

Innocent

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[0:00] Psalm 22 on page 548 of your Bibles. Page 548. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted, they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued, in you they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads.

He trusts in the Lord, let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him. Yet you are he who took me from the womb.

[1:06] You made me trust you at my mother's breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.

Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me. They open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a pot's herd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws.

You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me, a company of evildoers encircles me. They've pierced my hands and feet, I can count all my bones.

They stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far off.

[2:09] O you, my help, come quickly to my aid. Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the mouth of the lion. You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen.

I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel.

For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him. For from you comes my praise in the great congregation.

My vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.

[3:18] All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship. Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him.

It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it. The second reading is from John 19, starting from verse B, and it goes to John 19, verse 30.

So they took Jesus, and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross.

It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, where Jesus was crucified near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

[4:34] So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the king of the Jews, but rather, This man said, I am king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

So they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture, which says, They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

So the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus, where his mother was, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene, When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold, your son.

Then he said to the disciple, Behold, your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

[5:54] A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch, and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, It is finished.

And he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit. Well, do keep that open. As Jake said, My name is Andy.

I'm the youth and children's worker here. It's great to be here. Let's pray as we come to God's word. Amen. Heavenly Father, as we come to your word, please speak to us powerfully, and give us hearts to receive it.

Amen. Now, it's sometimes the case that some people in their dying moments manage some form of gallows humor.

So Oscar Wilde famously known to have said, Either that wallpaper goes, or I do. James W.

Rogers, a convicted murderer, when asked if he had any last requests before facing death by firing squad, said, Bring me a bulletproof vest.

[7:02] Or famously, General John Sedgwick, facing enemy shooters in the American Civil War, said to his soldiers, Don't worry, they couldn't hear an elephant at this distance.

And he was shot. Mid-sentence. But most last words aren't dark, gallows humor, but quite sad. Overcome with the futility of it all, of death.

It's all over. It's finished. So then, what are we to make of Jesus' famous last words? They're there in verse 30 of our passage.

Have a look down. Jesus said, It is finished. Just one word in the original. Tetelestai.

One word. Is that all? Bit of an anti-climax. But what is finished, exactly? What was his tone?

[8:03] Was this a defeated politician, begrudgingly congratulating the opposition? Or is there something more going on?

Well, John gives us details in the run-up to this to help us answer these questions. And to tell us what is going on. What is Jesus' death about? What is being finished? And his aim is spelt out in chapter 20, verse 31.

If you turn over the page, John says, These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

That's why John includes all these details. Strikingly, these details, he doesn't say much about Jesus' physical suffering. Perhaps he didn't have to. People knew the gory details.

People knew how barbaric death on a cross actually was. But instead, John zooms in on a sign and some gambling. Now, in the midst of a gruesome crucifixion, it seems also almost trivial.

[9:20] Yet these details are crucial to understanding what is happening, what is being finished. There's an outline of where we're going on the back of your service sheet, so do follow that.

Firstly, John wants us to see that on the cross, Jesus is proclaimed God's king to the world. Jesus is proclaimed God's king to the world.

So Jesus' kingship is a theme that's running all throughout this crucifixion account. At the start of chapter 19, the soldiers gave Jesus a crown of thorns, a purple robe to wear, and sarcastically shatered, Hail, king of the Jews!

And now, verse 17, have a look down. He carries his cross out to Golgotha, and he's crucified. He would have been stripped and nailed to a cross beam, then lifted up and fixed to a vertical post in the ground.

And as he is dying in agony, the cameras zoom in on that sign. Look down at verse 19. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross.

[10:35] It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

It was Roman custom for the crime of a crucified person to be fastened to the cross for all to see and read it. It was the warning from the Roman Empire.

This is what happens if you follow suit, if you do what they did. And so Pilate has that sign inscribed. What's Jesus' crime? Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.

This is not Pilate personally coming to his senses about Jesus' identity, but he's wanting to humiliate the Jews and Jesus.

Is this the best you've got for a king? Is this the best you can do? But Pilate, ironically, speaks better than he knows, because Jesus is indeed God's king.

[11:38] And in writing this in three languages, Pilate is proclaiming Jesus' kingship to the world. Jacob from Jerusalem passes by and reads it in Aramaic, the language of the locals.

Luigi is from Rome and he's on holiday and he reads it in Latin, the official language. And Ariana from Athens is on a business trip walking by and reads it in Greek, the language spoken throughout the Roman Empire.

