

An Amazing Messianic Psalm

Psalm 22

Psalm 22:1-10 - *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear, and in the night season, and am not silent.*

But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me. They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” But You are He who took Me out of the womb. You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from birth; from My mother’s womb You have been My God.”

Background Notes

Psalm 22 is an amazing Messianic psalm. The Lord quoted the beginning of this psalm from the cross as His own experience: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27; Mark 15).

Apparently David was going through a deep, troubling experience when he wrote this psalm. It seems he thought that God had forsaken him, and that the Lord was not answering his prayers for deliverance. He reminded the Lord that his forefathers had prayed for deliverance and God had answered them (v4-5). Think of Moses! Think of Joshua! Think of Gideon! “Why?” David prayed. Why was God not answering him? David not only felt forsaken by God, but people were snubbing him, despising him, and mocking his faith in God (v6-8).

David had learned to trust the Lord as a child (v9-10). Think of his victory over Goliath! He certainly had confidence in the Lord. Because of that, it was hard for David to understand the current situation. Why did the Lord seem so far away? Have you ever had that experience?

Well, in David’s case, we know the answer to his questions: this is a Messianic psalm - a “typical” Messianic psalm. God ordained that David would go through these difficult experiences because “David’s greater Son,” the Lord Jesus Christ, would go through similar experiences on the cross. So Psalm 22 is identified as a “typical” Messianic psalm in that David’s experiences are a “type,” or picture, or foreshadowing, of what the Messiah would go through. We will see, however, that in parts of this psalm, the experiences described go well beyond David’s experiences, and describe the Messiah alone. In other words, in these places the psalm is purely “prophetic” Messianic - not just “typically” Messianic.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord experienced the requirements of substitution.

On the cross, why did the Lord Jesus cry out, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Was the Lord only quoting Psalm 22 - or was He going through the experience of actually being forsaken by God, His Heavenly Father? We know the answer. It was a real and horrific experience. On the cross, the Lord took the sin of the world upon Himself, and died in our place. God, who is holy (v3), must judge sin. He had to forsake His only Son when the Lord Jesus took our sins and became our substitute on the cross.

The Lord did not become a sinner, but He was judged for our sins. The penalty for sin is death, and He took the penalty of judgment and death for us. He was our **substitute**. 1 Peter 2:24 says, *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’”*

The Lord Jesus died in our place, as our Substitute. It was the **only way** to meet the requirements that God’s holiness demanded. The Lord experienced the requirements of substitution.

2. The Lord experienced the sufferings of crucifixion.

Psalm 22:11-21 - *“Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws. You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet. I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots. But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me. O My Strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver Me from the sword; My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion’s mouth, and from the horns of the wild oxen! You Have answered Me.”*

This section of Psalm 22 is amazing, both in its **perspective** of the sufferings of Christ and in its **prediction** of the sufferings of Christ.

As to the **perspective of the Lord’s sufferings**, the psalmist did not write about the sufferings of the Messiah in the third person, as in the gospels. Rather it is written in the first person, as by the Messiah Himself! And notice - the perspective is *from the cross!* In this section of the psalm, the Lord is speaking from the cross, as He is being crucified. The piercing of

His hands and feet has already taken place (v16) but the Lord has not yet died. In Psalm 22 there is no mention of the spear wound to His side, because that took place after our Lord had died.

In verses 11-13, the jeering, heartless mob that gathered around cross is pictured as “bulls” surrounding the Lord with no one to help. The Lord suffers alone.

The Lord’s sufferings on the cross are vividly portrayed in verses 14-15. *“I am poured out like water”* – blood and perspiration. *“All My bones are out of joint”* - the shoulder joints stretched from the body’s weight as the cross was mercilessly dropped into a hole in the ground. *“My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me”* - severely stress from crucifixion. *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws”* – dehydration, thirst, and utter exhaustion.

Verses 16-18 definitely go beyond any experiences David had. David’s hands and feet were not pierced - but the Lord’s hands and feet were pierced. No one gambled for David’s clothes - but soldiers gambled for the Lord’s clothing.

And that brings us to **Psalm 22’s amazing prediction of the sufferings of Christ**. Psalm 22 was certainly written well before the time of Christ, because the book of Psalms was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition, crucifixion was a Roman method of execution that was unknown in Old Testament days, and yet these Old Testament verses describe crucifixion, and the physical suffering of crucifixion.

For many years unbelieving critics of the Bible (who didn’t believe in the miracle of fulfilled prophecy) claimed that the Greek translation of Psalm 22 was “manipulated” by the early Christians. They said that early Christians made verse 16 say “pierced,” when (according to the critics) the ancient Hebrew text did not use the word “pierced.” Well - guess what? In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Hebrew text of Psalm 22 supports the word “pierced” in verse 16! Psalm 22 is an amazing prediction of the crucifixion of Christ. The Lord experienced the sufferings of crucifixion.

3. The Lord experienced the blessings of resurrection.

Psalm 22:22-31 - *“I will declare Your name to My brethren. In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! 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. My praise shall be of You in the great assembly. I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.*

Let your heart live forever! All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations. 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. A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this."

At the end of verse 21, the Lord was no longer forsaken by the Father. The Father had heard His cries – and the Father had answered (v21). The Lord's time of being forsaken by God the Father was over when He said, "It is finished." Then He bowed His head and died.

So from verse 22 to the end of the psalm, the perspective is from the **resurrected** Messiah. Notice the joy of resurrection in verse 22. The Savior was no longer alone - He was declaring the Father's name in the midst of His brethren! And "His brethren" includes us, because this verse is quoted in Hebrews 2:12 in reference to all believers.

Our attention is drawn to the results of the Lord's death and resurrection in verses 23-31. The scope of these verses is not limited to the present time. They certainly look forward to Christ's second coming and His earthly kingdom. In that day, the Lord Himself will restore Israel's praise to the Father (v23-25). At that time, the poor and the afflicted will be relieved (verse 26). The whole earth will recognize the lordship of Christ (v27-29). The righteousness of Christ and His finished work (v31) will be declared from generation to generation throughout the rest of man's earthly history (v30-31). All this blessing is part of the victory of the resurrection. The Lord experienced the blessings of resurrection.

Practical Application

Are you included in Psalm 22?

If you're a believer, you're included in Psalm 22! The Messiah says, "*I will declare Your name to My brethren' (v22).* And **all** believers are included in "*My brethren,*" as this verse is quoted in Hebrews 2:12 - and it's referring to **all** believers.

But what about verses 30-31? Are you included there? "*Posterity will serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next Future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn: "He has done it!"*" Are you in these verses? If you're serving the Lord and sharing with others about His righteousness and finished work, you are. But some Christians are not telling others about Christ. Are you?

All believers are included in Psalm 22:22 - but some believers are not included in verses 30-31. Are you included in Psalm 22?