



Messiah: The Unchangeable One!

Psalm 102

Dr. Deane J. Woods

Growing up in the “War Years” of 1939 through 1945, I well remember attending Memorial Services (as I still do today) and hearing the sonorous tones of massed Brass Bands playing as we sung the chosen “Songs of Remembrance”. One tune was particularly haunting, the hymn’s words, humbling. Later, I learned the tune was aptly named: “Eventide”. Along with the fitting words of **“Abide with Me”**, the tune and lyrics are etched in my memory forever. I recall teary eyed loved ones, relatives and friends sniffing, signing or otherwise trying to sing Henry Lyle’s scriptural reflections as they remembered those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending our freedom:

*“ ... Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou who changest not,
Abide with me!”*

Our present series of studies tracing “Messiah in the Psalms” now turns to Psalm 102. It is a psalm of an unknown writer, yet whose experiences drew much on the God and Messiah who “never changes”! That this Psalm is a rightly termed “Messianic” is justified by Hebrews 1:10-12, where it quoted verses 25-27:

¹⁰ And ... “You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

*¹¹ They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;*

*¹² Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.*

*But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.” (NKJV).*

The title of the psalm, however, “A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint (Read: lament) before the LORD,” (so KJV,

explanation added), and verses 1-24 are in complete contrast to the last stanza, verses 25-28.

The first section focused on One who was “lonely” and “sorrowful”, yet whose belief was such that the LORD would “arise and have mercy on Zion”, restoring Jerusalem to incomparable glory (vss 13-15). Such divine intervention would surely affect “(succeeding generations)” who would “praise the LORD” (vs 18). This LORD is the One who will “declare His name in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem” – truly messianic aspects of the coming

– to echo the familiar, parallel words of Isaiah 53!

Four main subjects are addressed in His prayer:

A. His Lament: Notice first of all, that this is a dialogue between the Father and the Son. If you were to prayerfully reflect on these inter-relational words and then meditate on such a passage as Luke 22:39-46, you would no doubt see the essence and parallel that Jesus had with His Heavenly Father in the garden of Gethsemane. This scenario is further corroborated by Hebrews 5:7-8:

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And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

*¹¹ They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;*

*¹² Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.*

*But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.”*

In consulting the “Seven Sayings of Christ from The Cross” in the Gospel Narratives, it is noteworthy that Jesus addressed God as

“Father” at both the beginning and end of the divine dialogue (Lk 23:24, 46), while in His “Fourth” Saying from the Cross (Mt 27:46), where He quoted (not questioned!) the Father by reference to Psalm 22:1, He used the term “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me ...?” What does this teach us? In becoming “sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21), Jesus bore the ignominy of being separated from the intimate, continuous fellowship He had enjoyed with His Father through the Holy Spirit, from eternity past.



Kingdom (vss 21-22). This will come to pass because (“His) years are throughout all generations”, He is the One who never changes and whose “years shall have no end” (vss 26-27). What a positive prospect of future hope and salvation for “(his) descendants ... and their seed (who will be established) securely “before (Him) forever! Thus,

1. Prayerful Lament of a “Lonely Man” (vss 1-24)

The Psalmist depicts this One as a lonely, oppressed, rejected “Man of sorrows”



When Christ took upon Himself the “sin” of sinful man’s blatant rebellion against God and thereby took the penalty and punishment of God’s wrath that was rightly ours, He was “forsaken” by the Father! Their separation was not one of nature, essence, or substance. Christ did not in any sense or degree cease to exist as God or as a member of the Triune Godhead. He did not cease to be the Eternal Son, eternally begotten of the Father. His fellowship with His Father was broken, but not the essential relationship as to their eternal, essential Being.

Sin always separates – in this present context, a separation in time and space between the Father and the Son!

True, there was physical and agonising pain in His suffering, but it was not this, *ipso facto*, that brought about sinful man’s redemption and reconciliation to God. God’s mercy and justice must meet; righteousness and truth must “kiss” (embrace), as Psalm 85:11 declared. As the Hymn writer put it: It is at the Cross where “Heaven’s love and justice meet” – and this was only through Messiah’s substitutionary sacrifice! His atoning death necessitated His actually “becoming sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21) as He willingly lay down his life “in violent death” (so Leon Morris). Christ’s was a vicarious, spiritual, sacrifice to end all sacrifices; He singularly atoned for the sinful mankind (Is 53:4-6ff; Lev 17:11; 2 Pt 2:22-24ff; Rom 3:19-26ff). In the words of the Psalmist in our present investigation, it is possible to “hear” the echo of Jesus’ agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, surely:

*Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come to You.
Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day that I call, answer me speedily.* (Ps 102:1-2, NKJV)