Jesus proclaimed king to the world, to the nations, when Queen Elizabeth was crowned in 1953, it was watched by 27 million people crowding around TV sets and more millions of people worldwide. It was an international event. And here we see Jesus being crowned God's king. And this is an international event for all nations and for all time.

But instead of walking up a red carpet in Westminster Abbey with archbishops accompanied by a choir, God's king walks up a hill to Golgotha with soldiers accompanied by shouts of crucify.

[12:54] If you would call yourself a Christian here this morning, then John wants us to see that we've got the right man. We've made the right investment. You see, Pilate wants to humiliate the Jews and they take the bait.

Have a look at verse 21. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the king of the Jews but rather this man said I am king of the Jews.

Now, we might encounter that same view from others in the world today. You can't say that this is true but just your opinion, your interpretation.

Jesus was honestly mistaken perhaps. But Jesus is proclaimed God's powerful king right at the moment of his complete weakness as he dies in agony on a cross.

To the world and maybe to some of us here this morning, Jesus and Easter are utterly irrelevant to life now. A chance to eat chocolate and have a long week off work, a weekend off.

[14:02] But if Jesus really is God's king to the world, then he is totally relevant to today. He's relevant to my life, to this week coming.

And all of us need to decide what we make of him. And if he is God's king, then the right response is to come to him and submit to him as that king.

So firstly then, on the cross, Jesus is proclaimed God's king to the world. And then the camera zooms away from the sign and in on some soldiers gambling.

And John wants to see next that on the cross, Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. Look down at verse 23 with me.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts.

One part for each soldier, also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

[15:09] So they said to one another, let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be. It was custom of the day that the soldiers who executed someone and took the clothes of the crucified person as a kind of work bonus.

And so if you ask them why they were dividing the clothes up, they would say it's part of the job. It's part of the deal. But something bigger is going on here.

Have a look at verse 24. This was to fulfill the scripture, which says, they divided my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.

The soldiers had no interest in the Old Testament. But God is working through the minute detail of history, in particular here, Psalm 22, to fulfill the Old Testament.

Please turn back to Psalm 22 that was read earlier. It's on page 548. Psalm 22 is a psalm of King David written a thousand years before Jesus, before the cross was even invented.

[16:32] And yet, strikingly, it sounds very much like Jesus' crucifixion. The cry in verse 1, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Verse 7, all who see me mock me. They make mouths at me and they wag their heads. He trusts in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him for he delights in him.

Verse 15, my strength is dried up like a pot's herd. My tongue sticks to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death for dogs encompass me.

A company of evildoers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me. And then, verse 18, they divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.

This is what John is picking up on. The Old Testament promised God's people peace and security and a right relationship with God and it focused in on one man who would come.

[17:39] one man, a king descended from David who would achieve it. And at the cross, John wants us to see that God is orchestrating events.

He is totally in control, bringing this to fruition. He's fulfilling this through Jesus. God's king is following in the line of David who went through that suffering, went through David's experience experience to show he is that king to come.

Now, if Prince Charles ever does become king, he will be crowned on King Edward's chair. He will be given the symbols of kingship, the orb, the scepter and the crown.

They are symbols that he is following in the line of kings and queens before him. And likewise, at the cross, Jesus' suffering is a symbol that he follows in the line of King David.

He is that promised one to come. The whole of human history has been building up to this moment in this place. As Jesus is stripped, humiliated, his clothes divided and he's dying in agony, he is fulfilling the Old Testament by showing he is that king in the line of David who will deliver that peace and security and a right relationship with God for his people.

[19:07] Now, all this presses home to us that Jesus' death was not a mistake. It's not just a miscarriage of justice or a political power play. Almost every Easter, there's a new documentary claiming new evidence about the first Easter that has been discovered, new interpretations.

Last year, it was a turn of the actor Hugh Bonneville from Downton Abbey and Paddington fame to visit Jerusalem and interview scholars with their new interpretations of what happened and why Jesus died.

But we can have confidence that we have John's authorised version. John, an eyewitness account, but also the official interpretation of events.

that God is in control and he's bringing everything together to fulfil the Old Testament promises he made. Also, chapter 20, verse 31, we may believe Jesus is the Christ.

We need not look anywhere else. His death was the set and published plan of God fulfilled in the minute detail of history. So at the cross, Jesus fulfils the Old Testament.

[20:24] And lastly, this fulfilment is again pressed home in John 19, 28 to 30. As thirdly, on the cross, Jesus finishes his work of salvation.

Jesus finishes his work of salvation. Please turn back to John 19 and look down at verse 28. Verse 28. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfil the scripture, I thirst.

