

## PSALM 22 (Part 2)

### INTRODUCTION

Many people have described this Psalm as the Psalm of the cross. They call it that because it is thought to be the best description in the entire bible of Jesus Christ crucifixion. Now some people might want to dispute that for Isaiah 53 is a pretty graphic description of the cross as well. Now last time we looked at this Psalm from the view of the original writer and we saw it as a Psalm about God's apparent abandonment of the writer.

But as we saw that abandonment was only apparent and not actual for we discovered that God never leaves or forsakes his people. However I did acknowledge last time that this Psalm is also Messianic and there is no doubt that in this Psalm we have a clear reference to Jesus Christ and to his death.

But it is not only a Psalm about the Lord Jesus but it is also a Psalm that it seems Jesus himself mediated upon frequently and it was on his mind as he hung on the cross as he clearly quotes from it.

As Jesus hung on the cross he quoted from Psalm 22:1 and his last words from the cross 'it is finished' is probably a quotation from verse 31 in our Psalm. In our text it reads, "He has done it" referring to God as the subject. But in the Hebrew there is no object and so I am told it could equally be translated 'it is finished.' So it seems clear that Jesus was thinking of this Psalm and others as well as he hung on the cross for the sins of his people.

Looking at Psalm 22 from this perspective we can see that the Psalm begins with a description of Christ's alienation from the Father as he was made sin for us. It continues with a vivid description of the crucifixion itself and ends with triumph as the suffering one tells how his prayer was heard and affirms that he will declare the name of God and praise Him before his people in the great assembly.

### 1. JESUS AS THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR (vs. 1-21)

The most poignant verses in this entire Psalm are verses 1-2. Here the suffering one (Jesus) cries out to God, believing that he has been forsaken by him. His cry of dereliction is asking why he has been abandoned, why is God silent at this moment of crisis. Now many people have tried to explain how Jesus could have been forsaken and many theories have been written about it. But I think that we need to remember that in the final outcome Jesus was not forsaken and this is what the whole Psalm shows. After the crucifixion, came the resurrection which clearly shows that he was not forsaken. However having said that we must also be true to Scripture and say that in some way and for a moment of time God withdrew his presence from Jesus, his beloved Son.

The reason for this is that on that cross Jesus was bearing the sin of his people; he was taking upon himself our judgement and our sin and our hell so that we might know freedom righteousness and heaven. To be forsaken by God means that Jesus had the sense of God's presence concealed so that he felt abandoned. How could this happen you might ask? How could one member of the Trinity turn his back on another?

I confess I do not know I cannot explain it but this is what the bible teaches and we must believe it and accept it. But it does teach us something about the nature of sin doesn't it. Sin is so horrible that because Jesus was bearing our sin upon the cross his own Father turned his back on his Son. God cannot look upon sin he is so pure and spotless and sin is so repulsive that he had to turn away from his only and beloved Son. If you are not yet a true believer then please do try and grasp something of how awful your sin is. It is not something that can be trivialised it is hideous to

God, disgusting to him and abhorrent to him. Yet we sin willingly and freely and think nothing about it. Yet God finds it so detestable that he turned his back on his Son.

But even as Christians we can play fast with sin. We can somehow think that our sin does not matter or at least it is no big deal after all we all fail and fall. But if we think of sin like this even what we might call little sins then that is a sure sign that our thinking is wrong and as a result our living is also wrong.

As Christians we must be ruthless with sin Jesus was he was so ruthless that he had to die in order to be able to forgive us our sin. He did not see it as something little he died for it because that is the only answer to sin it must be put to death, the price has to be paid God's wrath and judgement has to be met and satisfied. So can I say to all of us whether we are Christians or not do not mess around with sin be ruthless with it turn to the Lord Jesus for cleansing because he died in order that we might be forgiven.

Every day ask God for grace to root out sin within our lives so that we might walk before God with pure hearts.

But this opening verse tells us something about the love of the Lord Jesus for sinners. If he abhors sin so much, and if as the Son of God is altogether pure and lovely, then how can he become sin for us. The only explanation is his love for sinners is so great that he is prepared to take upon himself our sin and be punished by his Father and be willing to endure the abandonment of God so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God.

What love Jesus had for his people. Now I don't know about you but I often find that what motivates me in his service is this knowledge that God loves me and loved me so much that he died for me. I will be honest and say that I do feel hurt so often when I see the way professing believers treat my Saviour and their Saviour with their half-hearted approach to worship, carelessness about the things of God and their lack of commitment to his church.

It hurts because Jesus the Son of God loves them so much that he died for them taking upon himself their sin. That ought to make us all totally sold out in a service to him. But so often that is not the case and we all need to repent of such sins and ask for his grace to help us understand what it cost Jesus to die for us in our place and what love he had for us in doing so.

