Two Assemblies Around One Cross

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[0:00] We pray that all of scripture is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible word. It's God's powerful word for you, his people. And it pierces where no man can touch.

We pray that as we hear God's word, that it will serve his purpose in our lives. Psalm 22. To the chief musician set to the deer of the dawn, a Psalm of David.
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my groaning? Oh, my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear.
And in the season of night, I am not silent. But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you.
They trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were delivered. They trusted in you and were not ashamed. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people.
[1:05] All those who see me ridicule me. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head, saying, he trusted in the Lord. Let him rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

But you are he who took me out of the womb. You made me trust while on my mother's breasts. I was cast upon you from birth. From my mother's womb, you have been my God.
Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me. Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.
They gape at me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax. It has melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue clings to my jaws. You have brought me to the dust of death, for dogs have surrounded me.
[2:12] The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look at me and stare at me.

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far from me. O my strength, hasten to help me.
Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen. You have answered me.
I will declare your name to my brethren. In the midst of the assembly, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you descendants of Jacob, glorify him and fear him.
All you offspring of Israel, for he has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor has he hidden his face from him. But when he cried to him, he heard.
[3:16] My praise shall be of you in the great assembly. I will pay my vows before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him will praise the Lord.

Let your heart live forever. And all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord. And all the families of the nations shall worship before you.
For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship. All those who go down to the dust shall bow before him.
Even he who cannot keep himself alive. A posterity shall serve him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation.
They will come and declare his righteousness to a people who will be born. That he has done this. The word of the Lord for the people of God.
[4:17] Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

No word of God shall be void of power. Let's pray. Amen. Oh Lord, we ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit through Psalm 22, Jesus Christ, God the Son in the flesh, that he will be lifted up.

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Please help me to proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified to your people. Amen. Amen. Well, through our Friday night Bible study and discussion, Sinclair Ferguson's The Whole Christ, I've been meditating a lot on this.
How my, maybe our motives for calling ourselves Christians are going to worship God on Sunday mornings. Our motives may not always be pure.
We can so easily trick ourselves. Even if we wouldn't say it out loud, there's a part of us still holding on to this. That if I do, I might feel better.
[5:44] If I do, I might get peace. If I do, I might experience more joy or more hope. If I do, God might forgive that sin.

If I do, then at least I'll know that I did something. I'm so convicted and convinced, as Ferguson put it, that the gospel is not what we experience.
That's the effect or the benefit of the gospel. The gospel is Jesus Christ, his person and his work. We too easily chase the benefits rather than the benefactor.
The effects rather than the cause. The blessings rather than the source. Even the reasons or the hope of the Christian faith rather than the object of our faith.
Jesus Christ himself. Jesus Christ. So I've been praying that today in a special way because of how special Psalm 22 is, that our focus will not be on ourselves.
[6:54] Not even on church. On what you or I, definitely not on what the preacher will do. But on Jesus Christ. It's been my prayer leading up to this moment that we would spiritually be gathered around Christ.

And gathered around his cross. So beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus. Please pray for me as I will do my best to show you in Psalm 22.
To two assemblies. Two different assemblies around one cross. Two assemblies around one cross. On the book table there are some sermon notes. I'm really just going to work through this psalm in order. One of the other handouts is a two-sided sheet that shows all of Psalm 22 being referenced and fulfilled in the New Testament.
If you would like to study this more, talk more with me about that, I welcome that. Some have tried to imagine a fulfillment of Psalm 22 in David's life, because he is the psalmist, as a first-level context.
[8:10] But I have come to the same conclusion as many others, including James Montgomery Boyce, who said that it simply does not exist. There is no way that David or any king of Israel experienced what's described in Psalm 22.

Crucifixion was not invented until 500 years after David's life. And when you look at verse 16. It says, This psalm can only be read looking forward.
God gave to David, as his prophet, this revelation of what God would accomplish through the Messiah, the promised anointed king.
So what we have in Psalm 22 is the suffering and the prayers of this Messiah. A commentator named Christopher Ashe wrote, Anyone who accepts the authority of the New Testament must read Psalm 22 as fulfilled in Christ.
Now, if you were here last week or you're looking at the Bible in front of you there, you notice that Psalm 21 was a psalm of victory.
[9:29] So how do we go from victory in Psalm 21 to such intense suffering in Psalm 22? The best answer is that the victory is before the Messiah all along.

