

Psalms: The Messiah's Pain and The Messiah's Reign

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Written on: November 27th, 2003

In David, Israel's king from 1011-971 B.C.¹, we see a type of the Messiah- when we look at David, we get an amazing picture of the Messiah to come: both His pain and His reign. David was in deep despair as a fugitive on the run for his life from King Saul for many years- even though he had already been anointed as king. David's life in the wilderness prepared him to be a witness and a type of the sufferings of the Christ to follow and through the Holy Spirit to write prophetically about the Messiah to come who would experience unparalleled suffering. David's reign as king afterward prepared him to write prophetically about the coming King who would reign over the earth from Zion. No other prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures personifies the Messiah more vividly and with such detail as David did.

Prophecy Before the Psalms

Until the time of David there was very little understood about the Messiah- and what prophecies and types were made were largely veiled and mysterious. Genesis three introduces us to the problem of mankind separated from God due to sin, and the first prophecy of the Bible- that a Messiah or "Seed" (offspring) would be born of the woman who would crush Satan, but in the process would be bruised.² This Seed is then traced through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah.³ We further learn that through a nation born of this Seed, Israel, that all peoples on earth would be blessed, and that the Messiah would be a final King born of the tribe of Judah who would reign forever.⁴

Prophecies in Psalms: The Messiah as King

The Seed is then traced from Judah to a Moabitess named Ruth to King David.⁵ The Lord promised David that "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever."⁶ The title for the Messiah that the Jews instantly recognized was that of King.⁷ The Lord prophesied through Ethan the Ezrahite, a contemporary of David⁸, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David. 'Your Seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'"⁹ (*Psalms 89*) The psalmist then prophetically mourns the exile of his people which would happen 400 years later, "But You [Lord] have cast off and abhorred, You have been furious with Your anointed. You have renounced the covenant of Your

¹ Jensen, Irving L., *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 175, Moody Press, Chicago, 1978

² Genesis 3:15

³ Genesis 4:25, 5:6-32, 6:18, 9:26, 12:3, 21:12, 26:4, 28:14, 49:9-10

⁴ Genesis 12:3, 49:10

⁵ Ruth 4:12-14, 17-22, 2 Samuel 7:8-16

⁶ 2 Samuel 7:16, 1 Chronicles 17:1-15

⁷ Psalm 2:6,8, 24:7-10, 45:1-2,6,7,14,72:18

⁸ 1 Chronicles 15:16-19

⁹ Psalm 89:3-4, cf. verses 19, 27-29, 34-37, Acts 13:22)

servant...How long, Lord? Will you hide Yourself forever?"¹⁰ Jews throughout the ages have stubbornly clung to the promise that even in exile nothing could prevent God from keeping His covenant to send His King to rescue them and fulfill His promises. The Psalmist (*Psalms 125*) during Israel's exile was under the "scepter" (rule) of wicked kings from foreign nations. He claims once again God's covenant promises: "For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous."¹¹ The psalmist looked to the day when the Messiah would reign from Zion. At the time of Jesus the Jews were eagerly awaiting the Messiah to deliver them from the oppression of Rome and establish His kingdom forever- had the Lord forgotten His promises? When would the Messiah come and judge the world in righteousness?

The Messiah as Judge

To David in the midst of persecution, there was great comfort in knowing that the Messiah would judge all the enemies of God in righteousness and wrath and exalt His faithful who have trusted in Him. In *Psalms 50* David prophesied, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people."¹² Jews throughout the centuries have zealously looked for the Messiah to come to deliver them from the oppression of the pagan governments and judge the world with wrath. *Psalms 110* says, "The Lord [the Messiah] is at Your [Jehovah, LORD] right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the nations."¹³ From His position in heaven at the right hand of the Father, the Messiah, will execute judgment on the nations.

The Messiah as Lord

Psalms 110 reveals the Messiah in another verse as both Lord and Priest: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool... You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"¹⁴ Interestingly, Melchizedek is the king of Salem (meaning "peace") recorded in *Genesis 14* who came out of nowhere and had no origin. Abram gave Him a tenth of all his spoils of war, demonstrating his submission to Melchizedek. He indeed is God in the flesh, making a visitation to earth. *Psalms 2* describes the Messiah as the Son of God who is the Anointed King of Zion. The kings of the earth are warned to bow down in obedience to Him or face His wrath, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."¹⁵

Psalms 45 was written for a wedding ceremony, but it obviously prophesies the Messiah, the King of Kings as being "fairer than the sons of men... God has blessed You

¹⁰ *Psalms 89:38-39, 46* (cf. *Deuteronomy 29:22-26*)

