

He Reigns

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, please do have Psalm 110 open in front of you. Let me maybe begin by asking you this question. What's the longest you ever had to wait for something good to happen?
- Something which you knew was going to occur. What's the longest you've had to wait for it to happen? In my final year at the seminary, a number of my course mates started to have children.
- Their wives started to have children. And they were very excited. They'd get the news. And we would be on tenterhooks to wait for that particular baby to be born.
- And in fact, just last Friday, my wife and I were at the hospital getting a scan to find out that our next little one is due in January. And there was an excitement to that wait.
- And I'm looking forward to seeing what it will be like when it arrives. And in a very tiny way, very small way, I think that excitement that we feel good news waiting to be fulfilled was felt in an even greater scale in the Old Testament.
- [1 : 0 7] As they were promised again and again. The good news that there would be a time when the Christ would come. When the Messiah, the leader of God's people would come and rescue them forever from sin and from the curse.
- This psalm that we have this evening is one of those great promises to the people of God about what Christ is like.
- It was written by David. We're told that at the very beginning. A psalm of David. Sometimes when you get a psalm of David, you can see very clearly how it was written in his life.
- Sometimes we're told the situation where that particular psalm was written. And we can see that because David was king and because Jesus is even the greater king, we can see how this psalm of David might be applied to Jesus and Jesus would fulfill it in an even greater way than it applied to David.
- But here, we're not given that option. We're told throughout scripture that this is, quite frankly, about Christ and about no other.
- [2 : 2 8] When Jesus, in his earthly ministry, was in an argument with the teachers of the law, he quotes this psalm and he says to them, How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him Lord?
- If then David calls him Lord, how can he be his son? Jesus is arguing about the identity of the person in this psalm and he's very clear.
- David in this psalm is referring to someone else. Someone who is greater than him, who he looks up to and calls his Lord.
- And just in case we don't get the message from that one passage from Jesus, later on in the New Testament, in the book of Acts, Peter is talking to the great crowd at Pentecost.
- And he says that David did not ascend to heaven. And yet he said, The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[3 : 40] Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

Again, Peter is very strong on this. This is not about David, because this is about one who has ascended to be with God. And David did not do that. So what we have in this psalm, it is not a royal psalm about David, but it's a psalm of prophecy about Christ.

David, in the power of the Spirit, hears the Lord speaking. And the Lord there in verse 1 is all in capitals.

Do you notice that? It means that we're here speaking about the name of God. If you got a slightly older, the old psalter would have put that as maybe Jehovah.

And in more contemporary translations, maybe Yahweh. So here we have the Lord God speaking to David's Lord, the coming King.

[4 : 52] This is God the Father speaking to Jesus, his Son. Our translation this evening puts it rightly in quote marks in verse 1 and 4 to mark it off as speech from the Lord.

And this is amazing. David, in the power of the Spirit, hears the speech made between the other members of the Trinity.

And from that flows the rest of this wonderful psalm. And so, a thousand years before Jesus walked on this earth, God was preparing his people for his coming.

Perhaps they're not surprising that this psalm is quoted by the New Testament more than any other psalm. It is a treasure trove of Old Testament information, of wonderful truths about Jesus, about his roles, and about his offices which he will fulfill.

And large sections of the New Testament are given over to unpacking all this truth. And just to be frank, we just don't have time this evening to go into every New Testament reference of this psalm.

[6 : 28] If I just stood here and read out every verse which references it, that would take up a good ten minutes of this evening on its own. Neither, then, will we exhaust the full depth of this psalm tonight.

But what I want us to do, what we can do, is get an overview of this psalm, and maybe just see a little something of the glory of Christ which it contains.

And then hopefully in the future, as we read the New Testament, as we look at the word of God for ourselves, we will be reminded of this psalm, and we'll recognize the quotations and the allusions to it.

And we'll start to build up those links for ourselves. So three things, in particular, stand out in this psalm about Jesus. Firstly, his reign as king.

Secondly, his service as priest. And thirdly, his victory as conqueror.

[7 : 45] A thousand years before Jesus came, God's Old Testament church is told that Jesus will be the greatest king there ever was, the greatest priest there ever was and will be.

the greatest conqueror the world has ever known or will ever know. So first of all then, his reign as king.

Jesus is right now reigning as king of heaven and of earth. Sometimes we can be very good at remembering what Jesus has done.

We remember well his life, death and resurrection and get a large amount of hope and great benefits from remembering those facts. And we can be very good at confessing what he will do in the future.

That he will return to judge the living and the dead. But what is Jesus doing right now at this moment?

[8 : 58] He is reigning. He is ruling. We're given this record of what was said to Jesus. And I think it was said to Jesus in eternity.

That this is an eternal truth that was said to Jesus but it has a particular application to him after his ascension. That after he died on the cross, after he rose again on the third day and the tomb was empty, remember, he rose and then he ascended to be with the Father.

