



The Cross of Christ through David's eyes - Psalm 22

A. Introduction

1. The New Testament refers to Psalm 22 twenty-four times. It was set in the tune of 'the Deer of the Dawn'. The choirmaster must have been very surprised to receive this psalm to sing. David himself must have been surprised too. Why? His feelings were so real, but it wasn't something David himself experienced.
2. Psalm 22 is in 2 parts: i) The man described suffers horrible physical torture and mental torment. He is socially outcast and spiritually desolate. ii) He is so happy that God has answered his desperate prayers and he wants to share with the whole world what God had done!

Yet what David describes here never happened to him. It was to happen to someone in his loins ~1000 years later. How then could he describe in such a real way these feelings and facts? 1 Peter 1:10-11 tells us the Spirit of Christ in the prophets foretold the suffering of Christ and the glories to follow. It was more than an astounding revelation, but the person David describes in this psalm was actually alive when David wrote of him. Jesus said, 'Before Abraham was I AM.'

3. This psalm opens with a most unusual question: '*Eloi, Eloi Lama Sabachthani...*' [*Aramaic*] (*Mk 15:34*) This was the last cry of Jesus! 'My God, my God why have you forsaken Me?' It was a bold question directed to God from a dying man with just a few breaths left in Him. Death is not a normal human experience. It is an unnatural, alien, and cruel experience. Each death is a judicial event. That is why it is called a 'sentence'! What sentence? 'It is a sentence of separation.' Being separated from people and ultimately from God.
4. Death entered the world because of Adam's sin - 'The day you eat the fruit you will die!' Why do we live such a limited lifespan? God is good and made the world good. But people are not good and destroyed the world God has made. Our limited time on earth ensures evil does not go on destroying the world forever. That why we die. Many dare not ask this question, 'Why do we die?'

When godly men and women felt forsaken by God, they called the season in their lives, 'the dark night of the soul.' Jesus asked this question, 'Why?' Psalm 22 gives us the answer to the question, 'why?'

B. Prayer of Suffering in the Dark (22:1-21)

Jesus' distress on the cross was threefold - *spiritual, mental, and physical*. His spiritual distress was about unanswered prayers. For six hours Jesus sought an answer to His prayer to the Father, but He didn't get any response! For us, this may be not an unfamiliar experience. But Jesus never knew this severed relationship with the Father. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus drank from the cup. Now for six hours, Jesus was out of touch with God. '*Loneliness*' set into His soul. Being forsaken by God was 'sheer hell.'

It is very important to note that Jesus did not lose faith, but the fellowship with the Father. 'My God' occurs three times in v1-2, but no answer. He wasn't questioning *God's existence, but God's absence, His silence*. 'Why have you forsaken Me?' Where would you put the emphasis? 'Why have you forsaken ME.' Jesus' friends are gone. Mother was taken away by John at noon. Father was completely silent. There was no reply.

1. Spiritual (v1-5): Jesus' thoughts now turn to history and the ancestors. When they 'trusted You' (x3), they were delivered! *Here am I. I also trust You completely, and You are utterly holy!* In other words, the fault could not be in God. But the fault was not in Jesus either. He was the Son of perfect obedience. Then where is the answer?
2. Mental (v6-11): Jesus said 'I AM' repeatedly in His debate with the Jews. *I am the light of the world, I am the resurrection and the life...* In the court trial, they asked Jesus, 'Are you the Son of God?' Jesus said, 'I AM.' A few hours later Jesus was on the cross. The last 'I AM' as Jesus hung on the cross was, 'I AM a worm and not a man.' A worm doesn't have eyes, ears, or mouth. When it is cut or stepped on it simply writhes and bleeds in pain. A worm does not protest. Men gave no more consideration to Jesus torn, broken, and bleeding on the cross than to a worm writhing in pain when it is cut.

