

The Last Words of Jesus Christ

Good morning/afternoon.

Let's step back in time today. We'll go back almost 2,000 years to the other side of the world. It's the springtime of the year. We're outside the walls of fairly large city, and people are streaming into the city from all directions. There's excitement in the air, because a great feast is beginning. The feast is called the Passover, and the city is Jerusalem.

We're outside the city walls on a road that enters one of the gates of the city. Thousands of people are coming and going, and the city itself is jammed. But here alongside the road a horrible spectacle is taking place. Several men are being crucified. A growing crowd is gathered around. Some are priests, some are Sadducees, some are Pharisees, some are Roman soldiers who are part of the crucifixion detail and others are there to maintain order, and some are bystanders drawn to the public execution. Some are women sobbing and crying at what is taking place.

Although it's midafternoon, the sky is eerily dark, adding a surreal quality to the scene. It's almost the ninth hour, or 3 o'clock, time for the daily afternoon sacrifice but also on this day the time when the priests would begin slaying the thousands of Passover lambs. Of those men being crucified, the one in the middle is in terrible shape. He has been scourged before being crucified, and His entire body is a bloody mess. It's clear that He doesn't have long to live.

In the inner court of the Temple the priests are very busy. Thousands of Passover lambs will be sacrificed in the next few hours. The priests are lining up the lambs for the sacrifices to begin. And outside the city walls, the dying man summons some strength from deep within Himself and cries out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" In English it would be, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Over the next few minutes He will utter several other things that will be heard and remembered and later written down to be preserved for us today. He will end with the words, "It is finished."

What's behind the last words of Jesus Christ on that day? What prompted them? Did God the Father truly forsake Jesus Christ during the worst trial of His life and possibly the greatest trial any human being could experience? What really happened there in those last moments of Jesus Christ's life? Is there more to the story than meets the eye? Today we will go through the last words of Jesus Christ to better understand what He did for us in becoming the sacrifice for our sins.

Now that I've set the stage and help us understand the setting for these events, we'll pick up the story now in the Bible, beginning in **Matthew 27:45-46**—
45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

The hours were counted from sunrise, so the sixth hour was noon and the ninth hour 3 o'clock. So from noon until 3 there was this puzzling and mysterious darkness over the land—a darkness no doubt sent from God to signify the darkness of what was taking place with the brutalization and death of His Son. The Jewish historian Josephus explicitly states that the lambs began to be slain at Temple at the 9th hour, or 3 o'clock.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Matthew records His words in Hebrew and Aramaic—“El,” of course, being one of the names or titles of God—and then translates them into Greek, from which they are translated into English for us: **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”**

Why would Jesus say this? Was He forsaken by the Father as He was dying? Let's consider a few other events and verses leading up to this.

First of all, did Jesus *know* what was going to happen to Him? Yes, He clearly did. Let's notice several verses. Let's first turn to a messianic prophecy in **Isaiah 53:3-5—**

3 He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

Jesus knew this prophecy—He Himself had inspired it to be written some 800 years earlier. It foretold that He would be despised and rejected, that He would bear our griefs, that He would be wounded, bruised, chastised and scourged. He knew He would have to bear all of this because of *our* transgressions and sins.

Let's notice some other Scriptures. Let's look at **Mark 10:32-34—**

32 Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem . . . Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:

33 “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles;

34 “and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

This is very specific. Jesus had previously told His 12 disciples that in Jerusalem He would be betrayed, that the chief priests and scribes would condemn Him to death and give Him over to the Romans, and He would be mocked, scourged, spat upon and killed before He would be resurrected three days later.

This happened on His last journey to Jerusalem as He was going up for that final Passover. Not long after this, He told them again what would happen. Notice **Matthew 26:1-2—**

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings [“all those sayings” being the Olivet Prophecy], that He said to His disciples,

2 “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

So here, just two days before these events, He specifically tells the disciples that He will die by crucifixion. He also knows, since He is the fulfillment of the symbolism of the Passover lambs, that He will die on the day of Passover.

