

Psalm 110

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[0 : 00] Good evening, may I add my welcome to Darren's. My name is Jack and I'm a ministry trainee here at St Silas. Before we start looking at Psalm 110, I'm going to pray for God's help.

Father God, thank you for your words. As we come to it now, please, by your Spirit, open our hearts and our minds that we may better understand you and better love you because of what you are doing in the world. Amen.

I want us to start by thinking about this statement. It does not look like God is winning. And I think it is certainly true that day to day we experience a world that to our eyes is not visibly under God's rule.

If you're not a Christian and you're watching this, then I should think that you almost certainly agree with me. You would probably say that it doesn't look like God is winning and that's just because there is no God.

The world is just the way it is and it's our responsibility just to make the most of it now. And if we were to go back a couple of thousand years and to put ourselves in the shoes of the people who would have first read the Psalms as a book together, they might have felt the same.

[1 : 36] The people who would have had this book originally were the Israelites. They were God's people. And they would have read this book looking back on a disastrous time in their history.

Is God winning? They would have asked. Because our nation is a shadow of its former self, our capital city was burnt to the ground and our people carried off into slavery.

Is God winning? Because we're just as messed up as we used to be and we make the same horrible mistakes. Is God winning? They might have asked.

Because he promised us a king to rule the world. A king to rescue us and save us. But we have no king.

It doesn't look like God is winning and really no one wants to be on the losing sides. This God project, perhaps it has failed. Perhaps it is time to abandon ship and just to live like everyone else.

[2 : 50] And the question, I think, for us as Christians is, where do we go as believers in the Lord Jesus when we feel like it's not worth it?

When Christianity just doesn't seem to be good enough? When it doesn't look like God is in control, either of our own lives or in the whole world around us, why should we bother to continue to trust in him?

I think that Psalm 110, our psalm for this evening, is an amazing psalm and it makes an unbelievably strong case for us to take a proper look at Jesus as we answer that question.

I want us, by the end of this, to be convinced that God's side is the only side worth being on because of who Jesus is and what he will do.

So, we're going to look at the psalm now and the first thing I want us to see about this psalm is who wrote it. I know that's very mundane, but bear with me.

[4 : 02] So, if you look down at Psalm 110, please open it up if you've shut your Bibles at home. And you see just under Psalm 110, a little bit of text.

It says, of David, a psalm. This is a psalm of David. That means David wrote it. And that should set off the king, the king alarm bell in our heads.

This is by and about God's king. And David was one of Israel's greatest kings. But, on the whole, Israel's kings have been awful.

And God's side really looks like the losing side because God's main representatives, his kings, have been rubbish. If you're an Israelite reading this just after you've returned from exile, then your last king, the last king to be on the throne in Jerusalem, was chased out of his own city by enemy soldiers, had his own sons killed before his eyes, and then had his eyes put out before being led away in chains into captivity.

Apparently brutal and horrifying ends to a monarchy. But David, and the point of this is that David is saying there's going to be a king who is far greater than him.

[5 : 31] Look at verse 1. The Lord says to my Lord. The first Lord, capitalised in our Bibles, refers to God, the God of Israel, using the name the Lord, the name that he used to reveal himself to them.

And then there is a second Lord, the my Lord. And this simply means master. So what David is reporting here is there is the Lord, God, says to my Lord, i.e. David's master.

And that means that already here we're talking about someone who is greater than David, David's superior. And I want us to take a close look at what God says to David's master, my Lord, to see his greatness.

And the first thing I want us to see about him is that this king sits on the throne of God. Verse 1. Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

God is saying this to this future king, greater than David, and he is telling him to sit at his right hand. And this is a picture that this king, this human king, this person, he is going to share God's throne.

[7 : 03] God is inviting this human king to come up and to sit next to him and to rule with him. And that is a huge deal. The picture of God in the Bible is the one who made absolutely everything.

Land and sea and skies and the sky and animals and fish and birds. And the entire scattered expanse of the whole universe is made by a God who is unbelievably powerful.

