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Psalm 110 and Progressive Dispensationalism

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In recent books by Blaising, Bock, and Saucy, it has been claimed that Christ in His present session is seated on the throne of David. This is a position that has previously been denied by dispensationalists, being the exclusive affirmation of amillennialists, postmillennialists and non-dispensational premillennialists. Such a view is a problematic position for dispensationalists, for it assumes a continuity between Israel and the Church they are not willing to make easily. Blaising and Bock contend, writing on the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, that Jesus' ascension (Ps 110:1) signifies the beginning of His Davidic reign.¹ In support of the statement that, "every NT description of the present throne of Jesus is drawn from Davidic covenant promises," they say

Repeatedly the NT declares that He is enthroned at the right hand of God in fulfillment of the promise given in Ps 110:1. This is a Davidic promise; it

is the son of David who fulfills it. In Acts 2: 30-36, the resurrection, ascension, and seating of Christ in heaven at the right hand of God (Ps 110: 1) are present in light of the prediction 'that God had sworn to him [David] with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne' (Ac 2: 30). No other throne is discussed in this text except the Davidic throne.²

If Blaising, Bock, and Saucy are correct, then Christ's present headship over the Church is a Davidic rule that fulfills promises made by God to Israel. This is perhaps one of the most drastic departures of Progressive Dispensationalism from what earlier dispensationalists have held.³ The implications of such a confusion between Israel and the Church are significant and will affect several major areas of theology: Bibliology (Is the OT to be interpreted literally, and are its proclamations perspicuous?), Christology (Is the present session of Christ a Davidic rule?), Ecclesiology (Are Israel and the Church distinct in the unfolding of various dispensations, or do they become merged as "the people of God"?), and Eschatology (Will the Church be raptured before or after the seventieth week of Daniel?).

Key to the insistence that Christ is presently seated on David's throne is the interpretation of Ps 110.⁴ Verses 1 and 4 of this Psalm are quoted or alluded to more frequently in the NT than any other portion of the OT. The 2nd edition UBS Greek New Testament's index of quotations lists no fewer than twenty-five quotations or allusions to these two verses, including two by Matthew, three by Luke, one by John, four by Paul, and thirteen by the author of Hebrews. Such a frequency and distribution establish this Psalm as probably the most significant OT text for NT studies. Have Blaising, Bock, and Saucy been accurate in their interpretation? It is our conclusion that both an exegesis of Ps 110 in its OT context and a consideration of the analogy of faith show that Ps 110 does not support a present Davidic reign of Christ.

Bock insists that Peter, in Ac 2: 30, consciously substituted the word *kathizo* for the LXX's *tithemi* (Ps 132: 11) in order to establish an exegetical "link" with Ps 110's *kathou* (cited in Ac 2: 34). This, according to Bock, establishes an interpretation for Ps 110 that sees its fulfillment in terms of the Davidic Covenant. He argues as follows:

The crucial linking allusion appears at this point. Peter notes that David was ... the conscious beneficiary of an oath God had made to him that one "of the fruit of his [David's] loins" (KJV) would sit on his throne (Acts 2: 30). The key term is *kathisai* (to sit), which is reintroduced in the citation of Psalm 110 (note *kathou*, "sit," in v. 34). The allusion in verse 30 is to Psalm 132: 11, a psalm which is strongly Israelitish and national in tone (see vv. 12-18). The psalm in turn is a reflection of the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7, especially verse 12. This 2 Samuel passage is better known as the Davidic covenant. What is crucial is that David's awareness of this covenant promise is immediately linked to his

understanding of the resurrection promise in Psalm 16, which in turn is immediately tied to the resurrection proof text of Psalm 110 (vv. 31-35). Being seated on David's throne is linked to being seated at God's right hand. In other words, Jesus' resurrection-ascension to God's right hand is put forward by Peter as a fulfillment of the Davidic covenant To say that Peter is only interested to argue that Messiah must be raised misses the point of connection in these verses and ignores entirely the allusion to Psalm 132 and the Davidic covenant.[5](#)

In another publication, where this basic argument is put forth, Bock elucidates upon his understanding of the relevant hermeneutics.

One of the ways Jews showed fulfillment of an OT passage was to cite the language in alluding to a second passage, thus linking the two texts conceptually. So by his use of the verb "to sit" (Acts 2: 30,34) Peter links Psalm 132:11 (cited in 2: 30) with Psalm 110 (cited in 2: 34).[6](#)

The use of Ps 110 is crucial to the Progressive dispensationalists' argument in support of a present Davidic reign of Christ. We will argue below, however, that Ps 110 is not to be understood as referring to fulfillment of the Davidic covenant at all, but that its fulfillment is primarily to be seen with reference to the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan 2: 24ff.).

The Unity of the Psalm

There are two prevailing themes to this Psalm: a kingly and a priestly. Many expositors see these as unrelated ministries: the kingly as Davidic, the priestly as Melchizedekian. However, the Psalm displays an obvious unity and suggests that these two ministries are more closely related. It is our conviction that an understanding of the structure of the Psalm will help us immensely in our interpretation of the Psalm. On the surface, it could appear to have two major themes, e.g. Royal Coronation/Warrior Priest. Some have seen millennial reign themes in the first section and second advent themes in the second, with the present high priestly ministry of Christ in between. The following parallels can be drawn from the Psalm:

1. "The LORD (Jehovah) said" (v.1)
 "The LORD (Jehovah) has sworn" (v.4).

Kidner says, "The first line, after the title, runs literally, 'the oracle of Yahweh to my lord.' It is an opening which stamps the next words as God's direct message to His king ... A second message is given in verse 4 ... If anything is stronger than a divine oracle it is a divine oath."[7](#)

2. "The LORD will extend your mighty scepter" (v.2)
 "The Lord is at your right hand" (v.5).

Even though the first is Jehovah and the second Adonai, the articular Adonai is always considered divine. The right hand here is a figure of speech for mighty strength.

3. "In the day of your power" (v.3)
"in the day of his wrath" (v.5).

In an attempt to understand the psalm as a whole, reformed theologians and progressive dispensationalists suggest that the psalm reflects not only the Davidic covenant, but also David as a Melchizedekian King/Priest. VanGemeren, a reformed theologian, comments on Psalm 110: 4 in the Expositor's Bible Commentary,

This verse opens up the question of whether Israel had a sacerdotal kingship. From the priestly laws it appears that there is a clear distinction between Israel's three theocratic officers: king, prophet, and priest. However, David was dressed as a priest (2 Sam 6: 14), was in charge of the sacrifices (2 Sam 6: 17-18), and gave a priestly blessing to the people (2 Sam 6: 18).[8](#)

Craig A. Blaising in his chapter on "The Structure of the Biblical Covenants: The Covenants Prior to Christ" in the book Progressive Dispensationalism is so bold as to state, "David's conquest of Jerusalem, the former city of Salem, gave him the ancient throne of Melchizedek There should be no doubt that the Melchizedekian priesthood is part of the Davidic covenant."[9](#) If this is true, then much of the argument of the book of Hebrews falls to the ground; Christ is not so unique; David, Solomon and any other Davidic king was also a Melchizedekian King/Priest. If Blaising is right, then King Uzziah should have invoked his Melchizedekian Kingship/Priesthood to support his right to offer incense on the altar of Incense in the Temple. Instead, the Chronicler records the following:

And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.... But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to [his] destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, [that were] valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, [It appertaineth] not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither [shall it be] for thine honour from the LORD God.... because the LORD had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death. (2 Chron 26: 4,5,16-18,20b-21a)

Unfortunately, not even our traditional dispensational spokesmen have always seen much need to understand the psalm from a unified viewpoint. Ryrie, for example, in his original (1978 edition) Study Bible explains, "Verse 1 refers to the present position of Christ sharing the Father's kingly authority; verse 2, to His rule on earth during the millennial kingdom." On verse 3 he states, "The meaning is this: "during the Millennium God's people will voluntarily rally to the Messiah, who will lead them in constantly renewed vigor." Of verses 5 and 6 he states, "This will be fulfilled in the campaign of Armageddon, climaxing in the second coming of Christ..." It is refreshing though to see what may be a concern for a more unified approach to the psalm in his new expanded edition (1994). Concerning verse 3 he appears to have changed his interpretation. "Other redeemed ones (Your troops) will join Messiah in the day of His coming (battle) to defeat those who opposed Him." I assume he means by "coming (battle)" a reference to Armageddon and not to the post-millennial battle of Gog and Magog (Rev. 20: 7-9).

Central Message of the Psalm

David is allowed to see a prophetic vision of how the Messiah will begin His reign from Zion. This reign will be mediated through volunteer people carrying out His orders in the midst of the Messiah's enemies while He is seated in heaven. The reign will then continue to a time when Messiah will act as a Melchizedekian priest leading the armies of the Lord in a holy war until His enemies are defeated and He is victorious.

OUTLINE

I. The Oracle of the LORD for David:

Messiah will begin His reign from heaven through holy warriors,
verses 1-3.

A. David's Lord is exalted to a heavenly throne until, after
the defeat of His enemies, it can be established on earth,
verse 1.

B. Jehovah begins the Messiah's reign in Zion even in the
midst of His enemies, verse 2.

C. Jehovah promises that His people will offer themselves
as free-will offerings to the Messiah in holy array, verse 3.

II. The Oath of the Lord for the Messiah:

Messiah will establish His reign on earth through holy war,
verses 4-7.

- A. Jehovah swears to make the Messiah a priest after the pattern of the "holywar" priest Melchizedek, verse 4.
- B. The Messiah, acting as a "holy-war" priest, assures His troops that Jehovah will be their strength, shattering kings in the day of His wrath, verse 5.
- C. Jehovah will utterly destroy all those who oppose Him, verse 6.
- D. Completely confident in battle, He goes; therefore, He will lift up His head in victory, verse 7.

The message of the Psalm is also suggested by the following possible chiastic structure:

Title

1 A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord

[i.e. "An oracle of Yahweh to my Lord]:

A Exaltation- Pre-Armageddon

"Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies
a footstool for Thy feet."

B Kingly Warfare - Mediate

2 The LORD will stretch forth Thy strong scepter
from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies. "

C Priestly Activity - Mediate

3 Thy people will volunteer freely in the day of
Thy power; In holy array, from the womb of the
dawn, Thy youth are to Thee as the dew.

C' Priestly Activity - Immediate

4 The LORD has sworn and will not change

His mind, "Thou art a priest forever According
to the order of Melchizedek."

5 "The Lord is at Thy right hand;"

B' Kingly Warfare - Immediate

He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.

6 He will judge among the nations, He will fill them
with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over
a broad country.

A' Exaltation - Post-Armageddon

7 He will drink from the brook by the wayside;

Therefore He will lift up His head.!

Authorship and Setting

The Davidic authorship of the Psalm is amply supported by two things: 1) Its title and 2) Its understanding by those in New Testament times. Jay Butler has thoroughly demonstrated the reliability of the title being understood as from the hand of the Psalmist David.¹⁰ During New Testament times this is so universally understood as being written by David that Jesus can state it and the scribes will not argue against it (Mt 22: 43-46).

Having established that the Psalm is written by David, we must ask whether there was an event in the life of David that could reasonably be said to have prompted the Lord to reveal this prophecy. The Lord has specific purposes for revealing truth at specific times. He is not fickle or capricious. Admittedly, we are not told, as in some Psalms, the actual historical setting, e.g., Psalms 34, 51, 52, etc. Although we should not press the point to dogmatic assertions, there is value in suggesting a historical prompting for the prophecy. "By misunderstanding the concept of Sitz im Lebem (life situation of the prophets), liberals eviscerate the practical relevance of the Scripture on the altar of the historical."¹¹ We may reasonably ask the questions, "Why did the Lord deem David as needing this prophecy?" and "At what time in his life would this prophecy have helped him the most?" The basic prophecy concerns

David's Messiah waiting for Jehovah to suppress His enemies through a holy war. This might suggest a context before David is crowned king of Israel, were it not for the mention of Zion which must point to a time after David had taken Jerusalem and made it the royal city. Was there, then, a time in the life of David, after he had become king in Jerusalem, when he would have to wait for Jehovah to defeat his enemies in a holy war? The best suggestion may be that of 2Sa 15:33 - 18:33 when David flees from Jerusalem in the face of Absalom's treasonous usurping of the throne. Notably, the Lord causes David to have dominion in Jerusalem (Zion) in the midst of his enemies through the advice of Hushai (2Sa 17:15-22) and the involvement of priestly youths who would voluntarily risk their lives for David. One other parallel is noteworthy: just as the holy war of Jehovah would be spread out over the countryside and many warriors utterly destroyed (Ps 110:5-7), in the same way the defeat of Absalom in holy war was spread out over the countryside and many were killed (2Sa 18:6-8). 2Sa 18:8 even suggests that it was Jehovah who destroyed more of the enemy than did David's warriors, not unlike when Jehovah goes to war for His people.

Psalm 110 and the Davidic Covenant

The question of whether any part of Psalm 110 may be taken as related to the Davidic Covenant has to consider Jesus' interpretation of the Psalm. An encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees regarding the interpretation of this Psalm is found in the Synoptics at Mt 22:41-46; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44. Mark's account is of great importance, especially as seen in contrast to the other synoptics. After Jesus had answered three barrages of questions by His religious enemies, Mark records:

And no man after that durst ask him any question. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, "How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? for David himself said by the Holy Ghost, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.'" David therefore himself calleth him Lord: and whence is he then his son?" And the common people heard him gladly. (Mark 12:34b-37)

The reason the common people heard him gladly may be found in Matthew's account: "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matt. 22:46).

One significant point of Jesus' question to the Pharisees has been lost in most modern translations. The King James Version translates Mark 12:37 as, "David therefore himself calleth him Lord: and whence is he then his son?" The New King James Version, on the other hand, conforms the translation to that of the other synoptic gospels ("how" [12](#)), losing the original force of the Greek word *pōthen*, unique to Mark's account. [13](#) Jesus' question to the Scribes, the Jewish interpreters, is, "Whence" ("from where," i.e. from what passage) is the Messiah the son of

David? *Pothen* is used here with the sense of "from what source of authority."¹⁴ This usage is illustrated, for example, in Mark 6: 1-2. When Jesus came into Nazareth and began to teach the people, they responded with amazement at his teaching and asked the question, "Whence are these things?" (*Pothen touto tauta*); in other words, "What is the source of his authority?" Another example of this usage, though from a different perspective, is seen in Luke 20: 7 where Jesus challenges the chief priests, scribes and elders with the question, "The baptism of John: was it from heaven [*ex ouranou*] or from men [*ex anthropou*]?" (verse 4). Realizing their perilous position (verses 5-6), they replied, "We don't know from where" (*me eidenai pothen, v.7*).

Here *pothen* is clearly the semantic answer to the prepositional phrases with *ek*, denoting the source of authority for John's baptism (viz., "heaven" [=God] or "men").

Mark's version of Jesus' response to the Scribes' teaching about the Messiah being David's Son in 12: 35-37 focuses on the source of authority for making such a claim; this is the force of Mark's use of *pothen*. The Scribes appear to have used Ps 110: 1 as a proof text for their point. Jesus does not deny that Messiah is to be a descendent of David's, but he does take issue with the Scribes' interpretation of Ps 110. We might paraphrase Jesus' response as follows: "You say that Messiah is David's Son? Fine, but on what authority (*pothen*) do you make that assertion? Ps 110? Impossible! For in that Psalm David addresses Messiah as his Lord, not his son."

The implication is that Jesus knew that their literal understanding of Psalm 110 could not allow them to see the Psalm as referring to the Davidic covenant. For them to justify their belief that the Messiah must be a son of David they would have to provide another passage. This passage, on the other hand, promoted something else. Their understanding of the Messiah needed to be expanded to include the Messiah as being more than just a future Davidic King. Jesus says that Psalm 110 puts the Messiah on a plane higher than David or any mere human descendant of his. This Messiah is on an equal footing with Jehovah. His opponents understood well his arguments and because they could not agree with his conclusions nor refute them, they preferred to remain silent.

Verse 1, The Throne of the Messiah

When we consider the throne of the Messiah in Psalm 110: 1 there are several things that must be taken into consideration: 1) the location of the throne, 2) the reason for the honor, and 3) the authority of the throne. What might seem to be obvious about the location of the throne some have complicated. The Messiah is told to sit at the right hand of the LORD (Jehovah). It should be, therefore, a celestial throne, i.e. in heaven. Some have tried to link it up with "the throne of the LORD (Jehovah)" as seen in 1Ch 28:5; 29:23 and 2Ch 9:8.¹⁵ But the contemporaries of the Psalm are

familiar with the difference between the throne of the king and the throne of someone, like the queen mother, on his right hand (cf. 1Ki 2:19). If the throne of the Messiah were an earthly throne it would be lower than that of the Davidic! Surely no one, of that time period at least, would hear the words spoken by Jehovah to the Messiah "Sit at my right hand" and confuse it with the Davidic throne. On the contrary, it would conjure up thoughts of a throne in heaven, literally at the right hand of Jehovah. Finally, it was not only the understanding of the members of the Sanhedrin that Psalm 110:1 spoke of a heavenly throne (cf. Lk 22:66-71; especially verse 69), but it is the universal understanding of the New Testament, including that of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Messiah is now seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, in fulfillment of Psalm 110 (cf. Mk 16:19; Ac 2:34,35; Ro 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; etc.).

Secondly, it is of interest to us to consider the reason for the honor. The double reference to the Messiah's enemies (*'oyevēka*) is instructive for us. In a holy war, it is accepted that the warriors and the deity share a common enemy to be defeated. Here we have the LORD considering the Messiah's enemies worthy of being His own enemies. What has the Messiah done to make enemies such that the LORD would consider them His enemies also and worthy of defeating on behalf of His Messiah?

It would seem that the Messiah has done something that although worthy of making enemies was also worthy of such high honor as to merit the invitation of the LORD to sit at His own right hand until He personally defeats the Messiah's enemies.

Thankfully, our Lord clarifies what He did to deserve the honor of sitting at the right hand of Jehovah in Rev 3:21, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." The Messiah judged the spiritual leaders of wickedness (cf. Jn 12:31; 16:11) and overcame the enemy. Thus He is worthy of exaltation to Jehovah's throne.

Lastly, we ought to consider the authority of the throne. This is expressed by the two phrases of verse 2. It is noteworthy to see that it is the LORD who stretches out the strong scepter of the Messiah and it is the LORD who commands the Messiah to rule. It is the LORD who initiates the rule of the Messiah. Obviously, the authority of the Messiah is derived solely from the LORD. This fits well with the vision of Daniel 7, especially verse 14, "And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed," and Matthew 28:18 "Authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

That this authority stretches out from Zion in no way limits the Messiah's authority to those environs. Rather, they stretch out to the midst of the enemies, as the second phrase states. We, therefore, conclude, that the authority of the throne of the Messiah is derived from and initiated by Jehovah. Furthermore, this authority begins

in Zion and reaches out from there to the enemies around about.

Progressive dispensationalists have seen the Davidic throne in Psalm 110 however. Darrell L. Bock, for example, states,

It also is not correct to argue that Psalm 110 refers to a heavenly throne that is distinct from the Davidic, earthly throne. In the Old Testament, these were equated (1 Chron. 29:23; 2 Chron. 9:8). Neither can one argue that the heavenly throne in Revelation 3 and Acts 2 is not Davidic. Such a distinction fails to recognize the continuity of these references to Davidic passages and their connection to events associated with Jesus' first coming, including events immediately after the Resurrection. Psalm 110 is itself a Davidic promise.[16](#)

1 Chronicles 29:23 states, "So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David." The queen of Sheba said in 2 Chronicles 9:8, "Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne, as king to rule for the LORD your God." Bock and his associates fail to recognize that these passages refer to the throne as "of the LORD" not by virtue of the fact that the LORD sits on it but rather by virtue of the fact that He controls who sits on it!

The throne in Psalm 110:1 is that of the LORD by virtue of the fact that He does sit on it! The first one is earthly, situated in Jerusalem; the second is celestial, situated in heaven. But Saucy says,

The meaning of the "right hand of God in Psalm 110 and Acts 2:33 is, therefore, the position of messianic authority. It is the throne of David. Although in Acts it is portrayed as heavenly, it is not to be understood in spatial terms but as a symbol of authority. Its heavenly position does not preclude a reference to the messianic king on earth.[17](#)

The key phrase in this quote may very well be the words "it is not to be understood in spatial terms but as a symbol"! They want us to be willing to abandon our literal interpretation for a more symbolic meaning. It should not surprise us to see Bock say, "It should first be pointed out that 'throne' is a pictorial description for rule"[18](#)

Let us return to Bock's argument that Revelation 3 is also Davidic. He argues that Revelation 3:21 ("He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." NASB) is Davidic because of the reference to "the key of David" in 3:7.

Here Jesus refers to himself as 'the one who has the key of David,'.... The reference to the key is an allusion to Isaiah 22:22. There Eliakim as the chief steward has the key to the door and determines who enters and who is prevented from entering to see the treasures of the king. In Revelation 3:8-12 Jesus uses the same image."[19](#)

This he describes as "Davidic authority". Yes, this could be described as "Davidic authority" but it is authority as a Davidic steward not as a Davidic king!

On Revelation 3:21 Bock says,

This passage fits the other overcomer texts in promising future blessing to disciples on the basis of the present authority of Jesus. The picture of victory probably alludes back to the remark of John 16:33. The image of sitting on the throne is clearly an image of rule, and the description of being seated next to the Father accords with the language of Psalm 110, a messianic psalm."[20](#)

So Bock's argument runs something like this: "the heavenly throne in Revelation 3" is Davidic because of the mention of the key of David in verse 7 and because of the link to Psalm 110, which we all know is messianic and therefore Davidic. We are not persuaded.

Verse 1, "Until I make your enemies a footstool..."

Virtually every commentator associates the seating of verse 1 with the ascension of Christ (cf. Ac 2:34). For dispensationalists this raises an interesting question: Since the ascension and present session of Christ are related to God's program for the Church (Eph 4:7-10; Heb 4:14-16), how can the seating of Ps 110:1 be related to the millennium? The question, of course, begs the point. It need not be assumed that the seating of Ps 110:1 has anything to do with the millennium. The temporal conjunction "until" (*'ad*) indicates that there is a limit to the period of time during which Messiah will remain seated at Yahweh's right hand. The seating in view in Ps 110:1 comes to an end when the holy war described in the Psalm comes to its conclusion just before the millennium begins.

According to Psalm 110:1-2 the Messiah is to sit at the right hand of His Father in heaven until it is time for Him to rule. Thus, the Messiah's rule as King will not begin until after His present session with the Father in heaven.[21](#)

Gesenius sought to render the conjunction in a way that did not imply an absolute termination.

Clauses introduced by *'ad*, *'ad-ki*, or *'ad-'asher*, sometimes express a limit which is not absolute (terminating the preceding action), but only relative, beyond which the action or state described in the principal clause still continues; thus, *'ad* with the imperfect, Ps 11:01; *'ad-ki* with the perfect, Gn 26:13, with impf. 49:10; *'ad-'asher* with the perfect, Gn 28:15; with the imperfect, Ps 112:8.[22](#)

Gesenius' interpretation views the session of Ps 110:1 as continuing on after Yahweh has made the Messiah's enemies a footstool for his feet. Of the various possible

constructions for *'ad* expressing a limit "which is not absolute," it is striking that Gesenius has listed only one example of the absolute use of the conjunction; all other constructions find the conjunction in composition with some other particle (i.e. either *ki* or *'asher*). Delitzsch sought to maintain the same interpretation and adduced another example in Hos 10:12, *'ad* as in Hos x.12, for *'ad-ki* or *'ad-'asher*, does not exclude the time that lies beyond, but as in cxii.8, Gen xlix.10, it includes it, and in fact so that it at any rate marks the final subjugation of the enemies as a turning point with which something else comes about (vid. Acts iii.21, 1 Cor. xv.28).[23](#)

The Hosea citation reads: "Sow then for yourselves after righteousness, that you may reap (the fruit) of kindness; cultivate your fallow field; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come (*'ad-yavo*) and rain righteousness down for you."

This example does not support Delitzsch's point, for the subordinate clause introduced by *'ad* ("till he come...") modifies the verb "seek" (*DRSH*). Surely it is obvious that after he comes he need not be sought any longer. The other examples cited by Delitzsch all use *'ad* in composition with another particle: Ps 112:8 uses *'ad-'asher*, and Gn 49:10 ("the scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh come.") uses *'ad-ki*. There does not appear to be one example of the absolute use of *'ad* to "express a limit which is not absolute," unless Ps 110:1 is it.[24](#) On the other hand, the normal and established meaning of the conjunction *'ad* is, according to Waltke and O'Connor, "allative (movement toward) - terminative (movement up to)... The preposition also expresses measure or degree ('as much as, as far as, even to, even unto)..."[25](#) Any effort to understand *'ad* as expressing a limit which is not absolute must be based on theological or contextual considerations.

One potential problem for seeing the present session of Ps 110:1 ending before the millennium is Paul's statement of 1Co 15:23-26,

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Paul seems to be quoting Ps 110:1 in a millennial/Davidic sense. However, it may be questioned whether Paul is really quoting Ps 110:1 or Ps 8:6. The latter reads, "Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." In the 1Co 15 passage it is certain that Paul is quoting 8:6 a few verses later (v.27) when he writes, "For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him." A comparison of Paul's Greek in 15:25 with both the Masoretic text and the LXX of Pss 110 and 8 points to a conflation of the two Psalms from both Paul's own translation from the Hebrew and possibly reference

to the LXX.

The first part of the verse, "For He must reign" (*dei gar auton basileuein*) may be Paul's own loose rendering from the Hebrew of 8:6 (MT v.7) *tamshilehu*, being Hiphil Imperfect from *MSHL*.

The second part of the verse, "until He has put all His enemies" (*achri hou the pantas tous echthrous*) appears to be taken from the LXX of Ps 110:1 (LXX 109:1): *heos an tho tous echthrou sou*, although the temporal phrase is different, as well as the person of the verb.

The final part of the verse, "under his feet," is more similar to 8:6 than to 110:1. Paul's Greek reads *hupo tous podas autou*. The LXX of 8:6 (LXX v.7) reads *hupokato ton podon autou*, a much closer parallel than 110:1, which reads *hupopodion ton podon sou*.

In summary, Paul's Greek of 1Co 15:25 more closely resembles Ps 8:6 than it does Ps 110:1, although the middle portion of the verse does seem to borrow the language of 110:1. The construction probably fits together something like the following:

- For He must reign (Ps 8:7 MT)
- until He has put all His enemies (Ps 109:1 LXX)
- under His feet (Ps 8:7 LXX)

Thus it is not necessary to see 1Co 15:25 as requiring a millennial fulfillment for Ps 110; it really is primarily an allusion to Ps 8:6(7) with a very loose borrowing of one phrase from Ps 110. The primary meaning of 'ad is not consistent with a millennial fulfillment for Ps 110:1, and there is really no theological or Biblical necessity for understanding 'ad in a non absolute sense.

Re: Bock's "Link" in Acts 2

Darrell Bock has argued that at Christ's ascension He began to reign from David's throne in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. This is in contrast to what dispensationalists have held in the past, viz. that Christ's Davidic rule will not begin until his second coming when He is seated on the throne of David in Jerusalem during the millennium. In support of his position, Bock insists that Peter, in Ac 2:30, consciously substituted the word *kathizo* for the LXX's *tithemi* (Ps 132:11) in order to establish an exegetical "link" with Ps 110's *kathou* (cited in Ac 2:34), thus establishing an interpretation for Ps 110 which sees its fulfillment in terms of the Davidic Covenant. He argues as follows:

The crucial linking allusion appears at this point. Peter notes that David was ... the conscious beneficiary of an oath God had made to him that one "of the fruit of his [David's] loins" (KJV) would sit on his throne (Acts 2: 30). The key term is *kathisai* (to sit), which is reintroduced in the citation of Psalm 110 (note *kathou*, "sit," in v. 34). The allusion in verse 30 is to Psalm 132: 11, a psalm which is strongly Israelitish and national in tone (see vv. 12-18). The psalm in turn is a reflection of the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7, especially verse 12. This 2 Samuel passage is better known as the Davidic covenant. What is crucial is that David's awareness of this covenant promise is immediately linked to his understanding of the resurrection promise in Psalm 16, which in turn is immediately tied to the resurrection proof text of Psalm 110 (vv. 31-35). Being seated on David's throne is linked to being seated at God's right hand. In other words, Jesus' resurrection-ascension to God's right hand is put forward by Peter as a fulfillment of the Davidic covenant To say that Peter is only interested to argue that Messiah must be raised misses the point of connection in these verses and ignores entirely the allusion to Psalm 132 and the Davidic covenant.[26](#)

In another publication, where this same basic argument is put forth, Bock elucidates upon his understanding of the hermeneutics at this point.

One of the ways Jews showed fulfillment of an OT passage was to cite the language in alluding to a second passage, thus linking the two texts conceptually. So by his use of the verb "to sit" (Acts 2: 30,34) Peter links Psalm 132: 11 (cited in 2: 30) with Psalm 110 (cited in 2: 34).[27](#)

Crucial to Bock's argument is identifying Peter's reason for changing *tithemi* to *kathizo*. He believes he has found the reason in a Jewish method of establishing a link. However, there are some problems with Bock's supposed "link."

First, *kathizo* (Peter's "substitution" in Ac 2: 30) and *kathemai* (the aor. impv. *kathou* is used in both the LXX of Ps 109: 1 [= 110: 1 Heb. and Eng. texts] and Peter's quotation in Ac 2: 34) though cognate are not entirely synonymous. While *kathizo* can be either transitive ("to seat someone") or intransitive ("to sit"), *kathemai* is only intransitive ("to sit"). Had Peter wanted to establish an unquestionable "link" between the two citations by changing the wording of the LXX he could have used the same verb in both citations. Either one of two methods might have been employed for this purpose: (a) He might have phrased verse 30 in such a way as to use *kathemai* (e.g., *poieso auton kathesthai epi ton thronon autou*), or (b) he could have quoted Ps 110 with a form of *kathizo*, which is frequently done by other NT authors both in quotations and in allusions to Ps 110: 1 (cf. Heb 1: 3; 8: 1; 12: 2; Mk 12: 36 [where the form of *kathizo* is likely the better supported text]; Eph 1: 20; Rev 3: 21). Either of these approaches would have made such a proposed exegetical

"link" much more likely, but Peter did not employ either of these approaches. Instead, he used two different words in citing the two texts. If it be objected at this point that Peter would not have taken such liberty in citing the LXX, we would respond that a brief survey of Peter's use of the LXX in 1 Peter indicates that he in fact had no such qualms about changing the text to suit his needs for a given context. A table of these uses is included in an appendix. In summary, of the eleven OT quotes in 1 Peter, Peter appears to be using the LXX as his base text. In the quotes he makes some significant alterations of the text on most occasions. Only once does he leave the text entirely unaltered (4:18 = Pr 3:11). Some of the alterations are relatively insignificant (e.g., change in personal number, changes in case required by the context, substituting an antecedent for the pronoun). But frequently, Peter makes quite significant changes to suit his purpose in quoting, either changing words or phrases, omitting words, or altering the mood of verbs or participles (1:25; 2:3,6,8; 3:10-12; 5:5; note especially 2:6,8). In light of this, it is risky at best to insist that Peter is necessarily establishing an exegetical "link" between Pss 110 and 132.

But even more damaging to Bock's interpretation is the fact that, after all, Peter has not changed any wording at all. Bock's explanation of why Peter changed *tithemi* to *kathizo* is more complicated than it needs to be. Peter in fact is not directly quoting Ps 132:11 in Ac 2:30, but rather is combining verses 11 and 12, where verse 12 refers to David's descendants (ultimately referring to the Messiah).

The LORD has sworn to David, A truth from which He will not turn back; "Of the fruit of your body I will set [*asit*, LXX *thesomai*] upon your throne. 12 If your sons will keep My covenant, and My testimony which I will teach them, their sons also shall sit [*yeshvu*, LXX *kathiountai*] upon your throne forever." (Ps 132:11-12 NASB)

It is in verse 12 that the psalmist used the verb *kathizo* in the phrase *kathisai epi ton thronon*. And it is verse 12, not verse 11, which refers to David's descendants who will sit upon David's throne.

In Peter's sermon recorded in Ac 2, Peter is simply citing various OT passages to substantiate various points of his message. The citations from Ps 110 and 132 are made to support different points of his message. Ps 132:11-12 is cited in Ac 2:30 in support of Jesus' resurrection, as a part of the section in verses 24-32 proving His messiahship. In 2:33 Peter introduces another section with the particle *oun*, indicating that the next section is inferential (not explanatory, using e.g. *gar*, as Bock's interpretation would require). This section is also resumptive of verses 14-21 and addresses the question of the tongues phenomenon.²⁸ Peter's point is that these gifts are poured out from on high because Jesus has assumed authority as the Melchizedekian King/Priest (Cf. Eph 4:7-10).

Verse 2, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

What kind of activity is portrayed in the statement, "Rule in the midst of your

enemies"? Many dispensational authors have taken for granted that the Messianic references in this Psalm describe activities and functions that are related to the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant during the Millennial kingdom. For example, Sailhamer writes in the NIV Compact Bible Commentary,

The last Davidic psalm in this series of three focuses on the messianic promise that God made to David in 2Sa 7.... As in other psalms that take up this same theme (e.g., Pss 2; 72), the present psalm views David's kingship in universal and victorious terms, 'You will rule in the midst of your enemies' (v.2b).[29](#)

Or, as McClain wrote, "The Hebrew word [in Gen. 1:26] is *radah*; the same term was used later significantly of the reign of Messiah Himself in His Kingdom: 'Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies' (Ps. 110:2)."[30](#) But the statement of Ps 110:2b does not appear to fit well with such a conception. Rather it describes a king (Messiah) ruling in a hostile environment, "in the midst of your enemies" (*bqerev 'oyeveyka*).

The Millennium pictures quite the opposite of Messiah's ruling in a hostile environment, in the midst of His enemies. It is a time when the nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is 2:2-4), a time "to bring in everlasting righteousness...." (Dan 9:24), when "judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Is 32:15-18). Concerning this time it is said that "Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make [him] afraid" (Jer 30:10), and "Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (Zech 14:9-11). Even the Gentile nations are portrayed in the Millennium, not as the enemies of Yahweh, but as streaming into Jerusalem to learn how properly to worship the Lord. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee (Ps 22:27-28; cf. Ps 86:9). Jeremiah prophesies, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jer 3:17), and according to Zechariah, "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech 8:22-23). However, immediately preceding this period of unprecedented peace, the prophets speak of a time of unprecedented turmoil. Notable is Joel's turn of Isaiah's phrase in his statement, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears" (Joel 3:10). This period of turmoil is variously known in the prophets by such titles as, "the Time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7), "the Day of the Lord (e.g. Jl 2), etc. Psalm 110 pictures this time of turmoil as a time during which Messiah is directing affairs on earth from the right hand of Yahweh's throne in

heaven. Through His chosen representatives on earth, the "willing volunteers of Ps 110: 3 (144,000 servants? Two witnesses in Jerusalem?), He rules "in the midst of enemies." It is our belief that Ps 110 describes events not fulfilling the Davidic Covenant, but preparatory to its fulfillment, events taking place just before the Millennial kingdom during the eschatological Day of the Lord.

A mistake commonly made by some dispensationalists is to assume that every reference to a future kingly ministry of Messiah must describe a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. However, there is another, non-Davidic, kingly ministry of the Messiah prophesied in Ps 110. We may speak of this ministry not as Davidic, but as Melchizedekian. In verse 4 of the Psalm Yahweh declares, "I have made you a priest forever after the appearance of Melchizedek." Melchizedek being not only a priest, but a king-priest (Gn 14) foreshadows a future Messianic ministry that encompasses both the functions of a priest and a king.

Melchizedek and the Concept of the Waiting Priest-King in Holy-War

It is here that an understanding of the historical background of the Psalm must be studied. The first question that arises is why Melchizedek is chosen to illustrate the relationship of the Messiah to the LORD. The obvious answer is the connection of Melchizedek being a righteous king, for so his name means. Surely the Messiah would also be a righteous king. But we also see that here in verse 4 the Messiah is further described as a priest, which Melchizedek was also. We might be satisfied to say that just as Melchizedek was a priest of God Almighty and a righteous king, so too the Messiah would be a priest of God Almighty and a righteous king. But the more we study the historical background of Melchizedek, the more parallels we see between the two persons.

An understanding of Moses' presentation of Melchizedek will help us further to understand the theme of Psalm 110. John Sailhamer has cogently argued in his book, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* that, "The pieces of the Pentateuch do fit together and do reveal a conscious attempt by the author to render the various stories and laws in one coherent picture."[31](#)

The most prominent event and the most far-reaching theme in the Pentateuch, viewed entirely on its own, is the covenant between God and Israel established at Mount Sinai ..., but the Pentateuch, as a literary document, is fundamentally different from a document of the Sinai covenant. The Pentateuch is a document that looks at the Sinai covenant as an object under consideration.[32](#)

In summary he states,

We have already suggested that the overall purpose of the author is to show that the Sinai covenant failed for lack of an obedient heart on the part of God's people Israel The author has as one of his central purposes to show that God's work must always be done in God's way: by

means of the Spirit of God.[33](#)

This is important to understand when we approach Genesis 14 (the Melchizedek narrative) and ask ourselves why Melchizedek is brought into the narrative here and what kind of a king-priest he was.

As Sailhamer admits, "It is true that Melchizedek appears in the narrative as if out of nowhere and just as quickly is gone, not to be encountered again or subsequently explained."[34](#) This should not discourage us but rather, encourage us to seek to understand why the recording of this event at this time is relevant to the context. First, we see Melchizedek coming out to meet Abram. He is at least aware of what Abram has been doing and he senses the obligation to meet him. Second, Melchizedek brings bread and wine as a priestly act. Moses will use the act of eating and drinking elsewhere to show the theme of communion between God and man in Ex 24:9-11, not to mention the entire Levitical sacrificial system. Melchizedek considers himself as a mediator between God and Abram. His words and actions emphasize the blessing that Abram has from God. Third, Melchizedek receives a tithe from Abram. Abram considers Melchizedek as a proper mediator between God and himself. He senses an obligation to share material goods with his spiritual superior, Melchizedek.

When we ask ourselves the relationship between the Sinai covenant and this narrative, we begin to understand better why Melchizedek is brought in here. If we can allow Moses to preach a sermon through the illustration of Melchizedek on the subject of Holy War, we will see with Sailhamer that "In a number of points, the events of chapter 14 reflect the same concerns as those of Deuteronomy 20:1-15, the instructions concerning carrying out wars with foreign nations."[35](#) Consider the following parallels:

First, "He does not hesitate to go into battle against an army greater than his (cf. Dt 20:1).[36](#)

Second, "Abraham went into battle specifically with only the 'dedicated young men in his house' (Ge 14:14). The Hebrew expression used here for 'dedicated' is not found elsewhere in the Bible, nor is its meaning clear within the context of ancient history and customs. The use of the word here, however, provides another link with Deuteronomy 20:5, which states that one who goes into battle should be one who has already 'dedicated' his house. Since within the Pentateuch the verb occurs only in this passage of Deuteronomy, a link between the two texts by means of the terminology seems likely."[37](#)

Third, "Abraham also recognizes that his three friends had their own rightful share in the spoil (Ge 14:24), which corresponds to the provisions of Deuteronomy 20:14."[38](#)

Fourth, "Deuteronomy 20:2 assigned to the 'priest' the role of reminding the people

that 'the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory' (cf. Dt 20:13) ... into your hand in much the same way, Abraham was met by Melchizedek, 'a priest' of the Most High God, who proclaimed to him that it was 'the Most High God who delivered your enemies into your hand' (Ge 14:20).[39](#)

We not only agree with Sailhamer that "Abraham was one who pictured God's Law written on his heart. He obeyed the Law, though the Law had not yet been given,"[40](#) but we also see Melchizedek as the priest-king who waits for the Lord to fight his battles. He is presented as the waiting priest-king, as in many of Israel's other holy wars when God fought for the nation and either the people or the king waited (cf. Ex 14:13-14; 1Sa 7:7-10; 18:19; 26:9-10; 2Sa 5:19-25; 1Ch 10:14; 2Ki 19:20-35). By contrast, Saul was told to wait (1Sa 10:8 [Hiph of *yatal*]) but didn't (1Sa 13:8 [Niph of *yatal*], Cf. also Jehoram of Israel, 2Ki 7:33). This is exactly how the Messiah is presented in Ps 110: the waiting Priest-King.

The priestly role in the holy wars of Israel is an important OT concept. In Numbers 10:8,9 the sons of Aaron are instructed to sound a trumpet for the army before it goes to war. In Numbers 31:6 we find this injunction being carried out by Phineas under Moses' leadership. Joshua also carried this out in the battle of Jericho (Josh 6:4, 16). 2Chr 13:1-20 records Abijah's faith and encouragement to his troops before they went into battle against Israel, who had twice as many soldiers. Of special note is the role of the priests, as noted in verse 12: "God is with us; he is our leader. His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against you. Men of Israel, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your fathers, for you will not succeed." These verses again emphasize the important role that the priest was to play in holy war (cf. also 1Sa 14:3, 18, 19, 36).

Now as we return to Psalm 110 we can see that the whole Psalm is not about a royal coronation, as many others have suggested, but rather of holy war. The Messiah is to take his rightful place at the right hand of Jehovah and wait for Him to defeat His enemies. His holy subjects give themselves as free-will offerings to the LORD for the battle, and the LORD causes the Messiah to rule mediately through them, beginning from Zion, in the midst of the Messiah's enemies. Then we are told that the Messiah is also a priest of the Melchizedekian type, a waiting, holy war priest (Ps 110:4). He encourages the troops that the LORD is at their right hand to fight the battle and the war continues until the Messiah is victorious (Ps 110:5-7).

