

Psalm 22:22-31--The Spiritual Glory of the Messiah

Intro: Last month we looked at the first part of one of the most intriguing psalms of the OT--Psalm 22. It portrays in vivid terms the suffering of a man of God, presumably David, who initially cries out to the Lord, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When the early church read this psalm, they could see in it a picture of the spiritual sufferings of Jesus. Some have even called Psalm 22 the "5th gospel of the crucifixion," since the suffering that David describes for himself in hyperbole becomes the literal suffering of Jesus on the cross. Jesus quotes this psalm as he hangs on the cross.

When we read the first half of psalm 22 we feel great sorrow as we hear the words of a helpless and lonely man crying out to God for deliverance with no apparent answer.

But Psalm 22 doesn't end with the sufferings of a helpless and lonely man of God. Instead it ends on a joyous note of deliverance and hope, no longer alone but surrounded by the community of the faithful. Today let's look at the second half of psalm 22 and think about the spiritual glory of the Messiah.

From suffering to vindication

Students of the psalms will quickly see that psalms of lament or complaint often take a drastic turn in the middle of the psalm. The one who has cried out to God for deliverance is often suddenly filled with praise for God for His deliverance. That may be explained in one of two ways:

There is a break-through moment of faith as the psalmist prays. His faith overcomes the fear and doubt and assures him that God will in fact deliver him no matter how hopeless things may seem to be.

Or, there is a real deliverance which prompts the memorialization of the deliverance in verses of praise to God.

Whatever the case may be in Psalm 22, it is clear that the one who cried out to God with a feeling of divine abandonment, ends up expressing the most joyous hope of deliverance! In other words, the one who suffered celebrates God's vindication of himself.

The hopeful celebration!

First psalmist declares that he will be praising God once more in the assembly of His people.

"I will tell of Thy name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee. (Ps. 22:22)

The one who suffered will join in worship with his fellow-worshippers in praise to God. That means that though he has thought that he would suffer death at the hands of his enemies, he now sees himself once more in the assembly of God's people at the tabernacle.

He invites all those who appreciate that deliverance to join with him in praise.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Neither has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him for help, He heard. (Ps. 22:23-24)

When you see or experience something beautiful, you want others to share in that moment. Likewise the psalmist invites his fellow-worshippers to fear, praise, glorify, and stand in awe of this God who has delivered them.

He anticipates giving God the worship he vowed to give if delivered.

From Thee comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! (Ps. 22:25-26)

After a time of deliverance, the ancient Israelites would come to the tabernacle/temple and offer a peace offering in fulfillment of the vows they had made during their time of suffering. They would eat a part of the sacrifice they had offered to God with their family and friends, indicating that they were once more at peace with God.

He sees a glorious future in which all the nations will worship the Lord.

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S, and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, even he who cannot keep his soul alive. Posterity will serve Him; It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it. (Psalm 22:27-31)

What the psalmist could see in his experience was that His God was reigning and at last He would win the allegiance of all the nations, not just the Jews. And whether God granted to those who prayed to Him either life or death in response to their prayers, He would be worthy to be served and praised from generation to generation.

And so we could say that the spiritual sufferings of the helpless and lonely man of God has turned into glorious and hopeful celebration in the presence of God and His people. It teaches God's people to keep trusting Him in the darkest times of life, knowing that God is always worthy of praise.

But they at the same time point to Jesus!

The Spiritual Glory of the Messiah

Just as the NT church read the sufferings of David as a prophetic picture of the suffering of the Christ, so they looked at his proclaimed deliverance as a prophetic picture of the glory of the Christ.

Peter could see, in view of Jesus' death and resurrection, that the Scripture foretold not only His suffering but also His resurrected glory:

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.” (1 Peter 1:9–11)

Though Jesus had to suffer and die for the sins of the world, the Father vindicated Him by His resurrection from the dead so that He would once more praise God with His newly-redeemed brethren.

But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, “I WILL PROCLAIM THY NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING THY PRAISE.”” (Hebrews 2:9–12)

Though the Hebrew writer's point is to show how Jesus shares our human nature, he quotes from Psalm 22, showing that our brother, Jesus, joins with us in praise God in the great assembly. Or to put it another way, we too celebrate God's deliverance of Him.

In Jesus' case, he was not delivered from death as was the original author of psalm 22; but rather delivered through death to celebrate God's vindication and deliverance in His resurrection and exaltation to heaven to sit on God's throne.

But psalm 22 not only reveals the spiritual glory of the Messiah; it also reveals:

The Resulting Praise of the Messiah's people

Psalm 22 is one place where you might say God speaks of you in the Scripture. Note how that if we apply the psalm to Jesus, then we are those who are urged to celebrate with Him!

You who fear the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. Imagine how we might feel if the resurrected Christ should walk in among us and say, "Join me in praising the Father for my deliverance." Would it not produce the most joyous singing ever? But that is exactly what Psalm 22 says! Jesus invites us to celebrate His deliverance with Him; and to celebrate what His deliverance means to us!

We are urged to understand that God has begun His reign over us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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

All this talk of a future millennial kingdom misses a central truth of the OT. The Messiah was raised to rule over the kingdom of God; and we are that kingdom!

But more importantly, the message is that God has been and ever will be in control! No matter how dire things may seem (as it was for the psalmist) God still reigns and will be glorified through what happens on earth.

We are urged to share a meal in grateful praise.

In just the same way that the ancient Israelites came together and ate a part of the sacrifice in God's presence, so we too come together to "break bread." We cannot of course eat of the body and blood of Jesus that was offered for us; but we can eat that which is an emblem of it, the bread and fruit of the vine, remembering the sacrifice He made for us.

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:16–17)

We are urged to share that message with the generations to come.

It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it.

The celebration of praise that began with the early church has continued through the centuries and will continue as each generation declares to the next what the Lord has done for us.

We too have that obligation and privilege to share the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and what it means to others.

Conclusion: So today we are having a part in fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 22. If the first part of Psalm 22 makes us vividly confront His crucifixion, then the second part of Psalm 22 makes us vividly confront His glorification as the resurrected King of kings and Lord of lords.

That day when Jesus died on the cross he cried out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" In that statement, He reminds us of the loneliness and helplessness of His death in the presence of His enemies without deliverance. But maybe Jesus spoke those words to say something even more profound, as if to say, "Read the psalm that begins with these words; and you will know that this is not the end!"

You could say that Jesus' faith on the cross assured him that death would not be the end of Him. In fact you could say that even on the cross Jesus predicted His own victory over death! That's why we are here today. It is the only hope that we have of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.