And as its maker, he is the one who owns it. He is in charge. He says what is right and what is wrong.

And the amazing reality here is that David's king, David's lord, this king, is that he shares this power and this rule.

He shares the glory of God. He is sat at the right hand of God. And he is put on the throne next to God. I'm sure lots of you will be familiar with the HBO TV series Game of Thrones.

[8 : 12] I've seen snippets. And from what I gather, one of the defining elements of the plot is, you know, who is going to sit on this thing called the Iron Throne?

In and of itself, it's a bit ridiculous. It's just a chair made out of melted swords. Who cares? It's just a fancy and no doubt rather uncomfortable looking chair.

But it matters because it symbolizes rule and dominion over the entire continent. To be said to be sat on the Iron Throne is not to have possession of a single piece of furniture, but it's to be recognized as the sovereign over all other kingdoms.

So, when the Lord says to my Lord, this future king, sit at my right hand, he is saying that he is going to rule with God over the whole world.

Everything that was created. So what? You might ask. So what? Good for him. Looks like a great place to be. But that leads us on to the second thing I want us to see.

[9 : 25] This king rules until all of his enemies are completely defeated. What is the purpose of him sitting at the right hand of God, of ruling with God?

Well, you've probably noticed that verse 1 contains a gap. It contains a gap in the form of the word until. Sit at my right hand until.

There are two events in this statement. One, sit at my right hand, which we've already thought about. And then there's this second event. Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

And that's important because whether you are a Christian or not, as we've already thought about, I think we can agree that the world doesn't look like it belongs to this king. It does not look like God is victorious.

How can we see this? It's true on so many levels. Take, for instance, the experience of Christians who are persecuted.

[10 : 32] If people in northern Nigeria can attack and kill Christians in churches, how is God winning there? If in our own country, if God's command about the sanctity of life, about how people are made in God's image, can be so easily ignored, resulting in the abortion in the UK alone in 2018 of 205,295 babies, how can God be said to be victorious?

If hundreds and thousands and millions of people all over the world never acknowledge Jesus as king, if he is said to be a myth, if he is said to be irrelevant, can he really be the king of the world?

And if believers in the Lord Jesus in this life can suffer sickness, both physical and mental, and suffer death, how can God's king be said to rule over everything?

But the promise of God in Psalm 110 is that one day every single enemy of Jesus will be put under his feet by God. But that day is not yet.

Verse 1 contains a present reality, and then a future reality that is the inevitable conclusion of the first. For someone to be put under someone's feet means total victory.

[12 : 07] So when you triumphed over a king in the ancient world, you would put your foot on his neck. And so those who oppose the rule of God's king, who reject him and stand against him, will one day be totally conquered and subjected.

God will suffer no opposition to his king. Verse 2 expands the same idea. The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, rule in the midst of your enemies.

What do kings do when people who don't recognise, who should recognise their authority, don't? They go to war. And this war by this king is not going to be powerless.

It is going to be mightily effective. God is the one who is active. The Lord will bring the entire world under the reign of this king by expanding his kingdom, even as he is actively opposed by his enemies.

This king does not need to rely on his own power as the one who rules with God alongside God. God will extend his scepter, and the scepter is the symbol of his kingship.

[13 : 30] He will advance outwards over the whole world into battle and into victory against his opponents. And this is an invasion, and it's not to take something that doesn't rightly belong to this king, but as the one who rules with God, everything by rights belongs to him.

He is taking what is his by rights. And for us, how does what we are reading here match up with us and our experience, our reality?

Well, as I've said earlier, I think this psalm is hugely important for understanding Jesus, the future king David is talking about, and in understanding the time in which we now live.

If we understand this psalm, then we understand so much that there is to know about God and this world. And when the New Testament is written, they look back to this psalm and to verse 1 in particular.

Jesus, who is the king that David is talking about, he is sat at the right hand of the Father. He died a brutal death at the hands of his own people in collaboration with the Roman authorities.

