

SBC – May 21, 2023

Psalm 102:1-28 (NKJV)

“Messiah – The Unchanging God”

Psalm 102 is definitely Messianic in the sense that Hebrews 1:10-12 directly applies Psalm 102:25-27 to Jesus Christ.

Psalm 102 has no author named or specific historical occasion. However, the reference to the need to rebuild Zion indicates a national calamity is in the background. And because of the emphasis on the restoration of Zion, the Babylonian Captivity which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple may well provide the background of the affliction in view in this Psalm.

The individual writing expresses distress but that may be in light of the greater picture of national disaster – which the references to Zion add weight to. The sense is that the person writing is afflicted because of the situation with Zion and finds solace in the unchanging God Who ultimately will fulfill His purposes for His people.

Slide # 1

Outline for Psalm 102

Theme: Afflicted but Trusting in God

- A. A plea for Divine Help – vv. 1-11
- B. A perspective of God’s Sovereignty - vv. 12-22
- C. A prayer for preservation - vv. 23-28

This Psalm is about changes in life that bring distress, but then finding comfort in the unchanging God. We find hope and strength by focusing on the unchanging God Who is sovereign over the whole of life.

Psalm 102 (NKJV)

A Prayer of the Afflicted, When He is Overwhelmed and Pours Out His Complaint Before the LORD.

Again, we don’t know who the author was or exactly what the occasion was other than it seems God’s people Israel and their capital city are in need of restoration. Because of this many think the cause of this affliction may well have been the Babylonian Captivity.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, And let my cry come to You.

2 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.

In deep affliction, God's people go to God in prayer. They pour out their hearts to Him. "Do not hide Your face" is the sense of pleading for God to respond – and that speedily.

3 For my days are consumed like smoke, And my bones are burned like a hearth.

4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass, So that I forget to eat my bread.

5 Because of the sound of my groaning My bones cling to my skin.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert.

7 I lie awake, And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.

The description here is one of ill health and agony. This situation is tearing him up. Physically he is burning up, spiritually his heart ached to where he had no appetite. He was so weak and thin that his bones cling to his skin and in that condition he groans.

Pelicans and owls were metaphorically known for gloom. Even the sound of an owl sound gloomy. And he felt all alone like a sparrow sitting all by itself on a housetop.

He was hurting physically, and emotionally, and perhaps worst of all he is going through it all alone. And then here come the enemies...

8 My enemies reproach me all day long; Those who deride me swear an oath against me.

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, And mingled my drink with weeping,

10 Because of Your indignation and Your wrath; For You have lifted me up and cast me away.

11 My days are like a shadow that lengthens, And I wither away like grass.

It is one thing to be hurting physically and emotionally in isolation but then add to that enemies who take advantage of the situation to try and bring you down.

Yet, in the midst of it all the writer recognizes that God is sovereign over his circumstances. He says God's indignation and wrath are behind it and that God has cast him away. Again, he may be thinking through what has happened to the nation and his experience in that context.

Twice he mentions that he is like withering grass as seen in verse 4 and then again in verse 11.

Slide # 2

Isaiah 40:6–8 (NKJV)

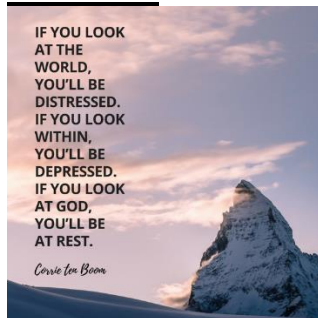
6 The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “**All flesh is grass,** And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

7 The **grass withers,** the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; **Surely the people are grass.**

8 The **grass withers,** the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”

If we focus on ourselves, on physical strength, on our resources, on other people, we will be bummed out. We are all like fading grass that quickly passes off the scene. We do not chart the course of history. It seems like we are just captive to it and it takes us where it will. Focus on self is depressing.

Slide # 3



Slide # 4

Isaiah 2:22 (NKJV)

22 Sever yourselves from such a man, Whose breath is in his nostrils; For of what account is he?

The great emphasis of Scripture is to not focus on man, but rather on God. In all our troubles we need to focus on the unchanging God. This is where we find solace. And that is where the writer now goes.

12 But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, And the remembrance of Your name to all generations.

People come and people go. They are like grass that quickly withers away.

But in contrast, the LORD endures forever. He is not going anywhere. People in their depravity try very hard to remove God totally from their lives, but they continue to fail miserably. God's name continues to be remembered and will be through all generations. God is not going anywhere. He is not going to do the great fade into oblivion. Even in the darkest times of apostasy, God is still there and the truth of His name continues to go forth.

We note the contrast between the first 11 verses, which were filled with personal references (I, me, and my) and verses 12 and following. With the words, **but You**, the focus changes and is set on God.

