

## Jesus is in the Old Testament? – Lesson 3

In the last two lessons, we studied about traits the Messiah would possess and also about the events leading up to the crucifixion. Today, we're going to take a look at Psalm 22 which describes the crucifixion scene itself in more detail.

**Psalm 22:1** – <sup>1</sup> *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?*

*Why are you so far away when I groan for help?*

Does this phrase in Psalm 22:1 seem familiar? I'm sure that many of you will recognize this as the cry that Jesus uttered shortly before he died on the cross.

**Mark 15:34** – <sup>34</sup> *Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"*

Some would say Jesus was quoting Scripture here. Others might say that Scripture was quoting Jesus. Aren't time paradoxes wonderful?

**Psalm 22:2-5** – <sup>2</sup> *Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.*

*Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.*

<sup>3</sup> *Yet you are holy,*

*enthroned on the praises of Israel.*

<sup>4</sup> *Our ancestors trusted in you,*

*and you rescued them.*

<sup>5</sup> *They cried out to you and were saved.*

*They trusted in you and were never disgraced.*

Notice here that the writer has been pleading with God but has received no answer or relief from his pain. So, what does he do but reflect back on how his ancestors trusted God and they were never let down. He used this as his anchor on which he could cling to weather the storm he was facing. When facing difficult trials, remember how God has been with you in the past to give you courage to face going into the future.

**Luke 22:41-44** – <sup>41</sup> *He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." <sup>43</sup> Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup> He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.*

Jesus was God but he was also human. That's what makes him such an awesome Savior. He knows exactly what we're facing in our lives because he's lived in a mortal body just as we have. And, because he was human as well as God, we can look to him for an example of how we should live.

Please note that Jesus starts out first by asking to be delivered from the very thing he was sent here to do. That may seem a little backwards at first but is it really? Jesus didn't deny the feelings he was feeling. For myself, I try to follow the example he gives here. *Always* be honest with God and tell him

what's *really* on your mind. It's not like God doesn't know what you're thinking already. Sometimes, just saying things out loud in prayer helps even if the answer is still "no."

Jesus knew he had to face the trials that were coming but that didn't make it any easier. So, he spoke what was on his mind. But take note of what he did next. He submitted to God's will regardless of what he wanted.

Now all that being said, the burden of what he was about to face was still crushing and overwhelming. Literally, no mere mortal could bear it yet being God he could and, more importantly, he did. It was however not without supreme effort. The stress was so extreme that Jesus literally sweated blood.

For those of you wondering, this was no exaggerated account. Although very rare, there does exist a condition called hematidrosis, in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to express blood. This usually occurs under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress. I do believe that these conditions would qualify for that situation, wouldn't you?

**Psalm 22:6-8** – <sup>6</sup> *But I am a worm and not a man.*

*I am scorned and despised by all!*

<sup>7</sup> *Everyone who sees me mocks me.*

*They sneer and shake their heads, saying,*

<sup>8</sup> *"Is this the one who relies on the LORD?*

*Then let the LORD save him!*

*If the LORD loves him so much,*

*let the LORD rescue him!"*

**Matthew 27:39-44** – <sup>39</sup> *The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery.* <sup>40</sup> *"Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!"*

<sup>41</sup> *The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus.* <sup>42</sup> *"He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him!"* <sup>43</sup> *He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"* <sup>44</sup> *Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way.*

What a horrible thing not only to die to pay for the sins of others while you yourself are innocent but to have the very ones for whom you are dying mock you for it in the process! I really can't fathom what that must have been like.

**Psalm 22:9-11** – <sup>9</sup> *Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb  
and led me to trust you at my mother's breast.*

<sup>10</sup> *I was thrust into your arms at my birth.*

*You have been my God from the moment I was born.*

<sup>11</sup> *Do not stay so far from me,  
for trouble is near,  
and no one else can help me.*

There are no particular New Testament Scriptures that I would like to tie to these verses other than maybe those describing Jesus' birth. Instead, I'd like to focus instead on what is being said. It's like the author is saying, "Now, remember, I'm only here because you, God, put me here so please don't leave me now!" I don't believe that there is any doubt in the speaker's speech, there is merely great dread and apprehension of what he knows is coming. There is a lesson for us here in that it's okay to ask God to comfort you and let you know that he's still right there.

**Psalm 22:12-13** – <sup>12</sup> *My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;  
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!*  
<sup>13</sup> *Like lions they open their jaws against me,  
roaring and tearing into their prey.*

Here we have a reference to the enemies all around him. Please refer back to Matthew 27:41-43 listed above. The chief priests, scribes, and elders (his enemies) were there at his crucifixion, presumably to make sure he was properly eliminated. Also present were the Roman soldiers charged with his crucifixion. If only it were that easy to eliminate Christ and we can thank our God that it wasn't!