And yet through this, knowing exactly what would happen to Him, knowing He could've escaped what was coming at any time, *He chose to go through it anyway*. And He knew that the Father would be with Him. Notice in **Matthew 26:51-54 (NIV)** what happens at Gethsemane when they arrest Him and Peter intervenes to try to prevent that from happening.

51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say *it must happen in this way?*”

So Jesus knew that His heavenly Father could deliver Him and rescue Him by sending about 80,000 angels if it came to that. Does this sound like someone who thinks His Father is going to abandon Him at His time of greatest crisis? Not really. Let's look at something else He told His disciples that night in **In John 16:32**. Here Jesus was talking with them on their way to Gethsemane, and He told them:

32 “Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”

Jesus knew and understood that the Father was *with* Him as He was going through these great trials that evening and that day. So why would Jesus cry out as He is being crucified, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”**

Does this mean that God had abandoned Him? Does this mean, as we've maybe heard explained sometimes, that because Jesus was taking on Himself all the sin of the world, that His Father could not look on that sin and turned His back on Jesus? There are some problems with that idea because if God cannot look on sin, how can He look on each of us when *we* sin?

And we know from Job chapter 1 that the greatest sinner of all, Satan the devil, came right into God's presence to accuse Job. So there are problems with that explanation because the world is full of sin and yet God looks on it each and every day. He sends rain on the just and the unjust. He calls sinners to repentance every day. So what is going on here is *not* a matter of the Father turning His back on Jesus Christ because He was bearing the sins of the world.

Nor is it a matter of God the Father forsaking His only begotten son. Because if the Father could forsake Jesus Christ in His time of greatest need, what does that mean for us? Does that mean the Father could or would forsake us as His children when we need

Him most? If that's what this means, then we have a real problem. So exactly what *is* going on here when Jesus says, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”**

The answer is somewhat surprising, but actually maybe not that surprising at all considering what we've been seeing as we're going through our studies in the Gospels. As I've explained before, when we see something said or done in the Gospels that doesn't make a lot of sense, it may be because we are seeing a *remez* where the writers don't give us the whole story. And that's the case here. What's going on here is a *remez*, a Hebrew word that means “hint” or “clue” or “look back.” A *remez*, for those of you who haven't heard my explanations of that in previous messages, is where Jesus or a biblical writer quotes part of a previous biblical passage knowing that his audience is knowledgeable enough of the Scriptures to fill in the rest of the passage.

For example, if I started quoting to you from Psalm 23, “the Lord is my shepherd,” you would in your mind fill in: “I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters...” and you could fill in the rest. The reason for this is that the major part of the education of Jewish children was memorizing the Scriptures. By age 12 a Jewish schoolboy was expected to have memorized the entirety of the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Jewish schoolgirls memorized other books of the Bible.

So this was a highly biblically literate society that we see in the Gospels. People knew large portions of the Hebrew Scriptures by heart, having memorized them. So Jesus many times quotes part of a passage and expects His audience to fill in the rest. In the Gospels we see Jesus doing this, we see John the baptizer doing this, we see God the Father doing this, and we see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all doing this in their writing of the Gospels. They all expected their audience of that day to be familiar enough with the Scriptures to fill in the blanks, and they expect us reading it today to be familiar enough with the Scriptures to fill in the blanks and understand the full message there for us.

So if Jesus is giving a *remez* when He says says, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”**—what is this a *remez* to, and where is He quoting from? If we don't know, we miss a huge part of the story of what Jesus is going through and its meaning for us today.

When Jesus says this, He is giving a word-for-word quote from the first verse of **Psalm 22**—**“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”** This is a Psalm of the Messiah. Specifically, it's a prophetic Psalm of what the Messiah would go through in His suffering and death on behalf of all mankind. Let's see why Jesus uttered these words, what they meant to Him when He said them, and what it means for us today.

Let me also point out that Psalm 22 was one of the most popular Psalms of the culture of that day. Psalm 22 was one that many people had memorized in that day. So when Jesus says the opening words of Psalm 22, many of the people standing there witnessing these events would have immediately begun to mentally fill in the blanks with the rest of that Psalm. So keep that in mind as we go through this.