– **David Guzik**

God is the one constant. He is unchanging and enduring. People come and people go – but God remains! And in due time God will turn things around for His people – and that is certainly true in relation to Jerusalem and His people Israel.

So goes Zion – so it goes for the people of Israel. Zion in effect is the poetical name for old Jerusalem also called “the city of David” or “the city of God”. The word Zion literally means “fortification”. God loves Zion more than any other place on planet earth.

Slide # 5

Psalm 87:2–3 (NKJV)

2 The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! Selah

Remembering that God is enduring goes hand in hand with knowing God will accomplish His purposes regarding Zion.

13 You will arise and have mercy on Zion; For the time to favor her, Yes, the set time, has come.

14 For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, And show favor to her dust.

Not only does God love Zion but so do His servants. God's people love God and what God loves they love.

In God's timing, He will restore Zion. It will happen, but it is all conditioned on God's timing.

Slide # 6

Isaiah 60:22 (HCSB)

22 The least will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am Yahweh; **I will accomplish it quickly in its time.**

God's timing is always right on time. God has His plan and He has His timetable. He is in charge of both. Psalm 102:13 speaks of "the set time" in which God will favor Zion.

There was a set time of 70 years after which Israel was delivered from Babylon (cf. Jer. 25:11-13; 29:10); and there is a set time when Zion will be delivered and restored at the Second Coming.

And then God will be exalted among the nations...

15 So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, And all the kings of the earth Your glory.

16 For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory.

17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, And shall not despise their prayer.

God's beleaguered people have been praying for Jerusalem through the ages and in God's set time the prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem will be answered.

Slide # 7

Psalm 122:6 (NKJV)

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.

Isaiah 62:6–7 (NKJV)

6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,

7 And **give Him no rest till He establishes** And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

18 This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

This is written down so that when future generations see how God worked to bring about the fulfillment of answered prayer in relation to Jerusalem they will praise God. This is true in restoration from the Babylonian Captivity but will have an even greater fulfillment in relation to the grand restoration that will take place at the Second Coming.

19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner, To release those appointed to death,

21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem,

22 When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

God takes note of what is happening with His people – and especially in view here is His people Israel as seen in the emphasis on Zion. His people Israel have long been “groaning” but one day they will be delivered. And then Zion will be the worship center of the world.

Slide # 8

Joel 3:16–17 (NKJV)

16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

17 “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again.”

Slide # 9

Zechariah 8:3 (NKJV)

3 “Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.’”

Having refocused on God and His enduring nature and what this means for the future of His people the writer sees in the end God will restore and it will be a glorious time for Zion.

Yet, in real time he is afflicted and prays accordingly...

**23 He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.
24 I said, "O my God, Do not take me away in the midst of my days;
Your years are throughout all generations.**

It's like the writer gets very personal with God at this point. He figuratively speaks of God's eternity ("Your years are throughout all generations"); but then bemoans the fact that his time is shortened and specifically asks that God not take him away in the midst of his days – literally at the halfway point of his life.

**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.**

These verses emphasize that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He says the whole of creation however is growing old like a garment and will perish. God will one day "change them" – like the putting on of a new garment.

There is debate among scholars whether God will in the end renovate this current planet Earth or will he completely annihilate it and start over from nothing. There are good scholars on both sides. I am more and more open to the renovation idea.

The renewal idea fits well with the Bible's storyline including the idea that even nature itself groans under sin but one day will enter into the glorious liberation of the children of God. Just as believers will one day have a new glorified body so perhaps this present earth will also have a new glorified form – and be changed in that sense.

Slide # 10

Romans 8:19–22 (NKJV)

19 For the earnest **expectation of the creation** eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;

21 because the **creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.**

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

It is pointed out that God is seeking the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21) and not the “annihilation of all things”. And yet strong arguments can be made for annihilation and re-creation from texts like 2 Pet. 3:7, 10; and Rev. 20:10; 21:1. Still, the language here in Psalm 102 emphasizes ultimately that the present earth will be “changed” like a garment – like one would take off an old ragged shirt and put on a new one.

Psalm 102 emphasizes the transitory nature of the present heavens and earth. The earth and the heavens will perish. Perish means to be destroyed. The heavens and earth are even now in the process of breaking down. They are growing old like a well-worn garment.

This is what is known in scientific terms as the Second Law of Thermodynamics otherwise known as entropy. Simply put everything in the universe is deteriorating. Everything is breaking down.

By the way, this is the exact opposite of the theory of evolution which claims everything is getting better. That is some stinkin thinkin and it smells really bad. It’s amazing how so many “scientists” want to claim science, but then are so inconsistent when true science runs contrary to their cherished theories.

The theory of evolution says billions and billions of years, involving cycle upon cycle of deterioration, destruction, and death equals everything is evolving for the BETTER. Out of a tale of continuous destruction and death somehow comes LIFE.

