

An Ancient Christmas: The Coming of Jesus in the Old Testament — The LORD

Psalm 110

By [Rev. Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III](#)

If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Psalm 110. Today, this morning and tonight, we're bringing to a conclusion our series this December in, "An Ancient Christmas," where we've studied the coming of Jesus in the Old Testament. We've looked at prophecies that have stretched back to the very beginning of human history in Genesis 3 in the promise of a seed who would come and crush the serpent's head. We've seen prophecies five or six hundred years before Jesus' birth — prophecies about Jesus as the Branch or the Ruler or the King or the Child.

Today, we're going to look at a prophecy that dates from about a thousand years before Jesus' birth and it comes from the Psalms, a book which is filled with pictures of Christ. The Psalms, so many of them, were written by David, but about David's greater Son. And Psalm 110 is one of the psalms most frequently quoted in the New Testament. If we were to simply go through the New Testament and read the quotations and allusions to Psalm 110 it would probably take me five minutes just to read through the various passages in the New Testament which quote or allude to this great psalm. The New Testament writers knew that this psalm was about Jesus, and the main reason they knew this psalm was about Jesus is because Jesus said this psalm was about Jesus. In the course of His own teaching, He pointed to this psalm as revealing an important truth about Himself. And of course the great theme we're going to study together today you're going to meet in the first three verses of this psalm — that Jesus is Lord. He is the Lord about whom David is speaking in this passage.

Well let's look to God in prayer and then we'll read and hear His Word.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word. We ask today that You would especially reveal to us Jesus in His humiliation and His exaltation and that You would grant us to believe Him. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Psalm 110. This is the Word of God:

A PSALM OF DAVID.

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! 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. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'

The LORD is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head."

Amen, and thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired, and inerrant Word. May He write its eternal truth upon all our hearts.

Have you ever noticed how often the picture of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God is made for us in the New Testament? In Hebrews chapter 1 verse 13, the author of Hebrews says, "To which of the angels has God ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'?" He's speaking about Jesus. He's speaking about how Jesus is superior to angels. We're going to be studying that passage on Sunday morning in just a few weeks, but he's appealing to Psalm 110 and he's applying the truth of Psalm 110 verse 1 to Jesus to show His superiority.

Jesus Himself quotes this very verse in Matthew chapter 22 verse 44, but Peter quotes it in Acts chapter 2 verse 34. He says, "It was not David who ascended into heaven, but Jesus Himself says, 'The LORD said to my Lord,' — or God Himself says, 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand.'"" Peter is saying that when David said those words he was saying those words about what God granted to Jesus, to sit at the right hand.

Or think of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 25 — "He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet." If you just look at the passages which speak of Jesus sitting at the right hand and reigning over His enemies which allude to Psalm 110, you'll find this all over the New Testament.

THE MESSIANIC KING IS PROPHESED, HIS ENEMIES WILL BE SUBJUGATED TO HIM AND HIS PEOPLE WILL EMBRACE HIS KINGSHIP

Well I want us to see what David is teaching us in Psalm 110 and I want you to see how this is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, especially in Luke chapter 20 and then one other passage that we're going to turn to in the writings of the apostle Paul. So look with me at the first three verses of Psalm 110. The first thing we see is a

Messianic King is predicted, is prophesied, who is going to sit at God's right hand. "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" In the first verse of Psalm 110 we read, "The LORD," and in your Bibles, that word, "LORD," is probably in all caps or in small caps. That means that it's the name, the proper name, of God in the Old Testament. It used to, in our Bibles, we'd see it as "Jehovah" or in our hymnals we see it as "Jehovah." Nowadays, you more often hear it pronounced, "Yahweh," but it's the proper name of God. "The LORD said to my Lord." Now in your Bibles, that second Lord is probably not in all caps because it's the word, "Adonai," and it's clear from this psalm that what is going on is God is making a promise to the Messianic king who is going to fulfill all of the things that God promised to David in 2 Samuel 7. You remember when God met with David in 2 Samuel 7, when David wanted to build God a house, and He said, "No, no, David. You're not going to build me a house; I'm going to build you a house, and your reign is not going to be like Saul's reign which is going to end with no king from Saul's line sitting on the throne, I'm going to place your son on the throne and he's going to have a special relationship with Me and you will never lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel." Well Psalm 110 is about that promise of God to David, and so it's pointing to the Messianic King sitting at God's right hand.