And as he returns to the Father, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand. Jesus is literally the right hand man of the Almighty and he receives all the power and all the authority of heaven.

He sits on the throne in the place of honor. Father, he reigns. But not everyone accepts his reign.

We're told that this king has enemies. These are those who reject the reign of the king. Those who want to rule their own lives, who want to be in charge for themselves.

[10 : 15] For those who want to reject the good ways of the Lord and choose evil instead. But the Father says the Son that he will make those enemies a footstool for his feet.

That they will be so conquered, so defeated, that Jesus will be able to put his feet upon them. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow.

How is this happening? How are his enemies being conquered? Well, first of all, we're told about his kingdom in verse 2.

That from Zion, the Lord sends forth his mighty scepter. The scepter is a symbol of his ruling, of his power.

And Zion, in the Old Testament, that was the hill in Jerusalem where the temple was built. But we're told that right now Jesus is in the heavenly Zion, the new Jerusalem.

[11 : 24] And he reigns from heaven. And from that place, the power of the Lord is going out. And he is ruling in the midst of his enemies.

That even in the places which do not confess him as Lord, he is ruling right now. Christ is invading the world, the darkest regions of this world, in his power.

And who is working alongside him? We're told in verse 3 of his people, of a royal army, of the people of the king who are ready to serve.

These are people, we're told, who offer themselves freely. The word for offer there is the same word used elsewhere in the Old Testament of a free will offering.

In the Old Testament temple or at the tabernacle, you made sacrifices for sin, but you could also give something extra. You could freely give to the Lord to show your worship of him.

[12 : 35] And here we're told this is what God's people are doing. Does it remind you perhaps of the language of Romans 12? Where we're told to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord?

That is what's happening here. These are not conscripts. They haven't had their arms twisted. They are working for the Lord and they are clothed in holy garments.

They have been cleansed. They have had their sin atoned for. and they are working for him, clothed by him.

This is the church of Christ in the world today. And we need to be reminded of this fact because I know that the reality is that the church quite often according to our eyes doesn't look like this.

perhaps we look at the church and we think that it's quite small. Maybe it's not as big as it used to be.

[13 : 51] In the town where I serve as an elder our congregation is 40 in a town of 50,000. I think if you looked at us through the world's eyes we would look pitiful pathetic even small insignificant and then we come to a psalm like this and the psalmist says no you are not unimportant you are soldiers of the king who is reigning he is the one who does not grow old or get weary that is who you are tonight if you trust in Christ that is the reality and as we see so clearly later on in the psalm he will be victorious so as we read a psalm like this we are reminded not simply that Jesus is reigning and not simply that his kingdom is growing as his power goes out from

Zion but that we can have confidence to serve him willingly to give our bodies as living sacrifices to him because that is the reality that no matter how we might feel tonight the truth is we are on the winning side that our efforts are not wasted but what we are doing is worthwhile and of eternal importance where if Christ is reigning as king he also serves as our king as our priest we see that in verse 4 where again the lord speaks to Jesus and says you are a priest forever a priest at its most basic is one who mediates between God and human beings they bring humanity and God together when you read the Old Testament it's full of priests in Israel the Levites especially the descendants of Aaron served as God's priests at the tabernacle and then later on at the temple when that was built every day they offered animal sacrifices to cover up the sins of God's people they did so to allow people to live with God in their midst with the presence of God amongst them we're told here that Jesus's priesthood is very different Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek now it might be that you're a new Christian here tonight and the name Melchizedek might not be familiar to you he only appears once in the Old Testament outside of this psalm it's in the book of Genesis he's the king of Salem later called Jerusalem and his name means king of righteousness but Genesis also says that he is a priest of the God Most High the patriarch Abram gives him a tithe he gives him 10% of all that he has and in return Melchizedek blesses Abram and praises the Lord but we're not told much more about him than that we aren't given any more details beyond those things Melchizedek appears he comes onto the scene he blesses he acts as a priest and then he goes away again we have no record of his birth we have no record of his genealogy of who his parents were and we have no record of his death or his descendants he seems to have no beginning and no end and that is what is being said about

Jesus here his role as priest has no beginning and no end he is the eternal priest king and this is given extra weight by the language that the Father uses when he says I have sworn the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind to make to swear to make an oath to make an unbreakable promise to make a covenant this is the eternal covenant of Christ our priest king he is this forever think of the priests from the Old Testament for a moment they would have come of age and then they would have served at the tabernacle or the temple doing their work and then when they got to another age they would have retired and eventually died and then generation after generation would have continued that work but here we're told that Jesus will never retire that Jesus will never stop being our priest but in what way is he a priest priest well the priests of the Old Testament made sacrifices of animals they laid them out on the altar and they killed them but Jesus made sacrifices well but it wasn't of bulls or lambs instead

