

The Psalm of the Cross Psalm 22

The year was AD 30, 31, 33.

- After a mockery of a trial, he was led outside Jerusalem, the main city of one of the most insignificant provinces on the vast Romans map.
- At about 9am in the morning, they crucified him.
- He *followed a path that many criminals had taken*.
- Jesus was so brutally tortured during the flogging that he **couldn't even take out his cross beam**.
- This once stout carpenter can't carry this cross.

Despite being one among many who were died by crucifixion, Jesus' death is the most famous death in history.

The Romans got the idea from the Phoenicians during the Punic Wars, and they had become experts at this messy business.

- They reserved this death for the lower class, and especially for the *servile supplicum* ("the slaves punishment")
- Cicero called it "the most cruel and most terrible punishment" and that shouldn't even be spoken of by the Romans. It was too degrading to discuss.
- The unnatural position of the body made every movement a pain.

Jesus may have seen crucifixions before; in this barbarous age.

But **his death would be the most famous death in history** (Green)

Why? (I'll just rattle off seven reasons.)

1. Because of who he Was.

- The greatest man who ever walked the earth, the innocent one, was hanging there.
- The incarnate Son of God.
- His very name means "Yahweh saves"

2. Because of the prophecies and hopes it fulfilled.

- "Here was the prophet like Moses ...the Elijah returned ... the Son of David's line ... the Son of Man ... Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Never in all history had all these threads from centuries ago converted into a single knot: and that knot was Jesus Christ on the cross. (Michael Green)"
- The Christ, the anointed one, was prophet, priest, and King. All three figures received anointing, but he was the Anointed One.
- The cross was the supreme prophetic act, the supreme priestly sacrifice, and the supreme demonstration of royalty (Green)
- He was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.
 - The Passover Lamb was the movie trailer of this epic event.
- All the NT writers tells us the cross was no accident: "He was delivered up by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23)

3. Because of what it achieved

- Reconciliation between man and God – temple torn in two. (2 Cor 5:18-20)

- **1 Peter 3:18 – “that he might bring us to God”**
- **We find the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus; his blood washes sinners clean.**

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

- **He took our punishment and we receive his righteousness (2 Cor 5:21)**
- **His death had cosmic significance. “in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself” (Col 1). The beginning of new creation.**

That’s why we call it “Good Friday” – good news, Jesus has died in the place of sinners for the forgiveness of sins, for reconciliation with the Father, for right standing with God, and for the enjoyment of new creation to come.

4. Because of the motives that it displays – love and justice (Gal 2:20/Rom 3:21-26)

- **Maybe someone would die for a friend, or a righteous person, but Christ died for his enemies, for sinners (Rom 5:8-10), out of great love.**
- **The cross shows us the love of God and the fact that there’s nothing he won’t endure for us.**
- **John 3:16**

5. Because of his will to endure it.

- **Jesus could have ended it.**
- **“You don’t take my life, I lay it down” (Jn 10:18)**
- **But he didn’t. He endured it for our sake and in obedience to the Father.**

6. Because of what it teaches us.

- **What love looks like**
- **What humility looks like**
- **How to be faithful in suffering**
- **How to respond to persecution**
- **How the path to glory must first go through suffering.**

7. Because of what it points us to: “worthy is the Lamb”

- **All of history is moving here!**
- **The cross is a proclamation of victory and of future glory of all the redeemed.**
- **“Soon we will see what the cross achieved.”**

Psalm 22

Keep these things in mind as we meditate on Psalm 22: (1) who he was, (2) what he fulfilled, (3) what he achieved, (4) his love and justice and (5) his will to endure it.

Many through the years have proposed a Messianic Trilogy in **Psalm 22-24.**

- **The Psalm of the Cross (22)**
- **The Psalm of the Lamb (23)**
- **The Psalm of the Crown (24)**

Psalm 20-21 are also **Royal Psalms about the King.**

So there’s a whole cluster of Psalms here that point to **the Anointed One.**

Psalm 22 is the most uncontested Messianic Psalm, as the NT writers cite it. It is the Passion Psalm. (cf., Matt 27:46)

- **Derek Kinder says, “David’s language overflows all of its natural banks”**
- It far transcends the actual experiences of David.
- It points to the righteous sufferer *par excellence*, the Lord Jesus.
- It clearly prefigures Christ’s death (and also speaks of his resurrection), though we aren’t to necessarily press every single detail of the crucifixion.
- It concludes in triumph, with the Suffering Messiah winning the nations to himself.

