

PSALM 22

Psalm 22 is known as the psalm of the cross. In verses 14-16 we are given one of the most graphic descriptions of death by crucifixion to be found in the Bible. Nothing in David's life accounts for the events depicted in this psalm. Sometimes when David writes, he speaks, not so much about himself, but as a prophet. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, referring to another psalm says concerning David; "Therefore being a prophet...he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning...the Christ" (Acts 2v30-31). Psalm 22 is like that. David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to picture the crucifixion of Jesus Christ - a thousand years before it happened! This psalm is quoted thirteen times in the N.T. Not only did Jesus quote it's opening words as one of His seven dying sayings from the cross (Matt 27v46) but the mockery of verses 7,8 was echoed by the priests (Matt 27v39-44) The division of clothing in verse 18 was said to be fulfilled by the soldiers (John 19v23,24), and verse 22 is applied to Christ in Hebrews 2v11,12.

STRUCTURE

This amazing psalm is in two contrasting parts. The first part is a cry (1-21), and the second is a song (22-31). The key to part one is "you do not hear" (v2), and to part two, "you have answered Me" (v21). The first part tells of sufferings, and the second part, of the glory that follows (1 Peter 1v11).

The cry of anguish v1-21

In verses 1,2 we have the cry of dereliction : "Why have you forsaken Me". His greatest suffering is neither the physical pain, nor the mockery of His persecutors, but His sense of God-forsakenness. His question is asked in perplexity, not in despair or bitterness. This was no crisis of faith as He continues to appeal to God three times as "My God" even while He is forsaken and receives no answer.

Three thoughts aggravate his condition. The experience of the ancients (v3-5). The taunts of His enemies (v6-8). His past experiences from birth (v9-11).

The song of praise v22-31

Suddenly and dramatically the tone of the psalm changes from prayer to praise, from suffering to triumph. Deliverance has come (v21,24). This marks the moment at which the period of darkness passes and Jesus, having suffered a true alienation from the Father as punishment for our sins, becomes aware of God's presence and favour once again. In verse 22 He begins to celebrate the great victory of the cross and calls upon all peoples to join Him. The effects of the cross are universal, "All the ends of the earth will turn to the LORD" (v27,28) recognizing that world dominion belongs to Him. A psalm that has begun in the depths of anguish has ended in a note of triumph and victory. "He has done it" (v31b) His people will be gathered in. The Church will be gathered from all corners of the globe, and in every generation (v30,31).