

Psalm 22

Aim: To comprehend the depths of Christ's suffering for us.

Background: Psalm 22 was written by David around 1000BC. We may assume David wrote this psalm when facing extreme difficulties (perhaps when king Saul or his son Absalom pursued him). But this psalm is quoted in the NT more than any other OT passage, and particularly in reference to Christ's sufferings. Also, we have no record of David experiencing the things in this psalm; eg, like what we read in vv.16-18. As a result, it appears that, in this psalm, it's actually the Lord Jesus speaking through David about His sufferings on the cross. This is how we shall treat this psalm, as we lead into Easter.

Christ's Anguish and Plea: (vv.1-21)

Read Psa 22:1 and Matt 27:46. What was Jesus' greatest anguish at the cross? Why?

Jesus' greatest anguish was not the pain from crucifixion, but the desertion by the Father. This was the result of our sin and shame being placed on Him (Isa 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21). Because of God's holiness, and Jesus bearing our sin, God had to turn His face away from His Son and even punish Him. From Jesus' perspective, He was forsaken, but He did this so that we might not ever be forsaken; if we trust in Him.

From vv.2-5, what makes this anguish even more painful?

Jesus was fully aware that in the past, God had rescued people/Israel when they called on Him (cf. Psa 50:15). But after Jesus cried out for deliverance from the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36), God's will was for Him not to be rescued. How painful that would have been for Jesus; even though He knew that only through His atoning death could we be forgiven and saved.

What are those around Jesus doing as He hangs on a cross? (vv.6-8)

They despise Him and speak maliciously ("separate with the lip"), sneering and taunting Him. They seek to shake His confidence in God and drive Him to utter despair. The way they treat Him is less than human - like a worm no-one cares for. This is exactly what the Gospels describe (Matt 27:39-43).

What is Jesus' plea in vv.9-11?

He expresses His total dependence on God, even from His mother's womb. Now in great suffering and despair for His life, He pleads for God to draw near and not stand afar – for He has no-one but the Lord.

What does Jesus experience on the cross? (vv.12-18) NB: It's exactly what the Gospels describe.

- vv.12-13 He is oppressed by the Jewish leadership ("bulls", "lions") who devour Him by their words.
- vv.14-15a He is utterly spent ("poured out") and His body is disfigured from being beaten and crucified.
- v.15b He is so thirsty and close to death (cf. John 19:28).
- v.16a Those who seek to destroy Him have surrounded him like a pack of wild dogs ("dogs" is a name that was used for the Romans in Jesus' day).
- v.16b They pierced His hands and His feet (cf. John 19:18), a very clear reference to crucifixion, which didn't exist until centuries after Psalm 22.
- vv.17-18 He is ostracized and treated as already dead and without hope, dividing his clothing among themselves (cf. John 19:23-24).

What does Jesus do again in vv.19-21?

He continues to look to the Lord and cry out to Him for deliverance from those seeking to destroy him.

Deliverance and Praise: (vv.22-31)

Why does Jesus now turn to praising God in these verses? (vv.22,25) What has happened?

Jesus has completed our salvation ("It is Finished" – John 19:30) and committed Himself into the Lord's hands (Luke 23:46) in His dying breath, and on the third day God delivered Him from death by rising Him from the dead (cf. also Acts 2:23-24). The Lord God indeed heard His cry and delivered Him.

What comes about as a result of Christ's atoning sacrifice and mighty resurrection? (vv.23-31)

Salvation is proclaimed and people are saved and experience God's grace as we put our faith in Jesus.

In particular, what do we learn from each of the verses in Psa 22:23-31?

- v.23 Those who hear will glorify the Lord and stand in awe of Him – our testimony of God's grace.
- vv.24, 26 Those who are afflicted (by sin) can look to the Lord for salvation and satisfaction.
- vv.27-29 This good news of salvation in Christ will be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, and worship will be given to the Lord because He is the true King and ruler of the nations.
- vv.30-31 The effect of God's mighty salvation will be declared and passed on from generation to generation, and will be remembered forever. In heaven we will continually praise Jesus (Rev 5:9-13).

Application: This psalm, more than any other passage in Holy Scripture, gives us such incredible insight into the sufferings Christ endured for us. Oh, what a salvation He has accomplished for us.

