

THE PSALM 22

PROPHECY

THE MESSIAH ON THE CROSS



THE PSALM 22 PROPHECY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Psalm Chapter 22 is an extraordinary passage of Scripture which describes in vivid detail the suffering and ultimate victory of Jesus Christ many centuries before the events would occur. This chapter, written by David, actually reads as if it were a first-person singular dictation from Jesus while He was hanging on the cross. As it is attributed to David, this passage would have been written an estimated eight hundred to one thousand years before the fact (around 1,000 B.C.¹), with its preexistence verified by its inclusion in the Greek Septuagint completed several centuries before Christ.²

Psalms 22 is an example of a multiple (or dual) reference prophecy, in which David is speaking concerning a near term situation in his own life, but yet the content acts as a type of a future ultimate fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ. In other words, David's sufferings foreshadowed the Messiah's future sufferings and death. In effect, David served as a prophetic "prototype" of Jesus Christ.

In fact, as we go through this prophecy it will become obvious that although David may have experienced some of these feelings emotionally or metaphorically, we know he never experienced some of them physically. What we mean is that at some point within this prophetic chapter, you can see that the language clearly begins to transcend

anything David experienced personally, and instead begins to vividly describe the actual physical experience of Christ while hanging on the cross. The Bible's use of prophecy – such as Psalm 22 – is an important evidence we look to that communicates to us the extradimensional origin of the Bible. Let's discuss this concept further...

The first thing we need to do is examine three epistemological anchor points that form the basis of our belief in the supernatural origin of the Bible.

Epistemology: The theory of knowledge, its method, its scope, and its limits. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion. It defines what we can actually know.³

So, let's examine the three points that form the basis of our epistemology...

-The Basis Of Our Epistemology

1. The Bible is a highly integrated message system.
2. The Bible contains an astonishing amount of prophecy.
3. The Bible contains intricately hidden subtleties encoded into the very text itself that clearly transcend the knowledge and intent of the human authors.

Note: We can't fully describe each of the following three points here, but to better understand what we mean by each, please consult the companion study entitled "The Basis Of Our Epistemology".

During this study, we will mainly be investigating Biblical content having to do with Points #1 and 2 – involving integration and prophecy. These two points help support each other. Biblical prophecy proves integration, and Biblical integration involves prophecy. One of the primary ways you can validate the Bible's extra-dimensional origin is through its continual use of prophecy. Let's define what we mean even more specifically...

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As we mentioned, Biblical prophecy proves the integration of the Bible. Integration is a proof of extra-dimensional authorship because of the following reason – the Bible is one continuous story written over a period of almost 1,500 years, by many human authors who mostly didn't know each other and weren't alive at the same time, and yet, we find that the themes and events in Scripture are woven together as one unified story. This points to a common Author who is behind it all, influencing and inspiring the human penmen who wrote down what they were inspired to say.

In other words, imagine your favorite novel or storybook...imagine you one day found out that the chapters were written by different people who mostly didn't know each other and weren't alive at the same time, over a period of 1,500 years...yet, the storyline was flawless, or, to use our term, integrated. Obviously, this is impossible – especially when the earlier chapters predict how the later chapters would turn out with amazing precision – and its predictions align with the record of human history. This points to a common Author outside of time who was guiding and inspiring the human writers to compose this unified story. This is what we mean by integration.

Let's talk more about prophecy for a moment before continuing. What exactly do we mean by prophecy, and how exactly does this prove anything?

The Bible repeatedly demonstrates its uniqueness by making a habit of describing history before it happens. This is what we mean by prophecy. And if this statement is true, it would require then that the author knew what was going to happen ahead of time, which obviously the human writers couldn't. This characteristic of prophecy is a method of authentication that is unique to the true Author (God), because He exists outside of the dimension of time altogether and enjoys a 100% success rate. In other words, we know the Bible cannot come from man – it must come from a Being outside of time itself.

So, we will find that prophecy is not just an odd curiosity - it's a demonstration that God is real, that He cares, and that He has chosen to reveal to us in advance what His plans are for the world, and for you and I personally. As we go through this study, keep in mind how

the content we will examine demonstrates our epistemological anchor-points.

