

The King Speaks II

The Great War and Victory of Messiah

Ps 110:1 *A Psalm of David.*

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

² The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!

³ Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.

⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

⁵ The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.

⁷ He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

PSALM 110

“Quote”

*Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy.
Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses.
The only thing to fear but fear itself.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Tear down this wall!
War must be.
War is peace.
If not us, who?
Fortune favors the brave.
People don't start wars, governments do.
The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.*

FAMOUS QUOTES ABOUT WAR. Some are pithy. Some are profound. Some are proverbial. All are pillars upon which civilizations old and new do well to rest their foundations by remembering. And remember them, we do. For they are oft repeated and quoted. If I asked you what was [the most quoted verse](#) from the Old Testament in the New Testament, what might you say? Maybe “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?*” Perhaps “*Love your neighbor as yourself?*” Maybe “*You are my Son, today*

I have begotten you?” Or “Honor your father and your mother?” Those are all good guesses, as each is found multiple times in the NT.

The answer is **Psalm 110:1**: “The LORD said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” One scholar finds it 23 times in the NT.¹ A sermon I heard put the number at 27.² It could be even more. Add to this that **Psalm 110:4** is quoted or alluded over a half-dozen more times,³ making it also one of the most referenced texts in the NT, and we have here a psalm upon which to rest our Christian foundations. Thus, it is vital to understand what these verses and Psalm are saying. And what would that be? It is **the announcement** of a great coming war. This war was clearly at the very center of the New Testament *kerygma* (proclamation), though many do not see it. I hope to help you see its glory today.

¹ Quotes: **Matt 22:44//Mark 12:36//Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13**. Allusions: **Matt 26:64//Mark 14:62//Luke 22:69; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33, 5:31, 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; 1Co 15:25; Eph 1:20, 2:6; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 8:1, 10:12-13; 12:2; 1Pe 3:22; Rev 3:21**. David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 163-64. Cited in **Christopher A. Beetham**, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 228.

² **Steven Lawson**, “Preaching Christ as Sovereign,” 2014 Expositors Conference. <https://www.sermonaudio.com/playpopupvideo.asp?SID=92314127424>. Around 12:35.

³ **John 12:34; Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21**.

Context and Structure

As one scholar has argued, I think successfully, we are in the middle of the first of several different sets of songs that were organized by the priests to lead Israel into post-exilic worship of God at the newly rebuilt temple, formally **during Passover** time. Passover celebrates the greatest military victory in the OT ... *and the New!* It is the day God delivered his people from slavery; it is the day Jesus delivered his people from sin and Satan.

The collection we are in is a short “**David**” **set** (three songs: 108-110). David, of course, was the king. And thus, we are in the middle of a collection that **gives us the words of the king**. These words were prophetic words in the previous song, which predicted the betrayal of the innocent Messiah at the hands of one of his closest friends. As we will see shortly, Psalm 110 puts this picture in living color.

Psalm 110 is quite short, just 7 verses. Some see its structure as chiastic:

A. The Yahweh installs Adonai (vs. 1)	feet
B. The Lord's commission to conquer (2)	enemies
C. The day of power (3)	day
D. Yahweh promises an oath (4)	oath
C ¹ . The day of wrath (5)	day
B ¹ . He will conquer (6)	nations, chiefs
A ¹ . Yahweh installs Adonai (7) ⁴	head

Others divide it along these lines:

I. Superscription: author (David), genre (psalm)	1aA
II. Introduction: genre (prophecy), Author (<i>I AM</i>), addressee (lord)	1aB
A. First Part: Lord as King	1b-3
1. Divine Citation: "Sit at my right hand"	1b
2. Prophetic Reflection: Address to Lord	2-3
a. Initiate holy war	2
b. Lord's troops willing to fight	3
B. Second Part: Lord as Priest	4-7
1. Divine Citation	4
a. Introduction: Genre (an irrevocable oath)	4a
b. Citation: An eternal priest like Melchizedek	4b
2. Prophetic Reflections	5-7
a. Address to Lord: he will smash kings	5
b. Address to congregation	6-7
(1) Lord judges whole earth	6
(2) Lord consummates victory	7 ⁵

⁴ See **Robert Alden**, "Chiastic Psalms (III): A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 101-150," *JETS* 21/3 (Sept 1978): 204 [199-210].

⁵ **Bruce K. Waltke**, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 501. Alden seems to suggest that something like this is also possible:

- A. Right Hand (vs. 1)
- B. Rule your enemies (2)
- C. Dew (3)
- D. Yahweh promises an oath (4)
- A¹. Right Hand (5)
- B¹. Execute judgment (6)
- C¹. Brook (7)

Both ideas can be quite helpful, and I'll use them both. The second shows us something we have not focused in detail on in the Psalms. It shows the three offices of the OT which the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills in his coming. **Prophet**—the song is a prophecy. **Priest**—the Lord is installed as a priest forever. **King**—the Lord becomes king and subdues all his enemies. All three are vital for you to understand regarding his various roles in this war.

Psalm 110:1: The Great King

The psalm tells us it is “*A Psalm of David.*” Immediately, we come to the quote to end all quotes in the Bible. Again, “**The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’**” (1). The first “LORD” is, as always, the proper covenant name of God: **Yahweh**. The second “Lord” is the oft used **Adonai**. Frequently, Yahweh-Adonai are put together to describe one person. This occurs as recently as **Psalm 109:21**, “**And Thou, O Jehovah (Yahweh) Lord (Adonai)...**” (YLT). In those cases, there is no preposition that comes between the words. They are literally: Yahweh Adonai.

