

Messianic Psalms Psalm 22

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Today's talk is the latest in our series on Messianic Psalms and we will look at Psalm 22. The Book of Psalms can be described as the hymn book of the Children of Israel. Like all hymns they cover all aspects of our life's experience, some cheer when we are sad, some comfort when we are mourning, and some celebrate when we are happy. *Many give expression to our worship and praise of God in a way our own words cannot. However, they are different from all other hymns in that they are the inspired Word of God.* As well as covering all the human experiences of the authors that we can no doubt learn from and be encouraged by, they also, like all other scripture, have the person of Christ running through them like a thread that brings together the whole of the Bible. All the Psalms were composed by Israelites so the main focus of references to God's people is the nation of Israel but as Christians we can no doubt see aspects where every Psalm speaks to all people of all ages.

So, let's begin by reading this wonderful Psalm.

¹ My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Why are You so far from helping Me,
And from the words of My groaning?

² O My God, I cry in the daytime,
but You do not hear;

And in the night season,
and am not silent.

³ But You *are* holy,
Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

⁴ Our fathers trusted in You;
They trusted, and You delivered them.

⁵ They cried to You, and were delivered;
They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

⁶ But I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

⁷ All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip,

they shake the head, saying,

⁸ "He trusted in the LORD,
let Him rescue Him;

Let Him deliver Him,
since He delights in Him!"

⁹ But You are He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.

¹⁰ I was cast upon You from birth.

From My mother's womb
You have been My God.
¹¹ Be not far from Me,
For trouble is near;
For there is none to help.
¹² Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.
¹³ They gape at Me with their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.
¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.
¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
¹⁷ I can count all My bones.
They look and stare at Me.
¹⁸ They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.
¹⁹ But You, O LORD,
do not be far from Me;
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!
²⁰ Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious life from the power of the dog.
²¹ Save Me from the lion's mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!
You have answered Me.
²² I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
²³ You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
²⁴ For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
²⁵ My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
²⁷ All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,

Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

³⁰ A posterity shall serve Him.

It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,

³¹ They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.

Of the 150 Psalms, King David is the most prolific author with 73 Psalms attributed to him. [The Psalms are divided into five books, each signifying a particular subject. The first of these books is from Psalm 1 up to and including Psalm 41 and perhaps the best summary of the subject for this first book is:- Christ in different aspects of His person and work. So it is under this summary that Psalm 22 falls.](#) As we have just said, our considerations today are part of a series in respect of those Psalms which come under a group called the Messianic Psalms. These Psalms directly refer to the expectation of Christ as the coming Deliverer and King for His people, Israel. While we can see Christ in all the Psalms to some extent as we can in all scripture, Messianic Psalms speak of no other person but Christ as the coming Messiah. Furthermore, I always feel when reading Psalm 22 that it is one of the most specific of these Messianic Psalms as it prophesies the horrific details of crucifixion long before such was ever used; and it also foretells some of the actual sayings of Christ when on the cross. So as we consider this wonderful Psalm it should both bow our hearts in sorrow as we think again about the cost of our redemption and lift them in worship as we think of the wonderful triumph that Christ has wrought for us now - but also for all of God's people in a day to come and for all eternity.

As we start looking at this Psalm it is worth briefly mentioning its heading. Not all Psalms have a heading, but we do regard the headings that are there as part of the inspired Word. They give us an important overview of the meaning of the Psalm. In the Authorised Version, the heading for Psalm 22 is "Aijeleth Shahar", which means 'the morning hart.' The New King James version gives this as 'the deer of the dawn.' Perhaps we can visualise the deer being startled by a huntsman at dawn and hunted relentlessly. Our Lord was hunted by Herod from His very earliest days and then by the religious and secular powers all His public life until this culminated in His death on the cross. We can say that, more than all others, Psalm 22 is the "Psalm of the Cross."

We therefore move straight into those powerful words in verse 1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?"