¹¹ *Psalms 125:3*

¹² *Psalms 50:3*

¹³ *Psalms 110:5-6* (cf. *2:9, 45:5, 46:6-9, 50:3, 68:21-23, 96:13, 98:9*)

¹⁴ *Psalms 110:1,4* (cf. *Hebrews 5:6,10, 7:17,21, Zech 3:8, 6:12-13*)

¹⁵ *Psalms 2:12*, cf. *Psalms 102:13, 25-27*, (cf. *Hebrews 1:10-12*)

forever... Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom."¹⁶ In this psalm the Messiah is also described as the Mighty One whose lips have had grace poured upon them, who is full of glory, majesty, truth, humility and righteousness. Psalm 72 adds peace and justice as character qualities of this righteous King who is the royal Son of God who will "endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations"¹⁷ and will "rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth."¹⁸ He will judge and provide blessing to all nations. Psalm 24 yearns for the Lord as Messiah- the King of Glory to take His rightful throne forever in Zion, entering through the gates of Jerusalem as He takes His rightful place on the throne, "Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty."¹⁹

The Messiah's Pain

Psalm 16 declares the Messiah to be the Holy One who will not see corruption or leave the psalmist in Sheol²⁰, which begs the questions, "How could the Messiah rescue people from Sheol, the place where the dead were kept until judgment? And "What does it mean that the Messiah will not see corruption- will He die but not stay dead?" Genesis gives us a hint of the pain of the Messiah in declaring that Satan "shall bruise His heel,"²¹ even though the Messiah will deal Satan a death blow, crushing His head. David prophesied a public execution of the Messiah in *Psalm 22*, written from the perspective of the One being executed: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? ...All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads...many bulls surround me...I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth; You lay Me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evil men has encircled Me, they have pierced My hands and My feet..." The entire psalm matches the public execution of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. J. Vernon McGee wrote, "In *Psalm 22* we have an X-ray which penetrates into His thoughts and into His inner life. In this psalm we see the anguish of His passion; His soul is laid bare. In the Gospels is recorded the historical fact of His death, and some of the events which attended His crucifixion; but only in *Psalm 22* are His thoughts revealed. It has been the belief of many scholars that actually the Lord Jesus, while on the cross, quoted the entire twenty-second psalm. I concur in this, because the seven last sayings that are given in the Gospels either appear in this psalm or the psychological background for them is here... We shall view the crucifixion of Christ from a new position-from the cross itself. And we can look with Him on those beneath His cross, as He was hanging there, and see what went on in His heart and in His mind. We shall see what occurred in His soul as He became the sacrifice for the sins of the world."²²

¹⁶ Psalm 45:2-6 (cf. Hebrews 1:8)

¹⁷ Psalm 72:5

¹⁸ Psalm 72:8

¹⁹ Psalm 24:7-10 (cf. Psalm 2:7, 2:12, 45:5, 11, 17, 72:1, 9, 11, 15, 97:8, 110:1,5)

²⁰ Job 14:13-15, 19:25-27

²¹ Genesis 3:15

²² McGee, J. Vernon, *Through the Bible Commentary Series, Psalms, Chapters 1-41*, p. 121-122, 1991, Nashville, TN.

J. Vernon McGee notes the last seven sayings of Jesus Christ while on the cross and how they relate to *Psalm 22*²³:

1. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" – Christ quoted these words from *Psalm 22:1* while on the cross. (*Mark 15:34, Matthew 27:46*)
2. "Father, forgive them" – *Psalm 22:7-8* speaks of the brutal mob mocking Christ on the cross, with the same words spoken in the gospels, yet Christ did not reply to their mocking. (*Matthew 27:29, 41-43, Luke 23:34*)
3. "Woman, behold your son"- *Verses 9-10* speak of Jesus Christ's mother, whom Jesus lovingly spoke to while He was crucified. (*John 19:26*)
4. "I thirst"- *verse 15* speaks of Christ's thirst while in the throes of death. (*John 19:28*)
5. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."- *verses 19-21* records Christ's plea for God's deliverance which was achieved as Christ had victory over death. (*Luke 23:46*)
6. "Today you shall be with Me in paradise."- *verses 25-26* speak of the great congregation of believers that praise Jesus Christ in heaven forever. The thief on the cross was a representative of that congregation to whom Christ promised eternal life upon seeing his faith. (*Luke 23:42-43*)
7. "It is finished"- *Verse 31* declares, "They [believers in Christ] will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this." What has He done? He paid the price for the sins of the world, once and for all, providing us His righteousness through His payment of our sin in our place. As Christ said on the cross, "It is finished!"- the price was paid in full for a people yet to be born- that is, you and me.

