

Psalm Sundays

Text

Psalm 22

Topic

Jesus' cry from the Cross, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" directed the mocking crowd to consider its words as prophesy being fulfilled

Title

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"

Time travel is a staple of SyFy. In the blockbuster Marvel movie, *Avengers Endgame*, the heroes pulled-off what they called a 'time heist.' There's a great comic sequence where, in their attempts to wade through the so-called 'rules' of time travel, the heroes list iconic time-bending movies.

Back To The Future features prominently in their discussions, as does *Star Trek*, *Terminator*, *Time After Time*, *Quantum Leap*, *Hot Tub Time Machine*, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, and *Somewhere in Time*.

Psalm 22 is a time-bender:

- 🧠 When Jesus quoted it as He was being crucified, it transported His immediate audience back from the present (at least in their minds) over a thousand years, to when David wrote it.

1 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



- 👤 It sends us back from the present two places: (1) To its writing, and also (2) To the crucifixion, to see and hear the crowd.
- 👤 Then it sends us all future, to the crowning of Jesus to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem, reigning over the much promised and anticipated one-thousand year Kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

Jesus didn't just quote from Psalm 22. He lived it out before our very eyes. I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Psalm 22 Invites You To Listen At Jesus' Crucifixion, and #2 Psalm 22 Incites You To Long For Jesus' Crowning.

#1 Psalm 22 Invites You To Listen At Jesus' Crucifixion (v1-18)

The Bible wasn't always divided into chapters and verses the way it is today. If that was still the case, instead of inviting you to "Open your Bibles to Psalm 22," I'd have gotten up and said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Since most Second Temple Period Jews had memorized all of the psalms, they'd be sent to it by Jesus' quoting its opening.

Psa 22:1 To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?*

David delivered this song to one of the "Chief Musicians" he had appointed for the Tabernacle, to be produced for public worship.

It was set to a popular tune. John Newton wrote the words to *Amazing Grace* in 1772. It was 60 years before the poem was put to the tune to which it is sung today. There is some indication in its history that it was sung to other music.

2 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



You've probably heard it sung to *House of the Rising Sun*. How about the theme to *Gilligan's Island*?

(It also works with the Marine Hymn, *America the Beautiful*, and a handful more).

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?*"

Many eloquent and moving sermons have been preached on the moment God the Father forsook Jesus on the Cross.

Usually a major point is that our Holy God cannot bear to look upon sin. He turned away, leaving His Son to bear the brunt of His Wrath. It's very dramatic.

But it's just not true. God has been looking upon sin since the Garden of Eden.

What about the verse that says, "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)? 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."

3 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



God the Father could not forsake His Son. After all, Jesus and the Father are one. The Trinity would implode.

More importantly, the psalm itself makes it clear that Jesus was not forsaken. In verse twenty-four David said, "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."

If you want to say that Jesus *felt* forsaken, in His humanity, I still think it misses the point, but OK. God the Father definitely never forsook Him. The crowd only thought Him forsaken.

If you concentrate on the forsaking that never occurred, you'll miss something much more powerful.

You'll miss Jesus' point that not only was He the fulfillment of the Person in the psalm, **but the people at the Cross were doing, and saying, exactly what the psalm predicted over a thousand years prior.**

Notice two more remarkable 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 can be translated, "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..."

I would go so far as to say Jesus sung Psalm 22 from the Cross. Why would you simply recite a song?

4 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



David, for sure, felt forsaken. We all do at times. But if I told you God had forsaken me, would you think He had? Would you agree? Of course not.

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.

David wrote prophetically, but he was definitely in a tight spot, crying out day and night to God.

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

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

Psa 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 particularly like the poetry of, "Enthroned in the praises of Israel." First let me point out that the original application of this psalm was to God's covenant people - to Abraham's ethnic descendants. We'll see at the end of it He has NOT forsaken Israel, as some would have you believe.

Your praise, during suffering, is also a 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.

5 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



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

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

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

This *exactly* describes the behavior 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 22 and ***the very words you are speaking were predicted over a thousand years prior!*** Even as they mocked Him, Jesus was seeking to save these murderers.

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

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

Jesus was God come to earth 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.

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

Certainly we can identify with this cry. There are times, even lifetimes, in which our only help will be spiritual. But as we read the next few verses, we will see an even greater reason that help could only come from Heaven.

6 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



Psa 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 in the Promised Land that Israel was to conquer.

Bashan was believed to be the land where the fallen angels, who married the daughters of men in Genesis chapter six, dwelt for a time. It is therefore sometimes referred to as "the gates of Hell."

It might surprise you, but there were offspring from the mating of angels and humans both before and after the global flood:

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 fallen angels mated with the daughters of men. It seems to peak around the time Joshua led Israel in conquest. It was a satanic strategy to defeat Israel. It worked, somewhat. It was largely because the ten spies saw giants in the land that they gave a bad report. It led to a forty year delay in crossing the Jordan.

Just to be clear, these guys weren't simply taller. The measurements of Og's bed are in the Book of Deuteronomy: 13½' x 6' (Deuteronomy 3:11).

Jesus was therefore revealing that there was a strong satanic presence at the crucifixion.

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

7 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



Who is the roaring lion? It is one of the descriptions of Satan.

Crucifixion is mentioned in history starting in the sixth century BC. David was born, we think, 1040BC. That means his writings predated crucifixion by several centuries. It makes Psalm 22 all the more remarkable in that he accurately described the physical experiences of Jesus on the Cross way **before** crucifixion was conceived as a form of execution.

