

Psalm 22

A cry of anguish and song of praise
To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.

Psalm 22:

A Christian cannot read this psalm without reflecting on the use of the first verse by Christ on the Cross (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

In addition to this verse, verse 18 is quoted in the New Testament (Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24), as well as verse 22; (Heb. 2:12).

In addition, many of the details of this psalm are reflected in Christ's cross experience.

Compare verse 7 with (Matt. 27:39); verse 8 with (Matt. 27:43); verse 15 with (John 19:28).

His cry to God, the condemnation of the crowd, His thirst, His crucifixion, and even the gambling for His robe, are all clearly predicted.

David's own experience gives way to a prophetic glimpse of his descendant Jesus Christ.

The psalm naturally falls into two parts.

David first describes the awful predicament in which he finds himself (verses 1-21): he feels forsaken by God in the midst of his enemies, who are compared to ravenous beasts.

The details here transcend David's own experience and point clearly to Calvary: mocking, ridicule, pain, opposition, all done to an innocent man.

The second part of the psalm consists of praise to God for His faithfulness (verse 22-31), by both the worshiping community (verses 22-26), and the world as a whole (verses 27-31).

Verses 1-31: This psalm presents the reader with a great contrast in mood.

Lament characterizes the first of the 21 verses, while both praise and thanksgiving describe the final ten verses.

Prayer accounts for this dramatic shift from lament to praise.

It is the story of first being God-forsaken and then God-found and filled.

It was applied immediately to David and ultimately to the Greater David, Messiah.

The New Testament contains 15 messianic quotations of or allusions to this psalm, leading some in the early church to label it “the fifth gospel”.

1. The Psalmist’s Hopelessness (22:1-10).
2. His Hopelessness and National History (22:1-5);
3. His Hopelessness and Natal History (22:6-10).
4. The Psalmist’s Prayer (22:11-21).
5. A No-Help Outlook (22:11-18);
6. A Divine-Help Outlook (22:19-21).

The Psalmist’s Testimonies and Worship (22:22-31).

1. An Individual Precipitation of Praise (22:22-25);
2. A Corporate Perpetuation of Praise (22:26-31).

“Aijeleth Shahar”:

You will find in the title there is a unique phrase in the superscription and is probably best taken as a tune designation.

Verses 1-2:

The psalmist felt frustrated by God’s apparent lack of response to his crises (38:21).

Jesus quoted these words as He hung on the cross (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Psalm 22:1 "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [why art thou so] far from helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring?"

This heavy lament rivals (Job chapter 3; Psalm chapter 69; Jer. 20:14-18).

“My God, my god, why hast thou forsaken me?”

The repeated noun of direct address to God reflects a personal molecule of hope in a seemingly hopeless situation.

“Forsaken” is a strong expression for personal abandonment, intensely felt by David and supremely experienced by Christ on the cross (Matt. 27:46).

At the very beginning of this verse we see the very words that the Lord Jesus spoke from the cross; My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

We have discussed in some of the other books, why Jesus felt forsaken of the Father at this point.

It appears to me that the moment Jesus took the sin of the entire world upon His body, the Father turned away.

The Father could not look upon sin.

He would have to burn it up.

I believe that this very moment was the very part of the crucifixion that Jesus had dreaded.

I do not believe that Jesus was as afraid of the pain of the flesh, as He was of the pain of His heart, He would feel when the Father turned away.

We might say that this entire Psalm is about the crucifixion of Jesus.

Verses 2-5: The thrust of these verses is “even though You have not responded to me, You remain the Holy One of Israel who has demonstrated His gracious attention time and time again to Your people.

Psalm 22:2 "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

In the time of his suffering on the cross, which was in the daytime.

"But thou hearest me not":

And yet he was always heard (John 11:41).

Though he was not saved from dying, yet he was quickly delivered from the power of death, and so was heard in that he feared (Heb. 5:7).

"And in the night season":

In the night in which he was in the garden, sorrowing and praying.

The night in which he was betrayed and was apprehended.