Before examining a number of prophetic passages from Psalm 22 in detail, let's first read through this entire chapter...

¹ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

² O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

³ But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

⁴ Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

⁵ They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

⁷ All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

⁸ He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

⁹ But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

¹⁰ I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

¹¹ Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

¹² Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

¹³ They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

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¹⁷ I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

¹⁸ They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

¹⁹ But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

²² I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

²³ Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

²⁴ For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

²⁵ My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

²⁶ The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

²⁷ All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

²⁸ For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.

²⁹ All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

³⁰ A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

³¹ They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."

-Psalm 22

In the next chapter, we will examine ten specific prophecies from

segments of Psalm 22 and their later fulfillments as recorded in the New Testament.

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CHAPTER 2

TEN PROPHECIES FROM CHAPTER 22

Let's now begin our investigation of ten specific prophetic passages found within Psalm 22...

#1 - Psalm 22:1

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”

-Psalm 22:1

These are the identical words that Jesus said while on the cross approximately one thousand years later, recorded in Matthew 27:46...

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

-Matthew 27:46

Jesus Christ, verbalizing the anguish of His human experience, felt forsaken of the Father as He hung on the cross – suffering the wrath of

God against sin, and dying as the sinners' substitute. The Bible says in Galatians 3:13 (as the Apostle Paul quotes the Old Testament law in Deut. 21:22-23) that Jesus actually became a curse, and suffered under the curse of the Father while bearing our sin, so that we might be freed from the curse and given the blessing of eternal life through the Holy Spirit.

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"

-Galatians 3:13

In contexts, the word "tree" here refers to a wooden cross for crucifixion (Acts 5:30; 10:39, and 13:29). The concept of cursing and blessing in association with a tree is found in the larger narrative of Scripture, demonstrating the integration of the entire Biblical text, as well as prophetic typology.

In Genesis 3, Eve and then Adam eat fruit from a tree in the Garden of Eden, from which they were forbidden to eat. In Revelation 22:14, the eternal state includes those who eat from the Tree of Life. So, we see that...

- a tree was involved in the entry of sin into humanity (through the tree in the Garden),
- a tree was involved in the answer to sin for humanity (redemption through Christ's death on the cross), and
- a tree was involved in the ultimate removal of sin in the eternal state (through the Tree of Life).

So, we can very clearly see not only the prophetic at work in this passage (as we see David directly quoting the future words of the dying Savior while on the cross), but we can also notice the integration of Scripture (through not only those words, but also the strategic

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usage of the theme of the tree, which God employs to describe the story of Redemption throughout the story of Scripture – from the beginning, to the “middle,” to the ending).

#2 - Psalm 22:6

“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

-Psalm 22:6

This verse is an amazing prophecy in and of itself, but to capture the fullness of it, we have to look at the Hebrew text behind it. The Hebrew word translated as “worm” in our Bible finds its origin in the name of a very specific worm native to Israel. This word in Hebrew is “tola” (Strong’s #8438), also meaning scarlet or crimson.¹

Let’s discuss some of the main points regarding this “worm” and how it prophetically relates to the precise imagery of Christ’s work on the cross...

- Scarlet or crimson dye was made from a particular worm, the Kermes vermilio (the origin of the word “vermilion”) also known as the Coccus ilicis.
- The shells of this worm were used to make a red dye to color cloth.
- The Kermes vermilio would pierce the thin bark of twigs to suck the sap, from which it prepared a waxy scale to protect its soft body. The red dye is in this scale.
- When reproducing, the female climbs a tree where it bears the eggs; the larvae then hatch and feed on the body of the worm. It gives its life so others can live. It is of no use to humans unless it dies.

- A crimson spot is left on the branch of the tree; when the spot dries out in about three days, it changes to white as it flakes off.²

So, we have some key words we need to keep in mind as we continue... “pierce,” “tree,” “crimson,” “three days,” “white,” and the idea of one giving its life that others might live. This imagery is precisely representative of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. The parallels are overwhelming:

- Jesus Christ was pierced on a tree (the cross).
- Through the crucifixion, He was crushed like a worm under the wrath of God for our sins in order to extract a precious crimson substance, which was His sinless blood.
- This blood would then be symbolically applied to mankind as a precious dye to cover their sins. In other words, He died so that we might live.
- He then was in the grave for three days before resurrecting to make this redemption plan complete. Through His blood, He would wash us, covering our sins, and making us “white as snow.”