Also keep in mind that in quoting Psalm 22, Jesus shows that He understood Himself to be *fulfilling this prophecy*. It foretold both the agony of what He would experience—the mental, emotional and physical anguish—as well as the faith and trust He had that His Heavenly Father would ultimately deliver Him and give Him the victory.

So let's begin reading here in Psalm 22 and see what it has to teach us about Jesus Christ and why He would quote it on that day of His crucifixion and death.

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?

This is a Psalm of David written about 1,000 years earlier. A number of the Psalms start with very human feelings and emotions like this, with cries and pleas to God. And maybe some of *our* prayers to God start like this too! Maybe there are times when we talk this way when we *know* we aren't *really* forsaken or abandoned by God. At times something really bad may happen to us, and we might think to ourselves or pray: "God where are you? Why aren't You in my life anymore? Why don't You hear and answer my prayers?" At times like that we are simply expressing our deep feelings and hurt and pain that the situation that we're in.

We see this kind of thing quite often in the Psalms. This is one reason the Psalms have brought so much comfort to so many people through the years—because they so accurately capture how we feel and so vividly express our emotions and thoughts in times of trials. We see this emotion and deep feeling flowing out of David during the dark times and trials he was going through in his life.

Let's notice some other Psalms that start this way:

Psalm 10:1

1 Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble?

And Psalm 13:1

1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

But did David really believe that God had abandoned him in his times of trouble? Let's notice a few more of his statements from some other Psalms:

Psalm 9:10

10 Those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.

Psalm 37:28

28 For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.

So David knew that God really had not forsaken or abandoned him when he wrote this in Psalm 22. He is pouring out his feelings and emotions in a very powerful and expressive way but this does not mean that he literally thought God had forsaken him.

God doesn't forsake us, and He certainly didn't forsake Jesus Christ as He was crucified. The Hebrew word translated "forsaken" here, which Jesus was quoting from Psalm 22, has shades of meaning that don't equate to "forsaken" in the sense that we use it in English. A better way to express it would be to say it's referring to God *temporarily* letting someone fall into the hands of his enemies—which is exactly what David experienced at times and what Jesus Christ experienced in His final hours. Jesus was conspired against by His enemies, arrested by His enemies, put through a sham trial by His enemies, condemned by His enemies, and then crucified by His enemies. God temporarily let Jesus fall into the hands of His enemies.

But God never forsook Him during this time, and we'll see proof of that when we cover a few more verses. It was never a matter of Jesus being forsaken or abandoned, but rather a matter that God the Father *didn't deliver Him*. And of course, the Father *couldn't* deliver Him under these circumstances, because Jesus *had to die* for God's plan to be carried out and for Him to be the sacrifice who would pay the penalty for *our* sins.

As even Jesus Himself prayed in **Matthew 26:39—**
39 "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Jesus prayed for deliverance, but at the same time He understood deep down that deliverance was impossible if God's plan was to be carried out. And as we saw earlier from what He told His disciples, He *knew* how this was going to play out.

So let's continue here in **Psalm 22, verse 2**, where we see this clearly shifting to Jesus' experiences and what is going through His mind as He is being crucified.

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

Jesus had cried out to God in Gethsemane the night before, shortly before He was arrested. He no doubt cried out to God silently or openly as He went through the events that followed—being brought before Annas and Caiaphas, being brought before Herod Antipas, being brought before Pilate, being beaten, being mocked, being spat upon, being scourged, having nails driven through His hands and feet. He had been crying out for *hours* at this point.

3 But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.

In spite of all this, He knows that God the Father is in control and in charge—just as He always is. God is there and has not left Him.

4 Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them.

5 They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

What is this? It's not an expression of *doubt* but an expression of *faith and trust in the Father*. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and many others trusted in and believed in God. Sometimes they were delivered, and sometimes not. We see in Hebrews 11 that they all died in faith, regardless of whether God had delivered them or not. God is faithful, and always knows what's best. This is Jesus' attitude as He is going through this excruciating trial of being crucified.