In Matthew's Gospel chapter 27 we get the fulfilment of this prophetic verse, part in Hebrew the rest in Aramaic whereas in Mark chapter 15 verse 34 the full saying is in Aramaic. Eli being Hebrew and Eloi being Aramaic. I just mention this in passing as a few years ago, while on holiday, I met some young Jewish men who said they spoke Hebrew. I told them I was a Christian and quoted this verse to them as from Matthew's Gospel. They were unaware of it but after a bit discussion between themselves they were able to give the meaning of "lama sabachthani" as being completely abandoned in the wilderness. I felt at the time the real sense of this being even more powerful than just the English translation of it, "forsaken." As the Lord feels the full weight of being the sin-bearer He calls out twice to God; but in order to accomplish His work His cries were not acted upon. We see a little picture of this in Leviticus chapter 16 when the scapegoat has the sins of the people conferred upon it on the Day of Atonement and then is taken to an utterly uninhabited place to be let go. In verse 21 of this chapter we get an important phrase which should not be overlooked, "by the hand of a suitable man." In order to deal with sin in all its vileness to a holy and righteous God, the only suitable Man was made sin and utterly abandoned in the wilderness.

[It is worth noting that although verse 1 of Psalm 22 is the only one of the seven sayings of the Lord from the cross that the Gospels record for us word for word, the final phrase of Psalm 22, "That He has done this" surely points our minds to the Lord's words "It is finished." Some](#)

commentators even wonder whether the Lord actually quoted the whole of this Psalm as He hung there on that great and awful day.

As we then go on from verse 1 all the way to verse 21, we can see the great horror of the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Then at the end of verse 21 we get a marked change of tone when we read the words, "You have answered Me." From that very point the subject of the Psalm changes to be that of the glories that will then follow. The Eternal Son of God, who was ever the delight of God the Father, had stepped into time to become the Son of Man in order to go to the cross. He was made sin in order for sin to be judged and as Man, His cries of verses 1 and 2 were not heard. However, the last 10 verses, from verse 22, are prophetically occupied with what will happen in a coming day as a result of Calvary's work being completed. In these verses we see praise and thanksgiving, how different from the laments and the sufferings of the first 21 verses! From King David's point of view, as he wrote these words, this was a prayer that had lifted him from the worst of depressions into the glory of relationship with God. But from a prophetic point of view, there is far more to these verses; and I want to point out some key considerations as we go through the Psalm.

In verses 2 to 5, we get the comparison with others who trusted in God when persecuted and who were delivered. It could not be said of any of the fathers or the prophets that they were abandoned of God. Many were shamefully treated, abused, and killed, yet God did not forsake them in their hour of need. All through history many believers have been persecuted by their fellowman. But these verses are very different, only Christ as the sin-bearer could say these things. It is therefore clear that His sufferings detailed here go far beyond what could be administered by man. Verse 3 is also worth consideration as it quite clearly and simply states an attribute of God, His holiness. [Therefore, we can never question the ways of God if we rest on His unfailing holiness. The serpent in the garden could raise the question as to what God had really said but this could never be the case for someone who holds onto the holiness of God as being unerring and unchanging.](#)

Then in verse 6 we get an astonishing, self-deprecating, description of the Psalmist as a worm, and no man. How could this description ever be said of the Son of God? Yet, in Philippians chapter 2, the apostle Paul teaches us that Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death and, as if to underline the horror of what we have before us today, he adds even the death of a cross. It is essential that we notice that He humbled Himself. As believers we, too, are called to be humble and to be Christ-like. This was the ultimate in Him making Himself of no reputation. [Our human nature often likes to make us something we are not; we like to be someone, or to achieve something, that others will appreciate. The Bible is filled with characters who were like this, one example being King David's son, Absalom, and that led to great difficulties.](#) It would be easy to consider the crucifixion of Christ as Him being humiliated by all that was done to Him as would have been the case for any other person who found themselves in that situation. But no, He humbled Himself!

