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THE CONQUERING KING-PRIEST OF PSALM 110, THE LYNCHPIN OF THE DAVIDIC  
COVENANT, AND THE FINAL VICTORY OF GOD:  
AN EXEGESIS PAPER ON THE HEBREW TEXT OF PSALM 110

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OT5150-01 — HEBREW EXEGESIS

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## Introduction and Proposal

The writers of the New Testament lived and breathed the Old Testament Scriptures. It formed their worldview, revealed their Messiah, and was a perfect rule of righteousness for their lives. Narrowing in, these authors saw Jesus through the lens of the Old Testament, ascribing to him titles and attributes of the prophesied Messiah and promised Seed. There is, however, one specific passage that so gripped their minds and illuminated the person of Christ that it runs as a dominant theme in the New Testament. Psalm 110 became *the* defining text used by the apostles (and Jesus himself) to illuminate who Jesus Christ is. In fact Psalm 110 is the most referenced Old Testament passage in the New Testament, being cited or alluded to over twenty five times.<sup>1</sup> Some have even argued that entire New Testament books hinge on the premises in Psalm 110.<sup>2</sup> Psalm 110 is so prominent in the New Testament because of its lasting importance for the believers in the days it was given and in the ‘last days.’ This exegesis paper will argue that Psalm 110’s historic and modern meanings have a unique interconnectivity and continuity due to the prophetic nature of Psalm 110, regarding the Messiah, his offices, person, and relationship to YHWH. It will be proven that this continuity allows believers in both dispensations to have confidence and persevere because their King-Priest has conquered the world (John 16:33) and will one day judge his enemies, vindicating his people forevermore. Psalm 110 allows believers in David’s day and those in this age to persevere in hope, because it is the pinnacle of the Psalter’s larger message, “our God reigns.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, Fred G. Zaspel, and Sinclair B. Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2023), 122.

<sup>2</sup> Jared Compton, *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews* (London: T & T Clark, 2018) argues this regarding the book of Hebrews.

<sup>3</sup> Mark D. Futato, *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, eds. Miles V. Van Pelt and Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, Miss.), (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016), 342.

## Methodology

The following methodological approach will be employed in this paper in order to explore Psalm 110 and prove the thesis true. The first step will be to translate the Hebrew text of Psalm 110 while giving commentary on any necessary factors. In addition a justification will be given for decisions made in the translation process that may have interpretative significance, exegetical value, any issues dealing with textual variants, significant vocabulary, and any other area that may be disputed regarding proper translation. All of these will be discussed as well as any other relevant, curious, or interesting material. After the translation has been justified, there will be a brief discussion regarding the text's outline. A non-exhaustive survey will be done to see how the text has been outlined previously, and then a new outline will be proposed. Once this has been done there will be grounds for exploration regarding historic setting and meaning of the text. The historic exposition of the text will dovetail into the modern application of the text. It will be shown that the meaning in both dispensations are harmonious while each having their own unique nuances.

## A Translation of Psalm 110

1 A Psalm of David<sup>a</sup>

An utterance<sup>b</sup> from the LORD to my<sup>4</sup> Lord,  
“Sit at my right hand<sup>c</sup> until I make<sup>d</sup> your<sup>e</sup>  
enemies a footstool for your feet.”<sup>5</sup>

לְקוֹדֶם מִזְמֹר נְאָם יְהֹוָה לְאָדָנִי שָׁב לִימִנִּי עַד-אָשָׁר  
אִיְלִיכְךְ קָלָם לְרָגְלֵיכְךְ:

<sup>a</sup> Interestingly, Mark D. Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction*, Short Studies in Systematic Theology (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2022), 102 makes note that Jesus confounds the Pharisees with a question regarding what is here one English word, but in the Hebrew text would have been one single consonant (Matt. 22:45; Mark 12:37; Luke 20:42). A good observation to keep at the back of our minds as the depths of the Hebrew text are plumbed throughout this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 110:1 is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament.

2 The LORD sends your mighty staff<sup>f</sup> from Zion. Rule<sup>g</sup> over your enemies!

מֶלֶךְ־עָזֶן יְשַׁלְּחֵנָה מֵאַיוֹן רֹהֶה בְּקָרְבֵּן אַיִּבָּה:

3 Your people willingly offer themselves<sup>h</sup> on the day of your strength.<sup>i</sup>

עַפְקֵנָה נְדַבְּתָן בְּלֹם חַיְלָךְ בְּמִדְרִיכָּךְ מְרַחֵם מְשַׁחֵר לְכָ

טַל יְלָדָתֵךְ:

4 The LORD has sworn,<sup>j</sup> and will not change his mind,<sup>k</sup> “You are a priest forever, according to<sup>l</sup> the order<sup>m</sup> of Melchizedek.”<sup>n</sup>

גַּשְׁבֵעַ יְהָה וְלֹא יִנְהַם אַתָּה־כָּנָנוּ לְעוֹלָם עַל־דְּבָרָתִי

מִלְכִיָּדְקָה:

5 The Lord<sup>o</sup> is at<sup>p</sup> your right hand, he shatters<sup>q</sup> kings on the day of his anger.

אָדָנִי עַל־יָמִינָה מִחְזָקָה בַּיּוֹם־אָפָוּ מֶלֶכִים:

6 He will judge the nations, he fills them<sup>r</sup> with corpses, he shatters<sup>s</sup> chiefs<sup>t</sup> over the vast<sup>u</sup> earth.

גַּזְוִין בְּגָנוּים מְלָא גּוֹיּוֹת מִחְזָקָה־רָאשׁ עַל־אָרֶץ רְבָה:

7 He will drink from the stream along<sup>v</sup> the path, therefore,<sup>w</sup> he will lift up his head.

מְנַחֵל בְּדַרְךָ יִשְׁתַּחַת עַל־פָּנָיו נְרָם רָאשׁ:

## Notes and Justification

- The lamed used in the opening title of Psalm 110 is a lamed of possession which displays that the object of the preposition (the preposition here being the lamed) is in possession of something.<sup>6</sup> So, לְזֹה מִזְלָוָר, a Psalm of David's possession, or the possession of David: this Psalm. This is more easily rendered in English as 'A Psalm of David.' Interestingly, Allen renders the title of Psalm 110 "Davidic. A psalm." This translation still attributes possession to David, making use of the possessive lamed, but seems to render it in a more generalized and wooden sense. This less personal possession is brought out because Allen believes it is either addressed to David, or more generally a categorization for a royal psalm and therefore not necessarily uttered by David himself.<sup>7</sup> This generalized use of the lamed preposition to have a simple association is present in the Psalms and theoretically possible here. 'Of the Sons of Korah' is the title on a number of Psalms (Ps. 42, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, 88) and it is unlikely they wrote them.<sup>8</sup> So, it can be used to associate the psalm with a person or group generally. However, due to context

<sup>6</sup> Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Second Edition. (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 126.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 101-150*, Revised Edition., vol. 21 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2021), 109, 114.

<sup>8</sup> Futato, *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, 343.

and other factors, Davidic authorship is conclusive and the lamed is one of possession. See ‘Historic Authorship and Occasion’ as well as justification in for further conversation regarding dating and authorship.

- b. The word here translated as utterance is the Hebrew word **נִבְאָה** which is a term associated with prophetic speech<sup>9</sup> and usually given at the beginning of a discourse when one is “understood to be under prophetic inspiration.”<sup>10</sup> Because of this, and the word being a common noun, it is translated here as utterance as opposed to “says” (see ESV, NIV).
- c. The Hebrew text here has the common singular noun, **לִמְנִין**, coming from **מִין**. The noun here has a lamed preposition functioning in a Locative sense, and a “light”<sup>11</sup> first person common singular pronominal suffix attached to it. A simple gloss of the verb can simply be ‘right’ or ‘right side.’ However, the semantic range includes ‘right hand,’ extending even to “something particularly valued” or an “honored person at right hand.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, the Locative use of the lamed preposition locates or signifies where the object of the preposition is (in or at).<sup>13</sup> Here the object of the lamed preposition is the person being spoken to, Lord or **לֵאלֹהִים**. Because of these factors, the common translation of ‘my right hand’ (see also NIV, ESV, CSB, KJV, and NASB) is the chosen translation for v. 1.
- d. The Hebrew verb **אִשְׁרֵה** (lexical form: **אִשְׁרָה**) has a wide semantic range with all meanings relating to rule/authoritative control. Here the best gloss is ‘to make someone or something into something.’<sup>14</sup>
- e. The second person masculine singular pronominal suffix (**תָ**) occurs eight times in Ps. 110.
- f. The word here translated as staff (**הַמְּלֵךְ**) from **מְלֵךְ** is often translated as scepter in English translations (see ESV, NIV, CSB, and NASB). This is most likely because of the Psalm

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<sup>9</sup> **נִבְאָה** being associated with prophetic speech is critical for the conversation regarding historical background of the Psalm and who uttered it. See ‘The Link Between Historic Exposition and Modern Meaning’ for further discussion.

<sup>10</sup> William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*, Thirteenth corrected impression. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 223-24 and Bruce K. Waltke, Fred G. Zaspel, and Sinclair B. Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2023), 126.

<sup>11</sup> C. H. J. Van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé, and Jan Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Second Edition. (London ; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), 230 has two classifications for pronominal suffixes. The “heavy” suffixes are Type 1, second person masculine and feminine plural suffixes and third person masculine and feminine plural suffixes. All other Pronominal suffixes (Type 1 and 2), except these four, are “light suffixes.”

<sup>12</sup> Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 136 classifies Ps. 110:1 explicitly in this category.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 124; Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 354.

<sup>14</sup> Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 368.

being a ‘royal psalm’ by classification. Its association with the kingly office and the Davidic covenant make the typical gloss of staff or rod<sup>15</sup> (ex. of this use KJV, NKJV) seem too non-monarchical. However, Holladay’s second function of the gloss ‘staff, stock, or stick’ is for chastisement which seems to fall in line with the Psalm’s general theme of the King-Priest’s conquest. So, staff is a sufficient translation in the context.

- g. The verb **הִנְדִּין** in v. 2 is a simple Qal, second person singular imperative. The general use of the imperative is for a simple command, which at first glance seems to be in view here. However, BH has uses of the imperative (and jussive) where the typical functionality is not used. *Heterosis* uses the same morphological form to substitute a different grammatical function. When used with the imperative, the sense is not a simple command but rather a promise or specific consequence that will/must be fulfilled. It is certain.<sup>16</sup> So, here YHWH is not simply commanding the king to rule, but is affirming a promise that the king *will* rule over all his enemies by the assurance of the mighty staff sent by YHWH Himself.
- h. V. 3 has been suggested as one of the most difficult verses in the Psalter because of its lack of temporal reference within its two nominal clauses.<sup>17</sup> In addition, there is a significant translation dispute hotly debated amongst scholars in v. 3a. The BHS suggests that the phrase **בְּנֵי קָרְבָּן** should be translated in accordance with the Septuagint, which translates this phrase from the MT to the LXX as **μετὰ σοῦ ή ἀρχή** (with you is the rule/dominion). Allen suggests that the Hebrew text “has merit of continuing the military vein of v. 2.”<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Chrysostom takes the same line of thought but uses the LXX’s rendering of the text. So Chrysostom holds that v. 3 is a completion of thought from vv. 1-2 and is the manner by which YHWH will make the enemies a footstool, that is “[in] dominance.”<sup>19</sup> However, Holladay and Calvin agree that the sense of the noun here is derived from its verbal form meaning ‘to volunteer’ or ‘offer voluntarily.’ So, Calvin argues that the people in view here are “a people of voluntariness” and they freely, and joyfully give of themselves to their conquering king’s service because of his might

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<sup>15</sup> Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 191-92.

<sup>16</sup> See Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 124; Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroese, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 77 both classify this use of the imperative under ‘Promise.’ See also the translation justification in Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 110.

<sup>17</sup> See Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 110.

<sup>19</sup> John Chrysostom, *St. John Chrysostom Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 21-22, 33. Hill notes that Chrysostom reverted to the LXX here and did not use “his ‘earlier’ habit of falling back on the Hebrew, and simply rationalizes his way out of difficult phrases. So nothing is a problem.” So, while Chrysostom is not representative of the proper Hebrew translation, it is important to note that the general flow and meaning of this verse, regardless of its rendering, can remain intact.

(see v. 2).<sup>20</sup> In Ex. 35:29 it says “the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a *freewill offering* (גַּדּוּלָה) to the LORD.”<sup>21</sup> This text gives a clear sense of the voluntary nature of the noun, but Kim points out that the same noun is used for a sort of self-offering in Judges 5:2 in the context of military conquest.<sup>22</sup> Just after a military conquest, in the song of Deborah and Barak it is said that “the people *offered themselves willingly* (בְּהַתְּנִכְבָּב). So, the rendering of Ps. 110:3 does not have to go with the LXX as the BHS suggests, but rather there is precedent and contextual warrant to translate the MT as “Your people willingly offer themselves.”<sup>23</sup>

- i. The MT contains נָעַזְתִּי (your strength), but the BHS suggests חַזְלָקָה (your birth). This usually follows from a re-vocalization of נָעַזְתִּי at the end of the verse. BHS offers נָעַזְתִּי as the re-vocalized possibility with witnesses from the LXX, Syriac, and Oregensis. However, in the context the vocalization of the MT fits the best.<sup>24</sup>
- j. The verb עַבְשׁ means ‘to swear’ and is typically associated with oaths or covenants. It is a critical verb used in conjunction often with the word בְּרִית (covenant). Oftentimes this verb is used as a “Promissory Oath” which gives an “assurance of a future gift or beneficence guaranteed by oath.”<sup>25</sup> When this verb is used with the Niphal it has an aspect of significant promissory value from a divine origin. Indeed, “the significance of the irrevocable appointment of the Davidic royal house also emerges clearly in Ps. 110:4... the statement with עַבְשׁ niphal emphasizes the unalterable nature of this oath.”<sup>26</sup>
- k. The Hebrew verb here is מָתַתִּי, lexical form מָתַת. It is the same verb used in Gen. 6:6 when God “regretted” making man. This verb signifies a ‘change of heart’ or ‘[the allowance]

<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, vol. IV of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), 301-2; Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 228-29.