It is clear that verses 6-8 of this Psalm moves to the mocking of the people and can rightly be applied to Jesus on the cross. The crowds mocked Jesus with words and actions very similar to the ones found here (Matthew 27:39-43). Then in verses 12-18 we have a very striking description of suffering endured by Christ at his crucifixion.

But not only are the physical aspects of Jesus suffering mentioned but there is a description of those who are abusing the sufferer. This little section proves to us that Scripture is God's word and not just the thoughts of men. The very words used by the Psalmists are the exact words God wants to be written.

The words of Jesus piercing (v 16) refer perfectly to what happened at Jesus crucifixion and even the event of the dividing up of Jesus garments (v 18) were fulfilled exactly at Jesus crucifixion. Now this shows us that God was at work in the Psalmist mind so that every word was written, as God would have wrote them and therefore we can have complete confidence in God's word. The Psalmist probably did not understand that these words would fit a later time perfectly he was describing his own experience but God saw that the words were exactly appropriate for Jesus crucifixion. We must also not forget the physical pain of Jesus crucifixion.

We are right to focus upon the meaning of the cross and that is where the emphasis is placed in the bible but we must remember that the Son of God did suffer physically during his crucifixion. He

suffered real pain, the mocking was real but if we only focus on this point as the film the passion of Christ does then we will come to the conclusion that Jesus suffered greatly and as a result we begin to feel sorry for him, which is why lots of people left the Cinema after the film with tears in their eyes.

But as Christians we remember his pain and suffering because of what it achieved for us. He suffered real pain because he was paying the penalty for our sin, he was enduring the wrath of God and our tears should not be for his suffering but tears of joy that he suffered all that for me that I might be forgiven and made right with God.

At this point in the Psalm the Psalm takes on a different tone for the second half of the Psalm is celebrating a great victory and can be applied to the victory Jesus gained at the cross. Now we can apply this second half to Jesus because verse 22 is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews in Hebrews 2:11-12.

In this chapter in Hebrews the author is teaching the superiority of Jesus to the angels and he is superior because he is God's Son and not just a servant like the angels. He is superior because he is the appointed ruler of God's everlasting kingdom. However having stressed Jesus superiority over created beings the author of Hebrews shows that Jesus has also become the Saviour of his people by becoming like them and making them members of his family.

It is at this point that the author applies Psalm 22:22 to Jesus and therefore it is legitimate for us also to apply the second half of this Psalm to Jesus and to the people for whom he died and rose again. This latter part of the Psalm is telling us that God's people are victorious because of Christ and as a result they will sing and proclaim his name throughout the world.

Verse 22 starts with the Jewish people and the Psalm moves to all the 'ends of the earth' turning to the Lord (v 27). That is the pattern that we find in the New Testament. The gospel goes out to the Jews first and they formed the nucleus of the early church but then the gospel was to be taken to the Gentiles to all the nations of the world.

You see the victory of the cross was not limited to a small nation of Jewish people but that victory was won for people from every tribe tongue and nation. Yes we thank God that some Jews responded to the gospel and the early Christians were mainly Jews. But they had the vision to reach out to the Gentile nations and to see Christ work on the cross applied to sinners of all nations.

The Psalmist under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit pens words in verse 30 that are clearly understood from the New Testament perspective. Future generations would come and praise God as a result of what Christ has done on the cross. The gospel is to be preached to all, the death of Christ on the cross is for all who will repent and believe no matter what their background race or creed.

Jesus death on the cross is sufficient for all to be saved; he is the only Saviour and the only way to be saved. Now this is also a real challenge to us as well as an encouragement. The challenge is that we are responsible for taking out the good news of Jesus death to our world. Of course we cannot reach every person in our world but we can begin to reach those in our locality with the gospel. We can then pray for the many countries of the world that the gospel might be successful, that Christ's death and resurrection will be applied to many in the specific nations that we are praying about.

We can also give of our resources to help finance others to go with the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps God might be calling us to go with this gospel message. I read this week of a couple that were nearly 60. They wrote to a missionary in Kenya asking if they could be of any

help to the work there. The Missionary responded with 'come and see.' They did and became missionaries in Kenya at 60.

For some of us 60 is about retirement and living for ourselves after working all our lives but for that couple 60 was the time to serve their Lord overseas. What motivates people to do that to leave all that they knew in Britain and go to a completely new culture? It was the fact that Christ died for them and they wanted to go and tell others this wonderful good news. I wonder if we have that desire even if God never calls us overseas. Do we have a desire to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ and his death for sinners? Do we try and tell others in our family and among our friends and in our neighbourhood. Do we really desire to see the Psalmist prophecy fulfilled with all the ends of the earth turning to the Lord? If we do not then once again we need the grace of God in our lives to show us the wonders of the cross.

We need the Lord to thrill us again and again of the wonders of the cross and as a result we need the Lord to move us and motivate us to tell others the glorious news that Jesus saves sinners.

Amen