Verses 7 and 8 take us right to those scenes we read about in the Gospels - to the people who walked past, shook their heads, and ridiculed what they thought of as being weakness and failure. How many people today will still mock the cross of Calvary? "He saved others", they could shout, "Let Him come down from the cross and save Himself." What a day of judgement it will be when the people of that day, and by extension those of this day who still, as it were, pass by the cross unmoved, have to give account for their actions! [I pray that none who are listening to this message today are just casually passing by, unmoved by this, the most pivotal moment in the whole of history. As I often say, everything that happened in God's dealings with mankind before Calvary looked forward to it; and everything that has, or will happen since, looks back to it.](#)

Verses 9, 10 and 11 remind us of the reliance on, and the relationship that David had with, Jehovah. Remember how as a young man he went to face Goliath, when all the mighty men of Israel quaked at the sight of the giant. Again, we see the Lord of glory becoming a Man in the form of a babe in Bethlehem's manger then asking His earthly parents, while a young boy, if they did

not understand that He must be about His Father's business. What a down-stoop of grace!

Then as we then read through verses 12 to 18, we get a graphic description of both the violence of crucifixion as well as the depth of feeling that the Lord passed through during those three hours of darkness upon the cross. This was not just like a darkness of night; this was a supernatural darkness that could not be penetrated. We read of the strong bulls of Bashan. The book of Numbers tells us that Bashan was a fertile place of good pasture and the animals were strong and well fed. Think of the picture of a naked and seemingly helpless, weak and beaten Man circled by these beasts! Think of the Lion of the tribe of Judah being helpless before a roaring lion on account of your sin and mine! Verses 14 and 15 tell us that all His strength has gone, and He has given up everything, He left nothing behind. In verse 16 we get the thought of the dogs surrounding Him, closing in on every side. Perhaps we see the thought of the Psalm's heading again - of the hart being chased by the hunter and closed in as the hunt comes to a conclusion. The Gospels record that the slogan above His cross was in Hebrew, Greek and Latin signifying that the whole world was without excuse as to who was hanging there; and that all the enemies of God closed in upon Him. Then we are told that His hands and feet were pierced. Those hands that touched the leper, picked up the children, and healed the eyes of the blind man. Those feet that took Him through His earthly journey always doing the things that pleased the Father. Yet, here they are pierced through and nailed to a cross like a common criminal. Furthermore, all His bones were out of joint such that they could be counted. [If you have ever had even one joint dislocated you will agree how painful this is, but He had all His bones out of joint! The excruciating pain that is associated with crucifixion, as we have already commented, was unknown at the time of the writing of the Psalm.](#)

In verse 18, we are given the details of His ultimate humiliation: His clothing was stripped from Him and divided among the Roman soldiers. Then His tunic, that was woven without a seam, was gambled for. The soldiers recognised the value of a piece of clothing but gave no value to the Lord of creation! All four Gospel writers mention this incident; and in fact both Matthew and John specially quote verse 18 in the context of the scripture being fulfilled. How incredible to think of King David writing, as directed by the Holy Spirit, these things when he had no real understanding of them; and then many centuries later the Holy Spirit moves the Gospel writers to verify the prophecy! Luke's Gospel records in chapter 23 verse 34, immediately before telling us about the casting of lots, that the Lord says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." So, even in such painful and humiliating circumstances the Lord's heart was moved by grace to forgive. Now obviously they could not be forgiven without first repenting of their sins, but the heart of the Lord is still the same today as He seeks forgiveness for all. In the first epistle of Paul to Timothy chapter 2 verse 4 we are told that, "God our Saviour....desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is also worth making a comment about the Lord's tunic. This was likely His under garment worn next to the skin; and it is not just an incidental point that John in chapter 19 of his Gospel tells us that it "...was without seam, and woven from the top in one piece." I can see in this the perfection of Christ's Person and His work; it was all of one piece, come from God, and consistent in every detail. Contrast this with mankind in our fallen condition. Perhaps there is a contrast between the fig leaves that Adam and Eve sewed together in order to cover themselves after they had sinned? Many pieces, a patchwork with no consistency; and how similar this is to man's own efforts, even today, to get right with God. The seamless tunic was a symbol of His perfection, and it was not to be torn. Only John's Gospel tells us this and only John's Gospel omits referring to the curtain of the temple being torn in two from the top to the bottom when Jesus died. How profound!