It's guaranteed. It's guaranteed. It's secured. But Psalm 22 is needed for us, his people, who will receive the benefits of his victory to show us how costly was this salvation of God's people.
It shows us how much the Holy God hates sin. And how wondrous is God's abundant grace in Jesus Christ to save sinners like you and me.
Charles Spurgeon wrote, If there's any passage before which we ought to take off our shoes like Moses, it's Psalm 22.
For we here stand on holy ground. Psalm 22 gives us the most clear, intense, graphic account of Christ's crucifixion in all of the Bible.
[10:38] Now, would you look at Psalm 22 and scan your eyes over verses 1 all the way through verse 21.

This is the first part, the first section of Psalm 22. It's about two thirds of the whole passage. And these verses from 1 to 21, they show us three sections that contain two parts each.

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In these verses, we have a lament first, followed by a response to that lament. The lament is this person, this coming Messiah, crying out and exclaiming what he is suffering.
But that in each case, the Holy Spirit strengthens him and gives him an expression of faith in the midst of that pain. We're getting this through the poetic and the idioms of David set in his time period.
What the Holy Spirit caused him to see and to write down by faith. And it describes what the Messiah will undergo. So I want to walk us through these, the three expressions of lament, these assaults that the Messiah suffers, as well as the expressions of faith that he uses to respond to each of these.
[12:06] Someone called this like a throbbing alteration back and forth from one to the other throughout these 21 verses. Here's the first assault, starting at verse 1.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The Messiah crying out, God, why have you forsaken me?
These are terrifying words. He says, my God, my God. He repeats it twice in verse 1, then again in verse 2. Oh my God, I cry. And then scan your eyes down to verse 10.
It says, from my mother's wounds you have been my God. He's emphasizing my God. It's a way of using poetic language to underline, to make bold, to draw a sense of urgency to what he's going through.
To say, my God. This is personal. And it's a covenantal appeal. The Messiah is evoking God's promise.
[13:14] God had said in Exodus 6, 7. You shall be my people and I shall be your God. That's covenantal language. But he says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That's another deliberate covenantal term. Deuteronomy 31, 6. God says again to his people, I will never leave you nor forsake you.
He's quoting God's own words back to God. To forsake means to desert someone, to abandon them, to depart or to withdraw from them.
To forsake means to break covenant. He asks in verse 1, why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my groanings? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime to you, but you do not hear.
And in the night season, I am not silent. This word for crying, the way he's using it, it means a scream of agony.
[14:20] And he talks about a season of darkness followed by a season of light crying throughout that time. Of course, with the light of the New Testament and the work of Jesus being accomplished, we see our Lord Jesus.

And it's the noon hour, the brightest moment of the day, the brightness. Of the sun shining and then the darkness covers the earth. And he's crying out to God.
Psalm 22 is clearly on the mind of our Lord. While this first assault is the most intense of the three, God is accused of forsaking his covenant to his Messiah and to his people.
And we have to wrestle with this. Our Lord Jesus Christ, one person, the God man. One person with two natures, divine and human.
Truly divine, truly human. And as our Lord hung on the cross, his human nature. Not receiving any help from his own divine nature.
[15:38] Nor from God, the eternal God, creator of all. Suffering in the place of sinful men and women and boys and girls who he's redeeming.

Because we need a mediator who is truly God and truly man. No other mediator would do for you and me. How could a creature pay the eternal creator what the creator is due?
There's no way. And yet, how could we have a redeemer that would unite us to himself if we were not made himself a man? He needs to be truly divine and truly human.
And according to his human nature, he cries out, Why have you forsaken me? Well, here comes the first answer of the faith. He responds to this first hellish accusation that God is a covenant breaker with a counter argument.
What he says is this. He says God is holy and worthy of trust. Look at verse three. But you, God, are holy.
[16:51] When you don't know how else to pray, brothers and sisters, declare who God is back to him. You've done this, haven't you? We don't know what else to pray.

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We tell God what we know he's revealed of himself. Because God is holy and his ways are other than ours, his wisdom is higher and his purpose is greater.
And we trust this. God, you are holy. He says in verse three, God, you are enthroned in the praises of Israel, your people.
And why is it that God's people praise God? In verse four, he reminds himself, Our fathers trusted in you. They trusted and you delivered him.
Do you hear the word he's repeating already? In verse four, The grounds for our hope in the present is God's faithfulness in the past. Look at verse five.
[17:47] They cried out to you and they were delivered because they trusted in you. They were not ashamed. So he reminds himself, You can trust God.

