone in David's court. This would mean that the opening sentence: *"The Lord says to my Lord:"*

is saying "Yahweh has spoken to my lord king David" and the remaining psalm would be all about David and his great works.

Or, alternatively the author is David.

If that is the case the opening sentence:
"The Lord says to my Lord:"

Is saying "Yahweh has spoken to the promised descendant of David, the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah"

And then the rest of the psalm would be about the promised messiah.

Who the author is, is key to properly understanding this critical psalm, and thankfully we do not need to guess. For one, all the manuscripts include the heading "a psalm of David" that we see in our own bibles.

But not only that, Jesus himself attributes this psalm to David. In Mark 12:36 we find Jesus saying

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."*

So David is the author and the psalm is about the promised messiah, not about King David.

Work through the psalm

So with confidence that David is the Author, let us take a brief bird's eye view of this psalm.

The Psalm is structured by two oracles or oaths from Yahweh, in verse 1 and verse 4. Each oath is then followed by an explanation.

V1

In verse 1 we have the first oracle from Yahweh. David is acting as a prophet and he proclaims the word of Yahweh concerning the coming messiah.

The Lord says to my Lord:

*“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

Yahweh, the one who sits in the heavens and laughs at rebellious kings, is inviting the messiah to sit at his right hand and reign with Him.

Not only is he to reign alongside Yahweh, but there is assured victory over the enemies and total subjection of them

V2

In verse 2 we see an elaboration of this rule.

*² The Lord sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.*

Rule in the midst of your enemies!

The reign of the messiah will begin in Zion, that is in Jerusalem. From Jerusalem it will spread fourth from there.

And the messiah rules in the midst of his enemies.
There are still enemies present, but the messiah is ruling.

V3

In verse 3 we find some very poetic language which is basically describing a great army which is following the messiah.

*³ Your people will offer themselves freely
on the day of your power,^[a]
in holy garments;^[b]*

These people are offering themselves up freely for service. No one is forcing them. Further these people are robed in holy garments. They are clothed in righteousness if you like.

That last phrase of verse 3 is somewhat confusing:

*“from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.”^[c]*

One translator puts it this way “Thy children are born onto thee like dew out of the dawn”

Is some stunning poetry David wants us to picture an army as numerous as the dew in the morning but also as fresh as the morning dew.

And the people of this army are born in a mysterious way, like the dew appearing out of nowhere as it were. A mysterious birth of a righteous people willingly following the messiah.

V4

In verse 4 we have the second oracle.

*⁴ The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,*

*“You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.”*

The “You” is still talking about the Messiah.

So Yahweh is saying that the Messiah is a priest and will remain one forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Now lots can be said from this verse and We will come back to this later to dig a bit deeper, but let us keep moving to get the full feel of the psalm.

V5

So we have had this second oracle, which introduces the messiah as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, and we would expect the explanation in the next three verses to elaborate on this stunning and slightly confusing oracle.

But that is not the case. Verse 5,6 and 7 go back to talking about the Messiah ruling over his enemies and judging them and subduing them. We are back to describing the activities of a king, not only that but specifically a king dealing with his enemies. Nothing about the activity of a priest.

In verse 5 we see there is a switching of places between Yahweh and the Messiah. Yahweh is now at the right hand of the Messiah. Yahweh is now fighting on behalf of the messiah.

*⁵ The Lord [Yahweh] is at your [messiah] right hand;
he [Yahweh] will shatter kings on the day of his
wrath.*

Yahweh and the messiah are fighting side by side and the most powerful adversaries are destroyed. The rebellious kings are shattered like clay before an iron rod.

V6

The “He” in verse 6 is best understood to still be Yahweh.

*⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs^[d]
over the wide earth.*

He is judging not only the kings but also the nations. He is justly and rightly executing the wicked. And in graphic poetic language the corpses of the wicked are piling up.

V7

And finally in verse 7, the messiah is back in the foreground. We have this humanlike figure refreshing himself, taking a drink, before going on continuing with the pursuit and the judgement of the enemies.

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

He quickly takes a drink and then he walks off with his head high in contrast to the wicked who are slain and shattered.

Summarize

So that is the general overview of the psalm.

Yahweh invites his messiah to sit as co-ruler at his right hand, and promises victory over his enemies.

The reign of the messiah begins in Jerusalem, is sent forth far and wide.

The reign of the messiah is established despite many enemies surrounding him.

