

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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## Psalm 110 — Messiah's Priesthood

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 110

- The New Testament cites Psalm 110 more frequently than any other Old Testament text.
- Most theologians recognize Psalm 110 as one of the Messianic psalms (e.g., Psalms 2, 22, 45, and 72).
- According to the psalm heading, David penned Psalm 110. This proves to be a significant factor in the psalm's interpretation.
- "To the modern reader, Psalm 110 is full of puzzles. To the early church, it was full of treasures; . . ."—Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 73–150*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 163.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 110 (NAU)

**110:1** A Psalm of David.

**The LORD says** to my Lord:

“Sit at My right hand

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

**110:2** The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, *saying*,  
“Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

**110:3** Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;  
In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,  
Your youth are to You *as* the dew.

**110:4** **The LORD has sworn** and will not change His mind,  
“You are a priest forever  
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

**110:5** The Lord is at Your right hand;

- He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.
- 110:6** He will judge among the nations,  
He will fill *them* with corpses,  
He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.
- 110:7** He will drink from the brook by the wayside;  
Therefore He will lift up *His* head.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 110

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. Messiah's Princely Rule (vv. 1–3)
- II. Messiah's Priestly Reign (vv. 4–7)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “The LORD says”
  - This particular phraseology is characteristic of prophetic literature (e.g., 21x in Isaiah, 167x in Jeremiah, and 20x in Zechariah), but is also found in Genesis 22:16 and Numbers 14:28.
  - With such an introduction, it is clear that this is a pronouncement with divine authority.
- **v. 1** “The LORD says to my Lord”
  - The antecedent for “my” is David (cf. the psalm heading). Who is David’s “Lord”?
    - ✓ See Matthew 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; and Luke 20:41-44.
    - ✓ Other New Testament texts referring to verse 1 include Mark 14:62; Acts 2:34-35; 7:56; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 12:2; and 1 Peter 3:22.
  - Just as in Psalm 2:7, the first and second persons of the Godhead are conversing.
- **v. 1** “Sit at My right hand”
  - Psalm 109 ended with “For He stands at the right hand of the needy” (v. 31) and Psalm 110:5 will say “The Lord is at Your right hand.”
  - Sitting at the right hand of the LORD refers to the Messiah’s presence in heaven with the Father and the sharing of His majesty and authority.
  - Derek Kidner made the following points in his *Psalms 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 393:
    - ✓ This position makes Messiah greater than David (Acts 2:34) and greater than the angels (Heb 1:13).
    - ✓ As forcefully as man rejected Messiah, God exalted Him (Acts 5:30-31).
    - ✓ Messiah is both Savior and Intercessor (Acts 5:31; Rom 8:34).
    - ✓ Messiah is seated, signifying his completed work (Heb 10:11-12).

- ✓ Messiah waits for the final surrender of His enemies (Heb 10:13; 1 Cor 15:25-26).



- **v. 2** “Your strong scepter from Zion”
  - Zion is significant as the location from which the future greater Son of David will rule over the whole earth.
    - ✓ Cp. Psalms 2:6; 48:2; Isaiah 24:23.
  - It is Yahweh Himself who enables the Messiah to rule over the earth.
- **v. 3** “Your people will volunteer freely”
  - A host of volunteers will offer themselves sacrificially to serve Messiah (see Obad 17-21; cp. Judg 5:2; Rom 12:1-2).
- **v. 3** “In holy array, from the womb of the dawn”
  - Literally, “the splendors of holiness.”
    - ✓ See Psalms 29:2; 96:9; 1 Chronicles 16:29; 2 Chronicles 20:21.
  - Holiness will characterize the people who serve Messiah.
- **v. 3** “as the dew”
  - As dew is abundant at dawn (cp. 2 Sam 17:12; Isa 26:19), so the youths willing to serve Messiah are numerous.
- **v. 4** “The LORD has sworn”
  - See Hebrews 6:17-18 and 7:20-22.
- **v. 4** “You are a priest forever”
  - Hebrews 4:14–7:28 is an exposition of Psalm 110:4 —
    - I. Our Sympathetic High Priest (4:14–5:10)
    - II. Our Spiritual Stagnation (5:11–6:20)
    - III. Our Superior High Priest (7:1–28)
- **v. 4** “According to the order of Melchizedek”
  - Melchizedek, as king of Salem and priest of the Most High God in the time of Abraham, was also a king-priest (Gen 14:18-20).
  - Compare Zechariah 6:9-15.
  - Melchizedek was not the preincarnate Christ, but was similar to Christ since his priesthood was universal (Heb 7:1), royal (Heb 7:1-2), righteous (Heb 7:2; cf. Ps 72:2; Jer 23:5), peaceful (Heb 7:2; cf. Ps 72:7; Isa 9:6), and unending (Heb 7:3, 24-25).
- **v. 7** “He will drink from the brook by the wayside”
  - “The royal drink may be ceremonial, as the psalmist expresses his confidence in the Lord in the presence of his troops.”—Willem A. VanGemen, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1991), 5:700.

- The Messiah might also identify with his troops by partaking of refreshing water. He will not need it, but they will. Because of His presence and power, they are secure enough to drink the water.
- v. 7 “Therefore He will lift up *His* head”
  - “He” could be a reference to Yahweh (cp. Pss 3:3 and 27:6), who vindicates and empowers the Messiah.
  - If the Messiah Himself lifts His own head, it might be a simple declaration of His victory and sovereign rule over His enemies.

#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 110

##### **The Lord unto His Christ Has Said** (Tune: “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place”)

1 The Lord unto His Christ has said,  
“Sit Thou at My right hand,  
Until I make Thine enemies  
Submit to Thy command.  
A scepter prospered by the Lord  
Thy mighty hand shall wield;  
From Zion Thou shalt rule the world,  
And all Thy foes shall yield.

2 “Thy people will be gladly Thine  
When Thou shalt come in might,  
Like dawning day, like hopeful youth,  
With holy beauty bright.  
A priesthood that shall never end  
The Lord has given Thee;  
This He has sworn, and evermore  
Fulfilled His Word shall be.

3 “Thou shalt subdue the kings of earth  
With God at Thy right hand;  
The nations Thou shalt rule in might  
And judge in every land.”  
The Christ, refreshed by living streams,  
Shall neither faint nor fall,  
And He shall be the glorious Head,  
Exalted over all.

— Author unknown

#### 5.0 Praying Psalm 110

- Oh, Lord, come and rule over Your enemies. [vv. 1-2]
- Help me volunteer for Your service even today. [v. 3]
- Thank You, Lord Jesus, for being my High Priest. [v. 4]
- May Your kingdom be established on earth. [v. 5]
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#### 6.0 Applying Psalm 110

- Jesus Christ fulfills the prophetic pronouncements of Psalm 110.
- Christ’s people should volunteer to serve Him sacrificially.
- The One Who sits at God’s right hand stands at our right hand.