Spurgeon: “For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe we may say of this Psalm, there is none like it. It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of his dying words, the lachrymatory of his last tears, the memorial of his expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David. . . . We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture, it is in this Psalm.”

We know Jesus cited it.

- Was the whole Psalm on his mind during those grueling hours?
- Was he working through it as he suffered under Pontius Pilate and as he was crucified?
- We can’t know for sure, but it certainly possible that Jesus was fortified by the meditation on this Psalm.

Jesus’ whole understanding of his own person and work – his life, ministry death, resurrection, ascension, and return was tied to his own understanding of Scripture.

- **Many believe that to get closer to Jesus you need to take a trip to Israel (!), and while I do recommend it if possible, you don’t have to do that to get closer to Jesus.**
- **You can actually just open the Old Testament.**
- **This is the Bible Jesus read and studied and memorized as a child.**
- **This is the Bible he quoted in his public ministry.**
- **Jesus lived with the Psalms in his heart and on his lips.**

The Shape of the Psalter as Messianic

- **Psalms 1-2 are to be taken together, and as an introduction to the Psalms.**
- **They are clearly Messianic, and their message message is seen to provide a doorway into a Messianic interpretation of the entire Psalter.**

Psalm 22

- Numerous verses of Psalm 22 are cited directly by Jesus and/or NT writers.
- These verses are fulfillments of his death and resurrection:
 1. **V. 1 (Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34)**
 2. **V. 7 (Matt 27:39 and Mark 15:29)**
 3. **V. 8 (Matt 27:43)**
 4. **V. 15 – fulfilled in John 19:28, “I thirst”**

5. **V. 18** (Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34, John 19:24),
6. **V. 22** (Heb 2:12)
7. **V. 31**: “He has done it” or “It is finished” (Jn 19:30)

I believe that Jesus understood that His death would a Psalm 22 death.

Where did He derive strength to sustain Him on the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrows, and especially on the Cross?

- Just as Jesus was strengthened by the Scriptures in the wilderness when tempted by the devil, he was surely strengthened at the cross as he mediated on passages like Psalm 22.

One OT scholars says, “I have become convinced that Christ conquered at Calvary, at least in part, because He had seen the battle plan in advance in the OT scriptures, and in particular Psalm 22, as it links with the prediction of His death in Daniel 9.... He recognized that what David described under inspiration in Psalm 22, was to happen to the New David, the Messiah, in His death.” (Davdison)

Peter uses the phrase “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” [or the humility and exaltation; or in the words of Hebrews 12, enduring the cross” (1-21); and the joy set before him] and I think that provides an orderly and accurate way to look at this text.

#1: The Sufferings of Christ (1-21)

A. His Cry (1-2)

V. 1: We begin in the darkness.

As Jesus bore the sins of the world, as he endures the physical and emotional wounds, he cries out in agony. (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34)

- As He hangs on there in shame and agony, he holds on to the promises of this Psalm that follow.

1b-2: As the suffering one cries out the Father silent.

- He had cried out asking for another way in the Garden.
- He is here lamenting the Father’s silence, as the “Father turns his face away”
- This mysterious abandonment left Jesus crying, “Why have you forsaken me?”
- As Christians, we will never be abandoned, for Christ was abandoned for us.

B. His Praise (3-5)

3: The suffering One recalls the fact that the Father enthroned on the praises of His people.

4-5: His faith is strengthened by remembering God’s mighty acts in history, and how his people trusted him.

- Just as God’s people trusted in Yahweh and He delivered them, so the true Israelite trusts the Father for final vindication and deliverance.

We can say this today; “I trust the Father”

- If Jesus can trust him suspended to a crossbeam, dying naked and in unspeakable agony, we can trust God today.

C. His Lament (6-8)

6: David (and in a greater way, Christ) experiences despair, and a feeling of worthlessness.

- What a contrast between “I am” and “I am a worm” (Spurgeon)
- “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3)

If you are in despair or sorrow, you can know that the Lord Jesus can identify with you.

- Embrace **Hebrews 4:14-16!**

7: The mockers are everywhere! (**Matt 27:39; Mark 15:19**)

8: “He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” (see **Matt 27:43; Luke 23:35**).

