

Christ in the Wisdom Books

As we have seen in previous studies, Christ is presented to us in the Old Testament in ways in which Christ and His apostles develop for us in the New Testament. Today our text is Psalm 110, a well-known Messianic psalm (along with Psalms 2, 22, 45, 72 and others). This psalm, however, is a very unusual Messianic psalm, as we shall see. There are two primary oracles that are given in verses 1 and 4, marked by quotation marks in the English translation. These two oracles form the primary basis for what David communicated to us about the coming Messiah.

Psalm 110

1 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,
in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.

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
over the wide earth.

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

- I. Let us first of all notice in verse 1 that the Messiah’s majesty is above all other majesties. Verse 1 contains a number of astonishing revelations. David shows us first of all that the coming Messiah is more than just “a Son of David.” Jesus picks this up in His logic with the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46. He asks them, “If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” The point is that this psalm is written not by a courier of the king, but by the king himself, David. The big question, therefore, is who is “my Lord?” It could be none other than the coming Messiah, who is obviously greater than even the greatest king of Israel, David himself. Peter picks up on this in his sermon in Acts 2, as does the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:13): “And to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’”

David also shows us that the Messiah’s throne is above all other thrones, for he says “sit at my right hand,” which was the position of power and authority with God. Paul alludes to such authority when he says in Ephesians 1:20b-22, “...he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church...”

In verse 1 we also see that His judgment (footstool) is above all other judgments. The rest of the psalm is primarily a commentary on the judgments of God. In verses 5-7 we can see that His vengeance will one day be exercised against all of those who have rebelled against Him. He will shatter kings and scatter the nations who have turned their backs on Him. This, of course, calls for patience on the part of all God's people. As Paul says in Romans 12:19, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.'" We also see in verses 2 and 3 that there is a season of patience with the Lord. He is, for now, ruling in "the midst of his enemies," which means that He is not completely yet destroying them. Furthermore, His servants "offer themselves freely," which means we cheerfully engage the battle, even though our enemies still surround us and live among us. In the midst of our joy that one day God will send His messiah as judge, we also must wonder how we shall be treated by this righteous judge, for we all know that we have sinned against Him. For this and other reasons, we believe that David has included this magnificent verse 4: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'" This teaches us that:

- II. The Messiah's grace is above all graces.
Although most kings in history have been violent tyrants, there have been some merciful ones, like Cyrus the Persian, or Saladin the Merciful (Muslim ruler), or Louis IX of France, or especially King David of Israel, but there has never been one as gracious as the Messiah. David says that He is so great that He alone will combine the offices of king and priest, that He may not only scatter our enemies like a good king, but draw us to the Lord like a faithful priest. In Genesis 14, we have the story of Melchizedek who blesses Abraham and leads Abraham in blessing the Lord. The author of Hebrews, in Chapter 7, reminds us that this Messiah-priest is greater than the Levitical priest because He ministers forever and He offers a sacrifice (himself) which shall once and for all wash away our sins. His grace is truly beyond the grace of any king who has ever ruled.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the superscription to Psalm 110, "a psalm of David," crucial to the understanding of this psalm?

2. Why do you think Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted psalm in the New Testament?

3. Why is Jesus called "the priest after the order of Melchizedek?"

4. Why is it important that we believe in the holy vengeance of God against all that is evil?

5. If we, like those in verse 3, are offering ourselves “freely” to the Lord, what would our service look like?

Going Deeper

1. In what circumstances have you found it difficult to leave with God the need for judgment against sinners?
2. How do you need to deepen your response to Jesus Christ as the great priest-king?