

# Exposition on Psalm 110

by St. Augustine

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*This sermon explores the meaning of Psalm 110, emphasizing Christ's reign at the right hand of God, His priesthood, and His judgment among the heathen.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 109:1, Matthew 22:42, John 1:1, Romans 10:10, Philippians 2:8

**Topics:** "Christology", "Priesthood Of Christ"

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## Description

St. Augustine preaches on Psalm 109, emphasizing the prophecy of Jesus Christ as both the Son of David and the Lord, challenging believers to confess and believe in His dual nature. He delves into the significance of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, highlighting how He is both David's Son and David's Lord through His incarnation and exaltation. Augustine discusses Christ's eternal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, His role as the intercessor at God's right hand, and His victory over enemies, symbolized by kings, through His divine power and authority.

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## Transcript

1. ...This Psalm is one of those promises, surely and openly prophesying our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; so that we are utterly unable to doubt that Christ is announced in this Psalm, since we are now Christians, and believe the Gospel. For when our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ asked of the Jews, whose Son they alleged Christ to be, and they had replied, the Son of David; He at once replied to their answer, How then does David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto My Lord? etc. If then, He asked, David in the spirit call Him Lord, how is He his son? Matthew 22:42-45 With this verse this Psalm begins.

2. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit on My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool Psalm 109:1. We ought, therefore, thoroughly to consider this question proposed to the Jews by the Lord, in the very commencement of the Psalm. For if what the Jews answered be asked of us, whether we confess or deny it; God forbid that we should deny it. If it be said to us, Is Christ the Son of David, or not? If we reply, No, we contradict the Gospel for the Gospel of St. Matthew thus begins, The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. Matthew 1:1 The Evangelist declares, that he is writing the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. The Jews, then, when questioned by Christ, whose Son they believed Christ to be, rightly answered, the Son of David. The Gospel agrees with their answer. Not only the suspicion of the Jews, but the faith of Christians, does declare this....If then David in the spirit called Him Lord, how is He his son? The Jews were silent at this question: they found no further reply: yet they did not seek Him as the Lord, for they did not acknowledge Him to be Himself that Son of David. But let us,

brethren, both believe and declare: for, with the heart we believe unto righteousness: but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; Romans 10:10 let us believe, I say, and let us declare both the Son of David, and the Lord of David. Let us not be ashamed of the Son of David, lest we find the Lord of David angry with us.

3. ...We know that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, since His resurrection from the dead, and ascent into heaven. It is already done: we saw not it, but we have believed it: we have read it in the Scripture, have heard it preached, and hold it by faith. So that by the very circumstance that Christ was David's Son, He became His Lord also. For That which was born of the seed of David was so honoured, that It was also the Lord of David. You wonder at this, as if the same did not happen in human affairs. For if it should happen, that the son of any private person be made a king, will he not be his father's lord? What is yet more wonderful may happen, not only that the son of a private person, by being made a king, may become his father's lord; but that the son of a layman, by being made a Bishop, may become his father's father. So that in this very circumstance, that Christ took upon Him the flesh, that He died in the flesh, that He rose again in the same flesh, that in the same He ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of His Father, in this same flesh so honoured, so brightened, so changed into a heavenly garb, He is both David's Son, and David's Lord....

4. Christ, therefore, sits at the right hand of God, the Son is on the right hand of the Father, hidden from us. Let us believe. Two things are here said: that God said, Sit on My right hand; and added, until I make Your enemies Your footstool; that is, beneath Your feet. Thou dost not see Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father: yet you can see this, how His enemies are made His footstool. While the latter is fulfilled openly, believe the former to be fulfilled secretly. What enemies are made His footstool? Those to whom imagining vain things it is said, Why do the heathen so furiously rage together: and why do the people imagine a vain thing? etc.. ..He therefore sits at the right hand of God, till His enemies be placed beneath His feet. This is going on, this is taking place: although it is accomplished by degrees, it is going on without end. For though the heathen rage, will they, taking counsel together against Christ, prevent the fulfilment of these words: I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for your possession?...Their memorial is perished with a cry; but, The Lord shall endure for ever: as another Psalm, but not another Spirit, says.

5. And what follows? The Lord shall send the rod of Your power out of Sion Psalm 109:2. It appears, brethren, it most clearly appears, that the Prophet is not speaking of that kingdom of Christ, in which He reigns for ever with His Father, Ruler of the things which are made through Him: for when does not God the Word reign, who is in the beginning with God? John 1:1 For it is said, Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. 1 Timothy 1:17 To what eternal King? To one invisible, incorruptible. For in this, that Christ is with the Father, invisible and incorruptible, because He is His Word, and His Power, and His Wisdom, and God with God, through whom all things were made; He is King eternal; but, nevertheless, that reign of temporal government, by which, through the mediation of His flesh, He called us into eternity, begins with Christians; but of His reign there shall be no end. His enemies therefore are made His footstool, while He is sitting on the right hand of His Father, as it is written; this is now going on, this will go on unto the end....

