

Unforsaken

Psalm 22:1-13

It's just my opinion, but the only *Mission:Impossible* movie that was any good was the first one.

The Bible made a cameo appearance in the film. The mission was Job 314, but Ethan Hunt realized that it was a biblical reference and stood for Job 3:14. It directed him to the next thing he needed to discover.

Something not totally unlike that happened at the Cross of Jesus Christ - at least with regard to directing people to discover something biblical.

The fourth of what scholars call the seven sayings of Christ on the Cross was, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Great sermons have been preached on those words as godly men have wrestled with the concept of God the Father temporarily turning away from God the Son as Jesus was "made sin for us."

I'm not sure that is what the verse is really teaching. In fact, I don't personally believe it is meant to teach that at all.

Jesus may have felt forsaken by His heavenly Father, but I don't think He ever was *actually* forsaken by Him.

There is another way of understanding this cry from the Cross. I believe He spoke these words to call the attention of the crowd to a passage of Scripture in the hope they would see the prediction of the crucifixion and be saved.

The Bible wasn't always divided into chapters and verses the way your Bible is today. In fact you can buy Bibles now that have no chapter and verse breaks.

You're not more spiritual if you do; it's just a thing that's happening.

In Jesus' time if you wanted to direct people to a portion of Scripture you would quote from the portion, and everyone would know where you were reading from.

That is what Jesus was doing; He was calling their attention to Psalm twenty-two, which begins with His cry from the Cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The psalm itself goes on to indicate complete trust in the Father to hear and to help Him. It says, in verse twenty-four,

Psa 22:24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; **Nor has He hidden His face from Him**; But when He cried to Him, He heard.

In the same way we can 'feel' as though God is not looking or listening, so did Jesus express something very human.

While we're on the subject, let me point out two more things:

1. The last words of Jesus from the Cross were, “It is finished!” How interesting that the last words of Psalm twenty-two are “He has done this,” which in Hebrew is, literally, “It is finished!”
2. There is a tradition that Jesus said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?,” and then recited this whole psalm, and perhaps **all** the subsequent psalms until Psalm 31:5, which reads, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit...”

Jesus was telling the crowd – and *every* crowd – that the Scriptures predicted His death on the Cross in minute detail.

David wrote Psalm twenty-two over one thousand years prior to the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion – yet he accurately describes the crucifixion and even some of the words that the Lord would speak from the Cross.

There is no known incident in the life of David that fits this psalm. He was writing prophetically under the inspiration of God about the future crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

We're going to look at this incredible psalm over the next three weeks. Tonight, in verses one through thirteen, we take a look at the cry from the Cross intended to reach the crowd assembled there.

Psalms 22:1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?

I don't want to take anything away from the truth that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (Second Corinthians 5:21). But I can't abide this idea that Jesus was literally made a lump of sin.

Jesus Christ's death, as the Lamb of God, was "for" us in the sense that it was on our behalf. The word is used in this same on-behalf-of sense elsewhere in Scripture.

- Jesus at the Last Supper said: "This is My body which is given **for** you" (Luke 22:19).
- Likewise, in John 10:15 Jesus affirmed, "I lay down My life **for** the sheep."
- Paul says that "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died **for** us" (Romans 5:8).
- Jesus "gave Himself **for** us to redeem us" (Titus 2:14).
- He was "the just **for** the unjust, so that He might bring us to God" (First Peter 3:18).

The idea that the Bible is trying to get across is that of Jesus substituting Himself for us. One theologian put it like this:

While Jesus never committed a sin personally, He was made to be sin for us *substitutionally*. Just as the righteousness that is imputed to Christians in justification is extrinsic to them, so the sin that was imputed to Christ on the cross was extrinsic to Him and never in any sense contaminated His essential nature... "The innocent was punished voluntarily as if guilty, that the guilty might be gratuitously rewarded as if innocent."

Doctrinally, it's not necessary to believe that suddenly Jesus was literally "made sin," in such a way that His Father could not look upon Him.

Jesus was telling the crowd – and *this* crowd – that the Scriptures predicted His death on the Cross in minute detail.

And, you know what? *That's what is amazing!*

Psa 22:2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.

The psalm is not completely prophetic. Here David expresses the very human feeling we get when we are called upon to endure suffering.