He is holy. God does not forsake his covenant because he is holy. He is trustworthy. That's who he is. Well, we will never experience anything in this life close to what our Lord experienced on the cross.
He did this to fulfill all righteousness, to give us a gift that we can receive now from God in the same way. There are times when we feel forsaken. We feel distant from God.
We feel like we're crying out and God is silent. We need to tell God. We need to preach to ourself. God is holy and put ourself once again in the middle of his people because he's enthroned on the praises of his people.
We need to remember his past faithfulness. And he's given this so clearly in his word. We study his word to remind us of who he is. He is holy and he is trustworthy.
[19:01] So especially when we're feeling forsaken or cold or dry, we trust our good God. Well, next we come to the second assault that the Messiah has prophesied to suffer.

Notice how beginning in verse six, what he suffers, it moves from thoughts about God afflicting him to people afflicting him. Some have said this, this is actually God's gracious ministry to the Messiah. It's better. It's better to suffer people treating me badly than to feel like God has forsaken me. Look at verse six. He says, I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people.
All those who see me ridicule me. They shoot out the lip. That's a way of saying they show contempt at me with their mouths.
They shake the head. What they say. Notice how in verse eight, what they say it targets. What God most recently ministered to him.
[20:11] Remember, the first response of faith was to trust God. And now in verse eight, they were making fun of that. Look, he trusted in the Lord. Let God rescue him.

Let God deliver him since he delights in God. And now comes the second answer of faith. I too have learned that I can trust in God, not only by remembering God's faithfulness to others in the past. But look at verse nine. God, you are the one who took me out of the womb. You made me to trust you while on my mother's breasts. I was cast upon you from birth and my mother's womb.
You ever since then, you have been my God. He's claiming that covenant belonging to God. Once again, I have trusted you because you have always held me and always been my God.
And he trusts this asking God what he needs. In verse 11, be not far from me for trouble is near for there is none to help. The Messiah will say what's coming for me is very bad and I'm all alone.
[21:19] So, God, be not far away. You have always been near me. Be near me still in this hour when I need you most.

Now comes the third assault. What's described here is extreme violence. So, he describes his torturers as beasts.
In verse 12, he says, Many bulls have surrounded me. Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They gape at me with their mouths. Literally says that they opened their mouths at me like a raging and a roaring lion.
But notice how even in this lament, his suffering has shifted down from spiritual suffering to more physical suffering.
In verse 14, I am poured out like water. All my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It has melted within me. Verse 15, my strength is dried up like a pot shirt.
[22:26] Here's a man dying in his final moments. My tongue clings to my jaws. You have brought me to the dust of death. Verse 16, for dogs have surrounded me.

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. So, this depiction of his torturers as beasts, he describes them as bulls of Bashan.

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Likely powerful, wealthy Jews. And as dogs. Dogs is the nickname for Gentiles. Even when Jesus interacted with that woman from the coastlands.
She said, won't the dogs even get a scrap? You see, what's before the Messiah is an utter rejection. And a mocking by Jews and Gentiles alike.
The powerful of the whole world against him. And his bones and his skin. On the cross, our Lord Jesus cried for thirst.
[23:34] We read of this in John. And the apostle says that the reason Jesus did this was to fulfill all scripture. And John is there watching the Lord.

This shows us that it was all scripture. That was on the mind of Christ. Has it been fulfilled?
Has everything the spirit breathed out must be accomplished? Have I done it all? We read in verse 16, they pierced my hands and my feet.
In verse 17, I can count all my bones. They look at me and stare. They divide my garments among them.
For my clothing, they cast lots. Naked. Mocked. Degraded. Less than a man.
[24:33] And here comes the third answer of faith. In verse 19. But you, O Lord, do not be far from me.

O my strength, hasten to help me. Deliver me from the sword. My precious life from the power of the dog. Verse 21.
Save me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen. You notice how they're described as fierce.
The horns of the oxen. These bulls of Bashan. A bunch of dogs coming around to devour him. Like lions' mouths full of sharp teeth opened at him.
They're fierce. But his description of himself is as one who is very frail. It's like they've trapped him and he's too weak to escape.
[25:37] And so he prays, God, in this moment, be near me. Ultimately, deliver me. Those who crucified Christ were powerful.