They ridiculed and hurt Jesus with vicious mockery and taunt. This was a verbatim account of what they said to Jesus on the cross! 'You said God delights in You. Let Him help You!' This is what Satan does to the

saints. *'God is disowning you for your blasphemy. That's why you are dying the way you are!'* Jesus didn't reply to the enemy's taunt, but his mind went to his birth 33 years earlier. Birth and death are both fragile. Life is most vulnerable in birth and death. Jesus' birth and infancy were surrounded by danger. *'God, you brought me through safely through my birth and nursed Me safely. I trusted in You regardless.'* But now Jesus' earthly mother was gone, and the fruit of her womb hung mangled on the cross, writhing in pain like a worm with no one to help him.

3. Physical (v12-18): In Psalm 22, animal images were used to describe Jesus' torment - worm, bulls, lions, dogs. These are not pet dogs, but a pack of savage wild rabid dogs or hyenas in the Middle East. Why are these animals shown here? Because men can behave like beasts. A perfect description of literal 'crucifixion' is shown here, even though crucifixion was not even invented at this time! It was invented 850 years later by the Romans - the worst and cruelest form of slow agonising death. The adjective 'excruciating' comes from crucifixion.

Seven Descriptions of Jesus' Suffering on the Cross:

(i) Strength drains out like water; **(ii)** Bones go out of joints from overstretching; **(iii)** Body dehydrated as the blood drains out; **(iv)** Mouth dries out until tongue gets stuck to the roof of the mouth; **(v)** Hands and feet tear out. **(vi)** 'Your body disintegrates and turns as dead dust even before you actually die.' **(vii)** Here is something which is normally not true of a one being crucified but was true of Jesus. The robe was taken off the victim, but in Jesus' case, the soldiers gambled for it! Who can challenge the inspiration of scripture? David wrote this in precise detail in 1000BC!

4. But Jesus doesn't doubt that God is the only help and His deliverer. *Come! Hurry! The sun has now turned dark (22:19-21).*

The title of Psalm 22 is 'The Deer of the Dawn.' A deer is not an aggressive creature, and it was surrounded by bull, lion, dogs to be killed. After six hours the answer finally came! *'Deliver Me from these wild animals. You have answered Me.'* (22:21) The answer to His prayer dawned. Why has God forsaken Him? The light not only dawned inside Jesus but also outside. The sun was totally darkened from 12noon to 3pm, then suddenly light might have returned in the very last minute of Jesus on the cross!

C. Praise in the Dawn of Light (22:22-31)

1. Jesus' first thought to tell is His brothers - the 'inner circle of Jewish disciples'. God has lived up to His name! He was the Deliverer! As soon as Jesus rose again, He met His disciples the road to Emmaus, and showed them all things concerning Him in the psalms. Psalm 22 must have been part of His teaching.
2. Every Jew is called to praise God for His mightiest work – Jesus died and rose again! At the biggest Jewish feast season of the Pentecost, three thousand were saved added to the 'Great Congregation' praising God (C.f. Heb 2:12).
3. Now the news spreads from the congregation of Israel to the whole world. On the cross with outstretched arms, Jesus embraced the whole of mankind! And they will worship God with 3 'R's – 'Remembrance', 'Repentance', 'Reverence'. They will remember Him, they will turn to God, and they will worship Him in awe. UN is trying to unite the nations, but it will fail. The only hope of the uniting of nations is with Jesus in the centre. God will unite the world in worship of Christ throughout all the generations. The top people will bow down before Jesus! Why? They are only mortal. They can't hold onto life forever. Those who are yet to be born will be told about Jesus' death and resurrection! God's word and work will go on. History ends with Jesus' return. Jesus had you on his mind on the cross. He saw the souls. (C.f. Heb 12:1-2)
4. Jesus' last words were in Hebrew: 'It is finished! (perfect tense)' God's deliverance was finished. Pilate was astonished Jesus died in just six hours. God's finally answer came to Jesus and Jesus said, *'It is finished.'* Jesus knew His work was finished, and He yielded His Spirit to the Father! *'Father, I commit My Spirit to You.'* And Jesus was rescued by the Father. What is finished? Why did it take six hours for God to answer? Jesus went through six hours of hell so that we don't have to. Sometimes we cry out 'My God, where are you?' But we know our Father will never forsake us because Jesus was forsaken! It is the finished work! *'He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.'* (Isa 53:10)