The cry continues in verses three through five.

Psalms 22:3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

Psalms 22:4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.

Psalms 22:5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

Trusted... trusted... trusted... Three times you see the word trusted. Despite the outward circumstances, the people of God trust in Him, even praise Him, in their suffering – not ashamed to suffer for Him, knowing that He will ultimately deliver them.

I like the phrase, "enthroned in the praises of Israel." Your praise, during suffering, is the throne God sits upon in the church age in which we live. The overriding characteristic of this age is our suffering, and our weakness generally, revealing His strength and presence.

You are going to need to trust... trust... trust... at some point or points in your life. Only then will you be enabled to rejoice, be not ashamed, and have the peace of God's ultimate deliverance.

The cry of Jesus - and the other six sayings - were heard by a diverse crowd, made up of men as well as demons hidden from view.

Psalms 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

Psalms 22:7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

Psalms 22:8 "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"

This *exactly* describes the attitudes and actions of the crowd at the Cross of Jesus. In Matthew 27:43 the crowd mocks Jesus, saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Think of it for a moment: You're in the crowd, saying these words... When Jesus begins to quote Psalm twenty-two and ***the very words you are speaking were predicted over a thousand years prior!***

You'd be stunned, and hopefully get saved.

Psalms 22:9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.

Psalms 22:10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My
mother's womb You have been My God.

Psalms 22:11 Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For
there is none to help.

Jesus was God come in human flesh, born to a virgin by the
power of God. As a man, He was "cast upon" God, meaning
He depended upon Him for protection.

God the Father kept Him through trouble. This wasn't the
first time men had tried to kill Him.

The Cross was the culmination of the life God had prepared
His Son to live and die. Jesus chose to die there, in
fulfillment of prophecy.

As many as twenty-eight prophecies were fulfilled on the day
of Jesus' crucifixion. Things like Zechariah telling what
would become of the money Judas returned to the
Sanhedrin after his remorse at the betrayal... And the
scourging, described by Isaiah as His stripes... And the
Savior's silence, also prophesied by Isaiah... His garments
being divided, and not a bone being broken, and His being
buried in a wealthy man's tomb - **all** were prophesied
exactly, and centuries before they occurred.

Men were not the only ones at the Cross. *Bulls were there.*

Psalms 22:12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls
of Bashan have encircled Me.

Bashan is mentioned sixty times in the Bible. Bashan was a city on the east side of the Jordan River. Og, who was king of Bashan, was the last of a line of giants that Moses was to conquer.

Bashan and its herds are used in the Bible as a metaphor. For example, in the minor prophet, Amos, you read about women called "the **cows** of Bashan." They are wealthy women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drink."

There are those who believe that Bashan was the land where the fallen angels, who married the daughters of men in Genesis chapter six, dwelt for a time.

Og is mentioned in Jewish folklore as being alive from the time of Noah up until the time of his death in battle with the Israelites.

- It is also written in the Midrash that he had a special compartment in Noah's Ark just for him. (The Midrash sounds like a skin condition. Midrash is commonly defined as the process of interpretation by which the rabbis filled in "gaps" found in the Torah - which are the first five books of Scripture).
- The Aggadah suggests an alternative to this; that he sat upon the top of the ark, riding out the flood for the duration of the storm from this location. (Aggadah is a compendium of rabbinic homilies that incorporates folklore, historical anecdotes, moral exhortations, and practical advice in various spheres).

I would reject the notion that anyone other than those specifically listed as being in the Ark survived the global flood.

We do know that there were offspring from fallen angels and the daughters of men both before and after the flood. Genesis 6:4 says plainly,

Gen 6:4 There were giants on the earth in those days, **and also afterward**, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

There must have been another time, post-flood, when demons mated with the daughters of men.

At any rate, the prophecy could very well be referring to the demonic spiritual forces that were present at the Cross.

Psalms 22:13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.

We immediately think of Satan as the "roaring lion," and, so, this furthers our understanding that demons were at the Cross.

Without being irreverent, Satan the lion, along with his bulls, were about to choke on Jesus' unbroken bones!

The Cross was their defeat, their undoing. It was the beginning of the end.

Jesus would rise... Ascend... Will return.