This is the exact OPPOSITE of reality! Creation STARTS with LIFE and everything was in a perfect condition, but then out of that reality came the fall (SIN) and death (cf. Gen. 3). From then everything is dying – everything is breaking down. There are no exceptions. There are no missing or evolving links going in the opposite direction. The law of entropy is UNIVERAL!

This reality completely debunks the concept of evolution! It was only the introduction of SIN that resulted in DEATH. Ever since there has been an evolution of death - not life!

Who is sovereign over this process? It is God! It is He Who like a cloak will fold them up and they will be changed. There is all this talk and panic about global warming and climate change. Freak out! Stop driving your car – stop cooking on your gas stove. Stop breathing for crying out loud. By all means do something to save the planet!

Thomas Lieth recently wrote an article titled, “Extreme Weather as a Sign of Climate Change”.

In February, a violent hurricane swept across northern Germany. ...Numerous people and animals were killed and large areas devastated, remaining flooded for several months. In May, severe thunderstorms erupted over large parts of central Germany. Rivers rose by several meters within just a few hours, and over 2,200 people lost their lives. In July, the Ahr Valley region in southwestern German was hit by an extremely serious storm and flooding, the likes of which had never been experienced before. [And he gives example upon example]. All these can be said to be clear evidence of manmade climate change... But there is one thought-provoking thing to consider: [these things all happened in the 1600s, the 1700s, and the 1800s]. ... Catastrophes of devastating magnitude, even climate change, have always existed and always will. Mankind will never be able to influence the climate, either for good or for bad. ...How can intelligent people be so naïve as to believe that they can change the climate and save the world? As the Bible says, “Claiming to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22) – Thomas Lieth, in *Midnight Call*, June 2023, p. 21-22

Fools scamper about thinking they are somehow going to save the planet. What folly? Certainly, there is a place for balanced and good stewardship which controls pollution, etc. But changing the climate and preserving the planet? Give me a break! We can't even control the economy and our own borders much less the weather and the climate.

And in this discussion as Christians, we should always keep the promise of God in mind. Believe God and not man. It will alleviate your fears in the face of all the fearmongering the world constantly pushes.

Genesis 8:22 (NKJV)

22 “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”

Note it well, mere man will not save the planet and neither will he terminate the universe. This will be God’s doing. He is sovereign over creation. He created all and He is going to re-create a “***new heavens and a new earth***”. He will do away with the present heavens and earth and He will create the new. This is a God thing. This is God’s activity.

But in contrast to the present earth perishing and growing old God endures. He is the ever the same and does not change. His years have no end as He is eternal life.

But here is the point I want to make that connects this Psalm to being Messianic. In the NT in Hebrews 1:10-12, under inspiration, the writer applies what is clearly said in reference to God in Psalm 102:27-27 to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Slide # 11**Hebrews 1:10–12 (NKJV)**

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.”

Hebrews 1 develops the idea that Jesus is superior to the angels. Jesus is shown to be superior because He is eternal while angels as created beings had a beginning. Jesus created while angels were created.

The psalmist was addressing the eternal Lord, and the writer of Hebrews identified Jesus Christ as the eternal One, the Creator and Sustainer of the world. This is a strong affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ. – ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

28 The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You.”

Here is the conclusion! Since God is sovereign and enduring His plans for His people will be fulfilled.

The children of God's people will endure and their descendants will be established.

Thus, the Psalmist, because of Who God is as enduring/unchanging, has great confidence in the survival of the Jewish people. Because God does not change the future of Israel is secure (Mal. 3:6).

Everything hinges on WHO God is as being sovereign and unchanging. All God's purposes will be accomplished in the future no matter what the present circumstances may look like.

In conclusion, let me share with you this true story. But in order for you to appreciate it you need to understand what is meant by the term "Neo- orthodoxy".

Karl Barth is considered to be the father what is termed Neo-orthodoxy. Neo-orthodoxy says the Bible **becomes** the Word of God as a person encounters Christ in their own subjective experience.

"In this view the authority is the subjective experience of the individual rather than the Scriptures themselves." (The Moody Handbook of Theology, p. 166)

Years ago Carl Henry was a major leader among evangelicals and he was the founder of the magazine called "**Christianity Today**".

A meeting was arranged between him and Karl Barth who was pushing neo-orthodoxy.

Karl Barth was full of himself and his new ideas – considered himself to be very intelligent and came off as snobbish. As they met Carl Henry said, "***I'm from Christianity Today – the magazine you know.***"

To which Barth responded, "***From Christianity Today or Christianity Yesterday?***"

And in turn, Henry replied, "***Christianity Yesterday, Today, and Forever.***"

True Christianity is unchanging because Christ Himself is our unchanging God.

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.