A numerous army of holy people, who are continuously fresh and strong willingly follow Him.

Then there is the oracle which seems so out of place, affirming that the messiah would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Only for the psalm to continue on to discuss the successful warfare of this royal priest Messiah.

And it ends with a triumphant note holds his head high.

Application

Israel miss reading scripture

Before we move on to looking more closely at the two oracles, can you see why Israel was awaiting a warrior saviour?

By the time Jesus came, Israel was an oppressed people. The Babylonians, the Persians, the Romans, all had dominated Israel. Too long they had seen the corps of their own countrymen piling up at the hands of their enemies. They knew the messiah would reverse that. That the messiah would execute judgement and slay the enemies, as we read here

So, if you were to read this psalm while under roman oppression what would you picture the messiah to be like? What would you want the messiah to be like? What would you feel like if this messiah told you to forgive your enemies and turn the other cheek?

You can understand the surprise and confusion of the disciples of Jesus when he was not rallying an army or preparing to overthrow the romans.

Yes the messiah would crush his enemies, but they had missed some important hints, **and** they had read their own situation into the Word of God. They had not let the word of God say all that it had to say. And they built a wrong picture of the messiah and tragically did not recognise him when he came. Would we have done any differently?

You misreading scripture

And so, as we read this psalm, let us be reminded to not be quick to read our own situation into a text of scripture. We can be so quickly blinded by our own expectations and assumptions that we do not let the Word of God say what it was meant to say.

We cannot just take the parts that we like parts that seem to speak directly to our own situation and discard the rest.

We must let the word of God form our understanding of God, of his son, of human kind and of his purposes.

When we humbly do that, and accept that sometimes the clues seem to not make sense, we show that our confidence is not in our own understanding, but in God who knows and orchestrates all things.

He is much wiser than we are and we can trust him, even when we are confused.

Part 2 – Oracle 1

Exposition

Let us now take a closer look at the first Oracle of Yahweh in verse 1.

*The Lord says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

Strong link with 2 Sam 7:12-15

This oracle would very well be a paraphrase or a shorthand of the promise Yahweh had made to David. A short hand of the Davidic covenant.

In 2 Sam 7 we read the promise of God that a king would come from the lineage of David. That this promised king would be the Son of God and that his throne would be established forever. The promised king of 2 Sam 7 is David's Lord of ps 110.

Seeing this connection between the promised king of the Davidic covenant and this verse of ps 110 shows us some fascinating insight about the messiah predicted here.

For one the messiah would be a man. He would be a descendant of David. That is fairly plain from the Davidic covenant and accepted by the Jews.

But when you link it with this psalm, you see that the messiah would also be divine.

Declaring divine characteristic of the messiah

For one David calls him Lord. David is more than happy to state that he is less than his messiah. But yet the this promised king would be from his lineage? David should be seen as greater because he was older and his ancestor. That is just how it worked. The older was always greater than the younger.

But there is more going on, as we well know.

For the descendent of David to be greater than David, he would also have to be divine.

Further the invitation to “Sit at the Right hand of the Father” amplifies the divine nature of the messiah.

The messiah would be welcomed to rule with Yahweh. Co-equal in rank and authority with the Covenant God and creator of the universe. Welcomed to sit in the throne room of the Lord almighty. Only a divine messiah could be in this position without it seeming like treason or blasphemy.

So, in this one verse we see hints pointing to the mind-bending truth that the messiah would be both human and that he would be divine. Of course, we have the benefit of hindsight and further revelation from the Holy Spirit, but we find the glorious mystery of the two natures of our messiah in this psalm written 1000 years before he walked the earth.

Application

Trust in the Word

Before we move on to looking more closely at the second oracles, can we just pause and wonder at the divine inspiration of this psalm.

This psalm is talking of a messiah who would come 1000 years later. It is attesting to the divine nature of the messiah, and to the human nature of the messiah. A truth that no humans can fully understand and yet is clearly written about.

If you every find yourself doubting the authenticity, authority or the divine authorship of the Bible, look to a psalm like this one.

Yes David wrote it, but it the Spirit was leading him. It has way too many connections with future events to be “just the writing of a man”. And it expresses truths far too great to be human imagination

Just remember, we hold the very word of God in our hands! And a psalm like this makes that so, so clear.

Part 3 – Oracle 2

Exposition

Let us now take a closer look at the second oracle.