[14 : 50] But God raised him from the dead and took him up into heaven. And it was at this moment that he was shown to be this king, this Psalm 110 king, this king who would rule and reign at God's right hands.

And the point of me saying this is that we need to know that the first half of verse 1 has already happened.

Jesus is sat at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is on the throne with God. And the whole world belongs to Jesus. All of the power and the glory and the honour that belongs to God belongs to the man, to the king, Jesus.

That is a present reality. Jesus isn't just confined to the past. He is not a dead figure in history. And we live in between his sitting, his enfronement, and the subjection.

These are the two defining realities of the world that we live in. One, Jesus sits on the throne. Two, that means all of his enemies will one day be put under his feet.

[16 : 02] And God is going to ensure that he is completely effective and completely powerful in moving from the first to the second. And if you're not a believer in Jesus and you're listening to this, I think this is where I would have my question for you.

I should think that for you to hear me talk about things like, or for Christians talking about things like heaven and Jesus defeating all his enemies, I guess you think that's nonsense.

Some sort of fairy tale fantasy. And although I guess obviously I think you're wrong about that, I think it's important to see why I would think that.

Because you see, it's what happens when Jesus is on earth in his life here that convinces me of what will happen in the future. It's his life and his death and then his resurrection that means he is going to have this, one day have this complete rule, complete subjection, complete victory over his enemies.

And so the question is, is do you know enough about his first coming to be able to say that his second coming, i.e. his return and his final defeat of all his enemies, which includes people who don't believe in him, do you know enough about his first coming to say that second thing is nonsense?

[17 : 29] Because I find that lots of people who don't believe Christianity don't really know that much about who Jesus was and what he did and what he says.

And that's a mistake. If you're going to reject something or to not believe something as crucially important as this, then it's worth doing so well informed.

So I'd recommend pick up a copy of the Gospels, a copy of, say, Mark, one of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, and read it. Or speak to someone you know who is a Christian.

Say to them, why do you think that this Jesus is so important? And then to Christians, when we read verse one, we so often see or kind of perceive that God is not winning.

But the huge implication of these verses for us is that it is going to happen. Jesus is going to subdue his enemies. This is what Jesus is doing now and will do in the future.

[18 : 36] And verse three, I think, is remarkable. Take a look down with me. Verse three, your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendour, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning's womb.

Verse three tells us that we are going to have a part to play. We will be his army on his day when he finally returns. And as much as we don't currently think of ourselves that way or look that way, but one day we will be that, even though we may feel powerless and trivial now.

On that day, on the day of battle, when Jesus returns, we will be part of his conquering army. So we've taken a look, we've taken quite a lot of time in verse one, the first speech from God to this king.

And we're now going to take a look at the second, which starts in verse four. Let me read it again. Verse four, If the key word in verse one is until, then I think the most important word in verse four is the word forever.

You are a priest forever. And I think we should briefly pause here to think about the problem. Again, Israel's failed kings.

[20 : 17] They were meant to lead the people and to help them inherit the promises of God. But they were a complete mess. In this, you know, we're often rightly shocked when our leaders fail morally.

And perhaps in this kind of current time, it's almost inevitable that the moral failings of our leaders are going to be at some point brought to light.

But all of the kings of Israel failed. And they failed because of this problem, because of sin. David, let's take David as an example, David was sinful.

He was so sinful, in fact, that he had one of his own soldiers killed. So the fact that he got this soldier's wife pregnant wouldn't be discovered. And from David onwards, the kings who were supposed to help God's people and to lead them in obedience to the law of God only led them further and further and further astray into further sin and further disaster.

If there was one enemy that the God's kings could not deal with, that enemy was sin. Their inclination to reject God and their inability to obey his commands.

[21 : 42] The kings of Israel were like football team captains who just lead their team to relegation. Or the teacher whose class fails every single exam because they never did any prep for the lessons.