- The fact is, Jesus is trusting in the Father, despite crying out in agony!

D. His Faith (9-10)

9: Holding on in faith, the Anointed One remembers what God did for Him the past.

10: The Father taught Him to trust since birth.

God is faithful; He will hold us fast.

E. His First Plea (11)

11: The suffering one cries out “Be Not Far From Me” He feels forsaken again.

- “There is none to help,” is an echo of the Messiah’s death in **Daniel 9:22**.
- This is what we need – his nearness is our good.

F. His Enemies (12-13)

12-13: We read of the Messiah’s enemies surrounding him and wanting to destroy him; with these enemies being like bulls and Lions.

Here’s another way that the Messiah can identify with us: he knows what it’s like to be opposed; criticized, bullied, and mocked.

G. His Physical Anguish (14-15)

14-15: He describes his anguish.

- Jesus knew this day would come.
- He knows isolation/weakness/physical anguish.

The irony is the one with no power has all power!

H. His Shame (16-18)

16-17: In shame, he hangs on the cross and the crowd is staring at his naked and emaciated body

18: Jesus had known this verse for many years, and on the cross sees it coming true.

- (Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).

He was stripped of his garments that we may be clothed in his righteousness.

I. His Second Plea (19-21)

19-21: The suffering one prays for strength.

20-21: He would have to wait until the work of the cross was over to experience deliverance.

#2: The Glories That Would Follow (22:22-31)

A. The Great Assembly (22-25)

22: This is a great shift.

- **Some call this the highpoint of the Psalm. He enters to the “joy set before him” (Heb 12)**
- **It’s a statement of faith, after hearing no answer for his plea in 19-21.**
- **He isn’t crying for deliverance anymore.**
- **It is an anticipation of resurrection, as he envisions being alive again.**

“I will tell Your name to My brethren.”

- **Recall the resurrection account, “Go tell my brothers” (John 20/Matt 28)**
- **It’s quoted in Hebrews 2:12**

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹²saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

23-25: Surely Jesus was strengthened by the encouragement of these final verses.

It’s a vision of a great ingathering of worshipers.

He didn’t see this after the resurrection. He appeared to 500 (1 Cor 15) but more is alluded here.

Such a large number of people, “a congregation” would worship him in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, and throughout the history of the church.

23: A call to praise God! Stand in awe of him!

24: A statement of God’s faithfulness.

God did not despise the Son’s work; for he delights in the Son and accepted his sacrifice.

25a: a statement of praise; with God as the source and the host.

B. A Great Feast (25b-26)

- Vows/sacrifice. When a worshiper brought a peace offering to the Lord, the worshiper retained part of it for a feast for himself, family, and any friends he wanted to invite (Lev 3; 7:15ff), and this tradition became a vision of the messianic kingdom.
- V. 27: The Gentiles would be included.
- Isaiah 25:6

- Because of Christ's sacrifice we have access to God's presence and feast there, and We invite others to join.
- Isaiah 53

B. The Glorious Kingdom (27-29)

27-31: He now turns to the ends of the earth and to the coming generations, proclaiming his kingship over the nations. The fulfillment of Abraham, all the nations would be blessed.

- **Kinder:** "Now David's language overflows all its natural banks as the thanksgiving proper to even a king (whose fortune affects others)."

31: This final clause can be rendered, "He has done [it]" (ESV) or "It is done/finished!"

- The latter is the triumphant line in John 19:30.
- This would mean Jesus cites the beginning and end of the Psalm
- He died with Psalm 22 on his lips.

Application: This text not only shows us the agony of the cross, but it also provides us with a wonderful encouragement to press on during dark times.

We too need to remember:

1. God care for His people in the past (vv. 3-5)
2. The promises of God's Word (vv. 21-22).
3. Like Christ, look to the future and the ultimate triumph; We look forward to the final "It is done" (Rev 16:17; 21:6)!

Church Behold Your Savior

1. Jesus the Sufferer
2. Jesus the Substitute
3. Jesus the Reconciler
4. Jesus the Conqueror
5. Jesus the Trailblazer
6. Jesus the Magnet
 - John 12:20-32 – his death would be a great magnet to draw all types of people to himself.
7. Jesus the Exalted One.