The opening verses of the Psalm give evidence of a chiasmic structure. What is often taken as the first line of the Psalm following the title may, as Kidner suggests[41](#), actually be a continuation of the title itself. The "verb" translated "said" is really not a verb at all but a noun which may be translated "an oracle." Thus, the title could be rendered, "By David, A Psalm, An Oracle of Yahweh to my Lord." The true first line of the Psalm, then, would be "Sit at my right hand." Consider the following chiasmic arrangement of the first two verses:

Title: "For David, A Psalm, Yahweh Speaks to My Lord"

A Sit at my right hand

B Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet

B' Yahweh shall send forth the scepter of your strength

A' Rule in the midst of your enemies

This arrangement is suggested by the verb themes. A - A' are connected by the imperative theme ("sit" "rule"). B - B' are connected by the imperfect theme ("I shall make your enemies a footstool" - "Yahweh shall send forth the scepter of your strength"). The B - B' connection is perhaps more obvious at first glance; the sending forth of a scepter of strength is easily associated with the putting down of enemies. But what is intended by the A - A' connection, if the chiasm is correct? It is simply this, that the ruling takes the form of sitting. That is, the rule is not one of treading down, [42](#) but of patient waiting. This is the kind of rule suggested by the Melchizedek figure introduced in verse 4. Melchizedek illustrates not only the priestly aspect of Messiah, but the kingly aspect as well.

Genesis 14:18 identifies Melchizedek first as a king, then as a priest. This order is observed in Psalm 110 also: a kingly theme is seen in vv. 1-2, but beginning in verse 3 we see a priestly theme introduced which is amplified upon in verse 4; finally, the kingly theme is seen again in verses 5-7. That this kingly theme is Melchizedekian, and not Davidic, may also be suggested by the emphasis which the author of Hebrews places on Melchizedek's kingly role.

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. (Hebrews 7:1-3)

Verse 4 "The Order of Melchizedek"

The phrase "order of Melchizedek" in Ps 110:4 comes from an attempt to translate a somewhat difficult Hebrew construction. Unfortunately, this English translation may imply elements which are not implied by the Hebrew. In a sacerdotal context the English word "order" suggests some kind of a connected group, possibly even a succession from one generation to the next. Craig Blasing, for example, assumes that when David conquered the city of Jerusalem, ancient Salem, he assumed authority as the Melchizedekian King/Priest. [43](#) If this were so, then Melchizedekian authority would have been passed on to the succeeding kings of Judah (all of whom, by sitting on David's throne in Jerusalem would have belonged to such an "order")

until the Babylonian captivity.

The Hebrew has *'al-divratiy malkiy-tzedek*, meaning something like "after the appearance or likeness of Melchizedek." The idea of "order" is not suggested by the Hebrew, but comes from the LXX use of the term *taxis* (used by the author of Hebrews with approbation in 5:10; 6:20). The problem of translation we are dealing with here, however, has to do with the area of semantic domains, for both the Hebrew *divrah*, and the Greek *taxis* admit to a broader range of semantic domain than the English word "order." *Divrah* generally means "cause" "reason" "manner," but when preceded by the preposition *'al* carries the idea "because of" "for the sake of" (BDB s.v.). One wonders, then, why the LXX used *taxis*. The semantic domain of *taxis* does include the idea of an "order," but also admits to a much broader conception, such as "nature" "quality" "manner" or "appearance" (cf. BAGD s.v. *taxis* #4; Moulton & Milligan s.v. *taxis* #4) This corresponds well with the Hebrew *'al-divratiy malkiy-tzedek*.

The author of Hebrews, however, is very careful to differentiate between Melchizedek's priesthood and Christ's not in kind, but in degree - by his use of a unique expression for eternity *eis to dienekes* (7:3) for Melchizedek, while Christ's eternity is described in the words of the LXX (Ps 109 [=110]:4) *eis ton eiona* (6:20). In fact a comparison of Heb 6:20 with Heb 7:3 (the chapter division is artificial) reveals a number of contrasts between Christ and Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews carefully distinguishes between Christ and Melchizedek. Christ's kingship/priesthood is like Melchizedek's, but there is no "order" in the sense of a succession. They are similar in appearance, but different in degree.

It is at this point that those who accept the new hermeneutics of the progressive dispensationalists could possibly agree with us about the War-Priest ministry of the Messiah as seen in Psalm 110 and point out that the writer to the Hebrews did not see the Messiah in Psalm 110 as a War-Priest, but rather as an Atoning Priest. They might suggest that the author "reinterpreted" Psalm 110 for his purposes, giving "progressive revelation" in the process. A closer examination, we believe, would refute this idea also.

The writer to the Hebrews may very well have understood that the Lord God was presenting the Messiah as the Holy-War Priest like unto Melchizedek, but he would also have understood that that ministry had time limitations as presented in the Psalm. The bulk of the Psalm spoke of an event or series of events that would have beginning and end. But the Lord describes the Messiah as being an eternal priest (*'atah-kohen le'olam*). If the Messiah is an eternal priest, the writer to the Hebrews reasons, then His duties as priest must go beyond those of a Holy-War Priest. Messiah must be, as truly Jesus is, an Atoning Priest also (See Hebrews 7:20-28, especially verses 24-26). This fits one of the primary themes of the author: Jesus Christ offered the better sacrifice for our sins; therefore, there is no need to return to sacrificing animals for our sins.

This leads the writer to the Hebrews to see Jesus as the High Priest. In no other book of the Bible do we see the Messiah called a High Priest. On what basis does the author call Jesus a High Priest? Is this the result of "progressive revelation" or Christian illumination? In 2: 17 He is the merciful and faithful High Priest (*pistos archiereus*) by virtue of His fulfilling the typology of the Old Testament when He "made propitiation for the sins of the people." In 3: 1-6 Jesus is the High Priest, faithful (*pistos*) over the house of God as a Son would be. This latter thought is further elaborated on in 10: 21-22: "and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near" (*kai hiera megan epi ton oikon tou theou, proserchometha*). Note the change of words for High Priest: from *archiereus* to *hiereus megas*. The latter was used in Maccabean times for the Maccabean High Priests, especially in reference to their leadership roles. It is the only time in the New Testament that the Greek phrase is used, and we believe that it is used to help distinguish the atoning role of the High Priest from the leadership role of the High Priest. The question surfaces, "On what basis can the writer to the Hebrews state that Jesus is the leader of a group of priests?" We believe that the combination of thoughts in Psalm 110, verses 3 and 4 have led the author to conclude that the Messiah would be over a group of volunteers, clothed in priestly garments.

We therefore conclude that the writer to the Hebrews has very carefully meditated on Psalm 110 and made conclusions that, although not the main thought of the Psalm, can legitimately be made from the Psalm. The ideas put forth by the writer were the result of Christian illumination and not of "progressive revelation," as some might be tempted to conclude.

Conclusion

One of Progressive Dispensationalism's major departures from the more traditional position of dispensationalists is the insistence that Christ is presently seated on the Davidic throne, and that He is in some way fulfilling the Davidic Covenant. Their interpretation of Psalm 110 is crucial to their argument. We have sought to show that Psalm 110, both in its OT linguistic and historical context, and in the light of its usage in the NT, cannot be used to substantiate a present Davidic reign of Christ. Rather, Psalm 110 prophesies the ministry of a waiting King-Priest, after the pattern of Melchizedek, who from heaven (Ps 110:1) directs affairs on a hostile earth (Ps 110:2) mediately through His army of volunteer priests (Ps 110:3). The time of His waiting in heaven will come to a close at the battle of Armageddon when He returns to earth to "shatter kings in the day of His wrath" (Ps 110:5). At this crucial point in history His period of waiting as the Melchizedekian King-Priest comes to an end, the enemies are judged (Ps 110:6), and He receives a final exaltation (Ps 110:7) which paves the way for His being seated on the throne of David to rule directly on the earth in the promised Millennial Kingdom in peace.