B. His Loneliness: The Messiah, here used three telling illustrations to describe the loneliness of his life:

*I am like a pelican of the wilderness:
I am like an owl of the desert.
I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.* (Psalm 102:6-7, NKJV. Emphasis added)

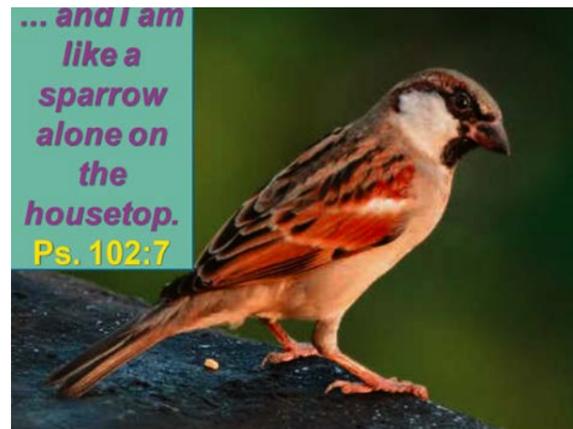
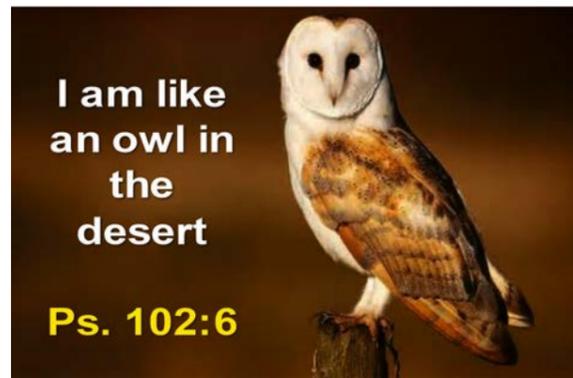
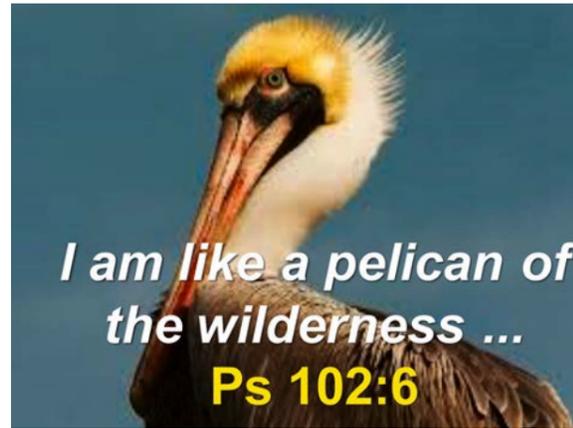
It was T. Ernest Wilson (missionary to Angola, Africa, for forty years), who wrote in his commentary on this psalm:

“The pelican is a perfect picture of doleful misery. It sits on the edge of a swamp with its head upon its breast. It is the most sombre, austere bird I ever saw. This doleful sight is followed by the owl. Its melancholy hoot is heard among ruined buildings. Moping in the ruins and sitting among fallen buildings and graveyards, it is a picture of the mourner. The sparrow is a social bird, but when it loses its mate, it is a mute picture of desolation.” (Emphasis added).

All three birds are emblems of utter abandonment and loneliness – fitting illustrations of what the Messiah experienced at this point in heading to Calvary’s Cross (Cf 2 Pt 2:22-23f).

That Jesus was “lonely” in His earthly life and ministry can be demonstrated in at least three situations in life that the Gospels record concerning Him. These are:

- *In His Home Life*—He had at least four (half) brothers and two sisters (Mk 6:3), yet Scripture reveals that “(He) ... became a stranger unto (his) brethren, and an alien unto (His) mother’s children.” (Ps 69:8, NKJV). Moreover, we are also that “... neither did his brethren believe in him.” (Jn 7:5, NKJV). Only after His resurrection did they believe in Him as their Saviour (Acts 1:14; Cf Js 1:1; 1 Cor 15:1-8ff).
- *In Gethsemane*—It was in the garden (notwithstanding taking Peter and James and John with Him), that He was alone in His agony as He “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground ...” (Lk 24:44).
- *On the Cross*—In the Upper Room Discourse, Messiah had told the disciples: “You shall be scattered...and shall leave Me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (Jn 16:32). From Gospels these facts also emerge: Judas betrayed Him; Peter denied Him; all the others forsook Him and fled! Only Mary, His mother, a handful of female followers, and the Apostle John stood by



Him at the Cross. It was there that the ultimate abandonment afforded Him was perpetrated. Amid the darkness over the world from the sixth to the ninth hour (Lk 23:44), He cried: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Sin separated Him from the Father for “(He) is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity” (Hab 1:13).

