

Thursday was Ascension Thursday. We in the free church tradition often neglect the church calendar. We tend to value the American *holidays* over the church's holy days. Ascension Day is the 40th day after Easter, which marks the day Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives and is ascended to heaven. We read about this in Acts 1:9-11: "And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven'."

Ascension is important but neglected sometimes. The church has confessed it together in the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead."

It is providential because if you were here with us last week in Matt 26, Jesus said to the high priest, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." He told Caiaphas that "from now on" (*ap arti*), meaning this is about to be fulfilled, he'd see the vindication of Jesus. He quotes Dan 7 and Ps 110, the latter of which will be our focus this morning. Turn to Ps 110 (476). This is God's favorite verse, quoted or alluded to 37 times in the NT.¹ So, we should have a handle on it.

Main point: because of the ascension of Jesus, he is the world's true and rightful ruler. Let's consider the significance of the ascended King from Ps 110. 6 truths from God's favorite verse:

I. This King is David's Lord - 1 – This first word for Lord is all caps, showing it is a translation of the divine name, YHWH. David writes, "YHWH says to my Lord." But who is David's Lord? David is the King. He has no Lord besides YHWH, so who is YHWH talking to when talking to David's Lord?

David's Lord is the coming King. The Messiah. The Lord of David. YHWH says to David's Lord. This King is David's Lord. We all know that the Messiah is the Son of David, but here he is the Lord of David. Remember in Matt 22, Jesus points this out. He quotes this Psalm and asks, "If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" Well, he is both: the son of David and the Lord of David.

II. This King Shares the Authority of God - 1 - The first verse of the Psalm is directly quoted six times in the New Testament!² Ps 110:1 is directly quoted or referred to 24 times in the NT.³ It is an extremely important verse. YHWH says to the Messiah, sit at my right hand. The right hand is not literal, but a symbol of a privileged position, the most privileged position there is. It is the place of honor. It is a sharing of the authority of God himself. It means "to enjoy a posture of power and authority given by

¹ FDB, 425.

² (Mat 22:44, Mar 12:36, Luk 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-35, Heb1:13, Heb 10:12-13).

³ See Quoted in Matt 22:44, 26:64, Mark 12:36, 14:62, Luke 20:42-43, 22:69, Acts 2:34-35, Heb 1:13. Alluded to in Mark 16:19, Acts 2:33, 5:31, 7:55-56, Rom 8:34, 1 Cor 15:25, Eph 1:20, 2:6, Col 3:1, Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12-13, 12:2, 1 Pet 3:22, Rev 3:21.

the one at whose right hand someone sits.”⁴ The right hand of God is the control center of the heavenly throne room. This King sits down, not to rest, but to reign. From here he will rule and reign. When does this sitting happen? The ascension. Jesus ascends to the right hand of God. To sit is to be enthroned (Ps 45:9).

YHWH says to the Messiah, sit at my right hand *until* I make your enemies your footstool. Think about this imagery. This King will rule until his enemies are on the ground and the King will rest his feet upon them. This is imagery of conquest, of victory, of subjection of those opposed to him. This King is the world’s victorious ruler.

III. This King is actively ruling in History – 2 – The scepter of the King issues from Zion, which is where God dwells. His throne is in the heavens (Ps 11:4, 103:19, 48:2, 99:1-3, Heb 12:22). This king will rule in the midst of his enemies. In other words, he is ruling now. His Kingdom is not just future, but now and future. He is on the throne now. As we’ll see next week, Acts 2 tells us that plainly. He is ruling now in history, progressively subduing his enemies.⁵

His reign has a distinct beginning and a distinct ending. Christ’s rule started at the ascension when he sat down at God’s right hand, and will last until every last enemy is subdued. His rule doesn’t start at the second coming. Then there will be no enemies. Listen to the way Paul puts it in 1 Cor 15:25-26: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” Jesus is on the throne, reigning and ruling and slowly but surely subduing his enemies through the gospel. When someone believes upon Christ, they turn from enemy to friend. Every time a person believes the gospel, the rule of his mighty scepter extends from Zion. He expands his rule as he converts the nations.

God is expanding the Kingdom of this Christ from Zion, slowly but surely, progressively in history, in the midst of enemies. As Jesus teaches us, his Kingdom comes spiritually and slowly. It takes time, like a little leaven that eventually leavens the whole lump. Or like a mustard seed, that goes from the tiniest of seeds to the largest of trees. The prophet Isa says it is like a mountain that becomes the highest of the mountains and all nations will flow to it (2:2-3). The prophet Daniel says it is like a stone that becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth as the Son of Man reigns (Dan 2:35). The King will rule and reign until his enemies are subdued.

IV. This King is also a Priest – 4 – The Lord has sworn. YHWH has taken an oath. David is referring to the covenant God made with him. The promise that he would have a Son who would rule in an eternal Kingdom. Think 2 Sam 7. Ps 89 is also a Psalm about the King, a Messianic Psalm. **Ps 89:1-4, 132:11**. He will not change his mind. You can bank on this. This ascended King is also a priest. You are a priest forever. This is no temporary priest. This priest is not limited by his own sin. **Heb 7:20-25**. This priesthood is settled. He is an everlasting priest because he lives forever.

⁴ Ash 212.

⁵ Your enemies: etymological connection with Gen 3:15 enmity.

