

Today's Quick Word Psalm 142:5

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 142:5 *I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."*

There is perhaps a deeper (unintentional?) truth embedded in David's cry for help - one that may not be apparent to us at first. It is only when we take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ - the One to whom the OT name 'the LORD' ('Jehovah/Yahweh') points - and throw in our 'lot', our 'portion', with him, that we COME INTO 'the land of the living'. Without HIM, we are still only descendants of Adam, and are therefore in 'the land of the DYING' (cf Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22).

As the Apostle Paul says: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17); and the Apostle John reports Jesus' own words: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me HAS eternal life and will not be condemned; he has [already] crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24). Towards the end of his earthly pilgrimage, John also writes: "He who has the Son HAS life; he who does not have the Son of God does NOT have life." (1 John 5:12).

So, if we want to transfer our citizenship from the 'land of the DYING' (into which we are ALL born naturally), into 'the land of the LIVING', so that we start enjoying all benefits of Eternal Life here and now, we need to cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ, in repentance-and-faith, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

*"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Saviour, hide till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last! ...
Other refuge have I none; hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, Ah! leave me not alone; still support and comfort me. ...
Plenteous grace with thee is found, grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound; make and keep me pure within.
Thou, of life, the fountain art, freely let me take of thee;
spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity."
(Charles Wesley).*

Today's Quick Word 2 Kings 24:2

By Bruce Christian

2 KINGS 24:2 *The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets.*

I had only just turned 5 when the annual Armistice Day Celebrations, that had been going for over a quarter of a Century, took on a whole new meaning! We were now celebrating, not only the end of 'The War To End All Wars', but also the end of the Second World War. This is when it became known as 'Remembrance Day'!

I was too young to understand fully what it meant to 'remember', by wearing a sprig of rosemary, all those who had made great sacrifices, and for many, the ultimate sacrifice, in order that we might enjoy 'freedom'. But I DO remember, and came to understand more clearly during the years that followed, that an important part of 'remembering' was to give thanks to Almighty God for answering our ardent prayers and giving us victory over the forces that had threatened to rob us of that freedom.

Those were days when, to a greater or lesser extent, our general culture gave credence to the belief that there IS a Sovereign God who is RUNNING the world HE MADE, and who listens to, and

answers, the cries of his people. Remember those days?

Today's verse is a good reminder of this truth. Even disasters, that might really challenge our faith and our trust in him, and might be extremely difficult for us to comprehend at the time, even these DISASTERS are part of HIS eternal, loving, and gracious Plan in the running of his world. The demise of his Chosen People, including the destruction of the beautiful Temple that represented his Sovereign Presence among them, was not just an 'accident' of history - it was HIS doing, part of HIS Plan!

It is good and helpful for us to keep this perspective in mind when we struggle with international events and national events reported on the News, or when we are perplexed by personal events in our own lives or in the lives of those we love. Tim Keller's prayer at the end of his comment on Psalm 119:89-96 in "The Song's of Jesus" for today is fitting: "Lord, things my grandparents believed in their youth with the rest of society are now laughable and offensive. There are ascendant ideas in our culture that charge the Bible with being 'regressive' but which themselves will be thrown into the dustbin of history. Help me remember that your Word is both perfect and eternal. Amen."

Today's Quick Word Hebrews 7:1-3

By Bruce Christian

HEBREWS 7:1-3 *This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace”. Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest for ever.*

The old King James version of the Bible, which was the ‘tool’ the Holy Spirit used in the formation of my Christian understanding, had as the ‘title’ of this significant NT Book, “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews”. I know that modern scholarship has questioned the authorship of this letter for many valid and convincing reasons, but, if it wasn’t Paul, the spectacularly converted Pharisee (Acts 9), it must have been someone with a similar background steeped in traditional Judaism!

I imagine this Jewish person doing some research on the enigmatic Biblical character, ‘Melchizedek’. For some unknown reason the parents of this person had given him the Hebrew name ‘Melchi-Zedek’, ‘King of Righteousness’, and in the providence of God he had become the ‘King of Salem’, ie ‘King of Peace’ (‘Salem’=‘Shalom’).

This imaginary ‘researcher’ then notices that his Scriptures (our OT) refer to the future Promised Messiah as ‘Prince of PEACE’ (Isaiah 9:6), and ‘the LORD Our RIGHTEOUSNESS’ (Jeremiah 33:16)! Moreover, I imagine our researcher noticing how the sentiment of Psalm 85:10 - “Love and faithfulness meet together; RIGHTEOUSNESS and PEACE kiss each other” - is expressed many times in different ways throughout his Scriptures.

Then he realises that as far as OT history is concerned, and uncharacteristic of its normal pattern, Melchizedek suddenly ‘appears’ out of nowhere and similarly just as mysteriously ‘disappears’ into the ether.

To top it all off, he notices that the ONLY other mention of ‘Melchizedek’ in the Scriptures he is researching, is in Psalm 110:4 - “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.”” - and he remembers that in Jewish thought, Psalm 110 is widely accepted as one of the ‘Messianic’ Psalms.

I struggle to understand how any Jewish person today familiar with the OT could read Hebrews 7 and not be convinced that Jesus IS the Promised Messiah, fulfilling ALL these clear OT prophecies!