But here we have something different. We have *Yahweh la-adonai*.⁶ “La” is the Hebrew preposition meaning “to.” We find this unusual construction only four other times in the OT (1Sa 25:28, 30, 31; 2Sa 4:8). In none of those cases can *adonai* be referring to God. Rather, it is just the typical word used to describe a human Lord, like David himself is sometimes called (cf. 2Ch 2:14).

What is so remarkable (and inexplicable to many) in Psalm 110:1 is that *David—the king—is the speaker* of this verse. David (person 1) is saying that Yahweh (person 2) says something to *his* Lord (person 3). “*Yahweh says to my Adonai...*”⁷ This gives us three parties in the verse in a relationship that looks something like this:

⁶ There is something called a *paseq* (|) inserted by the scribes between the two words for God. The idea seems to be that because (YHVH) was said as “adonai” (since they didn’t say the proper name for God), you would end up with “Adonai said to Adonai.” To avoid this reading, the Masoretes inserted *paseq* to make them be in separate phrases. Thus you have: יהוה | לַאֲדֹנָי. On this see note 110 at: <https://www.coursehero.com/file/p23hep3/From-small-childhood-I-have-puzzled-over-the-odd-thought-found-in-my-Bible/>

⁷ *-ai* is 1st p. suffix of *Adon*. The LXX has the singular genitive pronoun *mou* or “my” as do all English translations.



Adonai



David

At this point, let's see how Jesus talks about this. He brings this verse up with the Pharisees. He asks them, “What do you think about the Christ [Messiah]? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David” (Matt 22:42). He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'””? (Matt 22:43-44). He then asks them the decisive question. “If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” (45). The final verse in the story tells us, “No one was able to answer him a

word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions” (46).

Jesus’ line of argument uses the natural language of the verse, without allegory, without metaphor, without any kind of special pleading. It combines the thought of the “Son” from Ps. 2. So why could the Jews not answer him? This is a very important question, because it gets at the very heart of the Christian message about who Messiah is. But is Jesus just twisting words in a way that no one had ever seen before? Is that why they couldn’t answer him? Some people think so.

Take the modern Jewish rabbi Tovia Singer as an example, “Psalms 110 represents one of the New Testament’s most stunning, yet clever mistranslations of the Jewish scriptures.”⁸ Why? Because everyone knows that “Lord” with capital letters has to be “lord” (lower-case). “[Sarcasm] Jesus really showed those arrogant Pharisees how little they knew about their own Bible ... [but] no Jew armed with a superficial knowledge of this chapter would

⁸ Rabbi Tovia Singer, “‘The Lord Said to My Lord...’ To Whom Was the Lord Speaking in Pslm 110:1?” Outreach Judaism (no date), <https://outreachjudaism.org/psalm110/>

have ever found Jesus' argument compelling, let alone a conversation stopper."

What is he saying? He's saying that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all too ignorant of the OT to realize that this supposed Jesus-story makes literally no sense of the text. Adonai, he says, *must be* David. He literally makes the argument that David wrote the song for the Levites, so that the Levites could turn around and sing about *their* lord, who is David! What this points out is that people do not have the categories in their heads (and in many cases, the moral capability) to understand Jesus' argument. But if Jesus' argument makes no sense of the text, then beloved let me be plain: Jesus is not God. No one is allowed to just make stuff up about God's word.

But of course, Matthew, Mark, and Luke knew full well what the text said and what the Jews of their day would have thought. The key here is *their day*, not *our* day. In fact, that's their point, and Singer has completely missed it. Rather than assume that Jesus was pulling a fast one over the uneducated eyes of the Pharisees, and that these Gospels would somehow dupe the world into thinking this great con-artist was God, this entire conversation happens—and stops—

precisely because the Pharisees know this passage like the back of their hand. Jesus is tired of their unbelief.

With that in mind, not only is this the most quoted passage in the New Testament, but the Jews themselves—in the OT, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Talmud used it on a regular basis. David Hay, who did his dissertation on this psalm says you find it in:

Daniel 7:9-14 (cf. b. Sanhedrin 38b)		
Test of Job 33:3	Ascension of Moses 6:1	Jubilees 32:1; 36:16
1 Macc 14:41	3 Enoch 10:1; 48C:5	Test of Levi 4:2; 8:3; 18:2
11Q13 Melchizedek	Test of Reuben 6:11	1En 45:1, 3; 51:3; 52:1-7; 55:4; 61:8; 69:27, 29 ⁹

Importantly, some of these are **Messianic interpretations**, *by the Jews themselves!* For example, **Midrash Tehillim** on Ps 18§29 says, “**Rabbi Yudan, in the name of Rabbi Chama, said in the future: *The Lord will sit Messiah-King on his right hand, as the Lord says to my Lord, Sit on My right hand. And I'm on your right. As it were (God's name) on your***

⁹ Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, cited in Jared Compton, “Psalm 110 in the NT: An Important Monograph,” (Jun 2013), *Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary* <http://www.dbts.edu/2013/06/05/psalm-110-in-the-nt-an-important-monograph/>.

right.”¹⁰ Then there’s **Daniel 7:9-14**, where the “Ancient of Days” is seated on his throne and “one like a son of man” was presented before him. To him is given total dominion over all things as an everlasting dominion, forever. The Rabbis themselves connected these two passages.¹¹

This is precisely what Jesus does, citing both of them together at his trial. “I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (**Matt 26:64**). “Son of man” and “clouds of heaven” is **Daniel’s language**. “Seated at the right hand” is **the Psalm’s language**. And those in the court knew what he was saying, because they now want to put him to death for blasphemy! In other words, it isn’t like

¹⁰ Other Jewish interpretations of Messiah in Psalm 110 are summarized at “Psalm 110 ~ Conclusion.” <http://www.jewishroots.net/library/prophecy/psalms/psalm-110-folder/psalm-110-conclusion.html>

