

d. The writer next turned his attention to Psalm 102, which he cited from without any sort of transitional statement or introduction (vv. 10-12). This suggests that he viewed it as closely corresponding with the content he quoted from Psalm 45, rather than taking his argument and emphasis in a different direction. He clearly believed that these two psalms contributed to his one general point, yet he must have understood that they were set in two very different contexts, and were concerned with two very different circumstances.

- As noted above, Psalm 45 is a wedding song that pays tribute to God's righteous king and his new queen. The king isn't identified, but the way the psalm depicts him indicates that was an Israelite king in the line of David – a true king who ruled Yahweh's covenant kingdom in accord with His mind, heart and will. This anonymity and idealized presentation led the Jews to view the psalm messianically, as describing the triumph and glory of the Messiah and the kingdom Yahweh would establish in Him.
- Whereas Psalm 45 is exultant and celebratory, Psalm 102 is a woeful lament. Hence its ascription: *A Prayer of the Afflicted*. The psalm is very personal, and yet gives voice to the lament and plea shared by the entire covenant household of Israel. The writer didn't spell out the circumstance of his affliction, but it's clear that he was referring to the desolation of the Jerusalem and Judah wrought by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

The psalm expresses the writer's (and the nation's) agonized lament, but also his confident hope. The Lord who'd poured out His indignation on Zion would one day have compassion on her and restore her (vv. 8-13). And, as He'd stripped her of her harlotrous children and sent her from His presence, so He'd grant her faithful sons and daughters when He cleansed and restored her and again took her to Himself. These offspring would be birthed from the children of Israel, but also the Gentile peoples (vv. 14-22; cf. Isaiah 54). *Most importantly, this glorious future for Zion would arise as the fruit of the messianic work.*

The psalmist made no mention of this, but it is the premise underlying his resolute confidence. Just as Zion's desolation resulted from the unfaithfulness of David and his household (consisting of his regal sons and his covenant house), so her glorious future rested in Yahweh's covenant promise to David to restore His fallen tabernacle and build him an everlasting house in a singular son (ref. again 2 Samuel 7). The psalmist – and those who mourned and hoped with him – recognized that the promise of Zion's restoration was the promise of David's messianic son and his kingdom (Isaiah 9:1-7, 51:1-55:13; Jeremiah 23:12-6, 33:15-16; Ezekiel 34, 37; Hosea 1-3; Amos 9:11-15; Zechariah 2-3, 6:9-15).

The portion of Psalm 102 cited by the Hebrews writer is the centerpiece of its climactic ending. The psalmist began with an agonized plea to Yahweh, and he concluded with triumphal praise. *His cry of dereliction gave way to a glorious doxology because he knew that the God who'd promised would prove faithful.*

Thus the psalm's closing focus on God's eternity emphasizes His unchanging *nature*, and therefore His unchanging *purpose*. He who promised is ever-faithful, because He doesn't change and cannot deny Himself. And so the desolation of Jerusalem and destruction of David's house and kingdom were not to be the final word; Yahweh would yet fulfill His covenant oath to David and have compassion on Zion. The psalmist hadn't seen this come to pass, but he declared it as already realized (vv. 16-17), *not because he expected it in his lifetime, but with a view to the future generation that would experience it*. When that generation saw Yahweh return in His glory, restore Zion and create a new people for Himself, they would remember the psalmist's assurance and give praise to God for His faithfulness (v. 18-22). And so, the psalmist's answer to his own agony was the fact that the Lord remains the same. Everything He created is transient and subject to change – even those things that seem to endure forever (vv. 25-26). But though He should reclothe Himself with countless iterations of His material universe, He will yet remain the same. *But so it will be for those who know and serve Him* – those who are born of Zion's renewal as faithful sons and daughters (vv. 27-28; cf. Isaiah 54). As their Father endures unchanged forever, so it would be with His children.

This is the context and concern of Psalm 102, and it shows the close correspondence between this citation and the others the Hebrews writer used. All focus on God's purpose for the world to be realized in the messianic Son: the royal Son of David appointed to establish, extend, and perfect God's everlasting kingdom as its enthroned, sovereign King. This citation contributes to that emphasis by highlighting that Jesus, the righteous Son-King fully devoted to God's unchanging purpose and will, is the One through whom the creation attains its final destiny, even as it had its origin in Him.

The writer brought the same perspective to all of his citations in this context, so that the interpretive approach applied to his use of Psalm 45 should be applied here as well. Both passages (Psalm 45:6-7, 102:25-27) have the psalmist addressing Israel's God, while the author of Hebrews treated both in terms of God addressing the Son (ref. again 1:5-8, 10).

- The rationale in the instance of Psalm 45 is the fact that God accomplishes His everlasting rule as righteous King in the person of His regal Image-Son (ref. again 1:3). The psalm depicts such a ruler in idealized terms, thereby alluding to the Davidic Covenant and its promise of a unique son-king through whom Yahweh would establish His kingdom forever.
- In the case of Psalm 102, the rationale follows the same line, but with a different orientation. Here, the writer focused on the Son's role in God's work of creation and creational renewal (expressed by Zion's restoration). The psalmist lauded God as the Creator of the heavens and earth, and the One whose unchanging purpose and power secured their destiny; the Hebrews writer recognized that this purpose, power and work are manifest in Jesus, the Image-Son (cf. 13:8; Colossians 1:15-27; Ephesians 1:9-10).