The prime minister who leads their country into economic ruin. And for the Israelites who read Psalm 110 before the coming of Jesus, they would be hugely aware that it was their sin, both their sin and the sin of their kings, that meant they were in such a mess.

Because of their sin, God was angry with his own people and any attempt to deal with that only had temporary solutions. You can read about it in other Psalms.

In Psalm 90, Moses describes the experience of people under God's anger because of sin like this. Psalm 90. We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath. We finish our years with a moan.

[22 : 57] Our days may come to 70 years or 80 if our strength endures. Yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow. For they quickly pass and we fly away.

We all experience moments that we wish we could hold on to and to make them last forever. The family holiday or any holiday. The times when coronavirus was not dominating our lives.

But those moments, we wish we could cling on to them but we can't. They always phase. They always go. And that is true of everything that happens to us in the world that's dominated by sin.

The people we love, well, we know that no one we love is going to last forever. But the amazing thing about this king and his kingdom is that his victory is an everlasting one.

He makes the forever kingdom, this victory of God over all of his enemies, secure and unlosable. It cannot ever be lost. And what makes this possible, the astonishing answer that Psalm 110 gives us, is that this king is also going to be a priest.

[24 : 17] A priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The reason that this king, this king Jesus, is so superior to every king who came before him is that he is truly and thoroughly able to deal with the problem of sin.

That is what he is able to do as a priest. That is what priests do in the Bible. They mediate between people and God. And we need that because we are sinful and unfiltered access between people and God results in the destruction of the people.

And the significance of Jesus being a priest after the order of Melchizedek is quite a big topic. But the main point of it is that he is someone who is able to be priest and king at the same time.

You can read about Melchizedek in Genesis 14. And he meets, as he meets and blesses Abraham, as Abraham returns from victory over kings.

And David knows that one day, God is going to keep the promises he made to save the whole world through Abraham. And that God was going to provide a king priest like Melchizedek to bless Abraham's family and so to save the world.

[25 : 36] And unlike Israel's previous priests and previous kings, this king priest was going to provide a permanent solution. And although we don't have time to go into the details of all the references now, the key similarity that the writer of the book of Hebrews brings out, the key similarity between Jesus and this Melchizedek, is this word forever.

Jesus, resurrected and living forever, is able to bless the descendants of Abraham, that is, those who trust in Jesus, both by dealing with all of God's enemies and by dealing with sin, giving himself as a sinless sacrifice to wash us clean from our sin so that we might join him in the throne room of God.

King Jesus reigns victorious because of his sacrifice of himself to deal with our sin, to bring us into the presence of God, something that no king or no priest had ever done successfully.

So we can be more certain this is a king worth following and trusting in. We can be certain that the victory he has won is a permanent one because he is a priest forever who has completely dealt with sin.

For those who have trusted in him, he has completely washed away every transgression, every offence against God. This king has won a forever victory for us.

[27 : 10] So, what do we do when we feel like God is not winning? We need to look to Jesus and we need to remind ourselves of the fact that one day, the day of his power, the day of his wrath, he will be completely victorious over all of the earth.

Verse 5. The Lord is at your right hand. He will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge nations, heaping up the dead, and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

We need to lift our eyes from the here and now and look ahead to this certain future centred around Jesus and his victory. And so, verse 7, and so he will lift his head high.

This victory will belong to him. The glory will be his. And we need to hear this because we are short-sighted, quick to lose our focus on the only person we're focusing on.

So this week, this month, as we go, continue living as Christians, let's focus on Jesus' glory, his future victory, his kingship, and his priesthood.

[28 : 22] Let's pray. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for Jesus. Thank you that you have sat him at your right hand, that he is the king to rule the entire world.

Thank you that one day you will bring every single enemy of his under his feet, that you will give him final and complete victory. In the times when we feel like you are not in control, you are not winning, please help us to return to the person of Jesus and to his certain future victory.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

[29 : 33] Bye.