And though the natural desires of his human soul were not heard and answered, that the cup might pass from him, yet his prayer in submission to the will of God was.

Moreover, the daytime and night season may design the incessant and continual prayer of Christ; he prayed always, night and day.

"And am not silent":

But continue to pray, though as yet seemingly not heard and answered.

Or there is "no silence to me"; that is, no rest from sorrow and pain.

Or "no likeness to me", there are none like me, no sorrow like my sorrow, as in (Lam. 1:12).

How many times have we prayed and thought that God did not hear our prayer, because it seemed our prayer had not been answered?

The Lord Jesus prayed to the Father while He was in the garden of Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:39 "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou [wilt]."

Matthew 26:42 "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

Matthew 26:44 "And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."

We see in all of this that Jesus prayed, not once but three times for the cup to pass.

Perhaps we could learn a very good lesson from this prayer of Jesus.

First of all, it is alright to pray for the same thing more than once.

We also should realize that if we are truly followers of Christ, we must say with Him, "Not my will, but thine O Lord be done".

Psalms 22:3 "But thou [art] holy, [O thou] that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

Which may be considered either as an argument with his God, why he should hear and answer him, since he is holy, just, and faithful.

He has promised, when any call upon him in a day of trouble, he will hear and answer them, and will be glorified by them.

This, Christ did, and therefore pleads his faithfulness to his promise.

Or rather a reason quieting him under divine desertion, and a sense of divine wrath.

That God was righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

And that whereas he was the surety of his people and had all their sins on him, it was perfectly agreeable to the holiness and justice of God to treat him in the manner he did.

Yea, it was done to declare his righteousness, that he might appear to be just, while he is the justifier of him that believes in him.

"O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel":

That dwells in the place where the praises of Israel have always been offered for mercies granted unto them.

Or, who receives and rightly possesses the praises of Israel; whom thy people are perpetually praising for one mercy or another.

And therefore, I trust I also shall have occasion to praise thee.

Jesus knew that the Father was near when He was praying.

Not even once in His prayers did Jesus not submit to the will of the Father.

We are told over and over, that we are to be holy, because our God is holy.

Inhabits means to live in.

God lives in the praises of both Israels.

We Christians are spiritual Israel.

If you want to feel the presence of God, praise Him.

Look at 2 Scriptures with me, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, which tell us to praise God.

Jeremiah 33:11 "The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD [is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever: [and] of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD."

Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name."

This leaves absolutely no doubt that we are to speak out praises to our God.

Psalm 22:4 "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them."

It sustains the Sufferer to think how many before him have cried to God, and trusted in him, and for a while been seemingly not heard, and yet at length manifestly heard and saved.

"They trusted":

This is repeated not only for the sake of emphasis, pointing out something remarkable and commendable, and for the greater certainty of it, more strongly confirming it.

Or to observe the many that put their trust in the Lord, the numerous instances of confidence in him.

But to denote the constancy and continuance of their faith, they trusted in the Lord at all times.

"And thou didst deliver them":

Out of the hands of all their enemies, and out of all their sorrows and afflictions.

Instances of which we have in the patriarchs, and in the people of Israel when they were brought out of Egypt, and through the Red sea and wilderness.

And in the times of the judges, when they were distressed by their neighbors, and God sent them a deliverer time after time.

Psalm 22:5 "They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded."

As the Israelites did in Egyptian bondage, and as they in later times did when in distress (see Exodus 2:23).

The crying is to be understood of prayer to God, and sometimes designs mental prayer, sighing, and groaning, which cannot be uttered.

When no voice is heard, as in Moses (Exodus 14:15).

But often vocal prayer, put up in times of distress, and denotes the vehemence of trouble, and eagerness of desire to be heard and relieved.

And this cry was from faith, it followed upon and was accompanied with trusting in the Lord.

It was the prayer of faith, which is effectual and availeth much, and issued in deliverance.

"They trusted in thee, and were not confounded":

Or ashamed.

Neither of the object of their trust, the living God, as those who trust in graven images.

So Moab was ashamed of Chemosh (Jer. 48:13).

