

Psalm 22

The Crucifixion and Resurrection Prophesied

What an appropriate reading for the week after Passover!

Considered one of the “Messianic Psalms,” the first line and others were quoted by Jesus on the cross in his time of anguish, burdened with the sins of humanity. Almost the whole psalm can be paralleled amazingly with **Matthew 27:31-48**.

Psalm 22:1 - “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

The Hebrew text has “Eli, Eli, lama azavtani.” The Targum of the psalm uses the Aramaic “sabbacthani,” which Jesus cried out on the cross. He was quoting - not the Hebrew Psalm, but the Aramaic Targum of it, popularly known to everyone.

It was happening because “the chastisement for our peace was upon him: and God laid on him the iniquity of us all” (**Isaiah 53:5-6**). His cry not a demand for explanation, but a cry from the heart of astonishment and perplexity. Because of the sin, God had temporarily turned away, so that Christ could accomplish his mission.

“My” God means faith was still present and active, and the rest of the Psalm from vs. 22-31 shows that prayer and hope did not cease, even in extreme distress.

Psalm 22:2 - “O my God, I cry in the day time, but you hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.”

Hebrews 5:7 says that “Christ was heard in that he feared.” “But you hear not” means the Father did not *respond* to exempt him from suffering. Jesus already knew that “for this cause came I to this hour” (John 12:27). But that did not lessen the anguish. And if Christ experienced this, why should we expect to be spared?

“In the night season” means his agonies in the Garden of Gethsemane are included.

Read against the background of the **Genesis 27** readings, it expresses the desperation felt by Jacob, fleeing from his brother Esau, who had vowed to kill him. Esau was Jacob’s “strong bull of Bashan” who pursued him.

I Am a Worm

Psalm 22:6 - “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

Jacob is called “a worm” (**Isaiah 41:14**); not only because mean in his own eyes, but contemptible in the eyes of others. The Suffering Servant was “despised, and we esteemed him not.” (**Isaiah 53:3**).

Interestingly, the word “worm” also denotes the scarlet dye made from the dried body of the female of the worm "coccus ilicis" used in dyeing the Tabernacle curtains.

"When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might 'bring many sons unto glory' (**Hebrews 2:10**)! He died for us, that we might live through him! Psa 22:6 describes such a worm and gives us this picture of Christ. (cf. Isa 1:18)"

(Henry Morris. Biblical Basis for Modern Science, Baker Book House, 1985, p. 73)

Dogs

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

Dogs - wild, snarling, moving in packs. Possibly the Romans, Gentiles who were referred to as dogs (**Matthew 15:26**) The term "dog" in the Middle East has always been, and still is, a term of reproach. (Also used to refer to male prostitutes, because the manner of sex resembled that performed by dogs). But this could also just be another term denoting Jesus' Jewish opponents: “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” (**Philippians 3:2**)

Strong Bulls of Bashan

Psalm 22:12 - “Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.”

Bashan means “fruitful” and was originally the stronghold of Og (Numbers 21:33). Og alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim (**Joshua 13:12**). It became a synonym for an attitude of “fatness” in the sense of complacency in success, leading to fierce, savage, and violent oppression of the poor, crushing the needy while focusing on self-indulgence. (See **Amos 4:1**)

The strong bulls of Bashan (and all who identify with that mindset) will be judged when Babylon is judged:

Jeremiah 50:27 - “Put all her young bulls to the sword; Let them go down to the slaughter! Woe be upon them, for their day has come, The time of their punishment.”

As the psalm turns to a vision of hope, it mentions Jacob/Israel.

Psalm 22:23 - “Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;

and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.”

And there are echoes of Jacob’s blessing here:

Psalm 22:27-28 - “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD’S: and he is the governor among the nations.

(Compare to **Genesis 27:29** - “Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you...”)

The Seed

Psalm 22:30 - “A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.”

The seed - Christ - the Seed that falls into the ground to die but brings forth much fruit - has been shed through the Spirit on all flesh at Pentecost. Gentiles have been grafted in to Israel, and a new people, a generation of a new kind - will serve him. We are part of that promise.

Isaiah 59:20-21 - “A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD. “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.”

Galatians 3:16 - "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning One, who is Christ."