6. When therefore He has sent the rod of His power out of Sion: what shall happen? Be Thou ruler, even in the midst among Your enemies. First, Be Thou ruler in the midst of Your enemies: in the midst of the raging heathen. For shall He rule in the midst of His enemies at a later season, when the Saints have received their reward, and the ungodly their condemnation? And what wonder if He shall then rule, when

the righteous reign with Him for ever, and the ungodly burn with eternal punishments? What wonder, if He shall then? Now in the midst of Your enemies, now in this transition of ages, in this propagation and succession of human mortality, now while the torrent of time is gliding by, unto this is the rod of Your power sent out of Sion, that You may be Ruler in the midst of Your enemies. Rule Thou, rule among Pagans, Jews, heretics, false brethren. Rule Thou, rule, O Son of David, Lord of David, rule in the midst of Pagans, Jews, heretics, false brethren. Be Thou Ruler in the midst of Your enemies. We understand not this verse aright, if we do not see that it is already going on....

7. With You the beginning on the day of Your power Psalm 109:3. What is this day of His power, when is there beginning with Him, or what beginning, or in what sense is there beginning with Him, since He is the Beginning?...

8. What means, With You is the beginning? Suppose anything you please as the beginning. Of Christ Himself, it would rather have been said, You are the Beginning, than, With You is the beginning. For He answered to those who asked Him, Who are You? and said, Even the same that I said unto you, the Beginning; John 8:25 since His Father also is the Beginning, of whom is the only-begotten Son, in which Beginning was the Word, for the Word was with God. What then, if both the Father and the Son are the beginning, are there two beginnings? God forbid! For as the Father is God, and the Son is God, but the Father and the Son are not two Gods, but one God: so is the Father Beginning and the Son Beginning, but the Father and the Son are not two, but one Beginning. With You is the beginning. Then it shall appear in what sense the beginning is with You. Not that the beginning is not with You here also. For have You not also said, Behold, you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; but I am not alone, because the Father is with Me? John 16:32 Here therefore also, the beginning is with You. For You have said elsewhere also, But the Father that dwells in Me, He does His works. John 14:10 With You is the beginning: nor was the Father ever separated from You. But when the Beginning shall appear to be with You, then shall it be manifest unto all who are made like You; since they shall see You as You are; 1 John 3:2 for Philip saw You here, and sought the Father. John 14:8 Then therefore shall be seen what now is believed: then shall the beginning be with You in the sight of the righteous, in the sight of saints; the ungodly being removed, that they may not see the brightness of the Lord....

9. Explain of what power you speak. Because here also, as is said, His power is mentioned, when the rod of His power is sent forth out of Sion, that He may be Ruler in the midst of His enemies. Of what power do you speak, In the splendour of the saints? In the splendour, he says, of the saints. He speaks of that power when the saints shall be in splendour; not when still carrying about their earthly flesh, and groaning in a mortal and corruptible body....

10. But this is put off, this will be granted afterwards: what is there now? From the womb I have begotten You, before the morning star. What is here? If God has a Son, has He also a womb? Like fleshly bodies, He has not; for He has not a bosom either; yet it is said, He who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared Him. John 1:18 But that which is the womb, is the bosom also: both bosom and womb are put for a secret place. What means, from the womb? From what is secret, from what is hidden; from Myself, from My substance; this is the meaning of from the womb; for, Who shall declare His generation? Isaiah 53:8 Let us then understand the Father saying unto the Son, From My womb before the morning star have I brought You forth. What then means, before the morning star? The morning star is put for the stars, as if the Scripture signified the whole from a part, and from one conspicuous star all the stars. But how were those stars created? That they may be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. Genesis 1:14 ...This expression also, before the morning star, is used both figuratively and literally, and was thus

fulfilled. For the Lord was born at night from the womb of the Virgin Mary; the testimony of the shepherds does assert this, who were keeping watch over their flock. Luke 2:7-8 So David: O Thou, my Lord, who sittest at the right hand of my Lord, whence are You my Son, except because, From the womb before the morning star I have begotten You?