The coming King will be a King-Priest. Remember, that in the OT, these two offices had to be separated. Kings could not be priests.⁶ Think about Saul's unlawful sacrifice in 1 Sam 13:8-14. He was not allowed to act as a priest. He tried and it cost him the Kingdom. Or Uzziah in 2 Chron 26:16-21? He tried to burn incense on the altar God struck him with leprosy on his head. 2 Chron 26:21: "And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD." Kings were not priests, but this future ruler will overturn all that and will be a king-priest.

But this priest will be of a different order. What order were OT priests of? Levite. This will not be a Levitical priest but a Melchizedekian priest. What in the world does that mean? Who is this guy? He has only been mentioned one time so far in the OT. We meet him as the King of Salem (that would become Jerusalem) back in Gen 14. He meets Abraham after a battle, blesses him and received a tithe from him, showing that he is superior to Abraham. Go check out Heb 7 some time, that is all about this. This King is also a priest.

V. This King Will Crush Heads - 5-6 – This King will shatter kings. He will judge the nations (Ps 2:2-9). He will shatter chiefs. The ESV has a footnote here for the word for chief. It says, "Or the head." This King will crush the head of the enemy. You Bible readers will know that this is an allusion to the first gospel promise given back in Gen 3:15 where God tells the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Num 24:8, 17-19, Gen 49:8-10). The King will subdue his enemies. He will crush head. He will make his enemies his footstool. The victor will rest his feet on them. / He will crush heads over the wide earth. His victory will be universal. The entire earth will submit to this King. **Ps 2:6-8, 22:28, 72:8-10**. The coming priest-King is ruling now, subduing the nations into his global empire.

7 - Part of ancient Jewish enthronement ceremonies was the rite of drinking from a Gihon spring for refreshment. I get the image of a boxer walking back to his corner having just knocked his opponent out. He needs some Gatorade to re-hydrate. This King crushes heads then lifts his head.

VI. The People of This King Serve with Eagerness – 3 – The people of this King offer their lives up willingly and freely. Strength will be renewed each day like the morning dew. The King has continual sources of fresh energy. The people of this king are arrayed in priestly attire, holy splendor. Priests wear holy garments (2 Chron 20:21). This King has an army, clothed in priestly garments who go forth to subdue his enemies and extend his Kingdom (Rev 19:11-16). The King will conquer by a willing army of priests.

From this magnificent Psalm we learn that Jesus is the world's true and rightful ruler. He is the ascended Lord. We see that Jesus Christ the ascended King is exalted to the throne of God and from that position of authority, he will go forth with his people to rule in the midst of his enemies, subduing them and extending his rule and reign to the four corners of the world and that reign will not end until

⁶ We saw hints of this with Adam, who was commissioned to rule and subdue the earth and work and keep the garden-temple (Num 3:7-8, 8:25-26). David is also a type, wearing an ephod (2 Sam 6:14), making offerings (2 Sam 6:18), and his sons were priests (8:18); 1 Kin 8. Zech 6:9-14 foresees a Messiah who is king and priest. We also saw the merging of these offices in Isaiah's vision of Jesus in chapter 6 (Jn 12:41). This one was sitting on a throne (as king) and the train of his robe filled the temple (as priest).

all his enemies are his footstool. / What does the ascension mean for us? It should affect us in 6 ways, at least:

1. We should be comforted because Jesus is in control. Jesus has the wheel. He is on the throne. He is in control. He is head of the control center of the heavenly throne room. There are no maverick molecules but he is orchestrating history and he is doing so in order that every event will be to the Christian's maximum advantage, which is conformity to Jesus Christ. Fight anxiety with this truth. The right man is at the helm of the cosmos.
2. We should be missionally active because Jesus is at work. He is actively ruling and reigning and subduing enemies as the gospel is preached. The ascension is fuel for the GC. Notice the parallels: GC: all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. There, go and make disciples. Jesus sits at the right hand of God and will until all his enemies are made his footstool. Listen to Acts 5:30-31: "The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Jesus is leading from the throne, and granting repentance and forgiveness as the gospel is spread.⁷
3. We should be optimistic because he is reigning, and winning, and will win and because his victory is assured, we are more than conquerors through him. Eph 1:19-22: "what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church."
4. We should be secure because this King-Priest provides atonement. Our King is our Priest who atones for our sin. Heb 10:11-13: "And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet."
5. We should be assured because the ascended Priest-King is interceding for us. Rom 8:31-34: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." He is at the right hand of God, praying for you. Can you imagine his prayers? If you could hear those prayers, nothing in this world could get you down.

"Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great High Priest whose name is love. Whoever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on His hands. My name is written on His

⁷ He rules through us. See Ps 8:6 Rev 2:26-27. Interestingly, this word for "rule" here is the same one used in the cultural mandate in Gen 1 when God calls mankind to be fruitful and have dominion over the created order.

heart. I know that while in heav'n He stands. No tongue can bid me thence depart." Saints. He stands in heaven right now with your name graven on his hands and your name written on his heart and because he stands, no tongue can bid us thence depart. Come what may, we are secure because he is secure.

6. We should set our minds on Christ. Col 3:1-4: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Heidelberg Q & A 49: Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us? A. First, he is our advocate in heaven in the presence of his Father. Second, we have our own flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that Christ our head will also take us, his members, up to himself. Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth as a corresponding pledge. By the Spirit's power we seek not earthly things but the things above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand."