

Psalm 110 (4-7) – Jesus Our Warrior Priest

King David wrote this Psalm about Jesus nearly 1000 years before Jesus. And the ancient Jews fully acknowledged that Psalm 110 described the royalty, priesthood, and triumphs of the Messiah. But most of the Jews did not acknowledge Jesus as that Messiah. Even so, the New Testament writers clearly ascribe Psalm 110 to Jesus as the Messiah.

In our last message, we saw that vs.1-3 of Psalm 110 picture the Messiah as the Warrior King. And in this message, we will see that vs.4-7 of Psalm 110 picture the Messiah as the Warrior Priest.

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

This is God the Father (Yahweh) giving his proclamation about the Messiah as a priest. Priests were mediators between God and his people. And vs.4 describes him as *a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*.

Israel’s priesthood began with Aaron, the brother of Moses. And this priesthood was passed down through his descendants, which came from the tribe of Levi. When the monarchy arose a few centuries later, the monarchy and priesthood were kept separate. Nobody could be both king and priest. And when King Uzziah unlawfully entered into the Most Holy Place, God struck him with lifetime leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16-21).

But here King David speaks of someone who came before the Levitical priesthood was established. He was a king and also a priest. This is the mysterious figure Melchizedek, who first appears in Genesis 14:18-20, then here in Psalm 110:4, and finally in the Book of Hebrews.

Genesis 14:18 describes Melchizedek as both *“king of Salem”* and *“priest of God Most High”*. This is the first time in the Bible where anyone is declared to be a priest. And nothing is known of his background and there is no record

of anyone in Canaan who worshiped God besides Abram (Abraham). But his name means “king of righteousness.” And Melchizedek blessed Abram (Genesis 14:19). And Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). And Psalm 110:4 links Melchizedek to the Lord’s Anointed, the One who would rule in Zion – the Lord Jesus Christ.

God the Son, Jesus the Christ, he is the Great High Priest of his Church. Hebrews 4:14 says – *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.* 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says – *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

Hebrews 5:5-10 says – *So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

The Book of Hebrews gives an extensive teaching on the priesthood of Jesus. And it is derived from Psalm 110:4 and its linking Jesus to Melchizedek. And this is the only Old Testament passage to do so. And since the theme for the Book of Hebrews is “Jesus is superior,” it appears that Psalm 110:4 is the “solid food” the writer refers to in Hebrews 5:13-14.

Hebrews 5:9-10 starts talking about Jesus and his priesthood. And then in Hebrews 5:11-14 the writer pauses to rebuke them for their immaturity, and then returns to the discussion in Hebrews 6:13. Considering what the writer says in Hebrews 6:1 about going on to maturity, and in vs.2-12 about the basics of our faith, we know that he isn’t simply talking about how well they

behave, but how well they believe. Specifically, he is saying that understanding this psalm is a means of maturity and a mark of maturity.

Hebrews 7 is devoted to meditating on the implications of Psalm 110:4.

Hebrews 7:1-4 says – *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!*

Hebrews 7:5-10 teaches us that the priesthood of Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical priesthood. This can be seen in the fact that even though Abraham was the conqueror, he gave homage to and offered tithes to Melchizedek, and not vice versa. And when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek the tribe of Levi was in his loins. This means that Levi also gave tithes to Melchizedek. And so that means that Melchizedek transcended the Hebrew priesthood and stood above it.

This psalm was written centuries after the Levitical priesthood was established. But it speaks of another priest arising from this pre-Levitical priesthood. This is why Hebrews 7:11 says that perfection was not attainable through the Levitical priesthood, or from any other tribe, as Hebrews 7:12-14 says. So, as Hebrews 7:15-17 says, *Jesus has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”* And so, as Hebrews 7:11, and vs.18-19 tell us, the Law and the Levitical priesthood have passed away.

Hebrews 7:20 says that Jesus was made priest *with* an oath, unlike the Levitical priests, who were made priests *without* an oath. Hebrews 6:17 says *“when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the*

unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.” Jesus was made a priest with an oath – The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever” (Hebrews 7:21). This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22).

Hebrews 7:23-24 continues to contrast the order of Melchizedek with the Levitical priesthood. Not only was the Levitical priesthood itself temporary, but so was each priest. None could continue in the office because they all died. But Jesus *holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever*. Jesus has *the power of an indestructible life* (vs.16). So, what he prepared for on earth (Hebrews 5:7-10) he exercises in heaven, where *“he always lives to make intercession”* for us (Hebrews 7:25). This is Psalm 110:1, the Messiah being invited to sit at the LORD’s right hand in heaven.

Hebrews 7:26-28 teaches that Jesus was superior to the old priests, because he was perfect in every way. The Levitical priest had to offer up a sacrifice for himself. Jesus did not need to offer a sacrifice for himself. And the sacrifice of Jesus was superior to their sacrifices. They had to keep making sacrifices. But Jesus made a sacrifice once for all when he offered up himself. And *the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever*. So, after the Jewish priest entered the holy of holies to offer the sacrifice the veil remained. But after Jesus offered up himself the veil was forever destroyed.

And as 1 Peter 2:4-5 teaches us, all believers are now *a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. As Hebrews 10:19-22 says – *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Amen.*

And the Day is pictured in Psalm 110:5-7; the ultimate victory of the Messiah.

Vs.5 – *The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. The Lord is at your right hand* – This is the Messiah as the instrument of God's power. And *he will shatter kings* – Out from Zion, the strength of the Messiah brings the righteous judgment of God against every opponent. This will be fulfilled *on the day of his wrath*. Our great high priest is also a warrior who will enact the vengeance of God upon his enemies. But that conquest, that judgment, is set for an appointed time called the Day of the Lord.

Vs.6 – *He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will execute judgment among the nations* – Jesus will exercise his authority in every place, over every realm. And it may be that the phrases *filling them with corpses* and *he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth* refer to what we call the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16, 19:11-21). In any event, and at whatever appointed time, no one will be able to escape the judgment and power and authority of Jesus. And when it comes to us, the truth is that you will either sit with Christ on his throne, or you will be crushed under his feet.

Vs.7 – *He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.* This is speaking of the Messiah like a warrior in tenacious pursuit of his enemies, and the rapid approach of their demise. He isn't taking the time to relax. Once he is on the warpath, he doesn't even stop to drink. Rather, he will just scoop up some water along the way as he keeps in hot pursuit. And no obstacle can stand in his way.

Yes, Messiah is a shepherd who is tender towards his flock, but he is fierce among his foes the wolves and thieves. Those who will commit themselves to him as their Lord will experience his tender care. But those who refuse and rebel will experience his terrible power. The choice now is yours; will you continue to provoke his wrath by remaining rebellious, or will you hear the tender call from Jesus to come to him. Because you are going to meet him, and he will be your judge; but he can also be your savior. Amen.