¹¹ “I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit’ (**Daniel 7:9**); where the term ‘thrones’ is written in plural, *kharsavan*, but the term ‘sit’ is written in singular. The Gemara asks: **Why do I need these** instances of plural words? Why does the verse employ the plural at all when referring to God? The Gemara explains: This is **in accordance with the statement of Rabbi Yoḥanan, as Rabbi Yoḥanan says: The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not act unless He consults with the entourage of Above, i.e., the angels, as it is stated: ‘The matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones’ (Daniel 4:14).** The Gemara clarifies: This works out well for almost all the verses, as they describe an action taken by God, but **what is there to say concerning the verse: ‘I beheld till thrones were placed’?** The Gemara answers: **One throne is for Him and one throne is for David, i.e., the messiah, as it is taught in a baraita: One throne is for Him and one throne is for David; this is the statement of Rabbi Akiva” (B. San 39b).**

Jesus is making it up. If they didn't know that Psalm 110 was being read Messianically, his question about whose son the Messiah is would literally make no sense, and he would hardly be put to death for it. They would have just thought he was nuts, and laughed him out of the court.

But this all raises the vital question about David. Many people simply do not understand how David could say that he has *two* Lords. I mean, he is king; who else could possibly be above him? We've just seen this with the contemporary Rabbi. But if we are honest, many Christians say the same thing about David's own knowledge in the OT. How many will dare say that David actually *knew* Jesus? The silence in this regard in commentaries and sermons is itself deafening.

What I want you to understand is that David knew full well that he had **two Lords** *and yet* only **one Lord**; that this simply was Jewish religion of the OT; and that Jesus' point makes perfect sense. This second "Lord" is none other than the Angel of the LORD, whom **Abraham calls Adonai** (**Gen 18:3, 27**), but the same chapter identifies as **Yahweh** (**18:1, 26, 33**). Just one chapter later, this becomes **Yahweh on the earth** sending down fire **from Yahweh in heaven** (**Gen**

24:19). Thus, you have in the person Adonai both identification with Yahweh, yet distinction from Yahweh.

We saw this in Psalm 2, which is where Jesus gets the “son” idea. In that song you have, “He who sits in the heavens” laughing and “Adonai” holding them in derision (Ps 2:4). Just two verses earlier they were called “Yahweh” and “Mashiach [Messiah]” (2). Just a few verses later they are called “Yahweh” and “my Son” (7).

Two Lords in Psalm 2		
2:2	He who sits in the heavens	Adonai
2:4	Yahweh	Messiah
2:7	Yahweh	My Son

And guess what? The Son inherits the nations and makes the ends of the earth his possession, just like in Daniel 7; just like Psalm 110. Few notice these distinctions because they’ve been taught to read the OT like a Unitarian would, even though David and all the other OT saints knew full well that the Angel of the LORD was, simply, their God (see Gen 48:15-16). Distinct from Yahweh; identified as Yahweh.

So, David hears Yahweh speaking to Adonai. What does he say? “**Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.**” This is the language of **enthronement and military victory**. Yahweh is on the throne. He is commanding (not asking) Adonai to come by him and take his seat.

This seat is at “**the right hand.**” This is the position of power in the ancient world.



Horemheb seated at the right hand of Horus¹²

¹² **John H Walton**, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 418.

It is the place from which **justice is dispensed** in a court (**1Kg 7:7**),¹³ from whence the military **commander carries out his authority** (**Ex 15:3, 6; Josh 5:14**), and from where **glory and exaltation** are seen by all people. This is the phrase that is repeated so often in the NT, and its epicenter is right here. Here are a few examples:

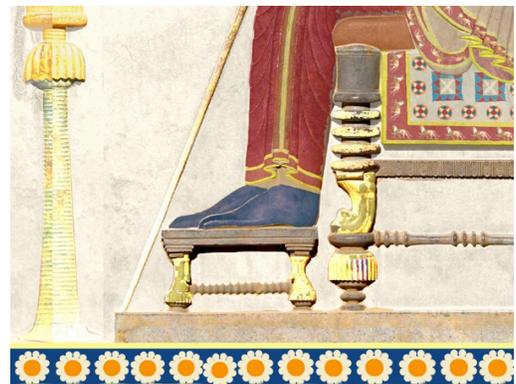
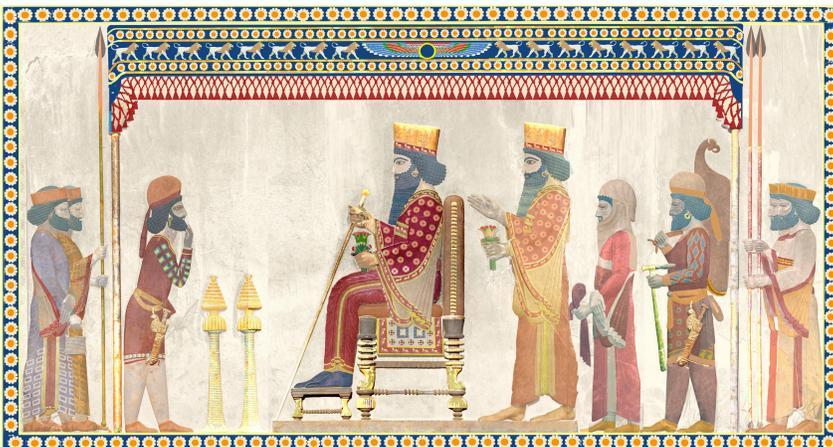
- For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at **my right hand**, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” (**Acts 2:34-35**)
- God exalted him at **his right hand** as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (**Acts 5:31**)
- Who is at **the right hand** of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (**Rom 8:34**)
- If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at **the right hand of God**. (**Col 3:1**)
- After making purification for sins, he sat down at **the right hand of the Majesty on high**. (**Heb 1:3**)

¹³ See the discussion in **Bruce K. Waltke**, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 503.