C. His Lifespan: Here, the “Anointed One” used three similes to describe the brevity of His *earthly* life. (Contrast this with His being our High Priest *forever* because of

the power of His *endless life* (Heb 7:16-25ff). These similes are: (1) of smoke (vs 3); of grass (vs 4, 11); (3) of a shadow that declines (vs 11). Then in verse 24, He prayed: “O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days.” Did God the Father answer that desperate prayer? Certainly! For verse 27 answered: “Thy years shall have no end”!

Without doubt, this prayer and its divine answer should remind us of two poignant passages in the Jewish Scriptures. Would you not agree, reader friend? Consider these scriptures:

*And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.* (Dan 9:26, NKJV).

*He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
And they made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,*

*He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.* (Is 53:8-10, NKJV. Emphasis added).

Messiah’s life, instead of being extended to the “scriptural norm” of seventy years (Ps 90:10), was “cut short” in the midst, at thirty-three. The reply of His Father, however, emphasized His eternal years. His life will be “endless”, “real” (for it is “eternal” – Cf Jn 17:3) and enduring beyond the present bounds of time and space. A new dimension will certainly be realized in His Kingdom and then into the Eternal State as believers enjoy the blissfulness of His presence “when time will be no more”!

All this will only be possible through the resurrected Messiah and the power of His endless life. The Psalmist gave more

than a hint of this when we referred to his belief that the LORD would arise and have mercy on Zion, rebuild Jerusalem and appear in glory (vss 13-16), anticipating and based on His immutability and faithfulness to which he would refer in verses 25 to 27! Therefore His prayerful “Lament” next highlighted Messiah’s captivating “Legacy”!

D. His Legacy (vss 12-24): Again, the Psalmist stressed three telling messianic themes. First, His Advent would: *Fulfil the LORD’s Prophetic Programme* (vs 13). His mercy certainly would come upon Zion to demonstrate His divine favour. Furthermore, it would come exactly “on time” in accordance with His sovereign will for it is His “set” (Cf Lev 23 in regard to His “appointed” Feasts! There, the same Hebrew word is used as well). This anticipated Paul’s reference to God’s Prophetic calendar in Galatians 4:4 that “in the fullness of time, God sent forth His son ...”. He prepared the stage of history for His First Advent and it will be the same for His Second Coming to planet earth (Hag 2:6; Heb 12:25-28f).

Second, it would focus on the *Return of His People* to the Land and the **Rebuilding of the Temple** in Jerusalem (vss 14,16). He is specific as he insisted that “His servants take pleasure in her stones”. His praises would again inhabit Jerusalem (Cf & Zech 1:14, 17; 14:1-9, 16-21)!

Third, it would manifest the *Revelation of His Glory* in the Kingdom! This would be indissolubly linked to His creating the new heavens and the new earth and His eternal reign. (vss 15-16, 22, 25-26). The nations will finally come and worship the King (vs 22; Rev 11:15).

Could it be that the reader of these words is “lonely”, “sorrowful” and oft-given to experiencing this psalmist’s heart-felt “lament”? Whether you are gentile or Jew, here is good news! Take heart from his assured self-confessed words: The Messiah King (& Priest) is coming ... coming back to Jerusalem ... and it could be soon! Call upon Him today, while He is “near” and receive Him into your heart! Remember He is the faithful, unchanging God of the Universe and delights to release “prisoners” from their groaning (vs 20; Cf Is 61:1-2)!

II. Promise of The “Almighty Father”!

The Psalm concluded in terms of God’s dramatic cosmic and personal intervention in terms of His eschatological consummation of history and the Coming again of the Messiah of whom the Psalmist spoke in the preceding twenty four verses. Let us note the final verses of Psalm 102, noting, first, the things that change and, second, those that do not ...

*25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
26 They will perish, but You will endure;
Yes, they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will change them,
And they will be changed.
27 But You are the same,
And Your years will have no end.
28 The children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before You.”* (Ps 102:25-28, NKJV).

In complete contrast to the “lonely and forsaken” Man cut off in the midst of His days in the first part of the psalm (vss 1-24), herein we find the words of promise from *God the Father* given to *God the Son* and quoted and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1:10-12.

In that context, the writer to the Hebrew believers shared how the Messiah is the Superior, Sovereign LORD. He is in every way “better” – “better” than the Prophets (Heb 1:1-4); the Angels (1:5-11); Moses (3:1-6ff); Aaron and his Levitical Priesthood (3:6-4:11), for His is a “better” covenant, based on “better” promises, giving a “better” hope (Chapters 7-9)!

