

Psalm 109 (110) - Excerpt from "Christ in the Psalms" by Patrick Henry Reardon
The Lord said to my Lord

..." The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand..."

In all of the Psalter, is there a line more precious and beloved than this?

No other line of the Book of Psalms enjoys, in the New Testament, a prominence equal to these opening words of Psalm 109. In the traditions reflected in the Synoptic Gospels, for example, Christians remembered that Jesus had quoted this verse in controversy with some of His rabbinical opponents (cf. Matt. 22:44; Mark 2:36; Luke 20:42) and that the context for His citation was the decisive and great kerygmatic question of the Lord's identity: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" (Matt. 22:42). In these few words of the Psalter, "The Lord said to my Lord," Christians learned that Jesus is not only David's descendant but also his preexisting Lord. He is the Son, not only of David, but of God.

Having mysteriously addressed the identity of Christ, this same line of our psalm goes on to speak of His triumph and enthronement, with the solemn proclamation: "Sit at My right hand." These majestic words were quoted in the first sermon of the Christian Church, that of Pentecost morning at the third hour (cf. Acts 2:34), and became the foundation of some of the most important Christological and soteriological statements of the New Testament (cf. Mark 16:19; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2.).

In this one line of the psalm, then, we profess, in summary form, those profound doctrines at the foundation of our whole relationship to God the eternal identity of Jesus Christ, His triumph over sin and death, and His glorification at God's right hand: "God... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, ... who ..., when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:1-3).

Our psalm immediately goes on to speak of those who oppose the triumph of Christ: ... till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies. " Once again, in the writings of the New Testament these words were quoted to lay the basis for the Christian interpretation of history and eschatology (cf. Acts 2:35, 36 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 10:12, 13; and perhaps 1 Pet. 3:22).

The reference to "Zion" evokes remembrance of the history of that ancient city, also known as Salem and Jerusalem, and the figure of her earliest recorded king, Melchizedek. He was not only the king of Jerusalem but also her "priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18), and it is with reference to that mysterious priesthood of Melchizedek that Psalm 109 speaks of the priesthood of Jesus: "The Lord has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'"

No other commentary on these words surpasses their theologically rich elaboration in Hebrews 7, which sees the priesthood of Melchizedek as a type or foreshadowing of the eternal priesthood of Jesus, speaking of our Lord's glorification above the heavens, at God's right hand,

our permanent interces-sor at the Throne, the one Mediator between God and man: "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, ... first being translated 'king of righteousness,' and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace,' without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. ... And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come... according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: 'You are a priest forever / According to the order of Melchizedek. ... But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (vv. 1-3, 15-17, 24-26).