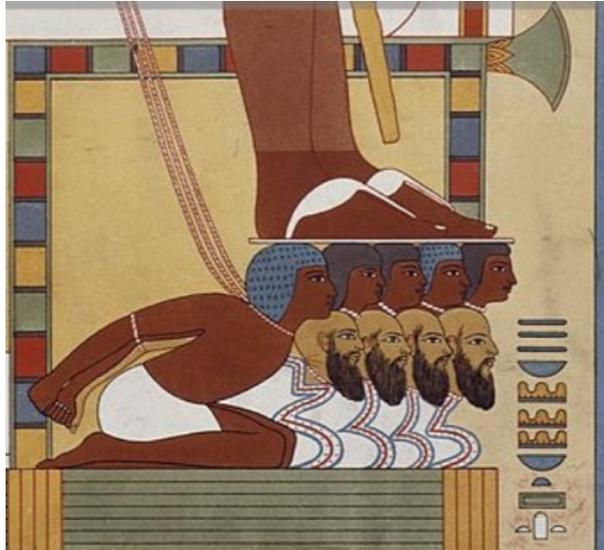
What they all have in common is the teaching that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and that 40 days later, he ascending to heaven. **The resurrection** is his great victory over death and hell. **The ascension** is his coronation in heavenly places where he is now seated at the right hand of the Father and rules as King of king and God of gods above heaven and earth. This is the NT proclamation, and it sees Psalm 110:1 being a prophecy of such importance that it is the most quoted thing we have in the entire Bible.

The footstool is the place to which the enemies of Adonai must bow. Again, kings had literal footstools, and in Israel's understanding, this is actually the role that the ark of the covenant fulfilled, as it sat below the mercy seat:

King's and their Footstools



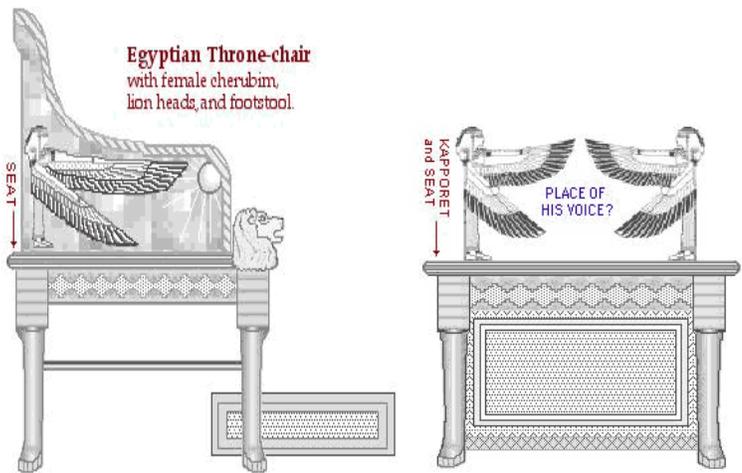
Reconstruction of the Persepolis Treasury Relief



Middle kingdom pharaoh seated on the lap of his governess with a footstool that bears the images of his enemies (HIP/Art Resource, NY, in Walton, see n. 12)



King Tut's Throne and Footstool



Tut's Throne/Stool compared to Ark of Covenant

Paul tells the Corinthians, “He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1Co 15:25). That’s footstool language, Psalm 110 language. And yet, it is far, far older, going all the way back to Genesis 3:15. “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” So Psalm 110 is nothing but the further expanding and explaining of the first “gospel” in the Bible.



Psalm 110:2-3: Victory Will Be Yours

The Psalm unfolds this for us in its own way. Let’s look at the next couple of verses. “The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!” (2). This scepter and rule make it clear that kingship is in view. The scepter or staff becomes the king’s badge of authority and power to punish his enemies (Isa

10:5).¹⁴ Messiah is the Great King, and he will do whatever he wants with his enemies! Again, here is an ancient *Jewish* interpretation of this verse. “And thy staff, that is the Messiah, as it is said (**Isaiah 11:1**): ‘And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse.’ (**Psalms 110:2**) ‘The rod of Thy strength the LORD will send out of Zion’” (**Rabba Genesis 85.9**) [Google Translate]. Some Jews saw this as a Messianic text. And why not? It bears strong resemblance to **Psalm 2:1, 9** and **82:6-9** and **89:9-10**; **Dan 7:13-14**; and many other texts.

But if Jesus is fulfilling these words, how are we to understand these “enemies?” The same way Psalm 2 did. They are both **earthly kings** and **heavenly rulers**. Of the earthly kings, someone has written, “Jesus’ statement [“from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven”] may very well mean that the next time the members of the Sanhedrin see him, they will see *him as their judge*.”¹⁵ You may wonder when these Jewish rulers ever saw Jesus again.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ **Craig A. Evans**, *Luke*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 335.

The answer is told by unbelieving historians at the destruction of the temple.

Though most of the Jews did not understand *Christ* was judging them, they all knew that God was. For example, Josephus said, “God has gone over to the Romans, and using them as his means to judge Israel” (Josephus, *Wars* 3.8.3.354). He wrote (the 110th! Paragraph of *Wars* 6.2.1), “Are not both the city and the entire temple now full of the dead bodies of your countrymen? It is God therefore, it is God himself who is bringing on this fire.”¹⁶ Nothing has ever been the same since 70 AD. Christ judged the human rulers of his own people.