A jar full of sour wine stood there. So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Three times in these verses we get finished, fulfil, finished.

All of these, the same word, tetelestai, the sense of accomplishment. But again, what is being accomplished? Well, it's the fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament.

[21:33] Because this king who came to be crowned came to suffer and die for sin in our place. We thought about Isaiah 53 a bit last week.

It speaks about the suffering king, the servant who had come to take God's punishment for our sin in our place. Isaiah 53 verses 5 and 6 says this, But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. So the Bible teaches that all of us are like sheep have gone astray, have turned our backs on God.

We want to be in charge instead to go our own way. And yet God promised a way back. And Jesus himself knew that this was his mission to accomplish.

[22:43] That suffering, the punishment, that our sin and rejection of God deserves. That eternal death and separation from God. Jesus himself declares that when he was arrested in John 18 verse 11 he knows this.

He said to Peter, Put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? Not to put up a fight but to know he's going to drink the cup of God's judgment on sin.

And he does so on the cross. You see, others who died on a cross suffered longer than Jesus but no one suffered more. Because as he hung there he's taking on the full weight of God's judgment on sin.

The Lord was laying on him the iniquity of us all. And so verse 28 Jesus knows it's done. Mission accomplished.

The cup is empty. He's drunk it. And so verse 30 he remains fully in control of events as he bows his head and gives up his spirit.

[23:59] Tetelestai. Now in Egypt archaeologists once unearthed papyrus fragments dating back to the second century they turned out to be very boring fragments actually of tax receipts of people paying and transporting goods across the desert roads.

But across these receipts was written Tetel short for Tetelestai it has been paid. The account is settled.

Well as Jesus died on the cross he shouts that same word. Sin has been paid in full. Our account with God is settled.

The way back to God is secure. And if you are a Christian here today then that is wonderful truth to hold on to. As Charles Spurgeon said there is no mortgage on the saints.

There's no future repayment to keep up to be demanded. Our sin has been fully paid for. Just think if that was not the case.

[25:06] If Jesus had not paid the full penalty there would still be judgment left for us to pay off. Actually this is essentially what Roman Catholicism teaches.

That Jesus death on the cross was not enough. We need to finish the work ourselves through our own good works. But then comes the crushing burden. Have we done enough?

The crushing burden of guilt from sin still weighing down of us. If we're each of us trying to earn our way back to God then that burden is always going to be there.

Have I done enough? Have I got that assurance? But wonderfully from the lips of Jesus we get the liberating truth.

because of his death alone across our sin is stamped paid. Perhaps for some of the past sins of the past weigh heavy on our consciences.

[26:11] Well if we belong to Jesus across that sin Jesus stamped paid. Perhaps there's a sinful habit that we keep battling. That permanent cloud hangs over us.

Well if we belong to Jesus across that sin is stamped paid. P-I-F paid in full. John is writing that we may have life in his name and wonderfully this is life that has been secured both now for the future and for now.

There's no record of sin that will stop us entering God's presence in heaven. And there's nothing stopping us now from enjoying God as our heavenly father.

So it gets to the end of a busy day. Whatever you've managed or failed to do that day you lay your head on your pillow and you can remember it is finished.

The most important things are already done on your to-do list. Pay for my sin. Restore my relationship with God. Both are crossed off or ticked off, if that's your way, in Jesus.

[27:28] And so we can wake up each morning not with the crushing burden of all that needs to be done that day. The overwhelming thought, but the liberating thought that even if the day is hard or a complete write-off, it is still finished.

Sin has still been paid for 2,000 years ago. And if you wouldn't call yourself a Christian here this morning, then this is the great news of the Christian faith.

Today could be a day of eternal significance. We can't pay our debt off of sin to God ourselves. It's a crushing burden and we have no assurance of whether it's done, whether it's finished.

Yet anyone can leave here this morning completely forgiven by turning to Jesus, submitting to God's King, trusting in his death alone to take away our sin.

So as we close then, Jesus' famous last words, not a cry of defeat, of despair, but of victory and accomplishment.

[28:42] John gives us the official interpretation. Jesus is God's King proclaimed to the world, all part of God's plan as he fulfills the Old Testament and finishes his work of salvation as he dies in our place for our sin.

It is finished. Sin has been paid for in full. Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for that liberating truth that it is finished, that Jesus has paid for our sin.

He sacrificially gave up his own life for us out of love. We thank you for your great love for us shown in that. Please help us now to have assurance for the future of sins forgiven.

Amen.