**Psalm 22:14-17** – <sup>14</sup> *My life is poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart is like wax,  
melting within me.*  
<sup>15</sup> *My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.  
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.  
You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.*  
<sup>16</sup> *My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;  
an evil gang closes in on me.  
They have pierced my hands and feet.*  
<sup>17</sup> *I can count all my bones.  
My enemies stare at me and gloat.*

Here we have a very accurate description of the condition of someone who has been scourged and is then being crucified. First of all, when someone is scourged the flesh and muscle of their back is shredded. This leaves the recipient weak and severely dehydrated. In verse 16, it mentions that his hands and feet were both pierced. There is some debate over the word that yielded this phrase in the translated Hebrew text. (Please see the notes at the end of the lesson for more information.) However, this phrase would be consistent with verse 14 where it says "all my bones are out of joint." It also mentions that his "heart is like wax... melted within my breast." Again, these descriptions are completely consistent with the conditions of one who is being crucified.

**Psalm 22:18** – <sup>18</sup> *They divide my garments among themselves  
and throw dice for my clothing.*

**John 19:23-24** – <sup>23</sup> *When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. <sup>24</sup> So they said, “Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.” This fulfilled the Scripture that says, “They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing.” So that is what they did.*

Here we are given a glimpse into the behavior of the soldiers at Jesus’ feet. Why would this particular detail be listed? It’s not like this was a crucial point of the crucifixion. I suppose it could be to highlight how trivially Jesus’ crucifixion was treated by many of those involved. Here this man hangs dying in agony and while this is going on they are gambling for his clothes at his feet in front of him like he’s not even there!

**Psalm 22:19-22** – <sup>19</sup> *O LORD, do not stay far away!*

*You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!*

<sup>20</sup> *Save me from the sword;*

*spare my precious life from these dogs.*

<sup>21</sup> *Snatch me from the lion’s jaws*

*and from the horns of these wild oxen.*

<sup>22</sup> *I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.*

*I will praise you among your assembled people.*

In the previous verses, the writer described a scene of unavoidable, pending death. Yet, here he speaks of how he knows and believes that he will be delivered. Because of Hollywood, we’ve come to expect the hero to survive a rain of bullets and bombs and emerge relatively unscathed, but the reality is that one does not typically survive scenes such as the one described above. Yet, he speaks confidently that he will be delivered. Of course, for those of us who know about Jesus and his pending resurrection it seems perfectly logical. But from the perspective of the day in which these verses were penned, it must have seemed like quite the misstatement.

In the rest of the Psalm, the writing changes to one of praise for God and encouragement for us to praise God.

**Psalm 22:23-25** – <sup>23</sup> *Praise the LORD, all you who fear him!*

*Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!*

*Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!*

<sup>24</sup> *For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.*

*He has not turned his back on them,*

*but has listened to their cries for help.*

<sup>25</sup> *I will praise you in the great assembly.*

*I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.*

Here in the midst of all this suffering we are encouraged to praise God. Why? Another lesson resides here for us in that no matter what is happening in our lives and no matter how difficult the trials may be, we must remember to always praise God because he will *always* be there with us as well as for us. Anyone can praise God when things are looking all rosy but it's only those who *truly* trust him who can praise him when things look the darkest because they know that he will bring them through it all.

**Psalm 22:26-31** – <sup>26</sup> *The poor will eat and be satisfied.*

*All who seek the LORD will praise him.*

*Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.*

<sup>27</sup> *The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.*

*All the families of the nations will bow down before him.*

<sup>28</sup> *For royal power belongs to the LORD.*

*He rules all the nations.*

<sup>29</sup> *Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.*

*Bow before him, all who are mortal,*

*all whose lives will end as dust.*

<sup>30</sup> *Our children will also serve him.*

*Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.*

<sup>31</sup> *His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.*

*They will hear about everything he has done.*

Here we have more praise for the Lord because can we ever really praise him enough? Seriously, I don't think you can. Think about the fact that the same God who was there for our ancestors will also be there for our children. That's a very comforting thought. Our lives are merely specs of time that collectively don't add up to a fraction of the time that God has been or will be yet he deemed us important enough to suffer his own Son for *our* sins!

Now, as an aside even Judas's actions were prophesied about.