As far as **the heavenly enemies** are concerned, Paul often uses it to talk about their judgment. “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For

¹⁶ **Going Deeper:** We don't have time, and this really isn't the best place to get into this, but Jesus predicted that he could come to judge Israel (that's the point of what we are talking about now) and that they would all see signs of his judgment (see the Olivet Discourse). Curiously, there were some very strange signs that accompanied this judgment such as “hosts seen meeting in the skies, arms flashing, and suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds” (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.13). Or “it was seen over the Holy of Holies for the whole night the outline of a man's face, the like of whose beauty had never been see in all the land ... [with] chariots of fire and horsemen, a great force flying across the sky near to the ground ... riders of fire” (Sepher Yosippon (*A Mediaeval History of Ancient Israel*) translated from the Hebrew by Steven B. Bowman. Excerpts from Chapter 87 "Burning of the Temple"). Etc. Thanks to my friend Brian Godawa for these quotes.

he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1Co 15:24-26). Or “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). Of this passage someone has said,

Although [Paul] does not explicitly cite the portion of the Psalm that speaks of the defeat of the enemies, the familiarity of this passage to the Christian readers would have prompted a recollection of the rest of the text. Early Christians typically identified the enemies of the Psalm with the hostile demonic powers that Christ subjugated by his death and exaltation. This allusion to Psalm 110:1 [in Col 3:1] is especially appropriate following the dramatic depiction in [Col] 2:15 of Christ’s defeat of the principalities and powers on the cross.¹⁷

Psalm 110:3 comes next. “Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.” As we have seen the last couple of

¹⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996, 2014), 306. See also Beetham, 226-27.

studies, you can hear in this reasons why the Levites may have chosen this for the next “[morning](#)” song in the Passover festival liturgy with its references to “day” and “dew” and, of course, “morning.”

But more to our point, we can paraphrase this as [Adonai has troops, and they are willing to fight](#). This is Holy war and it is conducted with dedicated, fearless warriors who support their King on the battlefield because they love and trust him, know that God is with him, and the cause is just.¹⁸ This is what we have come to call [the church militant](#).

Yet, how do they fight? Their weapons are otherworldly. The Spirit is their [sword](#); truth is their [belt](#); faith is their [shield](#) ([Eph 6](#)). They defend this Kingdom by opposing everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God ([2Co 10:5](#)), always ready to make a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for their hope, gently and with respect ([1Pe 3:15](#)). Yet, paradoxically, fighting in such a way that they give themselves up if they must: as martyrs—clothed in white garments ([Rev 6:11](#)), yet under the altar of heaven slain for the witness they had

¹⁸ Ibid., 506-07.

borne (**Rev 6:9**). But at the end, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (**Rom 16:20**).¹⁹

Verse 3 also has a fascinating **double-entendre** that links it to Psalm 2 in another way. The LXX translates, “From the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours” as “I have begotten you from the womb before the morning.”²⁰ Certainly, this recalls **Psalm 2:7s**, “I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’” But now, the language of begotten is even more mysterious. For it happened “before the morning.” Truly, there are deep reasons why this psalm is so important to the first Christians. But it doesn’t end here.

Psalm 110:4: The Great Priest

The second most quoted verse in this psalm is **Psalm 110:4**. It is the very strange, “Yahweh has sworn and will

¹⁹ A helpful summary of the supernatural side of this with Psalm 110 is **Greg Boyd**, “The Most Quoted Old Testament Verse,” adapted from his book *God at War*, pp 242-46. <http://reknew.org/2016/03/the-most-quoted-old-testament-verse/>. Though he was my professor and friend, I recommend being careful with reading Dr. Boyd, as his “open theology” is something I find dangerous. However, on Psalm 110, he is excellent.

²⁰ Kugel’s translation is even more interesting. “From the womb, before the morning star, I have begotten you.” See **James Kugel**, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 156.

not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’” Paul echoes it and 110:1 when he talks about Christ at the right hand (110:1) now interceding for us (110:4). How? Anyone thinking that this song was originally about David (or some other king like Hezekiah) forgot this verse. For none of those kings were ever considered priests! In fact, one got leprosy for trying to take that office upon himself! (2Ch 26:19). Now, the psalm moves from prophesying about the King to prophesying about the Priest. This priest is perhaps the greatest mystery-man of the entire OT: Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was the priest-king of Salem before it was known as Jerusalem. He ruled there during the days of Abraham. We have only a few short biblical texts about him. After the fabled “giant-wars” (as I call them) from early in the chapter, and the captivity and rescue of Lot, Abram’s nephew, we read, “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your

hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything" (Gen 14:18-20). So, who is this Melchizedek?

There are a couple of things to know. First, in terms of the history, there are some real question marks about this man. Not *that* he was; but *who* he was. Many think he is just an ordinary king, but since he was king in the Promised Land in what would become the Holy City of David, Abraham honored him.²¹

But some Jews, Christians, and in my opinion probably Hebrews too, thought he was something ... more. For example, Origin and Didymus the Blind believed he was an angel. Ambrose seems to have called him both God and the son of God, even though he in another place said he was a man.²² Epiphanius catalogued views that said he was the pre-incarnate Son,²³ a manifestation of the Holy Spirit,²⁴ or even

²¹ In the early church, Jerome received a letter claiming that Melchizedek was the Holy Spirit, and assured the man who gave it to him that most in the church agreed he was a man. This included: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa, Apollinaris, and Eustathius.

²² The citations in Hughes are *Hexaemeron* i.3. *De Abrahamo* i.3. and *De Fide ad Gratianum* iii.11. I tracked down the *On Abraham* quote (found in the Genesis Ancient Christian Commentary) and it does not appear to me that he is saying that Melchizedek was the Son of God, but that Jesus was. I could not find the other quote.

²³ Cf. Epiphanius *Pan.* 55.7.3; Ambrose *De Abr.* 1.3.4.