Summary: Let us love our Lord Jesus all the more because of what He has suffered to save us.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

Introduction: As we approach Easter, let's consider the very special meal Jesus ate with His disciples the night of His arrest. We refer to it as the "Lord's Supper". We shall see that it is based deep in Israel's history, and it serves as a wonderful picture of who Christ is and what He would become for us.

The Jewish Passover

What was the Jewish feast Jesus ate with His disciples during the Lord's Supper? (Luke 22:1,7-13)

It was the Passover (which was at the start of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread). This was one of the three great Jewish feasts (Deut 16:16). NB: Jesus began His earthly ministry around the Passover (John 2:12-13), and concluded it around the Passover.

What was the Passover (Feast of Unleavened Bread) all about? (Exod 12:17; Deut 26:6-8)

It was to celebrate how the Lord delivered them from oppression and affliction in Egypt.

The original Passover meal is related to the final plague that the Lord brought against the Egyptians. What was this plague? (Exodus 11:4-7)

In judgment, God would strike down all the firstborn of Egypt, including the firstborn of Pharaoh.

What seven things did the Israelites have to do to be spared from this last plague?

1. Exod 12:3,5 Each home had to choose an unblemished (perfect) year old male lamb.
2. Exod 12:6 After a set time (four days), the lamb had to be killed (at twilight).
3. Exod 12:7,22a The blood of the lamb had to be applied to the doorposts and the lintel of their door.
4. Exod 12:22b They had to stay inside the house until morning, under the covering of blood.
5. Exod 12:8-11 They had to roast the flesh of the lamb; it was not to be boiled or eaten raw.
6. Exod 12:8 Besides the roasted lamb, they were to eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs.
7. Exod 12:46 They were not to break any of the lamb's bones.

What did God promise the Israelites if they obeyed Him? (Exodus 12:12-13, 23)

God promised that when He saw the blood on the door of their house, He would pass over them and spare the firstborn in the house. The Israelites did what the Lord had said, and they were spared (v.28).

Christ our Passover Lamb

What parallels exist between the Passover lamb and the Lord Jesus? (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7)

The blood of the Passover lamb applied to the door of a house delivered the Israelites from God's judgment (the death of the firstborn). This foreshadowed how Jesus, the Lamb of God, who shed His blood on the cross would deliver us from God's judgment and eternal death, if we apply His blood to our lives (by trusting in Him). That's why Paul refers to Jesus as our Passover (1 Cor 5:7).

Consider the seven points made earlier about the Passover, and compare it with the Lord Jesus.

1. Just as the Passover lamb was chosen, God chose Jesus to be our Lamb (John 1:29) and sent Him to be among us. Like the Passover lamb, Jesus was unblemished; ie, without sin – (cf. 1 Peter 1:18-19).
2. Just as the Passover lamb was with a family for a set time (4 days) before it was killed, Jesus was with us for a set time before He was killed. He spent three (plus) years doing ministry among us, and He came into Jerusalem on "Palm Sunday", and was arrested four days later.
3. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb was applied to the door of one's house to deliver from judgment and death, when we apply Jesus' blood to our lives (through faith in Him), we are delivered from God's judgment and eternal death in hell (Rev 1:5).
4. The Israelites remained in their houses under the covering of the blood; we are to remain in Christ, protected under the covering of His blood from judgment and eternal punishment (Col 1:21-23).
5. The Passover lamb was roasted with fire; Jesus endured the "fire" of God's wrath (Isa 53:5).
6. The bitter herbs reminded Israel of their bitter life in Egypt under slavery; we are to remember the bitter life we had when we were under bondage to sin and Satan (Eph 2:1-3; 1 Pet 1:18).
7. Just as the Passover lamb had no bone broken, the great Passover Lamb fulfilled prophecy (Psalm 34:20) by having no bone broken either (John 19:32-33,36).

Closing thoughts

As we remember Jesus' death and resurrection this Easter, let us reflect on how Jesus is the Lamb of God and our Passover Lamb. Through what He did for us, God's wrath **PASSES OVER** us (if we trust in Him to save us). He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2); that is, the One who turns aside the wrath of God from us.

Let us appreciate and adore the One who died for us sinners, even Jesus Christ our Lord.