**Zechariah 11:12-13** – <sup>12</sup> *And I said to them, "If you like, give me my wages, whatever I am worth; but only if you want to." So they counted out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.*

<sup>13</sup> *And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—this magnificent sum at which they valued me! So I took the thirty coins and threw them to the potter in the Temple of the LORD.*

**Matthew 27:3-10** – <sup>3</sup> *When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. <sup>4</sup> "I have sinned," he declared, "for I have betrayed an innocent man."*

*"What do we care?" they retorted. "That's your problem."*

<sup>5</sup> *Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself.*

<sup>6</sup> *The leading priests picked up the coins. "It wouldn't be right to put this money in the Temple treasury," they said, "since it was payment for murder." <sup>7</sup> After some discussion they finally decided to buy the potter's field, and they made it into a cemetery for foreigners. <sup>8</sup> That is why the field is still called the*

*Field of Blood. <sup>9</sup> This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah that says,*

*"They took the thirty pieces of silver—*

*the price at which he was valued by the people of Israel,*

<sup>10</sup> *and purchased the potter's field,  
as the LORD directed."*

It should be noted that even though Matthew references the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Scriptural reference to which he refers is actually the Zechariah reference listed above. (Please see the notes at the end of the lesson for more information.)

All debate aside on the Zechariah reference, there is no doubt that Judas Iscariot was the villain here. He sold out Jesus for a few silver coins. But, I'd ask to you carefully consider something. Are we really all that different from him when we have an opportunity to boldly serve God yet we choose not to because it might affect our pocketbook? Consider these examples:

- The offering plate passes by and we drop the obligatory \$20 dollar bill in the plate even though God has blessed us with hundreds or even thousands of times that amount for that month.
- We pass on a chance to tell a client that we'll be praying for his sick loved one that he mentioned in passing because you don't want to risk affecting the business relationship by offending them.
- We pass on helping out more at church because we're "*just too busy at work right now.*"

This is just an extra little something to ponder.

### **Questions For Discussion**

1. What was the purpose and meaning for Jesus crying out to God and asking him why he had abandoned him? Why did God abandon Jesus?
2. In Psalm 22:2 it says "*Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer. Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.*" Have you ever felt this way when asking God for something? What was the result? Share your experiences with your group.
3. The author follows up Psalms 22:2 with verses 3 through 5. What was he trying to say in this follow-up to verse 2?
4. Can you identify with the author in Psalm 22:9-11 in being asked to do something for God, *alone*, that you know is going to be extremely difficult to do? Share your experience.
5. In Psalm 22:14-17 it appears to be describing the crucifixion of Jesus. But, could this passage possibly be describing anything else? If so, elaborate.
6. Psalm 22:18 mentions how the soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothing. Discuss reasons as to why this particular detail was included here?
7. Share and discuss ways that today we might be guilty of selling out Jesus or God in our own lives.

## NOTES:

### Psalm 22:16

Psalm 22:16 reads, "Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet." The phrase "pierced my hands and feet" along with the context, is likely the clearest prophecy of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures. Some propose, however, that Psalm 22:16 should read, "like a lion, they are at my hands and feet." So, does Psalm 22:16 truly prophesy the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross?

What causes such confusion is that the two Hebrew words for "pierced" and "lion" are remarkably similar. All that separates the two Hebrew words is the length of an upright vowel stroke. A majority of Hebrew manuscripts, from the Masoretic text, of Psalm 22 have the "lion" reading, while a minority of manuscripts contain the "pierced" reading. However, which reading is in the majority is not always the deciding factor in determining which reading is correct. For example, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which predate most other Hebrew texts by over a thousand years, note that the term is unmistakably "pierced." In addition, the oldest Syriac, Vulgate, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions also go with "pierced." The same is true in the Septuagint, the first Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, which was completed approximately 200 years before the birth of Christ.

So, even though the Hebrew manuscripts that say "lion" outnumber the manuscripts that say "pierced," the older Hebrew manuscripts, and manuscripts in other languages that predate most of the Hebrew manuscripts, strongly argue for "pierced" being the correct reading. Those who argue for "lion" typically claim that "pierced" is a corruption, inserted by Christians, in an attempt to create a prophecy about Jesus. However, the fact that there are many manuscripts that predate Christianity that have the "pierced" reading disproves this concept. In fact, it is more likely that the "lion" reading in the Masoretic Hebrew text is the corruption, as the Masoretic manuscripts predominantly date to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, after Christianity was established, giving the Jews a reason to conceal what the Hebrew Scriptures predict regarding Jesus Christ.

### Zechariah 12:11-13

A seeming difficulty is the fact that Matthew attributes the prophecy to Jeremiah, not Zechariah. The explanation is two-fold. First, Jeremiah also bought a field at the Lord's command (Jeremiah 32:6-9). Second, the Hebrew Bible was divided into three sections: the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets. The Prophets began with Jeremiah, and it was common for people to refer to the whole section (which included Zechariah) as "the book of Jeremiah."