²⁴ Cf. *Pan.* 55.5.2. The possibility is also entertained by Cyril of Alexandria; *Glaph.* on Gen 2:7* (PG 69.97).²⁴

the Father.²⁵ Some of these follow closely the idea that the sons of God over the nations were angelic beings who showed up, like Zeus did, from time to time. Thus, the best of these speculations is that Melchizedek was the Angel of the LORD. This is certainly plausible.

But, again, it wasn't just Christians. At the Dead Sea, the community talked about him as **one of the chief angels** around Yahweh's throne in the divine council (**4Q401.11.1-3**).²⁶ They wrote that he had three names: **Michael, Prince of Light, and Melchizedek** (**4Q Visions of Amram^b**). In one interpretation of Psalm 82, he is the "**Elohim**" of that song who inherits the nations (**11QMelch II, 10**). In another of **Isaiah 61:2**, "the year of the LORD's favor" reads, "**the year of Melchizedek's favor**" and, like Jesus who read that very passage at the beginning of his ministry and later wins a great victory over Satan, Melchizedek is the heavenly warrior

²⁵ Cf. *Pan.* 55.9.11–15; and **Mark the Hermit** (*PG* 65.1117–40), on whom see Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 101–11. See also **John F. X. Sheehan**, "Melchisedek in Christian Consciousness," *Sciences Ecclésiastiques* 18 (1966) 127–38. These references are found in **Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester**, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 195, notes 111, 113, 114, 115. On the history that see Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 242–44 and my sermon on Hebrews 7:1–8, "The Priesthood of Melchizedek: A Priest Forever."

²⁶ The fragment reads, "... priests of... gods of knowledge and ... Melchizedek, priest in the assembly of God..."

who fights and defeats Belial at the end of the age (11Q13 Col. ii:9). More war!

Pretty bizarre stuff, I know. But Hebrews itself seems to open the door to this kind of interpretation when it says, Melchizedek continues as priest forever (Heb 7:3, 24); that he received tithes from “mortal men” (implying that he himself was immortal; 7:8); that he had an indestructible life (16); and that he has no father or mother or genealogy (3). He was so great that even the mighty Abraham give him a tenth of everything (4).

The second thing is who he is in this song. Does he only arrive on the scene here, as the ESV’s translation would have us understand? Probably. In that idea, Adonai is made a priest “in the order of Melchizedek.” In other words, they are probably different people. However, the Hebrew is vague. It could be translated (and was), “You are a priest forever by my order, O Melchizedek.”²⁷ Taking this and the LXX’s

²⁷ Kugal, As The Bible Was, 154. The Targum reads, “The LORD has sworn and will not turn aside, that you are appointed leader in the age to come, because of the merit that you were a righteous king (i.e. a play on the name Melchizedek). A blogger explains, “The Septuagint, the epistle to the Hebrews, and modern translations understand the *î* of *dib̄arātî* (*dibrab* 'cause', 'manner', 'reason') as a *hiriq compaginis* (a relic of the old genitive or rather, the construct case-ending). The alternative way is to understand it as a first singular pronominal suffix (“my order”), which leads to two possibilities: (1) ‘You are a priest forever by my, Melchizedek’s, order;’ (2) ‘You are a priest forever by my order [on my account], Melchizedek.’” I do not see

“**begotten**” as being spoken to Melchizedek, suddenly you have Adonai being Melchizedek! This is a vague possibility even in reading Hebrews.

Whoever he was, we must not miss the point, or points, and there are many. Hebrew’s main point is to teach us that **Christ is superior to all beings**, in heaven or on earth. Part of his superiority is that he is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, whether that’s because he *is* Melchizedek become flesh or simply via analogy with a greater priest than Aaron and a greater king than David.

But what matters most for us is that the NT repeatedly says **this prophesy of Christ’s priesthood has been fulfilled!** This is remarkable, because Jesus isn’t from a priestly line. He is from the kingly line of Judah. Yet, because of Melchizedek, he can be our great high priest. Part of what this means is that because he is now at the right hand of the Father, he makes intercession for us to bring us to salvation by the Holy Spirit! This salvation is him **wresting away sinners** from captivity to Satan, **freeing them** from slavery, **releasing them** from prison, **binding** the power of the

why this has to be an either/or, though I suppose it could be, in which case, Hebrews and the LXX win.

strongman. This is why it is important that he is both priest and king. Both offices work together.

But you need to know that *the people were in fact expecting this too*. In John's Gospel, the crowd asks him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever" (John 12:34). Where do they get this from? The Jewish interpretation of Psalm 110:4. "He remains a priest forever..." That means, they knew Messiah would be a priest (which, in fact, they did as the Testament of Levi as an example bears great witness to).

They say this because Jesus is saying that he is going to die. But they wouldn't believe him. Then, curiously, it gives a reason. It is *because of Isaiah's prophecy*. "They could not believe" (39), because God "has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart" (40). This Isaiah quote comes from Isaiah 6. But the story finishes by saying, "Isaiah said these things because he saw his [Christ's/Messiah's] glory and spoke of him" (42). This refers to the vision at the beginning of Ch. 6(!), the famous vision of seeing the Lord in the temple! The point is, everything is being fulfilled in the law and the prophets, and at the very center of this is Psalm 110, which David and Isaiah and all the others knew was about

Christ. For, they knew Christ. For, they saw the Word and heard his words. But they couldn't believe until all was fulfilled.

This is what Jesus is doing with the Pharisees. He's telling them **that he fulfills this song** in all of its supernatural intricacies. But he does so **in a way no one expected**. His war is not of this world. It is otherworldly. He had to **die** for our sins to be remitted. He had to **suffer** so that God could pour out his grace on sinners. And because he did this, God **raised** him from the dead, and he is now **seated** at the right hand of glory in heaven from whence he shall **come to judge** the living and the dead, even as he now lives to make intercession for the saints. What glories there are to be uncovered in just one OT song!