In *Psalm 109* we see foreshadowed Jesus Christ falling under the weight of the cross prior to crucifixion: "My knees give way from fasting; my body is thin and gaunt. I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads."²⁴

The Rejection of the Messiah by His Own Family, Friends and Nation

Psalm 118 declares the beauty of the day the Messiah would reveal Himself as King and His people would worship Him, "Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord...blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."²⁵ These very words were quoted by the masses as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, days before His crucifixion. In the same *Psalm 118* we read these amazing words, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous

²³ Ibid, pp. 122-132

²⁴ Psalm 109:24, 25, cf. John 19:17, Luke 23:26

²⁵ Psalm 118:19, 26

in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."²⁶ Jesus had revealed Himself as Messiah on this appointed day of the Lord, and He was rejected just days later by His own people, but in the midst of that very rejection and crucifixion, the Lord's will was accomplished and His Kingdom established forever. Yes, "it is marvelous in our eyes" that the rejection of Jesus Christ was the very thing that would satisfy God's justice and provide us the gift of forgiveness of sins and righteousness before a holy God.

Psalm 41 foreshadows the Messiah's rejection by His friend, "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."²⁷ This verse found its final fulfillment in Judas' betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.²⁸ In *Psalm 69* David's mourning over the multitudes who hate him finds its final and complete fulfillment prophetically in Jesus Christ, "Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me...zeal for Your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult You fall on Me...They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." _

Psalm 88 describes Jesus' perspective on His anguish moments before His death, "My soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, who are cut off from Your care. You have put Me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily upon me...You have taken from Me my closest friends and have made Me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim with grief."²⁹

Psalm 38 foreshadows His disciples forsaking Him and the pain of His crucifixion: "My back is filled with searing pain [reminding us of Jesus' flogged and tattered back rubbing up and down against the cross that took place every time Jesus inhaled and exhaled a breath of air]; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. All my longings lie open before You, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart pounds, my strength fails Me; even the light has gone from my eyes. My friends and companions avoid Me because of my wounds."³⁰ Faucett remarks about these verses fulfilled in part in David's suffering but fulfilled completely in Jesus Christ, "At the very time when my affliction would have required them to stand nearer and more steadily by me than ever, they are afraid of the danger that they would incur by seeming to take part with me. While the enemies are near, the friends are far. So in the case of the Messiah."

Looking Back on Prophecy Before the Psalms

²⁶ Psalm 118:22-24, cf Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:7, Isaiah 8:14, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, 13:35, 19:38, John 12:13, Matthew 23:39, 21:9,

²⁷ Psalm 41:9, cf. 55:12

²⁸ John 13:18-19, Zechariah 11:13

²⁹ Psalm 69:1-4, 7-12, 19-21 cf. John 1:11, 2:17, 7:5, 15:25, Romans 15:3, 19:34, Matthew 26:38-43, 27:34,48)

³⁰ Psalm 88:3-8, John 16:32

The Israelite, upon becoming aware of his sin, was required "to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven. It is a guilt offering; he has been guilty of wrongdoing against the Lord."³¹ Through Christ's crucifixion, the sins of the world were completely paid for, once and for all. Genesis foreshadows Christ's atonement death in Abraham offering Isaac, "your son, your only son."³² The Passover lamb and tabernacle sacrifices for sins likewise point to the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The sacrificial lamb was always required to be a spotless, unblemished lamb with no broken bones. The Apostle John quotes Psalm 34 in regard to Jesus' death occurring without any bones broken, "He protects all His bones, not one of them will be broken."³³

God's justice demanded a price to be paid for sin: death. The Messiah speaks through David in *Psalms 40* by saying, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire but My ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come- it is written about Me in the scroll.'³⁴ The Messiah, Jesus Christ came as the final sacrifice as written in the scroll, who was pierced for our sins- He willingly became a servant of God even unto death on the cross. The sacrifices of bulls and goats could not ultimately remove sins, but merely foreshadowed a final sacrifice that would be made that would completely pay the price.

The Messiah is Our Savior

Psalm 72 proclaims that salvation to the needy (and is that not all of us?) comes through the Messiah, "All kings will bow down to Him and all nations will serve Him. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death."³⁵ Through the Messiah salvation has come to the Gentiles (non-Jews) as well, as prophesied in *Psalms 87*: "I will record Rahab [Egypt] and Babylon among those who acknowledge Me- Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush- and will say, 'This one was born in Zion.' Indeed, of Zion it will be said, 'This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High Himself will establish her.'"³⁶ Rahab [Egypt], and Babylon were two of Israel's chief enemies- how amazing that the good news of Jesus Christ would touch lives all over the world that salvation would be found in Christ to men and women everywhere.