Secondly, if you look at verse 2, we see that this psalm also says that that king's enemies will be forcibly subjugated to him. "The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter (symbol of strength). Rule in the midst of your enemies!" we're told in verse 2. So this Messianic King is going to forcibly subjugate His enemies. He is going to reign and He is going to conquer. So the psalm looks to this Messianic King to sit at God's right hand and to subjugate His enemies.

And then look to the third verse. There we read, "Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments." That is, this Messianic King, His people will willingly embrace His kingship. And so in Hebrew interpretation, this psalm was something that was seen to be applied in fulfillment of all God's promises to David.

JESUS TEACHES THAT HE IS THE LORD

Well turn forward with me to Luke chapter 20, because I want us to look at the passage where Jesus quotes these very words. If you look at Luke chapter 20 verse 1, you'll see that that chapter begins with the scribes challenging Jesus' authority and Jesus addresses them and He responds to them in a thorough and a compelling way. And then it happens again. If you look at verse 27, Luke chapter 20 verse 27, now the Sadducees come and they challenge Jesus and they challenge Him in such a way to ask an almost mocking question of Him. The Sadducees, you remember, did not believe in the resurrection. Now Jesus didn't always disagree with the Pharisees. On the issue of the resurrection, Jesus agreed with the Pharisees that the doctrine of the resurrection was a Biblical, that

is, a Hebrew Bible, Old Testament truth, it was revealed in God's Word, and the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection. Nor did they think that theology ought to be built out of anything but the first five books of the Bible. Only Moses, the Sadducees thought, ought to determine what Jewish people believed and they thought that the resurrection was a strange Persian doctrine which the exiles had brought back from captivity.

And so they rejected the resurrection and they asked Jesus this mocking question about the woman who'd married seven times and who she's going to be married to in heaven. And Jesus thoroughly confounds them in the question. And isn't it interesting that He quotes from Scripture, to refute their views, He quotes from where? He quotes from Moses in order to refute their views. And He said, "You know, your problem is, you don't understand your Bibles. If you understood the Bible and the power of God you'd know that the resurrection is true." And He refutes their mocking question in the passage. And then, after He has shut them up, He says this. Look at Luke 20 verse 41. "But He said to them, 'How can they say that the Christ is David's son? For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.' David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?'" Now Jesus confirmed in this passage that the Jewish people of His time, including the Sadducees, understood that Psalm 110 was a Messianic psalm. It was speaking about David's Messianic son to come, the one who was going to come and restore the glory of David, the one who was going to be a mighty king for His people.

But He's got a question for the Pharisees and you've got to understand a couple of things in order to understand what He's doing. First of all, notice that Jesus takes seriously that this psalm was written by David. You notice, when I read a psalm that has a heading, I read that heading as Scripture as we go into the psalm. And this morning we read, the very first words were not, "The LORD said to my Lord," but what? "A psalm of David." So Jesus is saying, "It's David who says this. David is the one who says, 'The LORD said to my Lord.'" So the first thing that He wants to point out is that it's David saying these words.

Then, notice a second thing. He says, "David calls him Lord. How can he be his son?" Now what He's doing is He's saying, "If this psalm is about the Davidic successor who is going to be a Messiah and restore David's glory and you believe, Sadducees, that the originator is always greater than the successor, how could David, the originator of the line himself, call this Messianic successor, 'my Lord?'" That's what he calls Him. David's speaking and he calls Him, "my Lord." Now the Sadducees don't have an answer to that and you don't hear from them again in the rest of the gospels. They're gone; that's the last conversation. They're out of there; no word comes from the Sadducees. They have no suggestion to answer that question. Jesus has an answer to the question. Jesus' answer is the reason that David can call his son, his descendent, his Messianic successor, "my Lord," is because his descendant is greater than he is. his

descendant is in fact the Lord in the flesh. Now I've already said, in this passage, the LORD, all caps, refers to God. My Lord, not in all caps, but Adonai, the word for lord or king or master or ruler, refers to this Messianic successor. But Jesus is saying, "I'm that successor and I'm greater than David." And this is picked up all over the place in the New Testament. Not just in Hebrews, not just in Acts, but in Philippians.

