

Day 1 – Introduction to the Text

Psalm 110

In order to read the Psalms well, we cannot approach them the same way we read the narratives in Genesis or the rhetorical arguments of Paul in his letters. There are two things we need to pay attention to as we read the Psalms. First, we must be familiar with their particular language. According to Allen Ross, “Lyric poetry differs from other literary forms in that it is a more concentrated form of discourse with more consciously artistic elements. Concentration is achieved through the use of images, symbols, figures, emotive vocabulary, and multiple meanings. The imagery used in the Psalms is earthy, for the Israelites were largely a nation of farmers and shepherds living in the countryside close to nature. It was also militaristic, because they were often involved in wars to conquer the land, and defensive wars against the ravages of empires which at times were part of God’s discipline. To understand fully the poetic expressions they used, one must sense the people’s cultural experiences” (Ross, 780).

In looking at Psalm 110, it is also important to notice how it is structured. Ross states, “The predominant feature of Hebrew poetic structure is the repetition of meaning in parallel expressions—the so-called poetic parallelism. The biblical verse of poetry normally has two or more of these parallel units. The relationship between the parallel units must be studied to determine the emphasis of a verse as a whole” (ibid.).

One way to view the structure of Psalm 110 is put forth by Willem VanGemeren, who sees it as comprising two oracles made up of two parts:

- A Promise (v. 1)
- B Victory (vv. 2–3)
- A’ Promise (v. 4)
- B’ Victory (vv. 5–7) (VanGemeren, 813)

In the words of Reynold Edwards, Psalm 110 “is one of the fullest and most compendious prophecies of the person and offices of Christ in the whole Old Testament” (Quoted by Spurgeon, 464). As you read and study Psalm 110, see if you can pick up on what Edwards is referring to.

Scripture Memory: Psalm 110:1

Day 2 – Observe the Text

Read Psalm 110

1. What type of imagery do you see David employing in Psalm 110?
2. How would you structure this psalm?
3. What will the LORD do for David's Lord (vv1-2)?
4. Look at verse 3. Who comes to David's Lord? How are they dressed? How many are there?
5. What does the LORD do for David's Lord in verse 4?
6. What is taking place in verses 5 and 6?
7. What does the LORD do for David's Lord in verse 7?

Day 3 – Interpret the Text

Read Psalm 110 again

Verse 1: The LORD says to my Lord: “In an oracular statement (‘the Lord says’; cf. 36:1; ...), the psalmist speaks of the promise of God pertaining to David and his dynasty. The promise pertains to the covenant between the Lord (^a*dōnî*) and the one in authority over the people of God, the Davidic king. His authority is by divine grant. The Davidic king is a theocratic ruler in the sense that he rules over God’s people under the Lord and yet is very close to him (cf. 1 Ch 28:5; 29:23; 2 Ch 9:8; Ps 45:6), at his right hand (cf. 1 Ki 2:19)” (VanGemeren, 814).

Sit at My right hand... “In the ancient world, to sit at a person’s right hand was to occupy a place of honor; a seat at the right hand of the host would be a place of honor at a dinner. To sit at a King’s right hand was more than mere honor; it was to share in his rule. It signified participation in the royal dignity and power” (Boice, 894).

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for your feet. “Assyrian royal prophecy promises that the deity will place the king’s enemies under his feet. An inscription on the throne pedestal of Salmaneser III (ca. 850 B.C.) states: ‘valiant man who with the support of Aššur, his lord, has put all lands under his feet like a footstool.’ Egyptian art also shows the newly enthroned king with his feet on a footstool and enemy nations inside, and coronation inscriptions speak of enemy nations under the king’s feet. Other reliefs from Egypt and Mesopotamia portray the king with his foot on the neck or head of prostrate foes. Thus, in Psalm 110, Yahweh promises that the enemies of the Davidic king will be subject to him” (Walton, 418).

Verse 2: Rule in the midst of your enemies. “If this psalm were about a mere earthly king, it would never speak of ruling ‘in the midst of’ enemies. That is not how earthly kings rule. They make boundaries; defend and extend their frontiers; and confront, fight, and overpower enemies. Here is a king who rules in the midst of his enemies. This can only mean that his is a spiritual rule that infiltrates the hostile powers of this world in a nearly invisible fashion. Moreover, it is a rule that he exerts indirectly, as it were, not by coming in power himself (though he will also do that in judgment at the end of time) but through his people, the church” (Boice, 896).

Verse 3: *In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,* “[holy array] is the vestment of the priest for performing divine service: the Levite singers went forth before the army in ‘holy attire’ in 2 Chron. 20:21; here, however, the people without distinction wear holy festive garments. Thus they surround the divine king as dew that is born out of the womb of the morning-red. It is a priestly people which he leads forth to holy battle, just as in [Rev 19:14] heavenly armies follow the Logos of God upon white horses, ...—a new generation, wonderful as if born out of heavenly light, numerous, fresh, and vigorous like the dew-drops, the offspring of the dawn. The thought that it is a priestly people leads over to v. 4. The king who leads this priestly people is, as we hear in v. 4, himself a priest (Keil and Delitzsch, 696).

Verse 4: *You are a priest...* “In Egypt and Mesopotamia, the king was regarded as a priest, who was ultimately responsible for the support of temple worship and on special occasions participated in priestly duties (cf. 2 Sam. 6; 1 Kings 8). Like the royal prophecy in Psalm 110, Assyrian royal prophecies called the king to his priestly responsibility. Royal priesthood was also the custom among Canaanite peoples. By alluding to the ancient precedent of a priestly king in Canaanite Jerusalem (Melchizedek in Gen. 14), this psalm confers on the Davidic king in Jerusalem a priestly title” (Walton, 418).

Verses 5-6: “When the king goes out to war, ‘the Lord’ (‘adōnāy), as the Master of the universe, supports him by being at his right hand (v. 5; cf. 16:8; 109:31; 121:5). He will further the king’s power by crushing the resistance of kings. There is a day of accountability appointed, and that day will be a time of vindication (‘the day of his wrath’; cf. 2:5, 12; 21:9; Isa 13:9, 13; Zep 2:3). On that day the Lord will ‘judge the nations’ (v. 6; cf. 2:9; 7:8; 9:8; 76:9; Rev 19:11–21), thus causing great defeat for the inimical nations—a defeat symbolized by their ‘corpses’ and ‘heads’ (rō’š; NIV, ‘the rulers’)” (VanGemeren, 816–817).

Verse 7: *He will drink from the brook...* “Some have suggested that the king drinking from the brook alludes to the coronation ritual, where the king was anointed by the spring of Gihon, located in the Kidron Valley below Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kings 1:38–39, 45)” (Walton, 419).

Day 4 – Apply the Text

Read Psalm 110 one more time.

1. If God has installed Christ as a priest forever (v4), what does this mean in terms of our salvation?
2. How is Psalm 110 good news for some, but terrible news for others?
3. List some reasons why Psalm 110 should give us complete confidence in the Christian life.
4. What difference has studying Psalm 110 made in your understanding of God's plan and purpose for your life?

Day 5 – Implement the Text

Review and reflect on your study of the passage

1. How has studying Psalm 110 impacted your understanding of God and His sovereignty?

2. How does Psalm 110 help you to see Christ as necessary for your life?

3. How could you use Psalm 110 in your daily witness to unbelievers?

Bibliography

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update.

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Sermon Notes