Psa 22:14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

Psa 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

Dehydration... Bones coming out of joint... These were things Jesus suffered on the Cross.

As far as His heart being like "wax," this may be a poetic way of predicting the spear piercing Jesus' heart, from which issued blood and water.

Psa 22:16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

Psa 22:17 I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me.

It is unlikely that Jesus would refer to the crowd as "dogs," especially since they were mostly Jews. This is likely another reference to the satanic presence. Similar to our phrase, "Hounds of Hell."

Psa 22:18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

8 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



Most of the secular historical sources I consulted say this was **not** a regular custom. It was, quite simply, a prophecy that we see fulfilled at the Cross, as the Roman soldiers did this precisely.

You know, if there was any doubt in your mind, as you witnessed the crucifixion, that it was fulfilling prophecy, the dividing of Jesus' garments would settle it.

Listen to Jesus as He was being crucified. It is just as time-bending for a person hearing Psalm 22 today as it was in the first century. "It's about Me," Jesus was saying, "coming to save you."

#2 Psalm 22 Incites You To Long For Jesus' Crowning (v19-31)

The psalm takes a dramatic new tone:

Psa 22:19 But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!

Psa 22:20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious *life* from the power of the dog.

Psa 22:21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.

Since He died, physically, it seems that the "sword," the "power of the dog," the "lion's mouth," and the "horns of the wild oxen" must all refer to spiritual things, to spiritual foes, from whom He **was** delivered. In the New Testament letter to the church in Colossae, "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them [on the Cross]" (2:15).

9 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



According to the scholars, the last part of verse twenty-one breaks off from the rest and is a separate exclamation, "You have heard!" Jesus was certain He'd been heard; and that His deliverance was certain. Death was being defeated; the devil and his forces vanquished.

Remember Jesus asking, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It seems somewhat rhetorical, because God had not; He heard Him immediately. Only the crowd thought Him forsaken by God.

When you are suffering in any way - From an earthly perspective, you seem forsaken, abandoned. Something else is going on; something spiritual is always going on. You must believe, in your heart, that God could never leave you; never forsake you. Cry out, and believe, "You have heard!"

Psa 22:22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

In the original context of the psalm, David had come through his trial, and wanted to give the glory to God. He probably called some sort of "assembly" to make his declaration.

Maybe it was the very first performance of this psalm. Opening night, as it were. Perhaps that is one reason he set this psalm to a well-known tune. He wanted everyone to be able to sing it from the first note.

There is a yet future fulfillment of this psalm.

It looks forward to the return of Jesus, in His Second Coming, to be received by the Jews as their Messiah.

Psa 22:23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

10 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



"Jacob" and "Israel" refer to ethnic Jews - the physical descendants of Abraham - who will be saved in that glorious Second Coming of Jesus.

Today there is a resurgence of teaching that when the New Testament mentions Israel, somehow it means all who are believers in Jesus, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. They say Jesus was the true Israel; and all who are in Him are Israel.

We reject that. The New Testament consistently maintains distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, and between Israel and the church.

God must fulfill His unconditional promises to the physical descendants of Abraham; and that's just what He is going to do through the Great Tribulation.

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.

A valid conclusion, to a thoughtful person, would be "God has not despised nor abhorred Jesus; He hasn't hidden His face from Him; He heard Him, and is accepting His sacrifice for my sins, and the sins of the whole world."

Psa 22:25 My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

The "great assembly" probably refers to folks, in the Millennial Kingdom, who come from all over the earth, to worship the Lord. For His part, Jesus gives praise to His Father.

11 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



What "vows" will Jesus keep? It's a way of saying that He totally, completely, and absolutely fulfilled everything in God's Word. It's an amplification of His cry from the Cross, "It is finished."

William MacDonald, in his excellent *Believers Bible Commentary*, suggests that there is a change in speakers for the remaining verses of the psalm. He says, "Now the Holy Spirit speaks, describing the ideal conditions that will prevail during the peace and prosperity of the Millennium."

Psa 22:26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever!

Psa 22:27 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You.

Psa 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD's, And He rules over the nations.

This is a general summary of the conditions that will prevail in the Kingdom. We will never achieve such a kingdom of men. It requires the righteous benevolent theocracy of Jesus Christ.

Psa 22:29 All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

This is simply a way of describing the frailty of human life. It is appointed to all men to die, "to go down to the dust."

No one can "keep himself alive" can also be translated, "no one can keep alive his own soul." Spiritual life is in view - a spiritual life that can only be yours by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ.

12 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"



Psa 22:30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,

Psa 22:31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done *this*.

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is called the Millennium because it lasts one-thousand years. Multitudes will be born to human parents. There will be great need for evangelism, as folks will still need to get saved.

Jesus, on the Cross, was therefore assuring the Jews that their promised kingdom was still to come. It must be postponed, because of their rejection of Him. But He will establish it.

God was wonderfully "enthroned" on this psalm of praise as Jesus fulfilled it. He died on the Cross, was buried; but then,

*Up from the grave, He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes*

He sits at the right hand of God the Father, waiting to return.

Can you 'see' Him enthroned - now and forever? The more you do, the more you'll long for Him.

13 of 13

Psalm 22

"He Forsakes Me; He Forsakes Me Not"