The Messiah Gives us Hope of Eternal Life

The Psalms declare the resurrection hope we have in the Messiah, "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay."³⁷ Just as Jesus Christ rose

³¹ Psalm 38:7-11, cf. Luke 23:49, Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40, Matthew 26:56, John 16:32

³² Fausset, A. R. A commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, Vol. III. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961, p. 184, as Quoted in McDowell, Josh, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, p. 188, Here's Life Publishers, Inc. 1999.

³³ Leviticus 5:17-19, cf. 1:4-5, 3:1-2, 4:1-4, 20

³⁴ Genesis 22:12,16,18

³⁵ Psalm 34:20, cf. Exodus 12:46, John 19:36, Numbers 9:12

³⁶ Psalm 40:6-7, cf. Hebrews 10:5-10

³⁷ Psalm 72:13

from the dead victorious, so we can trust that He will raise us up in the last day to eternal life with Him. *Psalm 112* foreshadows the day of Pentecost where believers in Jesus Christ first received His gift of the Holy Spirit: "He has scattered abroad His gifts to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be lifted high in honor."³⁸ David proclaimed in *Psalm 73* the blessings of having the Holy Spirit inside of Him and the glories of seeing Christ in the next life, "You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me into glory."³⁹ *Psalm 68* declares the glorious day that the Old Testament saints would be set free from the underworld of Sheol to reign with Christ forever in heaven: "When You ascended on high, You led captives in Your train; You received gifts from men, even from the rebellious- that You, O Lord God, might dwell there. Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death."⁴⁰ Because of His great confidence in the Lord's salvation, David could proclaim, "And I- in righteousness I will see Your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing Your likeness."⁴¹ Yet to the wicked who reject the Messiah, judgment awaits, "On the wicked He will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot."⁴²

Jesus' Use of the Psalms

Jesus frequently quoted the Psalms to open people's eyes to see He was the Christ, God become man, who would preach in parables⁴³, be rejected by the Jewish leaders, and then crucified, buried, resurrected and ascend into heaven. After entering Jerusalem days before His crucifixion, religious leaders attempted to trap Jesus in His words. He told them this parable, quoting *Psalm 118* at the end of it:

“A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, “What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.” But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. “This is the heir,” they said. “Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.’

“When the people heard this, they said, “May this never be!”

“Jesus looked directly at them and asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written [*Psalm 118*]: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?’

³⁸ Psalm 87:4-6, cf. 117:1

³⁹ Psalm 16:10, cf. Job 14:13-15, 19:25-27

⁴⁰ Psalm 112:9, cf. 2 Corinthians 9:9

⁴¹ Psalm 73:24, cf. 139:7

⁴² Psalm 68:17-20, cf. Ephesians 4:8

⁴³ Psalm 17:15, cf. 49:15, 37:28, 49:15, 50:4-5,

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

“The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest Him immediately, because they knew He had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.”⁴⁴

The people listening to Jesus didn't at first realize that the vineyard was Israel, and that God had sent various prophets to the Israelites whom they had abused. Last of all He sent His Son, and as prophesied in Psalm 118, they rejected Him as well. Once the religious leaders got the point of the story- that it pertained to their rejection of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, they sought all the more to kill Him.

The Apostles Use of the Psalms

Forty days after Jesus Christ had died and risen, the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and Peter stood up and preached about Jesus Christ who died for their sins and rose again- and that they were eyewitnesses to all these events. He used the Psalms to drive his point home: “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death on the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him. David said about Him: ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence.’ [Psalm 16:8-11]

“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did His body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact...David did not ascend into heaven, and yet he said⁴⁵, ‘The LORD said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”’ [Psalm 110:1]

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

⁴⁴ Psalm 11:6, Psalm 25:5

⁴⁵ Matthew 13:35, Psalm 78:2

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Conclusion:

One person once quipped, “The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.” This is certainly true regarding Jesus being revealed in the Psalms. An open heart can find Jesus Christ in nearly every Psalm! Even Jesus’ name, Yeshua, which means “salvation” is found throughout the Psalms, such as *Psalm 25*⁴⁶, “You are the God of my salvation (Yeshua), on You I wait all the day.”⁴⁷ Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for your salvation? As Peter later preached in *Acts 4*⁴⁸, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”⁴⁹ He is coming back to judge the world in righteousness! Let Him be your salvation today!

In Christ’s Love,

Mike Porter

⁴⁶ Luke 20:9-19, Psalm 118:22

⁴⁷ Acts 2:22-38

⁴⁸ Acts 4:12

⁴⁹ Psalm 25:5

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