

Easter Study

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Psalm 118:26a

The book of Psalms is a collection of inspired songs used to worship God and many of them foretell the coming of Messiah and predict events fulfilled in the life of Jesus. In total, twenty-five different Psalms (one out of every six) include at least one prophecy about Jesus. Many of the Messianic psalms are quoted and further explained in eleven New Testament books, especially in the four gospels and book of Acts.

Jesus would have sung the psalms constantly throughout His life and probably knew them by heart. The hymn that Jesus sang at the Passover meal (Matthew 26:30) would have been the Hallel, Psalms 116-118. He quoted from this book more than any other. But the psalms were not simply sung by Jesus, they were also about Him, prophesying from His birth to His final glory in heaven. Today we will focus on the betrayal, death, and resurrection of Jesus found in the Psalms.

His Betrayal

First, there was the plot to kill Jesus. In Matthew 26:3-4 we read, *“Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him.”* The long controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders had finally come to a head. Psalm 31:13 foretold this: *“For I hear the slander of many; Fear is on every side; While they take counsel together against me, They scheme to take away my life.”*

The next betrayal would be Judas. In Matthew 26:20-23 we read, *“When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, “Lord, is it I?” He answered and said, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.”* Jesus was not pointing out any one disciple because they all **dipped** with Him. Only Judas knew it was him. Possibly Jesus said this to let Judas know that He was aware of what he was planning to do and give Judas a chance to change his mind. Psalm 41:9 said: *“Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”*

After celebrating the Last Supper, Verse 30 tells us *“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”* We don’t often think of Jesus singing, but He did. He lifted His voice in adoration and worship to God the Father. It is remarkable that Jesus could sing on this night before His crucifixion. However, as he sang the Hallel, think of how some of the words might have ministered to Him.

The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!” (Psalm 116:3-4)

For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.
(Psalm 116:8-9)

I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. (Psalm 116:13-15)

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. (Psalm 118:17-19)

“If, beloved, you knew that at—say, ten o’clock tonight, you would be led away to be mocked, and despised, and scourged, and that tomorrow’s sun would see you falsely accused, hanging, a convicted criminal, to die upon a cross, do you think that you could sing tonight, after your last meal?”
(Spurgeon)

In the Garden

Psalm 69:20, “*Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none*” brings us to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Surrounded by ancient olive trees, **Gethsemane** means “olive press.” There, olives from the neighborhood were crushed for their oil. So too, the Son of God would be crushed here. Matthew 26:36-46 tells us that Jesus was “sorrowful and deeply distressed...even unto death.” He asked His closest disciples, Peter, James, and John to “stay here and watch with Me.” Jesus already knew every detail of what awaited Him. He knew He would be beaten nearly to the point of death before they pounded the metal spikes into His flesh. The pain would be excruciating, which literally means “from the cross.” He also knew the spiritual pain ahead. “He who knew no sin would be sin for us.” (II Corinthians 5:21)

It was here in Gethsemane - the place of crushing - that Jesus, through prayer, finally knew He would follow God’s plan for redemption and go to the cross. Jesus valued and desired the help of His friends in this battle of prayer and decision but ended up doing it alone. Three times that night He found them asleep rather than joining Him in prayer. Jesus found victory at the cross by succeeding in the struggle in Gethsemane. Peter fell into temptation later because he failed to watch and pray - just like us at times. The spiritual battle is often won or lost before the crisis comes.

His Crucifixion

Psalm 22

So much is prophesied about the Messiah in this psalm; we will be looking at some of the major things foretold. Many of them speak of David and the circumstances of his life but they are even more applicable to Jesus.

Alone

Psalm 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?*” While there were many instances in David’s life where he felt the agony he writes about here, it is even truer of Jesus the Messiah than David. While hanging on the cross, suffering and near death, Jesus cried out those very words. (Matthew 27:46) Jesus had known great pain and suffering during His life. Yet He had never known separation from His Father. On the cross at that moment, God the Father regarded God the Son as if He were a sinner. Jesus not only endured the *withdrawal* of the Father's fellowship, but also the actual outpouring of the Father's *wrath* upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity. Being alone at that crucial time must have been agonizing.

Mocked

Jesus also suffered verbal abuse by the antagonistic crowd surrounding the cross. His closest friends, the disciples abandoned Him: only John, His mother, and several women remained at the cross. He was surrounded by enemies. Psalm 22:6-8 tells us He was *“a reproach of men, and despised by the people.”* They ridiculed Him saying, *“He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”* This foretold mockery was confirmed in Mathew 27:43.