They were violent. They were ferocious. Did you catch how he describes himself? Look at verse 6. I am a worm. It was so beautiful to me to learn this. How the Hebrew word for worm in verse 6, throughout all of the Bible and the Old Testament, it's translated as crimson or scarlet 35 times.
The same word. Or it's translated as worm eight times. It's the exact same word. The reason for this is because this word is the name of a specific species of worm.
The body of this worm was used for scarlet dye in the ancient world. And that's why many times when the Torah uses the same word for scarlet that is dyed red, it's the same word for the worm from which they got that dye.
[26:53] In the instructions for building the tabernacle, for example, they were told to use blue, purple, and you could say worm, which would be scarlet worm. That's the color of the dye.

One commentator from a while back named Henry Morris wrote, When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again.
The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the lava were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. And as the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood from the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms.
The commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. Then he observes what a picture this gives of Christ dying on the tree, shedding his precious scarlet blood that he might bring many sons to glory.
Jesus Christ died for us that we might live through him. Psalm 22 6 describes a worm and gives this to us as a picture of Christ.
[28:18] That's the end of Morris's quote. So to the extent that Psalm 22 was on the mind of our Lord Jesus. As he was purchasing his people for himself.

We can only imagine him answering his own question. What must I do for my people to live? I must become a worm and die.
And this is what I will do. I'll become a worm. I am a worm and I will give up my life. I'll stain this cross red so my people can live.
Fulfilling Isaiah 1 verse 18. Where the Lord says, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.

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Your sins are worm. So my son will be a worm. So that you can be washed clean. Praise the Lord. Well now in Psalm 22 verse 21, the last part of that verse, there's a sudden and striking shift. [29:35] He says, you have answered me. The key changes from a heavy minor to a soaring major. The Messiah is moved emphatically from the depths of suffering to assurance of vindication with worldwide consequences.

That's what happens in the rest of the Psalm. Verse 22. I will declare your name to my brethren. In the midst of the assembly, I will praise you. Hebrews 2.12 quotes that verse as spoken by Christ. He says, I will declare your name to my brethren. And the whole assembly, the whole congregation will declare God's praise. We need to understand now who is part of this assembly.
Who does Jesus Christ call his brethren? In verse 23, he says, for you who fear the Lord, praise him. All you descendants, literally all you seed of Jacob, glorify him and fear him.
All you offspring of Israel. This tells us that Jesus Christ died to save many Jews. The principle of this passage and all the New Testament is this from Romans 1.16.
[30:52] The gospel must first be offered and proclaimed to the Jew, then to the Gentiles. And God will raise Jesus Christ after his death. He will hear his prayer.

And these Jews, these bulls of Bashan, these Israelites will behold him. And many will believe. And they will be raised up as missionaries from Judea.
Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria. Unifying all of God's people of the old covenant promise. And then to the ends of the earth. Until the islands and the coastlands hear the gospel.
The gospel is for the Jew first and then for the Gentiles. For all people of all nations. Because that's where it goes next. Look at verse 24. He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. See, God the Father saw the work of his Son. He saw his suffering. The servant who accomplished his mission. Remember in verse 1.
[31:52] Jesus Christ, according to his human nature, was crying out, Why have you forsaken me? And now we see in verse 24.

God never forsook him. He has not despised him. Would you look then? It says, God, he did not hide his face from him.
But when he cried, he heard him. Verse 24. Now verse 25. My praise shall be of you in the great assembly. I will pay my vows before those who fear God.
Verse 25. This assembly. It's the same word used back in verse 22. In verse 22, we have these dogs, these beasts, these open mouths with sharp fangs coming at him, described as a congregation or an assembly around the cross to devour Jesus.
But now Jesus says, God saw my suffering on the cross, and I will gather an assembly of those who fear God, and I will declare God's righteousness to them.
[33:02] Verse 26. He says, the poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him will praise the Lord, for your heart will live forever. Verse 27. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

There's the great escalation. It begins with Jesus Christ, the Messiah, declaring the name of God, revealing who God is. And then it ends with all nations, all families, and even those who are to come, gathering as his great assembly to praise this name of God, whom Jesus Christ has revealed.
You see this assembly gathered. You might ask the question, why does everyone, why does, was everyone from around the world, even those who hated him, who despised him, those poor sinners who deserve nothing, why do they get to be in God's holy presence?
And he answers this with verse 28. For the kingdom is the Lord's. And he rules over the nations. Why does God save all types of people?
Because he's the king. The kingdom is the Lord's. And that's what we see in verse 29. It's from one extreme to the other. All the prosperous, literally the fat or thriving of the earth, shall eat and worship.
[34:30] And all those who go down to the dust, or dust of the death, they shall bow before him. Even the skinny, those who are about to disintegrate, who have nothing, from the two extremes, all types of people, who can't even keep themselves alive, they are welcome too.