This is the Gospel that the first half of the song presupposes. It is sure and firm good news, because **the LORD has sworn and he will not change his mind**. If he swears, there is nothing higher by which he can give you his Word. And because he is the unchangeable God, his purposes will not be thwarted, and nothing in heaven or on earth, not even yourself, can change his mind. And nothing did. For it is fulfilled. The Father has proven himself true.

And now Jesus lives to make intercession for those who call upon him in faith to forgive them of their sins, to change their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, and who bow their knee to his Lordship as Adonai.

But the last three verses remain, and they teach you that if you have not trusted in Christ, beloved, you must do so today and no longer hesitate. For behold, look what is coming.

Psalm 110:5-7: The Prophet Speaks

If the first verses are about Christ as King, and vs. 4 is about him as priest, then **vv. 5-7** really focus on **the future**. We've seen some of this, but not the way it is presented now. Thus, the office of Prophet rises to the surface. What is its message?

“**Adonai is at your right hand**” (**Ps 110:5a**). Whose right hand? It might seem like it is saying that he is at *your* right hand, as if the verse is talking about Adonai coming to the seat of power to protect you, one of his enrolled warriors. But this is incorrect. Instead, it is that he is at the right hand of *Yahweh*—**The Father**. In other words, what was a

command in vs. 1 becomes a reality in vs. 5. Adonai has now sat down. Given that the NT teaches us that this has now happened (something different from anything in the OT), we need to know what he does from this position.

“He will shatter kings on the day of his wrath” (Ps 110:5b). Again, we’ve seen that this has happened, at least in part, already—for example in 70 AD. However, the key words here are “the day of his wrath” (this parallels “the day of your power” in vs. 3). Given how old this song is, some scholars have said that this may be the prototype of the later prophetic “day of the LORD.”²⁸ Amazingly, it has a very close parallel to, again, Psalm 2. “Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury” (5). Someone writes, “The universal God wrests territory from other kings, quelling all willful resistance to the divine rule ... The king’s realm must logically cover the earth, since he [is] the Lord of the world.”²⁹

Hence, the next verse. “He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth” (Ps 110:6). This parallels vs. 2,

²⁸ Anderson, 772 in Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150 (Revised)*, vol. 21, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 118.

²⁹ Ibid. See n. 18 for more of the supernatural parts of this as well.

“Rule in the midst of your enemies.” It is the apocalyptic vision that we find so often regarding the Great Day of the LORD. This very much reminds me of the end of Revelation, “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, ‘Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great’” (Rev 19:15-18). This is what awaits those who refuse to bow their knee to Adonai—the Messiah, King Jesus. Don’t be his enemy!

Vs. 7 gives us the climactic vision. “He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head” (Ps 110:7). What is the meaning of this strange ending to this magnificent prophecy? One scholar explains that, “Reference is frequently seen to a rite of drinking from the Gihon spring as part of the enthronement ceremony (cf. 1

Kgs 1:38) ... The reference may be to a ritual drinking from the Gihon spring as a sacramental means of receiving divine resources for the royal task.”³⁰

Augustine takes it more spiritually. “It was from this rapid and turbulent stream [of our humanity] that Christ was willing to drink. You heard just now in the psalm, ‘From the torrent he drank in the way.’ This torrent has brought us to birth, has carried us on to death. As though from the hidden source of a spring, Christ has taken to himself the very depths of the sea. Each for our sake—he was both born and died” (**Augustine**, *Sermon 372.3*). What could be more symbolic of this than that last night of his life when he crossed the **dark Kidron** stream on his way to be handed over to the Jews to be put to death so that we might have life? **Theodoret** sees here also Christ drinking from **the Passion a cup**, “**Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by.**” He drank deeply from the cup of death, so that (as he says), “**with the coming of summer, according to the Lord’s**

³⁰ Ibid. It is also worth noting that it can be translated very differently: “**The Bestower of Succession set him on his throne**” (**Dahood, Alden**). This idea fits very well with the military theme of the song. This translation also creates the chiasm. The ESV’s translation creates the ABCDABC pattern where “dew” (vs. 3) and “brook” (vs. 7) are parallel (see below).

statement, ‘Lift up your eyes, and behold the fields, white for harvest’ (Theodoret, *Commentary on Psalm 110:7*).

What a perfect way to end the most quoted psalm in the NT. For what it shows is the mystery of Christ: prophet, priest, and king; death, resurrection, and ascension. The One who fulfilled the prophecies. The one who mediates for our sins. The one who rules over all. The one who has conquered death and the devil at the cross, who is exalted and lifted up in his resurrection and ascension, the one who offers salvation freely from the cup of with the water of life. The one who is coming again to judge the living and the dead. This is our message. This is our hope.

Don't let anyone ever tell you that Jesus made this stuff up. Don't let anyone ever tell you that the OT saints didn't know the Second Person. Don't let anyone ever tell you that prophecy is not fulfilled. The King has spoken. As have God's people. Long ago the Sibyl told us:

When Sabaoth Adonai, who thunders on high, dissolves
fate
and raises the dead, and takes his seat
on a heavenly throne, and establishes a great pillar,

Messiah, imperishable himself, will come in glory on a
cloud
toward the imperishable one with the blameless angels.
He will sit on the right of the Great One, judging at the
tribunal
the life of pious men and the way of impious men.³¹

SibOr 2.238-44

It has happened. He is a priest forever. He rules forever.
Thus, we all say with one voice, according to another
enduring quote: [Long live the King](#). May he receive glory
and honor and dominion and power forevermore. Amen.

³¹ James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 351.