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

Why would David prophetically write of the crucified Messiah as “a worm, and no man”? we certainly would never think of Jesus Christ as being like a worm. But there’s actually a fascinating background here that has deep meaning when we understand it.

The Hebrew word translated “worm” is *towla*. It’s translated “worm,” “scarlet” or “crimson.” We can easily see the connection between “scarlet” and “crimson,” because those are both deep red colors. But what connection does that have to do with a worm?

Let’s notice a passage back in **Exodus 25:4-6**, which is talking about the tabernacle and the building of the tabernacle and the materials.

4 And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, “This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying:

5 ‘Take from among you an offering to the LORD. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze;

6 ‘blue, purple, and scarlet [*towla*], fine linen, and goats’ hair . . .

This is describing the materials used for the Tabernacle and its furnishings. But what I want to point out is that the word “worm” from Psalm 22 and “scarlet” here in Exodus 25 *are the same Hebrew word*. But what’s the connection? The word is used of a type of worm or grub, *coccus ilicis*, also known as the scarlet worm or crimson worm. Here’s **what they look like**—again more of a grub than a worm. And in the ancient world, people would collect these grubs and grind them up to make **scarlet dye for dyeing yarn** a deep red color. So the Hebrew word *towla* was used for *both the worm* and the *red dye* or coloring made from its body.

So what does this have to do with Jesus Christ and Him being called a worm? The answer is really pretty simple. What has happened to Jesus before He was crucified? He has been arrested, He has been beaten, He has had a crown of thorns pressed down on His head, and He has been brutally scourged with His flesh ripped to shreds as He hangs there being crucified. *What color is He* as He hangs there? *He is scarlet*. He is *crimson*. He is a bloody mess from the dried blood and the fresh blood oozing from all over His body. *He is the color of the scarlet worm*. He looks more like the worm than a human being. That is why He says here in Psalm 22—

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

It’s graphic, it’s disgusting, it’s horrifying, but it’s the reality of what Jesus was experiencing taking on Himself what *we* deserved.

Continuing in verse 7—

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

8 “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”

Do these words sound familiar? They should. Notice **Matthew 27:41-43**—

41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said . . .

43 “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

These same words were written down by David more than 900 years before they would be uttered by those mocking Jesus Christ as He was dying. How incredible!

Continuing in verse 9 of Psalm 22—

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

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

Of course, we know that Jesus was divinely and miraculously conceived by God in Mary's womb. And God was working with Him as the Messiah from birth, throughout His childhood, and through His entire life to this point.

As Jesus is hanging there dying, is He mentally reciting this Psalm? Is He whispering it between gasps of pain? We know that Jesus Christ said several things among His final words. Let's notice some of them in **John 19:26-27—**

26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved [John] standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"

27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

When did Jesus say to Mary, "*Woman, behold your son!*" and to John, "*Behold your mother!*" Was it as He was reciting Psalm 22 to Himself, and He came to this verse about His beloved mother who had given birth to him? We can't know for sure, but I think this is probably what happened. He starts His words with verse 1 of Psalm 22 and as we'll see later, He ends His words with the last verse of Psalm 22. So it's logical that He is reciting this Psalm as He is dying, and when He comes to this part He says, "*Woman, behold your son!*" and to John, "*Behold your mother!*"

Continuing in verse 11 of Psalm 22—

11 Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

He has been abandoned by those who were closest to Him. As was prophesied, He is the shepherd was struck and the sheep were scattered. All of His disciples had fled, with the exception of John who was there with Mary and the other women. There was no one to help him. He was all alone except for His father.

12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.

Why this talk about "strong bulls of Bashan"? What's this about? Bashan is the area that today would be called the Golan Heights and northern Jordan. It was an area that received more rainfall than most of Israel, and as a result it was agriculturally very fertile. It was well known for its strong and healthy cattle, particularly the powerful bulls that grazed there. And what is this symbolic of? It's most likely a prophecy of the Roman soldiers surrounding Him. They were strong and powerful men, just as the Roman empire was strong and powerful. When these soldiers weren't fighting, they were building roads, bridges, aqueducts, canals and things like that. They were big, burly men that you didn't mess with. So David's prophecy likens them to strong bulls, and that's probably what they resembled—powerful, brutal soldiers with bodies built like bulls.