Jesus said in his ministry that he had come not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many he paid our ransom by his blood he made atonement for our sins the cross was his altar where he offered himself willingly as the perfect sacrifice and he did it once once forever the old testament priests keep having to make sacrifice after sacrifice the animal sacrifices are not effective in that way they even have to make sacrifices for their own sins but Jesus sacrifice is so perfect and complete we're told in the very first verse of this psalm that he gets to sit down that part of his work is done but does that mean that his service as our priest is over does that mean that he's not doing anything now no he continues at this moment to intercede for us to pray for us to the father he continues as it were not simply to have provided the sacrifice to apply his sacrifice to us every minute of every day he prays for us he will never stop interceding for us there will never be a time brothers and sisters when you have committed some sin or other the father looks at you and says the blood of Christ doesn't cover that you've gone too far you're out there will never be a time when the

Lord looks at you and says my love has reached its limits be gone this should give us so much confidence how many Christians when they are conscious of their sin avoid God when they know they have done something they were not meant to do something amongst Christians makes so many of us go I better give God some breathing space I better not go straight to him I better wait for him to calm down wait for my feeling of guilt to go no Jesus has provided the sacrifice he's interceding for you even as you sin so you can have the supreme confidence that even if in that moment you feel like a hypocrite to go to your heavenly father and know that you will be heard by him to know that he will still accept you into his presence and go and confess your sin to him and know that you will be heard it should give us the great confidence to pray for others if this is what our

[23 : 40] Lord is doing at this moment praying for his people praying for us then shouldn't we who are becoming more Christ like who are wanting to be imitators of Jesus do the same thing and intercede for others and pray for them and plead to the father for them we have just scratched the surface of the priesthood of Christ tonight but it gives us so much good news and we remember that he is our eternal priest king well finally this psalm finishes with the wonderful news that he will be victorious in verse 5 the scene changes no longer from the throne room of heaven but this time instead to a scene of battle before

Jesus was sat down at the right hand of the father but now he is in battle and the power of God is at his right hand to strengthen him in the fight and then we have this description that he will shatter kings he will execute judgment he will fill them with corpses he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth this is the language of battle as he destroys those who oppose and it is done we're told on the day of his wrath the day of his wrath is a term used to describe judgment day the day when Christ returns now I know that the word wrath is not one which is used very much today in our society and it's maybe one which for many of us is a fearful word and there's a sense in which that can be right but I think it's important that we understand what wrath is that wrath is not an eruption from God it's not him losing his temper and coming after us no it is God's settled anger against his enemies it is God's righteous anger against those things which are opposed to him it is his righteous anger against those who reject his love and choose the way of hatred instead it is his righteous anger against those who reject his goodness and choose evil instead it is his righteous anger against those who reject his holiness and choose filth and dirt instead it is a righteous anger and our

Lord will conquer those whom it is against conquest and the completion of his conquest is shown I think by verse seven where we're told that he will drink from the brook by the way the scene there is of a military captain of somebody who's leading his forces with such ferocity that he does not want to stop to get refreshment to get resupplied and therefore he drinks from the rivers on the battlefield so that he can continue the chase and catch up to those who are trying to escape from him when I was little I used to watch Saturday morning cartoon shows I used to watch Transformers and Ninja Turtles and all sorts of things and at the end of each episode it was always really frustrating because the bad guys would just run away so that they would always be around for the next episode and get you next time and sometimes in life we see that kind of thing happening where those who have committed great acts of injustice those who have done great evil seem to get away with it

Stalin dies in his palace surrounded by luxury the person who dropped his wife and kids to run off with a mistress doesn't seem to get any real repercussions from it but we're told here that that is not the case that Jesus will catch up to all his enemies he will destroy them he will pile up their bodies he will be utterly utterly victorious we know that the Christian life can be a battle we know that sometimes we can feel under siege from elements of our culture from those who openly oppose

Christ sometimes even from the sin within ourselves that we fight against but in this passage we are told that this fight is Christ's fight and he will be victorious and because we are his people and because we belong to him his victory victory is our victory when he wins his people will rejoice with him we are on the right side of history we can have confidence to live sacrificial lives lives where we do not get everything we want right now lives where we bless our enemies and love those who persecute us because we know that we will not lose out because

[30 : 23] Christ's victory is assured now as I come to a close this evening let me just say to you two things if you're not a believer here tonight if you haven't made a profession of faith or trusted in Jesus I ask you simply take this psalm seriously take the warning of what is to come seriously don't be on the side of evil or the side of darkness on the day of his wrath come to him and he will receive you he will make peace with you he will love you but if you are a Christian tonight

I want to remind you of these words from the New Testament where we're told that God has raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus that is where we are tonight as we read of Jesus at the right hand of the father know that spiritually that is where you are as well nobody can dislodge you from there nobody can remove you from that spot you are in Christ and you are secure and that can give us hope as we wait for that final victory to come let us pray to come