This entire concept is dramatically brought together for us in Isaiah 1:18, another well-known prophetic Scripture containing Messianic references:

“Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

-Isaiah 1:18

If it wasn't a great enough condescension for God to become a

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man, He then became likened unto a worm – and no man – in order to take upon Himself the sins of the world in order that we might be made free.

#3 - Psalm 22:7-8

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

-Psalm 22:7-8

This passage prophetically details the intense ridicule and humility Jesus Christ suffered willingly on the cross at the hands of His own creation. This was literally fulfilled in Matthew 27:39-44...

“And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,

‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’

And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.”

-Matthew 27:39-44 (ESV)

So, we can see that the gospel accounts record the humility of Christ and the ridicule He willingly endured at the hands of His own creation while on the cross. But the amazing thing here is that David –

through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost – prophetically recorded it eight hundred years ahead of time.

#4 - Psalm 22:9-10

“But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts.

I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.”

-Psalm 22:9-10

Jesus Christ is the only one who could rightfully say this. The New Testament records that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. He was born a sinless child, always righteous, always perfect, always trusting in God the Father, and exercising perfect obedience.

#5 - Psalm 22:11-13

“Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.”

-Psalm 22:11-13

The strong bulls of Bashan are spoken of because of their reputation in the Psalmist’s day as being the strongest and fiercest among bulls.³

This on the surface may be very appropriate imagery depicting the Roman soldiers who crucified Him, showing no mercy to their victims, but gouging them as a bull would. In other words, on its most superficial prophetic level, this would seem to anticipate the piercing of Jesus’ hands, feet, and side with the Roman nails and spear.

Additionally, a deeper understanding is that Bashan was not only

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the home of these bulls, but more importantly, it was the notorious home of the Rephaim. In the Bible, the Hebrew word Rephaim is not only used to designate the specific tribe of giant descendants of the Nephilim (the product of fallen angels comingling with human women) who lived in Bashan (Gen. 6:4, Num. 13:33, Josh. 13:12), but was also later used to poetically refer to the “undead” disembodied spirits of the Nephilim (Isa. 26:14), who became evil, unclean spirits upon the earth.

Jesus seemed to draw upon this idiom of Bashan to typify these evil demonic spirits who apparently were harassing Him as He suffered on the cross for our sins. Surely, they would have seen His death as a tremendous victory, not knowing He would resurrect and receive victory over the grave three days later!

#6 - Psalm 22:14

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

-Psalm 22:14

This verse was vividly fulfilled in the physical experience of the crucifixion. The first part, describing being “poured out like water” would seem to describe a state of total physical exhaustion, and could include the loss of fluid volume in the body due to excessive sweating, trauma, and blood loss.

His initial flogging alone could have been enough to induce the onset of hypovolemic shock. This occurs when a person loses twenty percent or more of the body’s blood supply. The symptoms of hypovolemic shock include nausea, profuse sweating, dizziness, confusion, and loss of consciousness.^{4 5 6} You can imagine how this sweating, dizziness, confusion, and loss of consciousness could give the feeling of “being poured out.”

The next three phrases also clearly portray the bodily experience of crucifixion. “All my bones are out of joint” illustrates the torturous

feeling of being stretched out on a rack. During crucifixion, it was common for the shoulders to be ripped out of joint due to the weight of the hanging body. The body would then sink lower, dislocating the wrists.⁷

The result is that the arms are extended at least 15 centimeters (6 in.) beyond their normal span of reach. This causes the body to hang in an extended, slumped position, which forces the chest cavity to protrude outward. The extended chest cavity allows for inhalation but makes exhaling nearly impossible.⁸

