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WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT CHRIST?

Psalm 110

By

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Psalms: Lesson 20

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Correct concepts are crucial. Wrong concepts can be fatal. In 1865, when Abraham Lincoln was shot, doctors had the wrong concept that it was beneficial to drain some blood from an injured person. And so the President, who had already lost a lot of blood through his bullet wound, lost even more blood because the doctors had a wrong concept.

Wrong concepts can kill you. This is not only true physically, but spiritually. Having wrong spiritual concepts can lead to what the Bible calls the second death, eternal separation from God. It is absolutely essential that you think correctly about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees had some wrong concepts regarding the Messiah or Christ. ("Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "Anointed One"; "Christ" comes from the Greek word meaning the same.) They thought, correctly, that the promised Messiah would be a physical descendant of David. But they thought, incorrectly, that he would merely be a great man who would reign on the physical throne of David. They did not realize that He would be the eternal God, second Person of the Trinity. The Pharisees needed desperately to change their concept of the Messiah, because they were on the verge of rejecting their Messiah Jesus.

To correct their wrong concept, Jesus asked them a crucial question: "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" (Matt. 22:42). When they correctly answered that He would be the son of David, Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 and asked, "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" He was showing them that their thinking was inadequate on this most crucial question. They needed to see that the Messiah was not only David's son, but also David's Lord. Thus He was their Lord, and they needed to bow before Him.

The question remains the most important question for you to answer: "What do you think about Christ?" You may think there are more important questions: Whom should I marry? What career should I pursue? How can I have a happy marriage? How should I raise my children? How can I know the will of God? But all these questions are secondary, because the answers to them hinge on the answer to the most important question, "What do you think about Christ?" Once you've answered that question, you've settled who is the Lord of your life. And once you've settled that question, all other questions find resolution under the authority of His Word.

Faith in Christ must be grounded in a knowledge of His Person. Psalm 110 answers the question, "Who is Jesus the Messiah?" David tells us that

Jesus the Messiah is the King, the eternal
priest, and the future judge of the earth.

Psalm 110 is totally Messianic. It does not speak at all of David, but only of David's Lord. It is prophetic, written 1,000 years before Christ. It only contains seven verses, and yet they are packed. A Puritan expositor shows that the psalm contains in seed form the entire Apostles' Creed (Edward Reynolds, cited in C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David* [Baker], V:190-191). Psalm 110 is the Old Testament passage most frequently quoted in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the New Testament writers, thought this psalm to be that important!

1. Jesus the Messiah is the King of the earth (vv. 1-3).

In verse 1 there is a conversation between two members of the Godhead. God is one in essence, and yet three in subsistence, and here the Lord (Yahweh) speaks to David's Lord (Adonai), the Messiah. These verses reveal to us the person, the position, and the power of the Messiah-King.

A. The person of the Messiah-King is both God and man (v. 1).

"The Lord says to my Lord ..." (See Matt. 22:41-45). The Pharisees were correct in viewing the Messiah as a physical descendant of David (and thus as a man). But they did not grasp the full import of Psalm 110:1, namely, that Messiah is not merely David's

son, but also David's Lord, one with the Father from all eternity (Jesus had to be living to be David's Lord when David wrote). And so Jesus asks them a question to get them to think about the implications of Psalm 110:1. They could not properly resolve the paradox without admitting that Messiah is not merely human; He is also divine. He is both David's son and David's Lord, man and God.

Please note, by the way, that Jesus here affirms both the Davidic authorship of Psalm 110 (which some Bible critics deny) and its Messianic interpretation. Also, Jesus affirms that David wrote it through the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36), a verse that shows that Jesus believed in the divine inspiration of Scripture. He is also tacitly making reference to the Trinity ("Spirit," "Lord," "my Lord").

The major cults of our day stumble over the same question as the Pharisees did: They refuse to admit that David's son is also David's Lord. They deny the deity of Jesus and the Trinity. Thus they do not submit themselves to the Lordship of Jesus. It is a spiritually fatal error!

B. The position of the Messiah-King is that of exaltation to the right hand of God (v. 1).

"Sit at My right hand ..." This refers to the position of Christ after His resurrection and ascension into heaven. Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven where He was seated at the right hand of the Father, far above all rule and authority (Eph. 1:20-22). As a proof (to Israel) of His exaltation, He sent the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:32-36). His ascension into heaven and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit was positive proof that God had made "this Jesus whom [they] crucified" both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

Psalm 110:1 thus looks to the present time, when Jesus the Messiah is risen and ascended, Lord over all at the right hand of the Father. And yet the verse also shows that all of His enemies are not yet in subjection. He is awaiting that day (described in vv. 5-7).