ESV	LXA	PsTarg
<p><i>"A Psalm of David.</i> The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."</p>	<p>"A Psalm of David. The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.</p>	<p><i>"Composed by David, a psalm. The LORD said in his decree to make me lord of all Israel, but he said to me, "Wait still for Saul of the tribe of Benjamin to die, for one reign must not encroach on another; and afterwards I will make your enemies a prop for your feet." ANOTHER TARGUM: The LORD spoke by his decree to give me the dominion in exchange for sitting in study of Torah. "Wait at my right hand until I make your enemies a prop for your feet." ANOTHER TARGUM: The LORD said in his decree to appoint me ruler over Israel, but the LORD said to me, "Wait for Saul of the tribe of Benjamin to pass away from the world; and afterwards you will inherit the kingship, and I will make your enemies a prop for your feet."</i></p>
<p>² The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!</p>	<p>² The Lord shall send out a rod of power for thee out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.</p>	<p>² The LORD will send from Zion the rod of your strength, and <i>you will</i> rule in the midst of your enemies.</p>
<p>³ Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.</p>	<p>³ With thee is dominion in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints: I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning.</p>	<p>³ Your people <i>are those of the house of Israel who devote themselves to the Torah; you will be helped in the day of your making battle with them; in the glories of holiness the mercies of God will hasten to you like the descent of dew; your offspring dwell securely.</i></p>
<p>⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."</p>	<p>⁴ The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.</p>	<p>⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not <i>turn aside</i>, that you are <i>appointed leader</i> in the age to come, because of <i>the merit that you were</i> a righteous king.</p>
<p>⁵ The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter</p>	<p>⁵ The Lord at thy right hand has dashed in pieces</p>	<p><i>presence of the LORD is at your right hand; he</i> down kings on the day of his anger.</p>

kings on the day of his wrath.	kings in the day of his wrath.	
⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.	all judge among the nations, he shall fill up the earth with the heads of many corpses, he shall smote the heads of many chiefs over the wide earth.	<i>As appointed judge over the Gentiles; the earth is full of the bodies of the slain wicked; he smote the heads of many chiefs over the earth, very many.</i>
⁷ He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head."	shall drink of the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head."	<i>He will receive instruction from the mouth of the prophet by the way; because of this, he will lift up his head."</i>

Judgment quotes of the Fall of Jerusalem

(I received these quotes this week from a friend, and thought they were interesting)

God has gone over to the Romans, and using them as his means to judge Israel:

Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* 3.8.3 §354

(354) and [Josephus] said [to God],—“Since it pleaseth thee, who hast created the Jewish nation, to depress the same, and since all their good fortune is gone over to the Romans...”

Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 655.

Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* 6.2.1 §110

“(110) And are not both the city and the entire temple now full of the dead bodies of your countrymen? It is God therefore, it is God himself who is bringing on this fire, to purge that city and temple by means of the Romans, and is going to pluck up this city, which is full of your pollutions.”

Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 732.

Here are some additional stuff that you might like:

Joseph’s interpretation of Daniel’s prophecy of Messiah applied to Vespasian:

Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* 6.5.4, §312-313

“(312) But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.” (313) The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea.”

Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 743.

Parousia means “presence”. Josephus used it to describe God’s presence in rescuing Israel

Antiq. 3:80 (3.5.2.80) and while all the rest of the air was clear, there came strong winds, that raised up large showers of rain, which became a mighty tempest. There was also such lightning, as was terrible to those that saw it; and thunder, with its thunderbolts, were sent down, and declared God to be there present in a gracious way to such as Moses desired he should be gracious. Antiq. 3:203 (3.8.5.203) The sky was clear, but there was a mist over the tabernacle only, encompassing it, but not with such a very deep and thick cloud as is seen in the winter season, nor yet in so thin a one as men might be able to discern anything through it; but from it there dropped a sweet dew, and such a one as showed the presence of God to those that desired and believed it.

Non-Christian authors who reported many seeing an angelic army in the clouds:

Tacitus, *Histories* 5.13 (Loeb edition)

Prodigies had indeed occurred, but to avert them either by victims or by vows is held unlawful by a people which, though prone to superstition, is opposed to all propitiatory rites. Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: "The gods are departing": at the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard. Few interpreted these omens as fearful; the majority firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the East should grow strong and that men starting from Judea should possess the world. This mysterious prophecy had in reality pointed to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, as is the way of human ambition, interpreted these great destinies in their own favour, and could not be turned to the truth even by adversity.

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Tacitus/Histories/5A*.html#ref44

Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 6:296-300

a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], (297) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, (298) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunseting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen (299) running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, (300) and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence."^u

Sepher Yosippon (*A Mediaeval History of Ancient Israel*) translated from the Hebrew by Steven B. Bowman. Excerpts from Chapter 87 "Burning of the Temple":

For one year before Vespasian came, a single great star shining like unsheathed swords was seen over the Temple. And in those days when the sign was seen it was the holiday of Passover and during that entire night the Temple was lit up and illuminated like the light of day, and thus it was all seven days of the Passover. All the sages of Jerusalem knew that it was a malevolent sign, but the rest of the ignorant people said that it was a benevolent sign.

...Now it happened after this that there was seen from above over the Holy of Holies for the whole night the outline of a man's face, the like of whose beauty had never been seen in all the land, and his appearance was quite awesome.

Moreover, in those days were seen chariots of fire and horsemen, a great force flying across the sky near to the ground coming against Jerusalem and all the land of Judah, all of them horses of fire

and riders of fire. When the holiday of Shavu'oth came in those days, during the night the priests heard within the Temple something like the sound of men going and the sound of men marching in a multitude going into the Temple, and a terrible and mighty voice was heard speaking: "Let's go and leave this House."

<http://fulfilledtheology.ning.com/forum/topics/historical-records-with-some>

¹¹ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *[The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged](#)* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 742.