The next two phrases vividly portray the bodily experience of crucifixion as well – “my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” The difficulty surrounding exhalation leads to a slow form of suffocation. The decreased oxygen causes damage to the tissues, and the capillaries begin leaking watery fluid from the blood into the surrounding tissues. This results in a build-up of fluid around the heart (pericardial effusion) and lungs (pleural effusion). The collapsing lungs, failing heart, dehydration, and inability to get sufficient oxygen to the tissues essentially suffocate the victim. The decreased oxygen also damages the heart itself (myocardial infarction) which leads to cardiac arrest. In severe cases of cardiac stress – such as crucifixion – the heart can even burst, a process known as cardiac rupture. This seems to be what “my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels” could be referring to.^{9 10}

#7 - Psalm 22:15

“My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

-Psalm 22:15

As we just discussed, Jesus, while on the cross, was likely in a state of hypovolemic shock, causing him to experience intense thirst. Just at the end of the horrific event, John records that He shouted out, “I thirst” (Jn. 19:28). Following this, Jesus then said, “It is finished” and

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died (Jn. 19:30). This verse was fulfilled as Christ's strength left His human body in the experience of extreme thirst preceding death.

#7 - Psalm 22:16

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."

-Psalm 22:16

"Dogs" was a common Jewish term of insult when talking about Gentiles (Mt. 15:26). This passage anticipated the heathen Gentiles who would be surrounding the Messiah during His sufferings, which was fulfilled at the cross as the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus.

The second part of the verse – concerning the piercing of hands and feet – was precisely fulfilled in the crucifixion. Astonishingly, the practice of crucifixion was not even yet invented at the time of the writing of this prophecy, and would not become common in Israel until the Roman era.¹¹ Jesus' hands and His feet were pierced through to the cross as the wicked gathered around Him in ridicule (Jn. 20:25, Acts 2:23).

Note: Critics often try to cast doubt on the Hebrew behind the words translated "they pierced my hands and feet," claiming instead that it means "like a lion, they are at my hands and feet." The Hebrew words for "lion" and "pierced" are almost identical, and differ so slightly that they could easily be confused. Old Testament scholars do concede that most of the Hebrew texts available today read "lion," rather than "pierced." In some of these manuscripts "pierced" is a marginal note. That being said, there are several reasons to believe that "pierced" is the correct rendering. Because this is such an important subject, we will briefly list several:

First, in the Dead Sea Scrolls – which pre-date the common Hebrew

texts by a thousand years – the term used is clearly “pierced,” not “lion.”¹²

Second, the ancient versions (translations of the Hebrew text into various languages) overwhelmingly support the reading “pierced.” This is the case in the Septuagint (Greek version), the Syriac, Vulgate, Arabic, and the Ethiopic. One must remember that the Masoretic Hebrew text from which the “lion” reading derives, originated after the crucifixion, while the Septuagint dates from the third century B.C. – in other words, long before the crucifixion. The obviously biased Jews would have every reason to obfuscate the true meaning of this prophecy after the crucifixion, providing us the probable explanation of why it now reads “lion” in the Hebrew texts of today. Consider the following quote from Derek Kidner:

“A strong argument in its [the “pierced” rendering] favor is that the LXX [the Septuagint], compiled two centuries before the crucifixion, and therefore an unbiased witness, understood it so.”¹³

So, then it seems clear that the evidence lies with our common English versions that use the term “pierced.” Psalm 22:16 is an explicit prophecy of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, accurately detailing the piercing of His hands and feet hundreds of years before crucifixion was even invented.

#8 - Psalm 22:17

“I may tell (count) all my bones: they look and stare upon me.”
-Psalm 22:17

The New International Version phrases it:

“All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.”
-Psalm 22:17 (NIV)

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And the English Standard Version says:

“I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me;”

-Psalm 22:17 (ESV)

The experience of suffering the whipping Jesus endured would have filleted open His skin, exposing His bones so that both He and those nearby could see and count them. The Roman whips had shards of sharp metal and hooks that would embed into the victim’s skin and rip the skin apart as the whip was retracted. A *Wikipedia* article on “Flagellation” (whipping) in antiquity says the following:

“In the Roman Empire, flagellation was often used as a prelude to crucifixion, and in this context is sometimes referred to as scourging. Whips with small pieces of metal or bone at the tips were commonly used. Such a device could easily cause disfigurement and serious trauma, such as ripping pieces of flesh from the body or loss of an eye. In addition to causing severe pain, the victim would approach a state of hypovolemic shock due to loss of blood.”¹⁴

This passage also appears to anticipate the fact that during His crucifixion, none of Jesus’ bones were broken. Although it was commonplace to break the legs of crucifixion victims, it was recorded that not a bone of His was broken (Jn. 19:36) – this being in compliance with the Levitical requirements for the Passover sacrificial lamb (Ex. 12:46).