13 They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion.

Here they are likened to another powerful and frightening creature, raging and roaring lions. And as lions attack and claw and rip apart their prey, so the Roman soldiers attacked and brutalized and scourged and ripped Jesus Christ before crucifying Him. He continues,

14 I am poured out like water,

If you have ever been totally exhausted, you feel like you have been completely drained of energy and strength. This is probably how Jesus felt at this point. At the same time He had been literally poured out because He had so many cuts and lacerations that He was bleeding everywhere. And He would yet be poured out even more as a soldier stabbed Him in one last brutal blow and His blood and water poured out, ending His life.

and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me.

As He hung there by His arms it's quite possible that by now His shoulders were out of joint, which is extremely painful. Other bones may have been out of joint because of the beating that He had endured and discouraging and the brutalization the Roman soldiers had inflicted on Him. Yet through all of this a remarkable prophecy was fulfilled that none of His bones would be broken. In Exodus 12 it says of the Passover lamb that not a bone of its body was to be broken. None of Jesus Christ's bones were broken. Yes, some were out of joint but they were not broken.

Notice **John 19:33, 36**—

33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs . . .

36 For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.”

This refers back to the instructions regarding the Passover lambs in **Exodus 12:46—**

46 In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones.

The Roman soldiers who were part of the crucifixion squad broke the legs of the men who were crucified with Jesus to hasten their deaths, but they didn't break Jesus' legs because at that point He was already dead.

Continuing in verse 15 of Psalm 22—

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,

I've picked up thousands of **broken potsherds over the years** and in several countries.

They're broken, useless, worn out and thrown out. And that's the point. Jesus' strength was irreparably broken at this point. The release of death would come soon.

and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

“My tongue clings to My jaws”—Have you ever been so thirsty that your tongue sticks to the inside of your mouth and you can't talk plainly? That's what's happening here.

Jesus was so dehydrated. He had been awake for at least a day and a half. It had been hours since He had had anything to eat or drink. He had experienced major blood loss, which also dehydrates the body. So His tongue is swollen and His mouth feels like it's full of dust. He has no saliva left to be able to swallow. It's very hard for Him to speak. And yet He does speak some other words.

As we read in **John 19:28—**

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” “I'm so thirsty!”

Did He gasp out these words as He is reciting this Psalm to Himself, as He had said to Mary, **“Woman, behold your son!”** and to John, **“Behold your mother!”** when He came to the verse in Psalm 22 that mentioned His mother? In this Psalm He had memorized,

did He say, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws . . . *I’m so thirsty!*” Think about it. Probably so.

Continuing in verse 16 of Psalm 22—

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

Dogs in that day weren’t cute cuddly cocker spaniels. They were mongrels that survived by what they could steal from people or other animals. Wild dogs ran in packs and were threats to man and beast alike. They weren’t man’s best friend at this time in human history. They could be dangerous to a human being, particularly if that human being were injured and bleeding. They could attack and kill him as we know happened with Jezebel in the Bible. This is the kind of word picture that is being drawn here. Dogs could surround a person and devour and kill him.

This prophecy also says of Jesus, “They pierced My hands and My feet.” This is a remarkable prophecy of crucifixion because when David wrote this, crucifixion would not be invented until many centuries later when it came to be used in the Roman Empire. Yet about a thousand years before Jesus was crucified, David wrote that the Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced.

Consider something for a moment. Think about the people who were standing around watching what’s going on here. They know Psalm 22—they have it memorized. They know Jesus has quoted the first verse of Psalm 22. If they are thinking at all, they see a man who clearly loves and teaches about God, they see a man colored red like the scarlet worm, they see a man surrounded by Roman soldiers like strong bulls, they see a man suffering extreme dehydration, and they see a man with his hands and feet pierced by the nails of the Romans. *They are seeing this prophetic Psalm fulfilled right before their eyes!* Do any of them realize it? Were any of them among the 3,000 baptized about two months later at the Feast of Pentecost? We don’t know, but it wouldn’t surprise me.

