

Psalm 22 - The Crucifixion

What I hope you have been noticing especially in these sermons leading up to Easter is how much the Jews should have been aware of Jesus as the Messiah based on the reading of the Psalms. To me this is especially important because, as I like to point out regularly, people miss what the Psalms have to offer because they are too focused on the artistic values of the Psalms instead of the message. This is probably a carryover from the way people treat poetry in general. Poetry is often ambiguous and nuanced, leaving room for argument over interpretation. Just as in music, the metrical nature of poetry drives you forward and leaves you prone to missing the message. This is how so much ungodly philosophy is passed on through popular music. People are carried forward by the music without critically examining the message of the lyrics. One of the great thing about the Psalms, though, is that you know the message is good and you don't have to critically examine the message, you are free to analytically examine the message. Because the messages of the Psalms are going to be consistent with the nature of God and Biblical teachings, they stand up to stronger scrutiny and application. The point is that since the Psalms are God's Word, we should be very careful to examine the message. When we do so, we should expect to find teachings of strong doctrinal and sometimes prophetic significance. This is why the Messianic Psalms are so very important in the Easter/Passover season. This is why we can have such confidence in our faith. We have been majoring on the Psalms for the sake of appreciating what they have to offer. But we don't have to second-guess what the psalmists were trying to say because we have the rest of the Bible to help us examine them.

So far we have looked at the presentation of Jesus as king in the triumphal entry from Psalm 118. We then looked at betrayal of Christ from Psalms 41 and 55. The next event we are going to look at from the Psalms is the crucifixion of Christ in Psalm 22.

1. The declaration.

What is especially significant in this psalm is that it contains a plain declaration at the end that it is a prophecy. God wanted to make sure that there was no way that the Messianic nature of this song was going to be missed. Based on the exceptional clarity of this declaration, the message of this psalm is certainly the critical point around which all of history turns.

Ps 22:27-31 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28For the kingdom *is* the

LORD'S: and he *is* the governor among the nations.

29All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

30A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

Let's read this carefully, with explanation as we go along:

Ps 22:27-31 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

All the nations of the world are going to remember — they are going to remember this psalm. The message of this psalm is going to cause them to turn to God. The payment for our sins on the cross is what makes the difference. It will not be our works, our intellect, our philosophy, our cleverness that will draw people to God. The message of salvation is what people have got to ultimately consider.

28For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S: and he *is* the governor among the nations.

29All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

No one will be able to keep alive his own soul. There is no doubt that the salvation of the soul is at question. The concern of this psalm is not about getting your fair share as compared to your neighbor. It is not about "deserving" to be happy. It is not about being fed and clothed and warm. More important than that is the salvation of your very soul. So, the psalm is addressing the absolute ultimate issue of life.

30A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

The word *seed* refers to our progeny, our descendants. Our children are *our seed*. However, the verse does not say "our" seed shall serve God; it says that *a* seed shall serve Him. In poetic fashion, the next clause in the verse explains *whose* seed. There will be *a* seed that shall be *counted* as a generation of the Lord.

Rom 4:1-5 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath

found?

2For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

3For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Abraham believed God and his faith was *counted* unto him for righteousness. Salvation is not a function of works. Not only was Abraham's faith counted as righteousness, but only his spiritual seed was counted.

Rom 9:6-8 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Those who received the *promise of faith* were counted as the seed, not just those who were the physical seed of Abraham. Paul further elaborated in Galatians:

Gal 3:6-9 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The blessing of salvation was extended to all *nations* to become the spiritual seed. So far, then, the ones who will remember this psalm are the ones who are the spiritual seed who witness the fulfillment of this psalm. Going back to Psalm 22:

31They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

Who is the *they* that shall come? The

spiritual seed. What shall they do? They will rightly declare that He – God, has done this – what was done in this Psalm. Who shall they declare this to? Not to people of David's day, but to a people that *shall be born*. In other words, to a future spiritual generation. When the "this" of the psalm was fulfilled, the future generation will acknowledge Psalm 22 as a fulfilled prophecy. We now move on to take a look at the prophecy itself in its fulfillment at the scene of the cross.