PAUL TEACHES THAT JESUS IS THE LORD

Turn with me to Philippians chapter 2 and look at the scene that Paul paints there in Philippians chapter 2. Verse 5:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

THE LORD CAME TO RESCUE US

Now do you see what Paul just said? He just said that Jesus is going to reign as King at God's right hand, just like Psalm 110 verse 1 did. He's just said that his enemies are going to be subjugated to him. "God is going to make him reign and his enemies to be his footstool" — Psalm 110 verse 2. And he's just said that his people will willingly embrace his kingship. "Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord." That identification of Jesus as the Messianic King of Psalm 110 in Hebrews and Acts and Philippians, the passage we're looking, indicates that Jesus is greater than David because He's God in the flesh; He's the Lord in the flesh. That's one of the things that we sing about at Christmas-time, isn't it? Don't you love the John Wesley line where he speaks of the incarnate Jesus as "God contracted to a span"? And a span is the distance from the elbow to the fingers, and have you ever seen a father hold his first child in his arms and the baby doesn't even stretch from elbow to fingertips. He can carry that little child just like that. And Wesley is saying in the incarnation, God is contracted to a span. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Lord came into this world as an infant and so when the little baby Jesus could barely wrap His hand around one of His mother's fingers, that was the hand of the one who not only created His mother, but brought the world into being. And we ought never to lose our wonder at the Lord being contracted to a span when He took on our flesh in order to save us from condemnation and win us back into the family

of God. That's the first thing we ought to see from this passage about our Lord — what He did in the incarnation to rescue us.

THERE CAN BE NOTHING BEFORE HIM

But the second thing is this. If He is our Lord, there can be no one before Him; there can be no thing before Him. There can be no satisfaction outside of Him; there can be no treasure greater than Him. Did you hear the description that Jeremiah gave of the people of Israel in his time? He says — remember what Billy read in Jeremiah 11? “You've got a god for every city!” And then he goes on to say, “And there's an altar to a false god for every street in Jerusalem!” Can you imagine that, an altar to a false god on every street in Jackson? But there's even more than that, isn't there? We all struggle with idolatry. We could *tisk tisk* and talk about, “Oh, you bad Israelites of old! How in the world could you have worshiped those Baals? Bad, bad!” We have our own idols and there are two different ways you can have them. You can long for something that you don't have that you think that if you could just get that you'd have the satisfaction that you've always been looking for. And when you think like that, you know what? You're an idolater. That's your idol. That thing that you don't have that if you just had it everything would be great? That's your idol.

There's another way to have it too, though. There may be something that you have that you care about more than you care about God. You find your security in that thing. So whether it's something that you don't have but you want and you think that it will give you satisfaction and fulfillment or it's something that you have that's not God in which you find security and satisfaction and fulfillment and comfort, but anything other than God in which we find our ultimate satisfaction and treasure and comfort and fulfillment and which we value, that is, which we worship more than, instead of God, is our idol. And if Jesus is Lord — Psalm 110 says He is and Luke 20 says He is and Hebrews 1 says He is and Acts 2 says He is and Philippians 2 says He is — then Jesus must be our treasure. That's a good thing for us to think about at the end of the year and at the beginning of a new one. Let's decide that we're going to treasure Jesus in the year to come.

Did you listen to the words that C.C. sang in the offertory? They're powerful words. I was struck last night — John Piper preached his last message as the pastor of preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota after thirty-two years of ministry there. And his last message was on the theme, “Sorrowing, Yet Rejoicing.” And the big theme of his sermon was this. He was exhorting the congregation, “Let's be a witness to the world because of our unconquerable, indomitable joy in Jesus even in sorrow.” That is, even when we are facing troubles and trials in life, we are going to show the world that we treasure Jesus more than anything. And that's in part the message that we just heard. And you see, that's a message of the declaration that Jesus really is our Lord. So you can take away everything from us and we still have our treasure.

And you can't take Him away. That's what it is to be a Christian. To be a Christian is to name Him as Lord. Because of His grace, we have been forgiven of our sins and brought out of the world and into His family and we name Him Lord. He is our treasure, He is our satisfaction, He is our blessing, He is our King, He is our Master, He is our Maker, He is our God, He is our everything. Let's live that way, by His grace, in these days to come. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word. We ask that by the grace of the Holy Spirit we would treasure Jesus this day and always. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Now if you'll take your bulletins in hand and look on the Morning Guide to Worship, we're going to sing Psalm 110 and we'll sing it to the tune of "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord."

Now, receive the benediction from the king at God's right hand. Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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