Continuing in verse 17 of Psalm 22—

17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

What does this mean, that He could count all of His bones? To be blunt, it means *He could see them*. In scourging, which He had gone through, the Roman scourge was a short whip with several leather strips that had pieces of metal, glass or bone imbedded in the strips. As a person was lashed with the scourge, it literally ripped his flesh to shreds. On Jesus’ hands, arms, legs, ribcage and face, you could no doubt literally see and count the bones through His shredded flesh. And people would look and stare at Him because of this. This is why Isaiah prophesied of Him:

Isaiah 52:14 (NIV)

14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness— He was whipped with scourges, beaten, and used as a punching bag by these brutal soldiers. His body was bruised, swollen, gouged, lacerated and bleeding all over from head to toe.

Continuing in verse 18 of Psalm 22—

18 They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.

We see this fulfilled in **Matthew 27:35**—

35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”

Continuing in verse 19 of Psalm 22—

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

20 Deliver Me from the sword [from a violent death], My precious life from the power of the dog.

21 Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!

Again, He is surrounded by a violent and brutal men who are compared to lions, strong bulls and dogs who are devouring and killing Him. And then, as I read this, a quiet calmness and assurance envelopes Him as the release of death draws near. David’s prophecy says—

You have answered Me.

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

Who are the “brethren” to whom Jesus declares God the Father? It’s His disciples whom He called and trained in the first century, revealing to them God the Father. But it’s also His disciples called through the centuries to whom He has also revealed God the Father through the Gospels and the other books of the Bible. And it’s also *us*, to whom He has revealed the Father and the Father’s great plan that we are to be a part of His family forever!

Continuing in verse 23 of Psalm 22—

23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

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.

Did God the Father forsake Jesus? Not at all! God heard Jesus’ cries throughout all this. He heard every word. He knew every thought and Jesus’ mind. He knew exactly what He was going through because He was there with Him every step of the way. The Father never abandoned Him, *but it had to be done that way*. There was no other way for the penalty for our sins to be paid, for without the shedding of blood is no forgiveness of sins. The Father gave up what was most precious to Him for our sakes, and Jesus gave *everything* for us.

Continuing in verse 25 of Psalm 22—

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

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

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.

This is talking about the wonderful result of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—that ultimately the entire world will be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and will turn to God and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Continuing,

28 For the kingdom is the LORD’S, and He rules over the nations.

This is talking, of course, about the reign of Jesus Christ on earth and ultimately of the time after that when the Father comes to earth and dwells with men. This entire plan begins with a sacrifice of Jesus Christ as our Passover lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world through His death.

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.

30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, [future generations, in other words]

31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this.

“He has done this” in the original Hebrew would also be worded something like, “He has completed this” or “He has finished it.” What were Jesus Christ’s very last words? We find them in **John 19:29-30**, after He had cried out, “*I’m thirsty!*”

29 Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, [Why hyssop? What did the Israelites use to splash the blood of the Passover lambs on the tops and sides of their doorways? *Hyssop.*] **and put it to His mouth.**

30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!”

His last words are the last words of Psalm 22, allowing for the fact that Jesus is speaking Hebrew or Aramaic that’s translated into Greek and then translated into English—

31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this.—Or as we would say in English, **IT’S FINISHED! IT’S DONE! IT’S COMPLETED!**

And He died. “It is finished” didn’t mean just that His awful suffering and pain were over. It was *much bigger than that*. It was finished—*all of it*. He had *done it*. His sacrifice was complete—done—finished for all time for all mankind! God’s plan was sure. The sacrifice that would pay for your sins and my sins was complete.