Here is the Psalmist’s point: *The earth and heavens will perish, but Messiah never changes!*

The Bible teaches the “changelessness” of God. That is, He is “immutable”. This is one of His non communicable attributes. God never changes (Mal 3:6) and the God-Man, Jesus, is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:8). He is revealed as the “Source, Sustainer and ultimate Subject” of all things (Rom 11:36). His sovereign plan for Israel is set forth in Romans: “elected” in the Past (9), “temporarily rejected” in the Present (10) and “restored” in the Future (11)! As we have seen, the Psalmist foretold of this in general terms in Psalm 102:13-16.

As we look at God's marvellous creation of the heavens and the earth, everything seems permanently "enduring", from a human perspective, don't they? The stars and galaxies of the Milky Way look the same to us as they probably did to Abraham and the Patriarchs as they wandered the ancient deserts of the Middle East, or even our Psalmist some centuries later. On the other hand, the mountains and the oceans of the Seven Seas stretch out before searching eyes and appear to go on and on, seemingly, forever! But will they?

The Psalmist, along with other scriptures, revealed the exact opposite! One day these present heavens will roll up as a scroll (Heb 1:12-13) and He will create "a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness and order will dwell" (Is 65:17) (Rev 21:1). How shall this come about? The Scriptures reveal these things as well. The Power of His Word which made them at the beginning (Ps 33:8-9 Jn 1:3; Heb 1:1-4) shall finally dissolve them, just as Peter later prophesied:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pt 3:10-13, NKJV).

So we see that in contrast to an expiring world, God, the eternal Father addressed the Messiah, His eternal Son in captivating words: *"But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end."*

Recall that one of Messiah's titles in Isaiah 9:6 is: *"The Father of Eternity"*. Thus, in the mind of God in eternity past, *"the Child that (would be) born; the Son that (would be given)"*, was none other than the eternal Son, who would, *inter alia*, be



The Millennial Temple – Ezekiel 40 - 48

the "lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth" (1 Pt 1:18), fulfil the divine promise even before there was "sin" (Tit 1:1-2), provide prevenient, "purposive grace" (2 Tim 1:9), die for sinners to be forgiven, if they would but trust Him (1 Cor 15:2-3; Jn 1:12) and bring "light to the Gentiles" (Is 9:1-4, 5-6). He forever existed in the form of God (Phil 2:6); He was (and is) God (Jn 1:14); He fellowshipped "face to face" with God (Jn 1:2) and in His Incarnation "tabernacled (literally: 'pitched His tent') amongst us" (Jn 1:14) – fully revealing the Father" (Jn 1:18; 14:9; 10:30). In eternity future, as the "Go'e!"

Kinsman-Redeemer, He will rule and reign over His people from David's throne in Jerusalem during the Millennium and then in the Eternal State forever.

No wonder the Psalmist concluded his "Lament-turned-to-Praise" with these wonderful words in verse 28:

The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.

God's promise of spiritual and eternal deliverance were real to him, despite the sorrowful experiences he apparently faced and prophetically foretold of the coming Messiah in His Lament recorded in Psalm 102. He was utterly convinced a new day would come when Jerusalem would be "built up" and Messiah would manifest His glory there, as King!

Conclusion: Remember, it is not only attendees at War Memorials who gather to commemorate the lives of fallen loved ones as they tearfully sing Lyle's classic hymn. It is applicable to each one of us

who live in an ever-changing, challenging world! Yes, we gladly concur with his changeless words: "Change and decay in all around I see", but then hasten to echo the truth of the next line as we express our trust and hope in the Messiah: "O Thou who changest not, **abide with me!**" (Emphasis added).

And you know what, dear Jewish or gentile friend? He will do just that, if you trust Him as your Saviour!

Editorial Note: The following "Collect" Prayer is taken from the Canadian Anglican Prayer Book and is cited here because of requests received from Friends and Prayer Partners of The FRIENDS OF ISRAEL Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc. who attended recent Conferences with Meno & Anat Kalisher (Jerusalem Assembly) and heard it prayed at the close of one of the Meetings!

O GOD, who didst choose Israel to be thine inheritance: Look, we beseech thee, upon thine ancient people; open their hearts that they may see and confess the Lord Jesus to be thy Son and their true Messiah, and, believing, they may have life through his Name. Take away all pride and prejudice in us that may hinder their understanding of the Gospel, and hasten the time when all Israel shall be saved; through the merits of the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc.

P0 Box 171 Melrose Park SA
5039 Australia

Office and Books:

c/o EBC Community Centre
Suite 406 (Upstairs)
Cnr. Rothesay Ave and Dorene St
St Marys SA 5042 AUSTRALIA
Phone/Fax: (+ 618) 08 8276 1333
Email: australianoffice@foi.org