*⁴ The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.”*

This is the plot twist. This is the piece in the puzzle that just does not fit. The clue that makes you doubt the whole case that the messiah would only be a warrior king.

Statement seems out of place in Psalm

I mentioned before that this oracle seems out of place in the psalm itself. This divine oracle is not elaborated on as the first one is. The fact that the messiah would be a priest is introduced and then forgotten to continue to discuss the successful warfare of this royal priest.

Statement seems out of place in wider context

But it is also surprising in the wider context of the mosaic covenant. Under mosaic law a king could not be a priest and a priest could not be a king. They were two separate offices. Both important and positions of

power but distinct. So distinct that lineage separated them. Only those of the tribe of Levie could be priest. While only those of the Tribe of Judah could be kings and specifically descendants of David.

Saul as an example

David knew of this separation. He not only knew the law, but he also knew the story of Saul. Saul tried to perform the duties of a priest and it cost him his kingdom. That was the sin God punished Saul for as we read in 1 Sam 13:13. Saul took it upon himself to offer a sacrifice to the LORD before battle. He was told to wait for Samuel, but his army was dispersing so he made the sacrifice himself. He was called out by Samuel for this sin and his punishment was the end of his kingdom.

Melchizedek the priest-king

Under mosaic law kings cannot be priests and priests cannot be kings.

But there was one who was a priest-king. One who was before the law and before the Levitical priesthood and before Aaron.

In Genesis 14:18-20 we read of Melchizedek and find that he is the king of Salem and also priest of God most high.

And so it is in that pattern that the messiah will be a priest and a king.

Before we look a little bit more what it meant that the messiah would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek, let me just point out a stunning implication of this verse.

Yahweh is saying that a new priesthood would come. Which implies that the old will be set aside. That the old priesthood is weak and useless as the author of Hebrews puts it (7:18-19). This verse would sit there for 1000 years, and it would only make sense when our Lord Jesus would come to earth to be our great high priest.

Messiah is a priest King in the order of Melchizedek

But back to the messiah being a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Let me briefly give you four ways that Our King Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. There are more, but for the sake of our study four will do. The book of Hebrews is the key understand Jesus as High priest. Most of these points are drawn from chapters 5-9.

Firstly, because Jesus the Messiah is our priest in the order of Melchizedek, he is the supreme priest. He is our great high priest, appointed by God and not by men. No one is his equal. (Heb 4:14)

Second, he has entered the Most Holy Place on our behalf. (Heb 6:19-20). Jesus entered the holy place and offered himself as the sacrifice for our sins. Like the high priest of old he entered the most holy place, but not with blood of goats or bulls but with his own blood. In Hebrews 9:26 we read:

But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

This is not the work of a king, but the work of a priest. That is the stunning thing. King Jesus can enter the holy place, because he is a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Thirdly, his priesthood is eternal. Melchizedek had no genealogy (no record of beginning) and he just falls off the history record (no record of an end). So in that pattern, Jesus has no beginning and no end, he is a priest forever.

And fourth and finally, because Jesus the Messiah is our priest in the pattern of Melchizedek, he can save his people completely. He did not have to pay for his own sins. As priest, he is holy. And as offering he is perfect. So his priestly work is complete and He can save completely.

Application

We can approach the throne of Grace with confidence

All this and more, much more is unpacked in the book of Hebrews.

If He was just king, it would be terrifying. If the only thing we knew about the messiah is that he would crush the heads of his enemies and that the bodies of the nations would pile up we would be filled with fear terror and dread.

But he is also a priest. A priest in the order of Melchizedek. He is our great high priest. Who atoned for our sins and is interceding for us. Who paid for our sins with his blood and purchased us as his own.

Magnitude of our Lord Jesus Christ

And the thing I want us to ponder on as we think of this great prophecy, this great oath from God is the majesty of our Lord Jesus.

He is seated at the right hand of the father as both King and Priest. He rules and judges but he also

atones for and intercedes. Truly this should fill us with awe and wonder. Perfect intermingling of justice and mercy without contaminating either.

Conclusion

So as we bring this study to a close let us hold firm to the fact that our Royal High priest is seated at the right hand of God. God has declared this and we know this to be true. And so as Hebrews 4:16 says

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.

There is much we need mercy for. There is much we need grace for.

At the throne of grace, we may receive both. And we can draw near with confidence because our great royal high priest is seated at the right hand of the father.

Let us pray