<sup>21</sup> Emphasis mine. All miscellaneous Scripture references not from my own translation of Ps. 110, or otherwise specified, are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

<sup>22</sup> Jinkyu Kim, *Psalm 110 in Its Literary and Generic Contexts: An Eschatological Interpretation* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 2003), 289.

<sup>23</sup> Brotzman sees the LXX as being a helpful resource in OT text criticism however there are some qualifications. For helpful discussions on the usefulness of the LXX in OT textual criticism and proper use of the LXX in Greek to Hebrew backworking see Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 66-74, 93-6.

<sup>24</sup> Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 110; Kim, *Psalm 110 in Its Literary and Generic Contexts*, 289, and Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. IV., 302 all agree.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Johannes Botterweck et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XIV (Grand Rapids (Mich.): W. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 319-20.

<sup>26</sup> Botterweck et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XIV, 327. For wholesale discussion of the verb see pgs. 311-36.

of oneself a change of heart.<sup>27</sup> So, here when paired with the adverb of negation (אַל) it signifies the inability for the one swearing to change his mind or ‘have regret’ about the oath. YHWH has sworn, and he will not have the desire to change his mind regarding the oath he has sworn.

1. Arnold and Choi categorize the prepositional use of עַל here as that of manner, signifying “behavior or action *according to* a standard.”<sup>28</sup> It seems that the function here is of modality rather than causality,<sup>29</sup> which is synonymous with Arnold/Choi’s ‘Manner.’ Hence the preposition here has been translated as ‘according to.’
- m. At this point there is a necessity for a discussion regarding the dating of this psalm due to linguistic features in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew noun קְבָרַתִּי has a -y morpheme affixed to it (BHS has a textual note suggesting otherwise -<sup>a</sup> nonn MSS תֹּו, — 2 MSS הֹ—). Most often, this morpheme is found on PTC’s (27 occurrences) but it can also be found on nouns (6 occurrences).<sup>30</sup> However, Waltke dissents from Robertson at this point as identifies this affixed morpheme as a hireq compaginis which “is most common on nouns serving a nominative function.”<sup>31</sup> However, given the categories for the nominative use of the Hebrew noun<sup>32</sup> this explanation does not seem to fit. Rather, Robertson categorizes this occurrence as Noun-y + Noun, with Noun-y as a bound form. This -y morpheme is never used in “standard poetry” (pg. 76) and is only associated with bound nouns making it a rare occurrence very valuable for dating the poetry it is used in. The only other occurrences outside of Ps. 110:4 are in Gen. 49:11, Dt. 33:16, Ps. 30:8.<sup>33</sup> Robertson expands on the significance of this Hebrew morpheme writing, “One occasionally encounters in Hebrew poetry a -y (pronounced -i) affixed to a noun or participle. Since final long vowels are not indicated in Ugaritic orthography, it is not possible to tell whether this morpheme is found there. But its position as a rare poetic form in biblical Hebrew is sufficient to demonstrate the probability that it was a regular feature of early poetic Hebrew.”<sup>34</sup> So it can be asserted that the morpheme affixed to קְבָרַתִּי in v. 4 is

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<sup>27</sup> Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 234.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 135. Emphasis theirs.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, *PSALMS 101-150*, vol. 21, 111 and Kim, *PSALM 110 in Its Literary and Generic Contexts*, 290-91.

<sup>30</sup> See David Roberston, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Hebrew Poetry: Early Hebrew Poetry*, SBL Dissertation Series 3 (Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), 71.

<sup>31</sup> Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 127-28.

<sup>32</sup> See Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 8-11 for four options (Subject, Predicate Nominative, Vocative, and Nominative Absolute).

<sup>33</sup> Roberston, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Hebrew Poetry*, 76.

<sup>34</sup> Roberston, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Hebrew Poetry*, 69.

evidence of an early date back to the monastic period of David.<sup>35</sup> The occurrence of this form in Ps. 30 becomes another incredible witness to the Davidic authorship/utterance of Ps. 110. Ps. 30 is titled “A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple” (ESV). This places the -y morpheme squarely in the Davidic monarchy, and therefore places Ps. 110 firmly in this timeframe as well. Making a small Hebrew affix critical witness for affirming that David uttered Ps. 110. In terms of the translation of the noun קָרְבָּנִי, Waltke says it “probably does not mean ‘in the order of’ but ‘for the reason that.’ The Messiah is a king and a priest because before Aaron’s priesthood, Melchizedek, a royal priest, served him.”<sup>36</sup> However, this seems unnecessary as Waltke seems to be deferring the modal sense of the prepositional phrase עַל־קָרְבָּנִי to the noun in particular (see again justification k). Functionally his rendition has the same modal sense as suggested above, it is simply shifted to the latter part of the phrase rather than the former, that is at the preposition. This is why ‘according to the order of’ is the best translation of the phrase. It maintains the modal sense of the prepositional phrase while not negating the noun entirely.

- n. What is here rendered Melchizedek is the Hebrew compound name מלֶךְ־צַדְקָה. This could justly be rendered, ‘my king is righteous,’ but the same exact spelling is used in Gen. 14:18 and this clearly refers to an individual. So, the meaning of the name is certainly ‘my king is righteous’ or ‘King of Righteousness,’ but it does refer to an individual. Confusion and debate occur regarding this translation because the Hebrew compound name is attached by a maqqef, an uncommon feature with Hebrew compound names.<sup>37</sup>
- o. Kim highlights four possibilities that have been suggested for who the referent is depending on the vocalization of the first word, Adonai, in the Hebrew text of v. 5. The MT’s vocalization אֲדֹנָנוּ allows for (1) “the divine subject” or (2) “a divine vocative.” If repointed, it may be referring to either (3) “a human subject” (i.e. the hearer, the king or the Adonai spoken to in v. 1) or (4) “a human vocative.”<sup>38</sup> BHS cites the LXX as identifying the referent as YHWH and therefore adopting the MT’s vocalization. Hamilton says that the vowel pointing on the Hebrew text in addition to the ending signifies YHWH as the one now who ‘is at your (David’s Lord) right hand.’<sup>39</sup> This paper’s translation agrees.