Nor of their hope and trust in him, it being such as makes not ashamed (Psalm 119:116, and Romans 5:5).

Nor of the consequences of it.

When men trust in anything and it fails them, and they have not what they expect by it, they are filled with shame and confusion (Isa. 30:2).

But they that trust in the Lord are never confounded, or made ashamed; their expectations do not perish.

We will look at just one vivid example of God's delivering someone who believed in Him.

Read the whole 3rd chapter of Daniel to get the story about three godly men being thrown into a fiery furnace, and not being burned because they put their trust in God.

We will show one Scripture to show what effect of them being saved had on Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 3:28 "[Then] Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed [be] the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God."

Another vivid story about God delivering His people is, of course, when God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites.

Verses 6-8: David compares himself to a "worm", expressing his feelings of worthlessness, vulnerability, and contempt in the eyes of his enemies (109:25).

These foes insulted him, despised him and mocked his faith because God had not rescued him (Isa. 53:3; Matt.27:42-43).

Reproach and ridicule were overwhelming the psalmist.

For messianic applications, compare Matt. 27:39-44; Luke 23:35.

Psalm 22:6 "But I [am] a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people."

In contrast with the fathers who trusted in thee.

They prayed, and were heard; they confided in God, and were treated as men.

I am left and forsaken, as if I were not worth regarding; as if I were a groveling worm beneath the notice of the great God.

In other words, I am treated as if I were the most insignificant, the most despicable, of all objects alike unworthy the attention of God or man.

By the one my prayers are unheard; by the other I am cast out and despised (compare Job 25:6).

As applicable to the Redeemer, this means that he was forsaken alike by God and men, as if he had no claims to the treatment due to a "man."

"A reproach of men":

Reproached by men (compare Isa. 53:3, and the notes).

"Despised of the people":

That is, of the people who witnessed his sufferings.

It is not necessary to say how completely this had a fulfillment in the sufferings of the Savior.

This of course, is David speaking prophetically of the rejection of Jesus by the people.

This does not mean that Jesus was a worm, but that he was hated by the people as a worm.

Hebrews 11:26 "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

We will suffer reproach with Jesus rather than live in the sin of the world (Egypt).

Hebrews 13:13 "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Psalm 22:7 "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, [saying],"

To the afflicted, pity should be shown.

But instead of pitying him in his distresses they laughed at him.

This must be understood of the soldiers when they had him in Pilate's hall.

And of the Jews in general when he hung upon the cross.

Some particular persons must be excepted, as John the beloved disciple, the mother of our Lord, Mary Magdalene, and some other women, who stood afar off beholding him.

"They shoot out the lip": Or "open with the lip"; they made mouths at him, they put out their lips, or gaped upon him with their mouths, and in a way of sport and pastime made wide mouths and drew out their tongues.

An idiom for sneering (compare Job 16:10; Psalm 35:21; Heb. 5:5).

"They shake the head, saying": In a way of scorn and derision as in (Lam. 2:15).

This was fulfilled in the Jews (Matt. 27:39).

Psalm 22:8 "He trusted on the LORD [that] he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

“Trusted on the LORD”:

Literally “he rolled to the Lord”.

The idea is that he turned his burden over to the LORD (compare Psalm 37:5; Prov. 16:3).

The best explanation of this, that I can give, is to show you the fulfillment in the New Testament. They are speaking of Jesus in the next few verses.

Matthew 27:39-43 "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads," "And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest [it] in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." "Likewise also the chief priests mocking [him], with the scribes and elders, said," "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."

How sad that these people knew the word of God from the Psalms, but they did not realize this prophecy was about Jesus, whom they had rejected as Messiah.

Verses 9-10: The psalmist had a long history of reliance upon God.

Psalm 22:9 "But thou [art] he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope [when I was] upon my mother's breasts."

This is noted as an effect of God’s wonderful and gracious providence.

And although this was a mercy which God grants to all mankind, yet it may well be alleged here, partly in way of gratitude for this great, though common, mercy.