Appendix 1: Scriptural statements regarding the Millennial conditions:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, [that] the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Is 2:2-4)

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city ... to bring in everlasting righteousness.... (Dan 9:24)

Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; (Is 32: 15-18)

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this [is] his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer 23:5-6)

Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make [him] afraid. (Jer 30: 10)

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and [from] the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And [men] shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. (Zech 14: 9-11)

Even the Gentile nations are portrayed in the Millennium, not as the enemies of Yahweh, but as streaming into Jerusalem in order to learn how properly to worship the Lord.

But in the last days it shall come to pass, [that] the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above

the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Mic 4: 1-2)

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom [is] the LORD'S: and he [is] the governor among the nations. (Ps 22: 27-28)

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. (Ps 86: 9)

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. (Jer 3: 17)

And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. (Zech 2: 11) And it shall come to pass, [that] every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (Zech 14: 16)

Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. [23](#) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. (Zech 8: 22-23 KJV)

Appendix 2: Millennial interpretations for "rule in the midst of thine enemies"

Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1959) p. 43

*The Hebrew word [in Gen. 1:26] is radah; the same term was used later significantly of the reign of Messiah Himself in His Kingdom: 'Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies' (Ps. 110:2)." J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) pp. 247, 442. "A great parenthesis occurs ... between Psalm 110:1 and 110:2." Ps 110:2 is included in a list of references "concerning the kingdom to be established in its final form.*

Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953) p.129.

Psalm 110:1 speaks of the present work of Christ - "sit thou at my right hand" - and the second verse of His return in power. Again it is evident that this is unfulfilled for surely today He does not 'rule ... in the midst of thine enemies.'

Herman Hoyt, *The End Times*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969) p. 176

But the prophets predict a future kingdom without these defects. The people will all have experienced the new birth (Ezek. 11:17-20), and as a result will be in full sympathy with the King and His laws (Ps. 110:1-3).

John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), p. 229

Psalm 110:1 speaks of Christ in heaven and Psalm 110:2 refers to His ultimate triumph at His second advent.

Lewis Sperry Chafer; rev. by John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 329.

The present position of Christ at the right hand of the Father is described in Psalm 110, but it is also predicted that the day will come when He will rule over His enemies and His power will go out of Zion (vv. 2,6). It is clear from these many prophecies that the truth of Christ's second coming and His reign on earth is a major, not a minor, revelation of the entire Old Testament.

A similar comment, though on verse 4, is found in Leon Wood, *The Bible and Future Events*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 181.

... in the context of Psalm 110, Christ is referred to by the words, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (v. 4). It was God's intention even in Old Testament time that He, as God, should serve as both civil and religious head of His people. He gave His Laws on Mt. Sinai on this basis, structuring it to cover both areas of life. With sin abounding as it does in the world today, there is wisdom in maintaining a distinction between church and state, but this is not the ideal. With Christ as supreme head, the ideal can and will be realized. The difficulties in separating the two areas, encountered so frequently in the present time, will thus be removed. No secular areas will be permitted to exist without the proper influence of the religious.

John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1985. Note the following comment on Ps 110:2,

With His scepter the Messiah will . . . rule over His enemies," changing the preposition "in the midst of" to "over.

Appendix 3: 1Peter's Use of the LXX

[Table omitted]

In the eleven OT quotes in 1 Peter, Peter appears to be using the LXX as his base

text. In the quotes he makes some significant alterations of the text on most occasions. Only once does he leave the text entirely unaltered (4: 18 = Pr 3: 11). Some of the alterations are relatively insignificant (change in personal number [3: 10-12 verbal number; 3: 14-15 pronominal number], a change in case required by the context [2: 7], substituting an antecedent for the pronoun [2: 10]). But frequently, Peter makes quite significant changes to suit his purpose in quoting, either changing words or phrases, omitting words, or altering the mood of verbs or participles (1: 25; 2: 3, 6, 8; 3: 10-12; 5: 5).

Hebrews 6: 20 (Christ) Hebrews 7: 3 (Melchizedek)

archiereus hiererus

genomenos aphomoiomenos

meni eis ton aiona meni eis to dieneken

End Notes

1 C. Blaising & D. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 177-78.

2 Blaising & Bock, 182.

3 Ryrie identified the distinction between Israel and the Church as one of the three *sine qua non* of dispensationalism in *Dispensationalism Today*, .

4 Blaising & Bock, 84, 126, 161, 177-78, 182, 198.

5 Darrell L. Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ" in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* C.A. Blaising and D. L. Bock, edd. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 49. See further a fuller discussion of Bock's "Exegetical Link" later in his paper.

6 Darrell L. Bock, "Evidence From Acts" in *A Case for Premillennialism*, D.K. Campbell and J.L. Townsend edd. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992) 194.

7 D. Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, pp. 293-395.

8 W. VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* ed. Frank E. Gabelein (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1991) V,699.

9 Blaising, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 161-62.

10 Jay Butler, "An Exegetical Study of Psalm 110" unpublished Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, May 1980, pp.4-18.

11 Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake: BMH Books,1974) p. 103.

12 The NIV also translates "how," NASB has "in what sense."

13 Both Mt 22:45 and Lk 20:44 have *pos*.

14 Cf. BAGD s.v. *pothen*, 2; H. Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament*, 7th edition (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1874) I,403.

15 E.g. Van Gemeren, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, V,697.

16 Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ," p. 63.

17 Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, p. 72.

18 Bock, p. 51.

19 Bock, p. 62.

20 Bock, p. 62.

21 Renald Showers, "The Davidic Covenant" in *Israel My Glory* August/September 1993, p. 17.

22 *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, second ed., E. Kautzsch, A. E. Cowley edd. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1910) p. 503, § 164f.

23 C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. V, Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1867), III,189-90.

24 Perowne does cite Dt 7:24, but even though this verse uses '*ad* absolutely, it is not a logical parallel since the main clause contains a negative proposition (*lo'-yityatzev*).

25 Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990) p. 215, § 11.2.12a,c.

26 Darrell L. Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ" in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* C.A. Blaising and D. L. Bock, edd. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 49, emphasis his.

27 Darrell L. Bock, "Evidence From Acts" in *A Case for Premillennialism*, D.K. Campbell and J.L. Townsend edd. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992) 194.

28 For resumptive use of *oun* cf. BAGD s.v. *oun* 2.b.; BDF §451(1).

29 *NIV Compact Study Bible*, John Sailmaher, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 340.

30 Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1959) p. 43.

31 John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

1992), p. 34.

32 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 27.

33 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 32.

34 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 147.

35 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 147.

36 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 147.

37 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 148.

38 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 148.

39 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 148.

40 Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, p. 148.

41 D. Kidner, *Psalms*, (London: IVP, 1975) II, 393; cf. also Perowne's paraphrase in J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1878) I, 304; VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* V, 697.

42 Some expositors have insisted on the basis of etymology that *hdr* always has a hostile sense related to a "trampling down." But OT usage simply does not bear this out. Especially notable are the first occurrences of this verb, Gn 1:26,28, referring to Adam's "rule" over the fish of the sea. Also, roughly contemporary to the writing of Ps 110 are 1Ki 4:22 (of Solomon's peaceful reign) and 1Ki 5:16; 9:23; 2Chr 8:10 (of those ruling under Solomon in peace).

43 Blaising, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 161-62.