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<sup>35</sup> Roberston, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Hebrew Poetry*, 73-6.

<sup>36</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 130.

<sup>37</sup> Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 127.

<sup>38</sup> Kim, *Psalm 110 in Its Literary and Generic Contexts*, 291.

<sup>39</sup> James R. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms: Psalms 73-150*, vol. II of *Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2021), 295.

- p. The preposition in the prepositional phrase עַל-יְמִינָה “indicates a horizontal spatial relationship.”<sup>40</sup> The ‘contingent locative’ use of the עַל preposition in v. 5 is significant for exegesis (see ‘The Link Between Historic Exegesis and Modern Meaning) because “the trajector x is not horizontally above trajector y, but close in proximity to it.”<sup>41</sup>
- q. The verb עַזְתָ (qal, perf, 3ms) is often translated as “will shatter” (ESV, NIV, CSB, and KJV/NKJV have a future sense as well). The translators here take this perfect use as a ‘Rhetorical Future’ which has not begun or taken place but is certain to happen. Admittedly there is a sense of this absolutely present in the psalm, however the use of the same form in v. 6 brings out a sense of the ‘Proverbial’ use. This use indicates something that is not contingent on time but is always and generally true.<sup>42</sup> Ps. 110 has a sense of both the ‘Rhetorical Future’ and the ‘Proverbial’ use of the perfect. So, the fact that YHWH shatters kings in his anger, is generally/always true and is not necessarily referring to a specific day (in an immediate sense) but rather a multitude of days when this will happen. As admitted before, there is a sense in which the rhetorical future comes out because of the ‘now/not yet’ nature of Ps. 110. This psalm both anticipates the eschatological victory of the King-Priest and the immanent/unyielding protection of the King’s people in the many victories he wins prior to the final judgment. This general use and function of the perfect aspect (viewing the action in totality) also helps to prove the thesis by uniting the historic and modern meaning of Ps. 110, giving credence to v. 5’s application for battles in David’s reign and its application for the victory of the one called Faithful and True who rides on the white horse to judge the world (Rev. 19:11-16).
- r. The noun corpses, Hebrew word גָוִוִית from גָוִוִה, functions as a second object here. It follows the first object, nations, which is here inserted again in the English as an implied object from the Hebrew: ‘them.’ It is them (the nations) which will be filled with גָוִוִה.
- s. Both verbs in 6b (מָלַא - fills and עַזְתָ - shatters) have perfect aspects. Therefore they are translated to see the complete whole. See justification p for further discussion.
- t. Opinions vary on how this should be translated. The MT has singular שָׁאָר referring to a definite ‘head’ or ‘chief.’ However, there is a textual variant that has the plural form (BHS cites - Ms שָׁאָר). The MT does win the day, and is translated here as plural ‘chiefs’ because it seems to refer to a collective singular noun.<sup>43</sup> Most English translations translate it as a collective singular (ESV, NIV, CSB, KJV/NKJV). One exception is the NASB. One very interesting suggestion for rendering שָׁאָר as a definite ‘the head’ is from

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<sup>40</sup> Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 371.

<sup>41</sup> Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 372. See also Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 134 and who describes the horizontal relationship indicating the location of something/someone ‘at’ or ‘beside’ someone/something.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 66-9.

<sup>43</sup> See Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 209-10. Kim, *Psalm 110 in Its Literary and Generic Contexts*, 292 disagrees and translates it ‘the chief man.’

Hamilton who picks up on clear motifs of Gen. 3:15 in Ps. 110. He takes Ps. 110:5 as a declaration that the serpent's unrepentant seed will be crushed, and in Ps. 110:6 it is a commentary and affirmation that the serpent's head will indeed be crushed by this King-Priest in a final victory before he lifts his head in rest (Ps. 110:7).<sup>44</sup> For the purposes of translation, שָׁאַלْ should still be seen as a collective singular. However, there does seem to be clear motifs from Gen. 3:15 and a sense where the Biblical-Theological study of these passages is incredibly helpful for understanding the full scope of Ps. 110's meaning. This will be discussed further in 'The Unchanging Meaning of Psalm 110.'

- u. The Hebrew adjective רַבָּה has a wide (or רַב)<sup>45</sup> semantic range and has the general sense of 'numerous' or 'many'<sup>46</sup> so when applied to גָּאַל it brings/has the meaning of the largeness of the earth or the numerousness of its land, hence it is translated here as vast.
- v. The בְּ preposition is used spatially in 58% of its occurrences within the HB. It normally locates something/someone 'in,' 'at,' or 'on' something/someone.<sup>47</sup> However, many English translations render it as 'by' or 'along' (ESV, CSB, NIV) and this captures the spatial awareness of the בְּ preposition while also logically placing the stream just next to (and therefore 'on') the path. Therefore it is translated here as 'along.'
- w. The preposition כְּ can be compounded frequently with either a lamed or the preposition בְּ. When compounded with the בְּ it has a cause-effect function, hinging two clauses together and linking them causally.<sup>48</sup>

## An Outline of Psalm 110

A brief exploration of this Psalm's proper outline is a helpful excursus at this point. Three sample outlines will be looked at and then a proposed outline will be given with some modifications from the various outlines.

The first outline is from Allen (WBC) who proposes an outline based on the Psalms literary style and the consistent use of the preposition בְּ (x4) in the last four verses.

### 110:1a - Heading

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<sup>44</sup> Hamilton Jr., *Psalm*, vol. II, 296.

<sup>45</sup> Some humor from the Hebrew lexicon.

<sup>46</sup> Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 330-31.

<sup>47</sup> Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 116-17.

<sup>48</sup> Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 148.

- 110:1aβ-3 - A Divine Oracle and Commentary
- 110:1aβ - Quotation of the Oracle
- 110:2-3 - Assurance of its Future Fulfillment
- 110:4-7 - Another Oracle and its Implications
- 110:4 - Quotation of this Oracle
- 110:5-7 Military Implications of this Oracle<sup>49</sup>

Allen's outline is helpful for the functions of this paper because of its focus on the literary functions and attention given to the use of key grammatical tools like the Hebrew preposition **לְ**. The twofold division has its merits as there indeed are two oracles, but this outline seems to highlight a less unified version of Psalm 110 and that is the main critique of this outline.

Belcher provides an outline that functionally acts in a very similar manner to Allen's, but Belcher's decision is based on the contents of the Psalm rather than its literary function or grammatical devices, which is preferable.

- 110:1a - First Oracle
- 110:1b - Elaboration
- 110:2-3 - Explanation
- 110:4a - Second Oracle
- 110:4b - Elaboration
- 110:5-7 - Explanation<sup>50</sup>

Belcher's outline focuses on the two oracle statements in v. 1 and v. 4 which are the high points of the Psalm. Functionally the 'Elaboration' and 'Explanation' sections act in the same way Allen's 'Implications' and 'Future Fulfillment' sections work. The key distinction, and point of usefulness, is the focus on the two oracles.