Nothing being more reasonable and usual than for David and other holy men to praise God for such blessings.

And partly as an argument to encourage himself to expect and to prevail with God, to grant him the deliverance which now he desires, because he had formerly delivered him.

This being a very common argument (see 1 Sam. 17:37; 2 Cor. 1:10).

But this is applicable to Christ in a singular manner, not as a late learned writer takes it, that God separated him from the womb, but that God did bring him out (as the word properly signifies).

"Of the womb":

To wit, immediately and by himself, and without the help of any man, by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, which made him there.

Or else he could never have been brought thence.

"Thou didst make me hope":

Or trust, i.e., thou didst give me sufficient ground for hope and trust.

If I had then been capable of receiving that grace, because of thy wonderful and watchful care over me in that weak and helpless state.

Which was eminently true of Christ, whom God so miraculously preserved and provided for in his infancy.

The history whereof we read (in Matthew Chapter 2).

It is not strange that hope is figuratively ascribed to infants, seeing even the brute creatures are said to hope (Rom. 8:20).

And to wait and cry to God (Psalm 145:15; 147:9).

"When I was upon my mother's breasts":

I.e., when I was a sucking child; which may be properly understood.

Psalm 22:10 "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou [art] my God from my mother's belly."

Either by himself, trusting in God, hoping in him, and casting all the care of himself upon him.

Or by his parents, who knew the danger he was exposed to, and what schemes were laid to take away his life.

And therefore did, in the use of all means they were directed to, commit him to the care and protection of God.

The sense is, that the care of him was committed to God so early; and he took the care of him and gave full proof of it.

"Thou art my God from my mother's belly":

God was his covenant God from everlasting, as he loved his human nature, chose it to the grace of union, and gave it a covenant subsistence.

But he showed himself to be his God in time, and that very early, calling him from the womb, and making mention of His name while in his mother's belly, and preserving him from danger in his infancy.

And it was his covenant interest in God, which, though mentioned last, was the foundation of all his providential care of him and goodness to him.

Now all these early appearances of the power and providence of God, on the behalf of Christ as man, are spoken of in opposition to the scoffs and flouts of his enemies about his trust in God.

And deliverance by him, and to encourage his faith and confidence in him; as well as are so many reasons and arguments with God yet to be with him, help and assist him, as follows.

We know that the angels of God watched over the birth of Jesus.

This Baby was the Son of God.

Notice that this Baby was conscious of hope and faith, even when He was a tiny Baby being nursed by His mother.

In many instances, Jesus called God, My God.

Jesus also called the Father by the endearing name of a Child for the Father, Abba.

Only the children of God are allowed to call the Father Abba.

Mark 14:36 "And he said, Abba, Father, all things [are] possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Romans 8:15 "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:6 "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

It appears, and we know it is true, that Jesus was no normal Baby.

He came to this earth in the form of man to become the Savior of all who will receive His holy salvation.

He was however, God with us in the form of a man (Emmanuel).

Psalm 22 Questions

1. In the first verse, what is the cry to God?
2. Why did Jesus feel forsaken of the Father?
3. What was the one thing Jesus had dreaded the most?
4. How many times have you prayed and thought God did not hear your prayer?
5. What did Jesus pray three times in the garden of Gethsemane?
6. What did He say in each prayer, that made us know He was perfect in the will of the Father?
7. What lessons can the Christian learn from Jesus' prayers?
8. Why are we to be holy?
9. Who are spiritual Israel?
10. Where can we find Scriptures that specifically tell us to praise God, if we want to sense His presence?
11. Give one vivid example of God delivering His people.
12. Name the three men in the fire.
13. What effect did the 3 not being burned up, have on Nebuchadnezzar?
14. What is intended by the worm, in verse 6?
15. What does Egypt symbolize?
16. Verse 7 here in Psalms chapter 22 is fulfilled where in the New Testament?
17. Who watched over the birth of Jesus?
18. What is a name that only the children of God the Father can call Him?
19. When did Jesus call the Father by that special name?
20. What is the 22nd Psalm all about?