C. The power of the Messiah-King is now exercised through His people (vv. 2-3).

Jesus now rules in the midst of His enemies through His people, pictured poetically here as an army of priests. They have of-

ferred themselves ("will volunteer freely" has the nuance of freewill offerings) as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2) to serve in Jesus' army, under His power. They are clothed in holy garments, as believer priests. It is the beauty of holiness in the lives of Christ's followers that attracts and conquers His enemies.

The last phrase of verse 3 is difficult to translate. If translated, "Your youth are to You as the dew," it refers to the strength ("youth") and splendor ("dew") of those in Messiah's army. Just as the dew reflects in many droplets the splendor of the sun, so the Lord's people reflect in a manifold but lesser way His splendor. Or, it could be translated, "You have the dew of Your youth," thus referring to Messiah, who never loses His strength or glory.

Thus the first point that David would have us grasp to clarify our concept of Christ is that He is the King of the earth, the God-man who was crucified, resurrected, exalted to the right hand of the Father, who rules His army of priests from the throne of David.

2. The Messiah is the eternal Priest of the earth (v. 4).

Verse 4 records the second statement of the Lord (Yahweh) to David's Lord (the Messiah). When the Lord God says something, it's important. When He swears something, it is doubly important. When Scripture adds, "and will not change His mind," we had better sit up and take notice! What is it that God wants us to see? That He has declared His Messiah to be "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (v. 4).

What does this mean? Melchizedek is mentioned only in Genesis 14:18-20, here in Psalm 110:4, and in Hebrews (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21). His name in Hebrew means "king of righteousness." He was the king of Salem ("peace," Jerusalem). In Genesis, he seems to come out of nowhere, he refreshes Abraham with bread and wine after Abraham returns from battle, he blesses him, and receives a tithe of Abraham's spoils. He is called a priest of God Most High. A priest acts as a mediator between God and man. Melchizedek stood between God and Abraham to confer God's blessing on Abraham, and to receive the tithes from Abraham to present to God.

Hebrews 7 explains that Melchizedek served as a type of Christ. The author to the Hebrews was writing to second-generation Jewish Christians who were facing persecution (10:32-36) and were tempted to give up on Christianity and go back to Judaism. The author wants to convince them of the superiority of Jesus Christ over the Jewish system.

To summarize Hebrews 7, he brings in Melchizedek to show that Christ, as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, is superior to the Levitical priesthood. He is superior in that, unlike Jewish kings who couldn't act as priests and priests who couldn't be king, Jesus is both priest and king (v. 2). Jesus is superior because He is an eternal priest (vv. 3, 17, 21, 24) who offers a better covenant through which we may draw near to God (vv. 22, 25). Jesus is superior in that He didn't need to offer daily sacrifices for His own sin before He offered sacrifices for the people, as the Levitical priests did (v. 27). The bottom line is, Jesus "is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (v. 25).

The author to the Hebrews and David (in Psalm 110:4) are saying that Messiah Jesus is not just a human priest. He is God in human flesh, the only way that sinful people can draw near to God. To think correctly about Christ, you must understand that He is a divine, eternal priest between God and man after the order of Melchizedek. God has sworn it and won't change His mind about it. It's that important, so don't miss it!

David has shown that to think correctly about Christ, we must know that He is the King of the earth (vv. 1-3); and He is the eternal priest of the earth (v. 4).

3. The Messiah is the future judge of the earth (vv. 5-7).

The scene shifts from God's throne to the battlefield. If verse 5 is still addressing Messiah (which makes the most sense), the fact that God is now on Messiah's right hand (instead of the reverse as in v. 1) simply is a Hebrew way of saying that God is Messiah's strength in the battle against His enemies. The scene has moved on from Hebrews to Revelation 19:11-16, at the second coming of Christ, when He will forcibly subdue His enemies and establish His kingdom rule. There will be a judgment upon the Gentile nations at

that time (Matt. 25:31-46; Joel 3:1-2). (Later after the 1,000 year reign of Christ, will be the final Great White Throne judgment [Rev. 20:11-15] of all the dead outside of Christ.) Psalm 110:5-7 describes the judgment of the nations.

Verse 7 is a poetic way of making the point that Messiah will carry out this judgment swiftly and none will escape. The picture is that of a warrior-king in hot pursuit of the enemies who have escaped the general slaughter. He stops briefly at a brook along the way, is refreshed, and continues his pursuit until all his enemies are slain. Then He lifts up his head in victory. It means that Messiah will gain a swift, total victory over His enemies when He returns. None will escape.