The last outline to be discussed is Emadi's. Emadi stresses the unity of the Psalm by using a chiastic structure, but he recognizes a twofold division as well (like Allen and Belcher). Emadi notes that Psalm 110 is made of two stanzas each made of seventy four syllables. Of

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<sup>49</sup> Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 114.

<sup>50</sup> Richard P. Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ from All the Psalms* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2006), 143.

course, this is in the Hebrew text not the English translation of the MT. In Emadi's outline each line is representative of a single verse.

- 1 **A** The King Enthroned
- 2 **B** Authority to Reign Granted
- 3 **C** The Day of Power
- 4 **D** The Priest Installed
- 5 **C<sup>1</sup>** The Day of Wrath
- 6 **B<sup>1</sup>** Authority to Reign Executed
- 7 **A<sup>1</sup>** Refreshed by the Water and Head Raised<sup>51</sup>

Emadi's outline is very well done because it hits on three key areas. It observes the unity of the Psalm (which is this outline's greatest strength), it highlights the importance of the two oracles within the Psalm, and it notices literary structures.

The outline this paper proposes is twofold, attempting to highlight the unity of the Psalm and its prophetic intention for believers in both dispensations. It hopes to highlight the 'now-not yet' nature of the prophetic Psalm in two categories. (1) Seeing the divine oracles as affirmatory of the work done by the King-Priest, and therefore also prophetic, and (2) affirming the consequential matters of the King-Priest's new rule and reign.

- 110:1-4 Affirmation of the Two Oracles
  - 110:1 Affirmation of Messiah as King
  - 110:2-3 The Messiah's Current Rule
  - 110:4 Affirmation of Messiah as Priest
- 110:5-7 The King-Priest will Have a Final and Eternal Rule
  - 110:5-6 The King-Priest will Judge the Earth
  - 110:7 The King-Priest will Rest and Reign Eternally<sup>52</sup>

This outline attempts to weld helpful elements from the three outlines above to form a cohesive and plausible outline that is useful for this exegesis paper. Now, it is important to note that the

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew Emadi, *The Royal Priest: Psalm 110 in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson (London, England, Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos ; InterVarsity Press, 2022), 81. See also Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, who note the same two-stanza, seventy four syllable distinction, 125.

<sup>52</sup> I understand that this outline is obviously not perfect. In reality all three of the outlines I engaged with are incredibly strong and helpful. For the purpose of this paper I attempted to produce my own outline that is helpful and synthesizes ideas from my argument while incorporating multiple elements from the previous outlines.

‘Affirmation’ of the Oracles comes with two perspectives in R-H. At the time of the utterance this is a prophetic announcement of what will one day be said to the King-Priest as His work is finished. King David would have seen this as a statement given in the present tense, indicating an event which is guaranteed to occur because of the decree of YHWH. However, for believer’s living after the ascension of Christ, the oracles of v. 1 and 4 can be seen as affirming the work done and rewards accomplished by Christ as he enters into the heavenly realm having accomplished his work. Christ was appointed to be a King-Priest and therefore it was sure, but after his work is accomplished in time this Psalm can be taken as affirmation of the work as well.<sup>53</sup> Maybe stated more simply, this Psalm can be viewed from two directions, both before the life, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and after. Therefore, this outline helps to show the continuity and interconnectivity of the historic and modern meaning, giving both dispensations a clear hope for the future and assurance for the present. See below, ‘The Unchanging Meaning of Psalm 110’ for a more thorough discussion.

### **Historic Authorship and Occasion**

To begin, it is important to remember that this is a psalm and therefore was to be sung accompanied by music on specific occasions.<sup>54</sup> However, there is no general consensus amongst scholarship as to what the timeframe and or occasion of the psalms utterance would have been.

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<sup>53</sup> Here a conversation regarding Christ’s work, and the two perspectives (looking back and looking forward) can be better understood within the context of the Covenant of Redemption. This covenant is clearly taught in Psalm 110 and is one of the key texts used to argue for it. See J. V. Fesko, *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption* (Great Britain: Mentor, 2016), 95-106 for a discussion of Ps. 110 in the context of this covenant and François Turretini, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. II (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Publishing, 1992), 177-78 on the Covenant of Redemption more generally.

<sup>54</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 123, 25. Because of the two different speakers within the psalm, this song most likely would have been sung antiphonally. This simply means that two separate choruses would have sung different parts of the song. Like when there are men and women in a chorus and they each have separate lines to sing.

Generally there are three main streams of thought when it comes to timing and occasion. (1) Would have been a royal coronation service, (2) a formal worship service, or (3) a battle hymn of victory.<sup>55</sup> Many have pressed the issue too far and try to fit the occasion into unwarranted places using poor translation methods because of their presuppositions about dating. Some have taken it to be sung at the return of David from defeating Ammon, translating **רְבָה** in v. 6 as the name Rabbah while relating **שָׁׁרֵךְ** in the same verse to king Hanun of the Ammonites and **מֶלֶךְ** in v. 5 to the more general grouping of Syro-Ammonite kings warring with Israel.<sup>56</sup> Some have even dated this psalm to the Maccabean period citing the enthronement of Simon as the occasion for when it was given (1 Macc 14:41).<sup>57</sup> The view that seemingly holds the most constituents is that this is a psalm given during coronation ceremonies and has ties to the Assyrian coronation tradition. Waltke mentions eleven similarities between Ps. 110 and the Assyrian tradition that drive this view. (1) Begins with an Introduction Formula, v. 1 (2) The Subdivision of the Oracle Marked by a Second Introduction Formula, v. 4 (3) A Change in Person, Both of the Addressee and the Divine Speaker, vv. 4-5, 6-7 (4) Legitimization of Relationship Between Deity and King, v. 1 (5) Enemies at the King's Feet, v. 1 (6) Promise of Destruction of Enemies, vv. 2, 5-6 (7) Promise of Universal Dominion, vv. 1, 6 (8) Presence of Loyal Support, v. 3 (9) Divine Promise

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<sup>55</sup> See Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 143-44 and Ben Witherington, *Psalms Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 268. Witherington opts for (3) and draws parallels in (2) to Assyrian worship services where a prophet would come before the king and give a new oracle.

<sup>56</sup> Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 113 makes mention of these various views.

<sup>57</sup> Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, eds. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld et al, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 144. Zenger does not hold this view but mentions it. Zenger holds a post-exilic position. 1 Macc. 14:41 in the CEB reads, "The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise." This echoes very similar concepts but the dating is not cohesive or tenable considering the evidence.