A Broken Heart

Psalm 22:14 says, *“I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.”* This is an amazingly specific prophecy of Jesus suffering on the cross. The deliberately awkward and strained position of a man being crucified would give him cause to say his bones were out of joint. David didn't know anything about crucifixion as it didn't even exist, yet he described the physical agony of it with accuracy. Based on John 19:34, *“one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water,”* many believe Jesus suffered from a ruptured heart. Psalm 69:20 adds, *“Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.”*

Pierced

“They pierced My hands and My feet,” (v. 16). The disciple Thomas verified the truth of this prophecy in John 20:25, *“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”* Eight days later, when Thomas saw Jesus, he simply said *“My Lord, and my God.”* (John 20:28) Zechariah 12:10 prophesied this as well, *“then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”*

Humiliated

David wrote in verse 18, *“They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”* As was the custom of that time, Jesus was stripped naked or nearly naked for the cross and soldiers gambled (**cast lots**) for his clothing at the very foot of the cross. John, an eyewitness to the crucifixion, observed this very thing happening in John 19:23-24.

Not One Bone Was Broken

Psalm 34:20 also refers to the crucifixion saying *“He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken.”* As Jesus and the two thieves were dying on the cross, the Sabbath was rapidly approaching. The Jews asked to have the soldiers break their legs to hasten their death, in keeping with Sabbath rules. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves but when they came to Jesus, they discovered He was already dead and did nothing to Him. (John 19:36) Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 stipulated that no bone of the Passover lamb could be broken. Jesus, as the ultimate Passover Lamb, fulfilled this requirement.

The most remarkable part of the crucifixion is the love shown to us while we were still in sin. Jesus wasn't dragged against His will to die on the cross. Jesus was in control and could have stopped it if He wanted to. As He said in Matthew 26:53-54, *“Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be*

fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" He voluntarily chose to obey the Father's command to reconcile us to the Father and give us the precious gift of eternal life.

David finishes Psalm 22:31 with *"They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this."* David foretells that a generation will proclaim the Lord's righteousness to a people yet unborn, declaring that the Lord has done it - he has provided salvation. At the moment of death, Jesus cried out, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). The Greek word for "it is finished" is *tetelestai*, which implies something has been completed, paid, fulfilled, or reconciled. When Jesus uttered those words, He was declaring the debt owed to His Father was wiped away completely and forever. Also completed was the fulfillment of over 300 Old Testament prophecies detailing the coming of the Messiah, all fulfilled by Jesus.

His Resurrection

In Psalm 16:10a, David wrote, *"For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."* He was expressing his confidence of God's care and blessing in the life beyond. David was firm in the hope that God would not leave his **soul** in the grave (**Sheol**), but that his life would continue on in the presence of God. Wonderfully (and perhaps unknowingly), David spoke beyond himself. In a greater and more literal sense, only Jesus Christ fulfills this by His resurrection. This was perceived by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, who said that these words went beyond David who was obviously dead, buried in a grave, and whose body had long ago decayed into dust. (Acts 2:25-31) Peter showed a remarkable understanding of the work of Jesus on the cross. He understood that because Jesus bore our sin without becoming a sinner, He remained the Holy One, even in His death. *"It was not possible that He should be held by death."* (Acts 2:24)

Paul quoted the Psalms as well in Acts 13:30-39 (READ) These are wonderful words. Man did his best to fight against God – even to kill Him – **but God** was greater than man's sin and rebellion, and Jesus rose from the grave, winning over sin and death. The resurrection means that Jesus truly is the unique Son of God (Psalm 2:7), and it proves that He was utterly holy even in His work on the cross (Psalm 16:10).

The Future King

In Psalm 2, David gets a glimpse into the future and sees that there is a King coming who is different from every other ruler. He will be the anointed Son of the Most High and he will rule and reign with justice and power. He will rule with an iron scepter as a true and just King forever. This is a beautiful portrait of King Jesus a thousand years before he came in human form. It's a picture of the true resurrected Christ, who overcame evil in humility and gentleness but now rules and reigns over everything as a victorious warrior.

This picture of Jesus brings hope to those of us who are suffering or struggling. Jesus can put it right one day, and He will. It also raises some questions for all of us who claim to follow Jesus. If he really is Lord of all, then what are the areas we still need to yield to Him? Do we have sins we still entertain that we need to confess and completely repent from? As we remember Jesus' great sacrifice, Lord help us to boldly share the gift of salvation you so lovingly provided for all who would receive it.

"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End."

Revelation 21:6a