Jesus Christ is offered to all classes of people. And there will be some from all nations, all types, around his throne. Jesus Christ won't stop being offered to those who will meet him at his cross.

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While he will, he will be offered to every generation who will believe in him. Verse 30, a posterity shall serve him. They will recount of the Lord to the next generation. Even as he reigns from heaven, his name and his work will be proclaimed until every last soul he purchased for himself comes to faith.
I told you I wanted to show you two different assemblies. The first assembly in Psalm 22 was violent.
These were the raging beasts who hate and mock and torture the body of the Messiah. Notice in verse 16, he describes that assembly as ones who are surrounding him.
[35:50] It's the congregation of the wicked enclosing him. They're the ones who pierce his hands and his feet. The second assembly, in verse 22, he calls his family.

In verse 31, they come together to declare his righteousness. Literally, verse 31 says, they shall come, they shall tell to people being born of the righteousness of God.
I've thought about this, how around the cross, in history, the work of Jesus Christ being literally physically pierced to the cross, there were some mocking him.
And even in mocking him and seeing him die this torturous death, he was accomplishing their salvation. They would believe.
They would trust in Jesus Christ. Now for us, who are part of this second assembly, who he calls his family.
[37:15] We too pierced him and killed him. But this assembly is unmixed. It's the assembly of the church, the gathered congregation.

It's the ones who declare, in verse 31, he has done this. Literally, simply says, what he did.
Jesus interpreted this last phrase of Psalm 22 from the cross when he cried out in John 19, 30. It is finished. It's fulfilled.
It's accomplished. The work is done. It's the same word, finished, that Paul uses in 2 Timothy 4, 7. I have finished my course.
This was Jesus crossing the finish line for his mission to redeem a people for himself. John's account says, after Jesus cried that out, he bowed his head.
[38:19] So this second assembly that gathers around the cross also, we are the ones who accept the work in saving me is finished. A.W.

Tulzer told this story about a farmer and a carpenter. Both were simple men. The farmer was a believer and the carpenter was not. And the farmer was telling him about how Jesus Christ had finished his work and the carpenter came from a fleshly church background that thought he had to do more.
So the farmer ordered a gate be built for his farm and the carpenter built this wonderful gate, came and installed it, tested it, showed it to him and it was all perfect.
The farmer took an axe and started to whack and destroy this gate that he had just put up. So the carpenter asked him, what are you doing? And then he made the connection.
The carpenter said the work was finished, don't add to it. By adding to my work you're destroying it. And the farmer was willing to pay that price of a gate to help his friend see the work of Christ is finished for you.
[39:29] That's the second assembly. Do we believe Jesus' word or not? He says finished. We sing his dying breath has brought me life.

I know, you know personally for me. I know that it is finished. Jesus Christ finished his work to make sure that there was nothing keeping sinners like you and like me from him.
There's nothing. There's no experience, no feeling, no proving that you have repented enough or done enough or to go to Jesus.
Don't expect any of those effects until you are first united to Christ. Only union to Christ can cause you to repent. Only union to Christ can cause you and me to want to know God more.
Only union to Christ. There were two assemblies around the one cross of Jesus. The first gathered by sight only and the second gathers by faith.
[40:42] God more and the second of Christ. It's that one cross that brings heaven to earth. And this is where Christ is lifted up and he's offered to you and to me.

Don't mock him any longer. Don't despise him anymore. Leave that assembly. Come to the assembly of faith in Christ.

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Go to him. Let him hold you and trust that Jesus Christ did all for me. He did all for you who trust in him.
Let's thank him for our great salvation. Oh Lord we confess that it was my sin that held you there until it was accomplished.
It held you there because you would have all the reward of your suffering. You would bring a people to yourself and you would leave nothing between your people and yourself.
[41:49] Thank you that we can know God our creator through the one mediator Jesus Christ his person and his work. Our Lord Jesus Christ clothed in his glorious gospel for us.

We praise you. Amen.

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