Accompanied by Denial of Lying, v. 4 (10) Affirmation of Priestly Responsibility, v. 4 and (11) Eternity of Royal Prerogatives, v. 4.<sup>58</sup>

While this view may be compelling for some, Ps. 110 clearly comes off the lips of David (see justification a and m for detailed explanation). Because this psalm is ‘of David’ and was uttered by him, it predates any Assyrian coronation ceremony by over three hundred years. So, while the parallels may be striking, it is not copied from their practices. Ps. 110 was given by David, and then *subsequently* used in various coronation ceremonies.<sup>59</sup> A simple, but conclusive, refutation of any non-Davidic authorship comes from the NT. Jesus and Peter both ascribe authorship to David (Matt. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34-35) and Jesus even claims that David was “in the Spirit” when he said these verses. Phillips gives a beautifully simple quip regarding authorship, “It was written by David; Jesus said so.”<sup>60</sup>

Even though Ps. 110 is in the Davidic period, and not post-exilic, it is placed in Book V of the Psalter which is post-exilic. The editors of the Psalter placed the royal psalms throughout to intentionally form a sort of eschatological progression displaying the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the giving of the Davidic Covenant makes the function of the kingly

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<sup>58</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 123-24. The authors here do not hold this view but are simply pointing out similarities.

<sup>59</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 126. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 113 is less enthusiastic about this dating but is open to the possibility. He sees v. 4 as critical to the conversation regarding dating, he writes, “The issue of the priesthood in v. 4 is a strong factor that predisposes the choice of a pre-exilic date and also probably that of purely eschatological interpretation. If v. 4 can be harmonized with the Davidic monarchy, the way is mainly open toward a pre-exilic setting.” This is a fair and understandable concern considering the inconclusive nature of if there were any ‘priest-kings’ in Israel. See Richard P. Belcher, *Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2016), 133-38 for a brief exploration for ‘priest-kings’ in Israel. However, this plays into the understanding of what Ps. 110 is about within its historical setting. See The Link Between Historic Exposition and Modern Meaning for further discussion.

<sup>60</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms: An Expository Commentary*, vol. II of *The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988), 190.

<sup>61</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 146.

role explode in purpose, typology, and significance with regard to the king as a sort of mediatorial figure.<sup>62</sup> So, Ps. 110 since it is given in the Davidic reign becomes a critical text for understanding the kingly role, its typology, and what will be seen below in the kingly role's fulfillment. Again, the placement of Ps. 110 in Book V of the Psalter is "interpretively significant."<sup>63</sup> Book V has a royal flavor with a specific messianic hope, Ps. 110 being the pinnacle of what is called a "Davidic triad" that includes Ps. 108-110.<sup>64</sup> Ps. 108 introduces the immediate (and eschatological) problem of enemies, it is mulled over in Ps. 109, and the problem is dealt with and solved by God in Ps. 110:1-2, its conclusion being messianic and eschatological.<sup>65</sup> This triad "indicate[s] the stages of the Messiah's eschatological warfare against his enemies."<sup>66</sup> Belcher picks up on this progression as well, he writes "This promise was given to the anointed one at the time of his installation in Psalm 2, was prayed for in Psalm 72, was temporarily hindered in Psalm 89, but is actualized in Psalm 110."<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, in a general sense the entire Psalter has this formula. It is messianic and eschatological in that it assumes and teaches that God now reigns, and God as King is coming to reign.<sup>68</sup> The Psalter closes with this

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<sup>62</sup> Richard P. Belcher, *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020), 183-85. See also Richard P. Belcher, *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2020), 97-112.

<sup>63</sup> Emadi, *The Royal Priest*, 78.

<sup>64</sup> Emadi, *The Royal Priest*, 78.

<sup>65</sup> Emadi, *The Royal Priest*, 79.

<sup>66</sup> Kim, *Psalm 110 in Its Literary and Generic Contexts*, 160. For a helpful brief exercise to see this progression, see Ps. 108:13 where David proclaims that God will "tread down our foes." Compared to Ps. 110:1 where these foes are now a footstool where David's Lord's feet rest after he has stomped on his enemies. So this triad begins and ends with imagery of enemies under God's feet. In Ps. 108 it is anticipated and by Ps. 110 it is completed.

<sup>67</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 148.

<sup>68</sup> Futato, *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, 349-53.

in mind, following the messianic theme of Book V by concluding with the ‘Hallelujah’ psalms which is an appropriate response to the promised deliverance and final universal reign of God.<sup>69</sup>

### **The Link Between Historic Exposition and Modern Meaning**

Ps. 110 falls into the category of ‘royal psalms’ which are categorized on the basis of content, regarding the Davidic Covenant, the kingship of Israel, and other ‘kingly’ concepts of justice and reign, rather than any literary form like some other psalms.<sup>70</sup> Like occasion and authorship, the historical meaning of the Psalm is disputed. Many commentators argue that Ps. 110 cannot simply be a prophetic psalm because then it would have no value to Israel in the setting it was given.<sup>71</sup> At face value this critique seems relevant, Belcher writes that “the best way to approach a royal psalm is to understand how the psalm fits into the historical setting of the monarchy, especially its relationship to the concepts of the Davidic covenant...”<sup>72</sup> Because of this, many assume that the Psalm must actually be about David. It is not referring to the Messiah because if it was there would be no historical occasion for its giving.<sup>73</sup> However, this fails to account for properly understood “concepts of the Davidic covenant.” But, Belcher continues his thought, “... the key promises of the Davidic covenant include a descendant (seed) of David who will build the Lord’s house, a father-son relationship between the Lord and the descendant, an

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<sup>69</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 492-94.

<sup>70</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 118.

<sup>71</sup> See Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21, 113 as an example of this objection. He writes, “One respects the worthy motives of those who seek to restrict the psalm is obviously not possible here, and any attempt must appear subjective and selective. Christian scholars would agree concerning the hermeneutical value of the psalm as a messianic promise. One respects the worthy motives of those who seek to restrict the psalm to a messianic intent from the beginning. Yet it hardly accords with the pattern of historical and theological development discernable in the royal psalms in general and with the ancient cultural and historical royal references within Ps. 110.”

<sup>72</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 121.

<sup>73</sup> Belcher, *Prophet, Priest, and King*, 133.

enduring house or dynasty, and an enduring kingdom.”<sup>74</sup> So, as the royal psalms relate to the Davidic covenant and its “key promises,” it makes perfect sense to expect a psalm regarding the promised seed of David who will rule on his throne eternally. Because of this, Ps. 110 is the only royal Psalm which is understood “as a direct prediction of Christ because of the unique combination of kingly and priestly roles in one person.”<sup>75</sup> The Hebrew word **מֶלֶךְ** used in v. 1 sets the stage clearly for prophetic speech and so it should be no surprise that David prophesied regarding the Davidic seed in Ps. 110 (see justification b for further discussion).