Psalm 22 starts to change in verses 19 to 21. We have gone from seeing an abandoned, helpless and so badly abused Saviour to seeing one no longer deserted. He has gone into death and by the power of God the Father has been raised from the dead. He is delivered from the sword, the power of the dog, the lion's mouth and the horns of wild oxen. All speaking of the devil and his domain, death, and the grave. It is from the place of death, when the work has been accomplished, that He can now be heard by a righteous and holy God. In John chapter 10 verse 11, we read of Jesus describing Himself as the good Shepherd who gives His life for the sake of

the flock. In verses 17 and 18 we get these remarkable statements, “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” At that moment, when the world was cloaked in darkness, the Saviour of the world goes into death and breaks the power of death. Three days later He then rises victoriously. Death and the grave are defeated, and God the Father is glorified. The work is finished. The One who was not heard at the start of Psalm 22 is now heard, and verse 21 finishes with the words, “You have answered Me.”

From verse 22 to the end of the Psalm, we are introduced to the glories that will follow. When people enter into negotiations there is often a tense time whilst fine details are worked out; and both sides hope they will come to a point where both are satisfied. Consensus ad idem, or the meeting of minds, is the desired outcome. At the cross of Calvary a desired outcome has been reached like no other. God’s righteousness has been maintained and His justice has been upheld against sin. Therefore sin has been dealt with and God is glorified. Praise and worship should therefore follow such a glorious victory. [King David enjoyed many triumphs and the adulation of his people that came from them. But even he could never have imagined, as he wrote these words, the full impact of what this victory will engender for all eternity.](#)

Verse 22 starts with this clause, “I will declare Your name to My brethren.” On the cross the Lord laid down His life by committing His spirit into His Father’s hands. Then redemption’s work being finished, in resurrection, He could say these remarkable words, “Go tell my brethren.” His instruction to Mary, we read of John chapter 20, included that He would shortly be ascending to His, and their, God and Father. Those disciples, with all their faults and shortcomings, were now through that finished work elevated to a position they could never have thought possible; and, by extension, we, too, through faith in that finished work are brought into this category, of those who know God the Father. However, while it is essential that we Christians appreciate and enjoy the blessings that have been made ours through the work of Calvary, we must keep in mind that this part of Psalm 22 is primarily referring to the future earthly blessings for restored Israel and the Jews in the ages to come. We read firstly of blessings for the Jewish remnant, then for Israel, the entire world, and finally for all further generations.

So from verse 22 to the end of Psalm 22, we see many Old Testament prophecies, which refer to God’s earthly people being blessed, coming to the fore. Whether that is during the period of great tribulation, when a remnant of Israel will repent, or the wider restoration of the whole of Israel during the Millennium, when Christ will sit on the throne of King David in Jerusalem. At that time the whole world will bow the knee and own that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. [We hear a lot these days about climate change and, while we have a responsibility to care for the planet that God has created, we should always be aware that Christ will put all things right when He reigns for a thousand years. It is only after this that this world will be done away with and destroyed by fire. The epistle to the Hebrews chapter 1 tells us that God laid the foundations of the earth, but also that this universe will grow old like a garment, which He will then fold up and it shall be changed.](#) So, as we see the wonderful work of Christ on the cross of Calvary in this Psalm, let us appreciate more and more each day and be thankful for what it means to every believer; but also rejoice that God the Father has been glorified and satisfied. Psalm 22 finishes with those words that will ring out for all eternity, so it is only fitting that we finish with them too, “That He has done this.”

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Psalm 22, talk number T1229, and I trust the message will have been a real encouragement and a challenge to us all.

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