- e. The final citation in this section comes from Psalm 110 (v. 13). Interestingly, the writer didn't apply it to Jesus directly as he did the preceding quotes, but instead directed it toward the angelic hosts. He intended it to further reinforce his claim of Jesus' supremacy over the angels, but by underscoring something that isn't true of them: "*To which of the angels has He ever said...*" In this way, he closed out the section by focusing on God's angels, and not His Son. And what he wished to emphasize is that they are ministering spirits – appointed servants of the Son and His fruitful work in the world.

Psalm 110 is another passage that the Jews recognized as messianic long before Jesus was born. When He cited from it in questioning the Pharisees about their understanding of the Messiah, none of them complained that He was using an inappropriate text (Matthew 22:41-46). Apparently He raised the same question from Psalm 110 on more than one occasion, and all three of the Synoptic writers believed that the connection between Jesus and this messianic psalm needed to be part of their account of Him (cf. Mark 12:35-37; Luke 41:44). This connection was part of the earliest Christian tradition, reflected in the fact that Psalm 110 is cited or alluded to in the New Testament more than any other passage from Israel's scriptures. The Hebrews writer alone did so numerous times (ref. 5:6, 10, 6:20, 7:1-3, 11, 17, 21, 8:1, 10:12-13, 12:1-2).

In an important sense, this citation sums up and brings to a climax all of the ones that precede it. It, too, has its premise in the Davidic Covenant and its import in God's purposes for the world. But it emphasizes, with a directness absent from the other citations, that the triumphal reign of David's Son has its goal in all things in the heavens and earth being subjected to Him as supreme Lord and Messiah. That is the way by which God intends to subject His creation to Himself, and so consummate His rule over His everlasting kingdom. Thus it is no accident that, in highlighting these themes, both Peter and Paul drew on Psalm 110 (ref. Acts 2:22-36; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28).

Psalm 110 celebrates the full and absolute triumph of David's regal Son, but as a *priest-king*. There are many dimensions and implications to this, and the Hebrews writer will draw them out in due time. But here it's important to note three things:

- 1) The first is that the statement quoted here from Psalm 110 is Yahweh's command to another Lord: "*The Lord said to my Lord...*" The first occurrence of Lord is the Hebrew Tetragrammaton (YHWH) that is rendered *Yahweh* and refers to God's covenant name by which Israel was to know Him (Exodus 3:13-15). God identified Himself to Moses as "*I am,*" and thus Israel was to know Him as Yahweh – *the One who is*. In the psalm, Yahweh addressed another Lord, identified by the title *Adonai*. This is a generic term indicating lordship, with its connotations of authority, submission and respect. It is used of human beings as well as God, and here it refers to the Davidic priest-king whom Yahweh commands to take his place at the right hand of His throne (cf. again 1:3).

The Hebrews writer followed the traditional Jewish view that identified this priest-king with the Messiah, so that he interpreted Yahweh's words to this individual as God's words to Jesus, His triumphal Son.

- 2) The second thing to note is the messianic significance of the king-priest idea. From the beginning, messianic revelation had both priestly and regal dimensions, evident in God's purpose for and calling to Abraham and his covenant household (cf. Genesis 17:1-6, 15-16, 49:9-10; Exodus 19:1-6). The Abrahamic Covenant had its goal in a regal, triumphant people, but one that would mediate the knowledge of the true and living God to all the earth's families. So the covenant at Sinai – by which God ratified the Abrahamic covenant relationship with the nation descended from Abraham – was founded on the concept of priesthood and its ministration.

Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests,” and this priestly dimension was epitomized in the Levites, the Israelite tribe chosen by God to perform this role. Israel itself, the Abrahamic “seed,” prefigured and predicted a regal and priestly son of Abraham, and this was all the more the case with Moses, the first prototypical ruler-mediator in Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). The priestly and regal messianic streams continued through Israel's history until they began to converge in *David*. David's own life hinted at this convergence (2 Samuel 6:12-18; cf. 1 Samuel 13:5-14; 2 Chronicles 26:14-21), and his psalm (Psalm 110) implied it. But it was Zechariah who disclosed this truth explicitly (6:9-15).

The promise that the kingship and priesthood would converge in the Messiah may not seem significant to modern readers, but it was earth-shaking to the children of Israel. For the covenant separated these two functions through genealogical assignment – Judah was the regal tribe, and the Levites were the priestly tribe, so that it was impossible that the priesthood and kingship should converge in one person. If this was indeed Yahweh's plan, *it meant that Messiah's coming would inaugurate a new covenant structure and order that would replace the former one*. This is precisely what the Hebrews writer argued later in his epistle (7:11-22).

- 3) Finally, it's important to consider how Messiah's status as unique king-priest gives insight into the nature and scope of His triumph. Yahweh's charge to the messianic Lord to sit at His right hand suggests his triumphal victory, but one that is Yahweh's own victory. For this Lord takes His place on Yahweh's throne, and He shares this throne as one who has conquered shared enemies. And yet His conquest remains incomplete; there remain enemies who are not in subjection. But these, too, will be conquered, but as this Lord rules as an enthroned *priest*. This suggests that He would complete His conquest, not through military might, but through mediation. He would overcome and subjugate all enemies by eradicating the enmity between Creator and creation.