Ps. 110 is intrinsically related to covenants and holds a unique position within the Psalter, Emadi writes, “Psalm 110 picks up a theme woven into every major biblical covenant thus far: a royal priest will establish God’s rule on the earth.”<sup>76</sup> And while the royal psalms relate to the Davidic covenant, and Ps. 110 in many ways relates to all previous biblical covenants, Ps. 110 distinguishes itself into a unique category altogether. Within the context of the Davidic covenant, the utterance of Ps. 110 illuminates for OT readers the peculiarly new nature of the promised covenant they anticipated.<sup>77</sup> But this is helpful, not destructive to the historical meaning of Ps. 110. By issuing an illuminating effect on the promised new covenant, Ps. 110 provides meaning and value for all believers in the age of David, the post-exilic Israelite community,<sup>78</sup> and throughout the entire old covenant dispensation. The NT’s consistent use of Ps. 110 confirms the notion that (1) the psalm is a direct prophetic speech regarding Christ, and (2) that it has

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<sup>74</sup> This is the second half of the quote from Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 121. See note 72.

<sup>75</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 122.

<sup>76</sup> Emadi, *The Royal Priest*, 81.

<sup>77</sup> James Hely Hutchinson, *Answering the Psalmist’s Perplexity: New-Covenant Newness in the Book of Psalms*, ed. D.A Carson and Benjamin L. Gladd, New Studies in Biblical Theology 62 (London: Apollos, 2023), 139.

<sup>78</sup> Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 154 thinks that this psalm is simply an “expression of the hopes of post-exilic Israel, impregnated with royal (‘messianic’) theology.”

immediate and future significance for its historical readers. It solidifies both the narrow and wider, the historical and eschatological meaning of Ps. 110.<sup>79</sup>

The link between historic exegesis and modern meaning is found in the kingship of the Messiah fulfilling the Davidic covenant and the implications thereof. These implications being the eternal reign of the Seed of David, the judgment of God on the enemies of Israel and the final victory of God over these enemies. The psalm's context as a critical text for seeing the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant allows readers to see the psalm in a twofold manner. A slight glimpse forward into future victory within the context of exile, and a revelatory look forward as God reveals his final victory of the powers of darkness themselves. As already mentioned, the best way to understand Ps. 110 is as a direct prediction regarding the Messiah.<sup>80</sup> But this is not a simple prediction. The present tense verbs and imperatives throughout the psalm insinuate a sense of guarantee because they speak of future events as if they are happening. The Messiah has not yet been born and has not defeated enemies, but yet he is spoken to as if it is already accomplished (see justification q for discussion regarding the use of the perfect).

Importantly, both sections of the psalm are dominated by the kingly actions of 'יְהָוָה (David's Lord) and YHWH. YHWH's defeat of his enemies alongside his "throne companion"<sup>81</sup> who is both a king and a priest is the highlight of the psalm and the actions of YHWH are so closely connected to the King-Priest's that they are almost indistinguishable.<sup>82</sup> In v. 1 YHWH

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<sup>79</sup> See Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. II, 291. In addition see Steven J. Lawson, *Preaching the Psalms: Unlocking the Unsearchable Riches of David's Treasury* (EP Books, 2012), 281-89 who very helpfully explains how intertextual connections should serve as a positive hermeneutic. Therefore the NT's use of Ps. 110 is a valid approach to help understand how Ps. 110 may/should have been understood in its historical setting.

<sup>80</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 148.

<sup>81</sup> Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 145.

<sup>82</sup> Both Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 122 and Hutchinson, *Answering the Psalmist's Perplexity*, 139 make mention of the general cohesiveness of the attributes described of YHWH and 'יְהָוָה.

gives an utterance that sounds eerily similar to the words of YHWH in Isa. 45:1-2 as he pronounces כָּרֶשׁ (Cyrus) will be his conquering king in the near future.<sup>83</sup> Then in v. 4 he swears an oath, both oracles are responded to with a guarantee of victory in vv. 2-3 and vv. 5-7. It is guaranteed because they are YHWH's declarations.<sup>84</sup> Num. 24:17 and Ps. 2:9 declares that the messiah would become/use a טְבַשׁ (scepter) to destroy the nations and now into v. 2 אֶלְעָזֶר is given a 'mighty scepter'<sup>85</sup> by YHWH to judge and destroy the nations.<sup>86</sup> V. 3 displays that God's overwhelming power and strength will be so trustworthy and benevolent that his people will "willingly offer themselves" to join the fight. There is no fear or hesitation in his people because of their trust and love for their conquering King.

Not only is אֶלְעָזֶר the conquering King, but he is also a priest forever, "after the order of Melchizedek" (v. 4). This is not simply a prophecy but it is a divine oath which cannot be broken or averted in any way (Heb. 6:13-17).<sup>87</sup> The King will not only usher in peace by the destruction of his enemies, but he will bring peace also between God and his people with the utter and total forgiveness of sins under a new priesthood. A type of forgiveness which previously could not be achieved by the Aaronic priesthood as they were simply figures, shadows prefiguring this priest.<sup>88</sup> There is both utter forgiveness because of the mediatorial work of the new Priest and

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<sup>83</sup> Witherington, *Psalms Old and New*, 267-68. Isa 45:1-2 reads, "Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: 'I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron.'"

<sup>84</sup> Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. II, 290.

<sup>85</sup> נְטוּנָה is used in Ps. 110, a synonym of טְבַשׁ which is used in Num. 24:17 and Ps. 2:9.

<sup>86</sup> Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. II, 292-93.

<sup>87</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 130.

<sup>88</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 1995), 51-3.

utter redemption by a new King who ushers in a new Exodus.<sup>89</sup> Simply put, “the Messiah is to be a king whose rule provides a priestly ministry.”<sup>90</sup>

Now that YHWH has given the two oracles and sworn an irrevocable oath (see justification j), in a twist, he is now at the right hand of אֵלֶּךָ. The King-Priest goes to war against the enemies of YHWH and YHWH shatters the King-Priest’s enemies. YHWH closely and intimately walks with the King-Priest (see justification o).<sup>91</sup> While there are absolutely notes of hyperbolic poetic language in v. 6 regarding the wide scope of the king’s victory, there is truth that the Davidic monarchy will thrive for a time and God will remain faithful to vindicate his people. But this is not the sole meaning, it references the Davidic monarchy *as well as* the final day of judgment on all nations (Yom YHWH).<sup>92</sup> V. 7 closes the psalm as the conquering King-Priest drinks from the stream and lifts his head, a sign of victory, peace, and rest.<sup>93</sup> And the most astonishing part of it all, is that this King-Priest is a son of David (Matt. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:42).