It is through that sacrifice, and *only* through that sacrifice, that we receive God’s gift of salvation. One week from tomorrow night we will come together on the Passover as a reminder of that sacrifice that makes our salvation possible. Think on these things as you come to Passover to remember that sacrifice. Remember that we have a God and a Savior who will never leave us nor forsake us. Remember that we have a true Passover Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world through His sacrifice.

PS. I don’t usually add a PS to my sermons, but today I will. Because for the last 3,000 years certain groups of Psalms were always read and studied and recited together as though they were a unified group. It would be something like a musical composition in three parts, or four parts, or five parts, with individual Psalms being one of those parts.

Psalm 22, which we have just covered today in detail, is part of a group of three Psalms that were considered to be three parts of one complete set. The other two Psalms in the set were Psalm 23 and Psalm 24—three Psalms that form what you might call three “movements” of a whole. Let’s briefly read through those other two Psalms to see what they add to the picture.

Psalm 23 is one you’ll recognize immediately. But read it as though you were reading it through Jesus Christ’s eyes as He goes through what we just read about in Psalm 22 and what does it describe?

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

What is this describing when viewed from the perspective of Jesus the Messiah and what He was going through in Psalm 22? It’s describing Him walking through the valley of the shadow of death. *He’s about to die*, in other words. But what is His attitude? Does He fear what He is experiencing and facing? No. He says, **“I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

He’s not afraid because He knows His Heavenly Father is with Him. Continuing,

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Again, is He worried or feeling cut off and abandoned by God? No. He knows that God is with Him, that God will bless Him with goodness and mercy, and that He will dwell in God’s house forever, He will not be left in the grave or the tomb. Do you see that, that this Psalm as the “second movement” describes Jesus Christ’s complete confidence and trust in the Father in His last hours? It’s incredible when you read it this way.

Am I saying that this is the primary meaning of this particular Psalm? No, because it’s written to describe the relationship of any of us to God the Father and Jesus Christ as our shepherd. What I am saying is that at times there are different layers of meaning in the Scriptures that aren’t evident at first glance—as we’ve seen again and again in going through the Gospels. There are whole other levels of meaning that we don’t see on the surface, but we do see when we dig deeper. Now if you don’t accept this interpretation, that’s fine, but bear with me for a few more minutes. Maybe this will change your mind.

What about the third Psalm of this set of three that were viewed as three parts of one whole? What does it tell us about our Messiah and Savior? Let’s take a look.

Psalm 24

24:1 The earth is the LORD’S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

2 For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Can you see that Jesus the Messiah would be the sinless, pure person who would stand in God's holy place? If anyone would, wouldn't it be Him, the only person who never sinned at all? Wouldn't He be the one blessed by God above all others? Of course.

6 (NIV) Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob. Selah

And now this shifts gears in a remarkable way. If any of you are fans of Handel's Messiah, you'll recognize these words immediately:

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates! What are these gates? And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! What are these doors? And the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory, and what gates and doors is He entering? Keep reading, and we find out.

8 Who is this King of glory? Now it tells us who the King of glory is: **The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.** Who was the LORD of the Old Testament? The one who became Jesus Christ. So the King of glory is going in through gates and doors. Why is He called the King of glory? Because He is glorified!

9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. To where is this King of glory, the glorified Jesus Christ, coming through gates and doors? This is the resurrected Messiah no longer suffering crucifixion, no longer three days and three nights in the tomb, but resurrected and returning to God the Father in His throne room in heaven.

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah This is the third of three movements. The first was the Messiah being crucified as a sacrifice for the sins of the world in Psalm 22. The second is Jesus the Messiah having complete faith and trust in His heavenly Father as He faces death in Psalm 23, but knowing He will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And the third is our resurrected and glorified Savior and Messiah returning to heaven to be with His Father again here in Psalm 24—what an incredible picture painted for us in these three Psalms!

It's a truly wondrous and amazing picture for us of our Savior who gave His life for us, and now lives at the right hand of the Father in heaven as our glorified High Priest and Intercessor and coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As we approach the Passover a week from tomorrow night, let's think deeply on these things and the greatness of God's plan and what our Savior went through that we might ultimately be a part of the family of God.