#9 - Psalm 22:18

“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

-Psalm 22:18

This was precisely fulfilled in John 19:23-24 as the Roman soldiers cast lots for the garments of Jesus at the crucifixion.

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.”

-John 19:23-24a

As we conclude this chapter, we can recognize that by examining just ten of these incredibly detailed prophecies within Psalm 22, we should come away amazed at the precision they require. This is astonishing evidence that points to the supernatural origin of the Bible. The true Author had to be timeless, all-knowing, and most of all, loving. To know that the future experiences of the Messiah – the Son of God – God manifest in flesh were as gruesome as this, and yet still follow through on His commitment of the redemption of man is nothing short of amazing. It gives us a glimpse into the way God thinks toward us – reminding us Jesus’ words in John 15:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

-John 15:13-15

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CHAPTER 3

EXAMINING THE ARGUMENTS OF THE CRITICS

After examining these ten prophetic segments of Scripture, you may find it difficult to understand how anyone could ignore this evidence. Some critics have found a way, by embracing a view that insists Psalm 22 was only a present-tense poem about events contemporary to the writer and cannot be construed as a prophecy at all. But after examining these incredibly specific prophecies, it should be obvious to us that the descriptions contained within them clearly depict Christ on the cross. The parallels are just too evident to be ignored.

These parallels leave us with three possibilities:

1. It is a mere coincidence. The details just happen to line up as they do.
2. It is an early Christian plot. The gospel writers invented the details of Jesus' execution to make it match this Psalm.
3. Psalm 22 is, indeed, a fulfilled prophecy of Jesus.

Let's examine each of these possibilities in order to determine which is most plausible.

#1 - “Mere Coincidence”

That the Psalmist would just happen to mention details as specific as the piercing of hands and feet or the dividing and casting lots for clothing just as they occurred in Jesus execution seems highly improbable. The more parallels we note, such as the intense thirst and all the bones of the body being stretched out of joint, etc., the more unlikely it becomes that this is coincidence – especially since crucifixion did not yet exist when this Psalm was written.

This is another point we need to acknowledge. An uninformed reader of Psalm 22 might suspect that the writer is knowingly describing a crucifixion. The facts prove otherwise, however. This method of punishment was not widely used until the 6th Century B.C. or later, long after any plausible date for Psalm 22.¹

To attribute the similarities of Psalm 22 and the crucifixion of Jesus to coincidence seems more than a bit of a stretch. This does not seem plausible.

#2 - “A Christian Plot”

The conspiracy theory where the gospel writers manufacture a connection between Jesus and this Psalm seems more plausible at first, but breaks down upon closer examination. Let’s examine several reasons why...

First of all, what reason would the gospel writers have to pick a random Psalm and use it as a model for Jesus’ execution if that Psalm isn’t a known and recognized Messianic prophecy within Judaism? The only motivation for the conspiracy would be if Psalm 22 actually is intended to be prophetic! This argues that it was actually viewed as being a prophetic portrait of a future event. So, we should first recognize that Psalm 22 is, and was, already recognized to be prophetic.

Secondly, there are four gospel writers. While many scholars argue that Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s gospels (often called the Synoptic gospels) may have in some way relied on one another (most often claiming that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source), few if any

serious scholars would claim that John borrowed from any of these three. Yet, in all four gospels, the narrative of Jesus' death matches up strikingly well with the narrative of this Psalm.

You would have to accuse at least two and arguably four different writers of coming up with the same conspiracy to take the same random Psalm and not only turn it into a prophecy of Jesus, but make it a primary source for the whole narrative of Jesus' suffering.