2. The scene at the cross.

We won't look at the detail of every verse in Psalm 22, but we will find that there is a wealth of information that is immediately available to our understanding. We will compare back and forth between the scene in the psalm and the scene at the cross.

The first thing we notice before we even get to the first verse is that it is titled in Hebrew, *A Psalm of David*. It is *of* David, but it is not *about* David. Many of the things could either be about David *or* about Christ so that someone might be critical and suggest that we are reading too much into the psalm. However, the way we can tell that it is *not* about David is by the fact that David never went through all of these things, but that Jesus did and, of course, that "little detail" that David said at the end that the fulfillment of this psalm is for a future generation.

- Jesus cried out at His Father forsaking Him.

Ps 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

Matt 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

- He was rejected of men.

Ps 22:6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

John 18:39-40 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

John 19:15-16 But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We

have no king but Caesar.

16Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led *him* away.

- They mocked Him and challenged Him to call on His Father for deliverance.

Ps 22:7-8 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

8He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

Matt 27:39-43 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

40And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said,

42He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

- He was the virgin born one.

Vs. 9-10 make special mention of the birth which we recognize as the virgin birth of Christ.

Ps 22:9-10 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.

10I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

Gal 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

- He suffered deep anguish as evidenced by the blood that came from His pores.

Ps 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

Luke 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great

drops of blood falling down to the ground.

- He suffered from thirst.

Ps 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

John 19:28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

So far, up to this point, someone might try to argue that the scriptural similarity is coincidental, or that Jesus only said certain things to make it look like He was fulfilling Scripture. If there was any question about this, it is removed by what comes next.

- His hands and His feet were pierced.

Ps 22:16-17 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.

Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

- They gambled for His clothes.

Ps 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Matt 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

Jesus did not merely make it look like He was fulfilling this prophecy. It could not be claimed that He had control of the situation to manipulate it to look like He was fulfilling prophecy. Piercing His hands and feet gambling for His clothes was nothing He would have been able to control if He were a mere man. This Psalm is simply impossible to have been written by chance. There was no luck guessing. There was no manipulation. The only conclusion an honest person could come to is that this crucifixion and the payment for our sin was completed on that day.

3. The darkest moment.

We need to look beyond the Psalm to get a fuller interpretation of this moment. It is contained in another poetic writing found in the book of Isaiah. You might be tempted to wonder why everything that could be said about the crucifixion was not contained in this one place. The first problem is that if everything that could be said about Christ alone appeared in the Bible there would not be room enough and all the libraries of the world to contain it. At the end of the Gospel of John this is pointed out:

John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Even more importantly is that by spreading the message out in other books, in different times, through different authors, the message becomes tamper-proof and defies corruption.

Isa 53:1-12 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?
[Jesus is the arm of the Lord]
2For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.

3He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. **[Although people flirted with accepting their King, they despised Him when He went to the cross. This was aggravated by their turning to Him when He was there to heal them.]**

4Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **[When He was on the cross, they considered Him judged by God, but He was carrying our griefs and sorrows.]**

5But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD **hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

7He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and **as a sheep**

before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: **for the transgression of my people was he stricken.**

9And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. **[He was crucified between two thieves and buried in the borrowed grave of a rich man.]**

10Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt 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. **[His seed is the generation that is born of faith into the family of God.]**

11He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. **[By knowing Jesus people are justified.]**

12Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his **soul** unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and **he bare the sin of many**, and made **intercession for the transgressors.**

What was the darkest hour for God became the brightest hour for man. It was on the cross that sin was judged and where God forsook God. I don't bother with a metaphysical understanding of how this works, I just know that God said so and

- that my spirit was cleansed and set free
- that my pardon was secured
- that my judgement of Hell was removed
- that my salvation was paid for by the blood of Christ
- that God's love for me was poured out
- that there was no more sacrifice possible or needed
- that the effect of the fall of man was erased

Next week we will look at the critical difference the resurrection makes in our salvation, but the thing we want to focus on right now is the fullness of the payment for our sin, our sins, and our sinfulness. Jesus' blood paid for our sin in general, the sins we *could* commit even if we don't commit them. His blood

paid for the sins that we actually commit. And then His blood paid for our sinfulness, the fact that we are defiled with sin and that we, as a person, are unacceptable, unclean, worthless.

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

What a curious thing it might be to have your last words at death be, "It is finished." Before we consider that, I want us to think about what *we* would want our last words to be. I would want my last words to be "I love you," to my wife. Instead, I make sure to say it so regularly to her so that Nancy would be proud of me saying to someone nearby, "Jesus loves you and wants you to be saved." Included in these notes is a link to an article on famous last words of believers and unbelievers.¹

- "I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O Christ, O Jesus Christ!" -Voltaire.
- Thomas Paine, the great writer, has these final words attributed to him—"I would give worlds, if I had them, if *The Age of Reason* had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! Stay with me! It is hell to be left alone!"
- "When I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and I am unprepared to die." -Cesare Borgia.
- Edgar Allen Poe was said to have lived at best an erratic life of lies and drunkenness. He died in 1849 at the age of 40 having been found in a street near death—"Lord help my poor soul!"
- Clarence Darrow, the Scopes Trial lawyer in the famous 1925 debate, while on his deathbed asked several clergymen to "please intercede for me with the Almighty. During my life I have spoken many times against Christians, and I now realize that I may have been wrong."
- "I enjoy heaven already in my soul. My prayers are all converted into praises." Augustus Toplady, author of the great hymn "Rock of Ages," who died at age 38.
- Sir Michael Faraday, (brilliant English scientist 1791 – 1867), was asked when he was near death: "What are your speculations now?" He answered: I have no speculations. I rest upon Jesus Christ who died, and rose again from death."
- Dwight L. Moody, famous

¹http://www.pdegraaf.com/articles/last_words.pdf

preacher and founder of the Moody Bible Institute, while on his deathbed: "Can this be death? Why it is better than living! Earth is receding, heaven is opening. This is my coronation day"

- David Brainerd, (well known missionary): "I am going into eternity and it is sweet to me to think of eternity."

All of these last words are dependent on how you take the last words of Christ. Technically, it was only *one* last word and is translated "It is finished." He did not say, "*I* am finished," as if He had healed all He was going to heal, taught His last lesson, and had no more work of that sort to do. It wouldn't make sense to simply be referring to the crucifixion being finished. The *it* that was finished was the Passover sacrifice. The verb tense of *finished* indicates that it is a completed work with lasting results. The sacrifice for our sin was completed. There is no more sacrifice needed because the results are lasting. By 70 AD God made it impossible for the Jews to offer another Passover sacrifice. There is great interest today in building a Temple and restoring the sacrifice and it will be done and the Antichrist will present himself in it for worship. But there is no need for a sacrifice because Jesus was once offered to take our judgment that we deserve with eternal result. It is interesting to look at Bible statistics about how many chapters, words, and verses in the Bible, what is the middle chapter, what is the middle verse, what is the longest chapter or verse, what is the shortest chapter or verse, etc. If you looked at the Bible as God's message of redemption, *it is finished* is the ultimate word. What was the darkest moment for God to take on the defilement of sin and in eternal judgment for each of billions of people became the brightest hope of glory for any who would turn to Him and ask for that salvation to be applied to them.

Along with Pilate, we must each ask ourselves:

Matt 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?...

Pilate did what the crowd did – he rejected him. After all Christ did for you, what will you do with Him?

1. The declaration. Ps 22:27-31, 22:27-31, Rom 4:1-5, 9:6-8, Gal 3:6-9
2. The scene at the cross. Ps 22:1My, Matt 27:46, Ps 22:6, John 18:39-40, John 19:15-16, Ps 22:7-8, Matt 27:39-43, Ps 22:9-10, Gal 4:4-5, Ps 22:14, Luke 22:44, Ps 22:15, John 19:28, Ps 22:16-17, Luke 23:33, Ps 22:18, Matt 27:35
3. The darkest moment. John 21:25, Isa 53:1-12, John 19:30, Matt 27:22