The intertextuality of Ps. 110 is staggering and the many connections help interpreters decipher further the full extent of the text’s meaning. Ps. 110 gives a glimpse into the very end of

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<sup>89</sup> Hutchinson, *Answering the Psalmist’s Perplexity*, 140.

<sup>90</sup> James Luther Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 105.

<sup>91</sup> Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. II, 296.

<sup>92</sup> See Witherington, *Psalms Old and New*, 272. This also seems to be the opinion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew as he claims the title Son of David in the context of Ps. 110:1. See Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, ed. David Dockery, vol. 22 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman, 1992), 402-3; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2010), 998 and John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Repr., The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 789-801, 1132-33 for explorations of Jesus’ interaction with Ps. 110:1. Nolland notes that Ps. 110 and Dan. 7:26 are most likely interpreted together and that the two passages in conjunction form this final judgment view of Ps. 110 as one figure judges and one figure sits and is confirmed in his power/judgment.

<sup>93</sup> Witherington, *Psalms Old and New*, 271.

time and solves a problem that has been since the beginning of time. In many ways, Ps. 110 is about the “reversal of enmity”<sup>94</sup> as God crushes the head of his greatest enemy, “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

### **The Unchanging Meaning of Psalm 110**

As the Davidic seed in sight becomes more clear through the exploration of Ps. 110 his true mission comes into clarity as well. And with this, the true meaning of Ps. 110 is illuminated. The unchanging meaning for David, post-exilic Israel, and believers in the 21st century. In Gen. 1:28 Adam is told by God to **הַרְאֵ** (exercise dominion/rule), but he failed to do so as Satan entered the garden and overthrew Adam’s reign. In Ps. 110:2 the King-Priest is commanded to **הַרְאֵ** (exercise dominion/rule) and rule over his enemies.<sup>95</sup> In Gen. 3:15 God says he will put enmity (Hebrew word **אִיָּבָה**) between the serpent and the woman, and between both of their offspring. Ps. 110:2, the King-Priest is instructed to rule over his **אִיָּבָה** (enemies). It is said in Gen. 3:15 that God himself is the one who will put (**תַּזְבִּיאֵ**) enmity between them. And later in Ps. 110:2 as the final victory over the serpent comes, YHWH himself will **תַּזְבִּיאֵ** (put) the enemies of the King-Priest under his feet.<sup>96</sup> So, Ps. 110 in its broader context is about final eschatological warfare, not necessarily on humanity but even more so on the spiritual forces of darkness who the King-Priest will destroy, giving him and his people eternal peace. So in many ways and even primarily, Ps. 110 is a text that looks forward to the final fulfillment of many of the promises of the gospel, and especially the *protoevangelion*.

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<sup>94</sup> Iosif J Zhakevich, “Reverse of the Curse: An Allusion to Genesis 3:15 in Psalm 110:1,” *Masters Semin. J.* 33.2 (2022): 239–54, 242.

<sup>95</sup> Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. II, 293.

<sup>96</sup> Zhakevich, “Reverse of the Curse,” 242-45.

Jesus highlights his identity by two OT figures primarily, the Son of Man and the Son of David. The Son of David being here the King-Priest of Ps. 110. Jesus highlights that the Messiah, in a super-natural/super-human sense, will receive a kingdom unlike any earthly kingdom which has ever been seen. The Davidic monarchy will be so dwarfed in glory by the coming kingdom of the King-Priest that even David will say to the King-Priest, “my Lord.”<sup>97</sup> So, in this view, the central message of Ps. 110 is the Messiah’s eschatological war and final victory of the enemies of YHWH on the Day of the Lord.<sup>98</sup> On that day the King-Priest will appear in the clouds, riding on a white horse and his robe will be covered in blood like Aaron’s on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) and like David or Joshua returning from a victory. Except this King-Priest’s blood soaked robe signifies much more than Aaron, David, or Joshua’s did. Because the King-Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be covered in blood which signifies finality. Total forgiveness of sins, and total defeat over Satan, sin, and death. What a glorious victory for YHWH and the King-Priest. God’s rule will be ushered in by His Chosen and Anointed One as he executes judgment over the nations, sin, death, and Satan and brings peace to God’s people. Jesus Christ will be “a universally recognized Lord and judge.”<sup>99</sup>

But how can Ps. 110 be used in the lives of Christians today? Ps. 110 clearly instructs believers towards two principle actions. The first is to take hope and have confidence in the King-Priest and the second is to be diligent and submit to the King-Priest. Take hope and have confidence because the King-Priest will conquer, it is guaranteed. Spurgeon put it simply when he said, “[Jesus’] work is done, and he may sit; it is well done, and he may sit at this right hand;

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<sup>97</sup> Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 34-5.

<sup>98</sup> Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 146.

<sup>99</sup> Waltke, Zaspel, and Ferguson, *How to Read and Understand the Psalms*, 400-02.

it will have grand results, and he may therefore quietly wait to see the complete victory *which is certain to follow.*<sup>100</sup> Like the apostle John assures believers in his apocalypse, they have conquered, because their King-Priest has conquered (Rev. 15:2-3).<sup>101</sup> Because the King-Priest has stooped down to “drink from the stream along the path” (Ps. 110:7) in victory and rest, his people too will stoop down and drink from the River of Life as they enjoy his final victory and rest (Rev. 22:1-5). Believers must also be diligent and submit to the King-Priest. Ps. 110:6-7 seems to have connections to Ps. 1. These two passages draw a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. The wicked will perish (Ps. 1:6b) and have their heads crushed like their king the serpent, but the righteous will be blessed (Ps. 1:1a) and have their heads lifted by their King-Priest.<sup>102</sup> So Psalm 110 provides a twofold instruction for believers. Take courage in the conquering King-Priest of Ps. 110 and persevere because of the conquering King-Priest of Ps. 110. Belcher summarizes this point well when he writes, “Christ established a kingdom that will never end, and even today he rules over this world at the right hand of the Father for the sake of his people... we live in a world that does not recognize the rule of our King. We can be assured that one day he will return as the King of kings to defeat all his enemies.”<sup>103</sup>

Ps. 110 gives a glimpse into how wise God really is. YHWH pulls back the veil and shows his glorious plan, revealing that the Son of David will be made “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). In him God’s people, the true Israel, will have a perfect Priest and a perfect King

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<sup>100</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Containing an Original Exposition of the Book of Psalms; A Collection of Illustrative Extracts from the Whole Range of Literature; A Series of Homiletical Hints upon Almost Every Verse; and Lists of Writers upon Each Psalm*, vol. II (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 461. Emphasis mine.

<sup>101</sup> William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, 75th Anniversary Commemorative Edition. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 13-4.

<sup>102</sup> Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. II, 296-97.

<sup>103</sup> Belcher, *Covenant Theology*, 189.

who will overcome and conquer on their behalf. Believers both in David's day and this very day can hold a confident hope and preserve in the world because their King-Priest is guaranteed to overcome.

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