You would also have to claim, without clear evidence, that the author of the book of Hebrews already possessed one of the gospels or invented the same conspiracy himself when he also makes the Jesus-Psalm 22 connection. If you accept the theory of some modern scholars that the book of Revelation was written by someone other than the John who wrote the gospel, then you have yet another author to deal with, as Revelation also makes this connection.

This would be a remarkably widespread and detailed conspiracy to happen so quickly among so many with only ancient media with which to work. Doesn't seem plausible.

Thirdly, the vast majority of these parallels are incidental in the narrative. The gospel writers are not making much of them, nor are they turning back to Psalm 22 again and again to say "as it was written," or "this occurred to fulfill the scripture..." as they often do with other passages elsewhere. Indeed, Mark and Luke don't cite the Psalm at all, and John and Matthew each only reference it once in passing. These writers love to point out the many places that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament, but yet make surprisingly little effort to direct the reader to Psalm 22 as a fulfilled prophecy. This would be rather surprising if they were trying to fabricate a connection between Jesus and an otherwise non-prophetic Psalm. Again, this doesn't seem plausible.

Fourthly, many of the details are directly connected to the methods of torture and execution contemporary to the Roman society of Jesus' day. The gospel writers could not just "make them up" to match the Psalm. No one would have believed them if they were not practices that Romans would really perform. The Psalmist wrote before such practices were invented, but the gospel writers wrote while they were

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still happening. They could not simply invent them to match the details of the Psalm because they were describing events from their own time and place. Their contemporary readers would catch the errors if they contrived unrealistic scenarios to make Jesus' death connect with this Psalm. In other words, even if you were to disbelieve that Jesus was crucified as the Biblical and non-biblical sources all record, you'd still have to explain how David could write detailed poetry precisely describing crucifixion hundreds of years before the invention of crucifixion. So, this passage is still supernaturally prophetic even without the New Testament!

Fifthly, there is the fact that these men were willing to suffer the loss of their possessions, imprisonment, torture, and death for what they said about Jesus – with apparently nothing to be gained. So, they had everything to lose and nothing obvious to gain. With this in mind, it would seem absurd to think that they were intentionally fabricating their testimony. These men believed what they were claiming with great conviction and were willing to suffer and die for it – and the key differentiator between them and modern-day “terrorist martyrs” is that the former were actually eyewitnesses of the events they were willing to die for. If what they witnessed did not line up with what they were claiming, it is irrational to believe they would hazard their lives for a lie. So, this does not fit well with the idea that they made up the details to force false connections with unrelated Old Testament passages.

This leaves us with the conclusion that the Psalm is, indeed, prophetic. The text of the Psalm itself also gives us reason to think so. The Psalmist writes at the conclusion of the suffering and deliverance he describes, that:

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.”

-Psalm 22:27

David's own suffering did not cause all the nations of the world to worship the one true God of Abraham. Neither did the suffering of

any of the kings, prophets, or patriarchs of old. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection have done exactly that. Indeed, to this day, more families of more nations all over the globe continue to come to God through the testimony of Jesus' suffering and deliverance – and this will be fulfilled even more fully in the Millennium when Christ rules on earth. Not only do the details of the events fit, but what's more, the stated result of the events not only fits Jesus, but fits Him exclusively. The words of this prophecy simply cannot be said of any other person more precisely. Psalm 22 is certainly a prophecy, and one that was miraculously fulfilled in Christ!

1. -Kiehl, pp. 123-124.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In Psalm 22, we discover a cluster of some of the clearest and most precisely detailed prophecies that have ever come to pass. These prophecies describe in detail the future death of the Messiah with a vividness not even exhibited by the New Testament epistles, written years after the fact.

This demonstrates not only the supernaturally integrated design of the Bible, but clearly reveals a characteristic unique only to God - prophecy! Only a Being residing outside the limitations of our physical reality would be able to see the future before it takes place in our space-time. And only a Being who loves us immensely would enter into our space-time Himself in order to become the perfect sacrifice for our redemption – writing us a prophetic love-letter in advance that depicted in great detail the very sacrifice He would one day provide.

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