11. And unto what are You born? The Lord has sworn, and will not repent: You are a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec Psalm 109:4. For unto this were You born from the womb before the morning star, that You might be a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. For in that character in which He was born of the Father, God with God, coeternal with Him who begot Him, He is not a Priest; but He is a Priest on account of the flesh which He assumed, on account of the victim which He was to offer for us received from us. The Lord, then, has sworn. What then means, the Lord has sworn? Does the Lord, who forbids men to swear, Matthew 5:34 Himself swear? Or does He possibly forbid man to swear chiefly on this account, that he may not fall into perjury, and for this reason the Lord may swear, since He cannot be forsworn. For man, who, through a habit of swearing, may slip into perjury, is rightly forbidden to swear: for he will be farther from perjury in proportion as he is far from swearing. For the man who swears, may swear truly or falsely: but he who swears not, cannot swear falsely; for he swears not at all. Why then should not the Lord swear, since the Lord's oath is the seal of the promise? Let Him swear by all means. What then do you, when you swear? You call God to witness: this is to swear, to call God to witness; and for this reason there must be anxiety, that you may not call God to witness anything false. If therefore thou by an oath dost call God to witness, why then should not God also call Himself to witness with an oath? I live, says the Lord, this is the Lord's oath....The Lord swore, then, that is, confirmed: He will not repent, He will not change. What? You are a Priest for ever. For ever, for He will not repent. But Priest, in what sense? Will there be those victims, victims offered by the Patriarchs, altars of blood, and tabernacle, and those sacred emblems of the Old Covenant? God forbid! These things are already abolished; the temple being destroyed, that priesthood taken away, their victim and their sacrifice having alike disappeared, not even the Jews have these things. They see that the priesthood after the order of Aaron has already perished, and they do not recognise the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedec. I speak unto believers. If catechumens understand not something, let them lay aside sloth, and hasten unto knowledge. It is not therefore needful for me to disclose mysteries here: let the Scriptures intimate to you what is the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedec.

12. The Lord on Your right hand Psalm 109:5. The Lord had said, Sit on My right hand; now the Lord is on His right hand, as if they changed seats....That very Christ, the Lord on Your right hand, unto whom You have sworn, and it will not repent You: what does He, Priest for evermore? What does He, who is at the right hand of God, and intercedes for us, Romans 8:34 like a priest entering into the inner places, and into the holy of holies, into the mysteries of heaven, He alone being without sin, and therefore easily purifying from sins. He therefore on Your right hand shall wound even kings in the day of His wrath. What kings, do you ask? Have you forgotten? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed. These kings He wounded by His glory, and by the weight of His Name made kings weak, so that they had not power to effect what they wished. For they strove amain to blot out the Christian name from the earth, and could not; for Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken. Matthew 21:44 Kings therefore fall on this stone of offense, and are therefore wounded, when they say, Who is Christ? I know not what Jew or what Galilean He may have been, who died, who was slain in such a manner! The stone is before your feet, lying, so to speak, mean and humble: therefore by scorning thou dost stumble, by stumbling you fall, by falling you are wounded....But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Luke 20:18 When therefore any one falls upon it, it lies as it were low; it

then wounds: but when it shall grind him to powder, then it will come from above. See how in these two words, it shall wound him and grind him to powder: he strikes upon it, and it shall come down upon him: are distinguished the two seasons, of the humiliation and the majesty of Christ, of hidden punishment and future judgment. He will not crush, when He comes, that man whom He does not wound when He lies in a contemptible appearance....

13. He shall judge among the heathen: He shall fill up what has fallen Psalm 109:6. Whoever you are who art obstinate against Christ, you have raised on high a tower that must fall. It is good that you should cast yourself down, become humble, throw yourself at the feet of Him who sits on the right hand of the Father, that in you a ruin may be made to be built up. For if you abide in your evil height, you shall be cast down when you can not be built up. For of such the Scripture says in another passage: Therefore shall He break down, and not build them up. Beyond doubt he would not say this of some, unless there were some whom He broke down so as to build them up again. And this is going on at this time, while Christ is judging among the heathen in such a manner as to fill up what has fallen. He shall smite many heads over the earth. Here upon the earth in this life He shall smite many heads. He makes them humble instead of proud; and I dare to say, my brethren, that it is more profitable to walk here humbly with the head wounded, than with the head erect to fall into the judgment of eternal death. He will smite many heads when he causes them to fall, but He will fill them up and build them up again.

14. He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up his head Psalm 109:7. Let us consider Him drinking of the brook in the way: first of all, what is the brook? The onward flow of human mortality: for as a brook is gathered together by the rain, overflows, roars, runs, and by running runs down, that is, finishes its course; so is all this course of mortality. Men are born, they live, they die, and when some die others are born, and when they die others are born, they succeed, they flock together, they depart and will not remain. What is held fast here? What does not run? What is not on its way to the abyss as if it was gathered together from rain? For as a river suddenly drawn together from rain from the drops of showers runs into the sea, and is seen no more, nor was it seen before it was collected from the rain; so this hidden rain is collected together from hidden sources, and flows on; at death again it travels where it is hidden: this intermediate state sounds and passes away. Of this brook He drinks, He has not disdained to drink of this brook; for to drink of this brook was to Him to be born and to die. What this brook has, is birth and death; Christ assumed this, He was born, He died. Therefore has He lifted up His head; that is, because He was humble, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross: therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name; that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ the Lord is in the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:8-11

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