We need to understand that while we are now in a time of grace, when God is withholding His wrath on sinners, a day of judgment is coming when everyone opposed to the Lord and His Christ will be crushed. To think correctly about Christ, you must understand that He is the future Judge of the earth.

Conclusion

Jonathan Edwards said, "The ideas and images in men's minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them" (source unknown). He's right! How you think determines how you live. It is of utmost importance to think correctly about Jesus the Messiah: He is the King, the eternal priest, and the future Judge of the earth. Let's explore three implications for our lives based on these three concepts:

1. Since Jesus is King, we should submit to His Lordship willingly. In Isaiah 45:22-23 God says, "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance." God has sworn that it will happen! Either you turn willingly to Him now and are saved, or you will be crushed into submission to His lordship when King Jesus returns. It's a sure thing: Every knee shall bow!

We need to be clear that submitting to Christ's lordship is not an option for a few super-committed, gung-ho types. Every Chris-

tian must be growing in submission to King Jesus. It is a lifelong process that begins at conversion. You yield all of yourself that you know to all of Jesus that you know. Growth comes as the Lord Jesus reveals to you more of your selfish ways and more of His righteousness, and you progressively yield yourself to Him. A person who calls Jesus "Lord" but isn't growing in obedience is in for a rude awakening come judgment day: "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23)!

2. *Since Jesus is Priest, we should appropriate His mediation gladly.* Jesus is the mediator, the go-between between you and God. The fact that He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek means that He has secured, once and for all, forgiveness for your sins (Heb. 7:27; 9:11-18). When you sin, you have an advocate with the Father who is there pleading His blood as the just satisfaction for the penalty of your sins. You no longer need to feel condemned before God because Jesus is your Priest! Confess all your sins to Him and appropriate His cleansing. When the enemy accuses you, you can overcome him by pleading the blood of Jesus (Rev. 12:10-11).

Jesus' priesthood also means that He is your access to the Father's presence. Hebrews 4:15-16 assures us, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."

And even more, not only can we pray through Jesus; also Jesus is interceding before the Throne for us (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34)! Think of it: Jesus is praying for you! It's great if you have a faithful mother or grandmother who prays for you. But it's even greater to have the Lord Jesus praying for you. Robert Murray McCheyne, the beloved Scottish minister of the past century, once wrote, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!" Thank God that Jesus is our high priest! We can appropriate His mediation gladly and often!

3. *Since Jesus is judge, we should avoid His judgment fearfully.* Since we live in the day of God's grace, it's easy to put off coming to Christ. Perhaps someone here is thinking, "I still have time. I don't

see God judging me or anyone else, so what's the hurry? Besides, isn't God a God of love? And, I'm a pretty good person. God wouldn't judge me, would He?" That's a wrong and eternally fatal concept! Don't believe it!

Our psalm, as well as the rest of Scripture, shows that although God's judgment is delayed, when it comes it will be swift and certain. None outside of Christ will escape in that awful day!

In Los Angeles, two bandits walked casually into the Crocker National Bank, flashed their guns, took \$704 from a teller, and then calmly walked out. It all looked so easy. The crooks thought they had gotten away with it. But all of a sudden a loud bang like that of a firecracker came from inside the bag of money. Blinding tear gas hissed out of the sack, a cloud of smoke enveloped the pair, and a gusher of red dye spewed all over them. The thieves threw down their loot and quickly fled the scene. But shortly afterward they were caught--redhanded. (From, "Our Daily Bread," winter, 1979.)

God's judgment is like that. You may think for a while that you're getting away with your sin. As Christians, we sometimes wonder why God doesn't nail wicked people on the spot. The reason is, God delays His judgment so that people can come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). But even though God's judgment is delayed because of His grace, it is certain and will hit suddenly and swiftly when it comes.

I want each one here personally to consider Jesus' question to the Pharisees: "What do *you* think about the Christ? Whose son is He?" He is David's son. That's right! Even more, He is David's Lord. Right, again! But is He *your* Lord? Jesus is the *King*; we must submit to Him. He is the *eternal priest*; we must draw near to God through Jesus' blood. He is the *coming judge*; make sure you're on His side!

Discussion Questions

1. Can a person accept Jesus as Savior apart from accepting Him as Lord? Cite biblical evidence.
2. Should Christians feel guilty when they sin? How can we know if our guilt is from the Holy Spirit or from Satan?
3. How can we sensitively warn people of the coming judgment? Should it be more prominent in our witnessing?

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