

John 19:23–24
Seeing the Glory of Kingship in the Humiliation of Jesus

Introduction

Last week, we saw the glory of kingship in the suffering of Jesus. This week, John wants us to see the glory of kingship in the humiliation of Jesus; and he wants us to see this so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we may have life in His name (Jn. 20:31).

I. John 19:23–24a — Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus [when they had lifted Jesus up], took His garments and made four parts, a part to each soldier and also His tunic; now that tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be;”

The personal effects of those who were crucified were always divided up among the soldiers assigned to the execution. In this case, there were four soldiers, but after dividing things four ways, there was still the tunic that Jesus wore, left over. Since this tunic was of some value—being seamless, woven in one piece from the top—they decided to cast lots for it (which was probably also not unusual). Why is this of significance to John? Why does he include this detail in his Gospel? He answers:

II. John 19:24b — ...this was in order that the Scripture would be fulfilled: “THEY DIVIDED MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.

Has John just found a really neat “connection”? Is he saying, “Look, the Old Testament ‘*predicted*’ it, and now it happened”? Is this just an apologetic to “prove” the accuracy of the Old Testament or to “prove” that because this happened to Jesus, He must be the Messiah? This is how we tend to look at things, but it’s not how John saw things. His agenda is deeper and richer. The Greek word for “fulfilled” (*pleroo*) could also be translated, “filled up” or “made full” (cf. Jn. 15:11): “This was in order that the Scripture would be *filled up*”; “This was in order that the Scripture would be *made full*.” Maybe this gives us a better picture of the *kind* of beauty that John sees in this “fulfillment.”

III. The Context of the Psalter

John quotes from Psalm chapter 22: “They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

The psalms, we know, are the psalms of David, the king. The majority of the psalms were written by David himself or under his supervision (cf. 1 Chron. 25:1-7). The psalms not written under his supervision were included in the Psalter only as those appropriate to a royal psalter – the psalms of the king.

Psalms 1-2 are tied together as a single unit and function as the introduction to the entire book of Psalms.* The second part of this introduction (Psalm 2) is all about the universal and the everlasting rule of Yahweh's "anointed" – of the "king" whom the Lord has "installed... upon Zion, [His] holy mountain" (Ps. 2:6). David writes, in verses 7-12:

- Psalm 2:7-12 — "I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh: He said to me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten you. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like a potter's vessel.'" So now, O kings, show insight; take warning, O judges of the earth. Serve Yahweh with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he become angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

David understood that he himself was Yahweh's royal son—the son whom Yahweh had "begotten"—because of Yahweh's "decree" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8-17). But David also understood that his royal sonship would be fulfilled (filled up) in his seed. His rule would be fulfilled in the universal and the everlasting rule of his greater Son.

If the book of Psalms begins with the *promise* of the rule of the God of Israel over all the earth, it ends with a foretaste of the *fulfillment* of this promise. The book of Psalms ends with a six-chapter finale† praising Yahweh for His universal and everlasting kingship.

- Psalm 145:1, 10-13 — I will exalt You, my God, **O King**, and I will bless Your name forever and ever... All Your works, O Yahweh, shall give thanks to You, and Your holy ones shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of **Your kingdom** and talk of Your might; to make known to the sons of men His mighty deeds and the glory of the majesty of **His kingdom. Your kingdom** is an **everlasting kingdom**, and Your dominion endures from generation to every generation.
- Psalm 146:10 — Yahweh will **reign** forever, your God, O Zion, from generation to generation.
- Psalm 149:1-2 — Sing to Yahweh a new song, His praise in the assembly of the holy ones. Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the sons of Zion rejoice in their **King**.

We see from the *introduction* and from the *conclusion* to the Psalter that a fundamental theme of the Psalms is the universal and everlasting kingship of Yahweh, which is mediated in and through His Son whom He has anointed and installed on Zion, His holy mountain. It's in this sense that the entire book of Psalms is prophetic and Messianic (pointing to the Messiah; cf. Lk. 24:44). The royal sonship of David is a "type" that will be "filled up" in the royal sonship of his greater Son. David's temporal rule that was limited to Israel and the immediately surrounding

* Psalms 1-2 lack a title (out of the next 87 chapters [books 1-3] only two other psalms lack a title [32, 71]; Psalms 9 & 10 and Psalm 42 & 43 were probably originally single psalms [or at least read together]). Psalms 1-2 are linked by the opening and closing beatitudes (Psalm 1:1; 2:12), by the reference to "meditating" in 1:2 and 2:1 and by the closing reference in each psalm to the "way" (1:6; 2:12).

† The title to Psalm 145 ("A Praise of David") appears to function as the title for Psalms 146-150 as well. This is the only Psalm title that includes this Hebrew word for "praise." "Praise" appears 42 times in chapters 145-150 (by comparison, it appears only 77 times in the preceding 144 chapters). Psalms 146-150 all begin and end with "Praise Yah!" Psalms 145-150 contain no petition, but only praise and exhortations to trust Yahweh and praise Him.

nations was a “type” that would be “filled up” in the universal and everlasting rule of His greater Son.

The introduction and conclusion to the book of Psalms is a celebration of the triumph of Yahweh’s kingdom. And yet we also see in the introduction the certainty of opposition—and even of suffering—before the final triumph.

- Psalm 2:1–3, 7–9 — Why do the nations rage and the peoples meditate on a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together *against* Yahweh and *against* His Anointed, *saying*, “Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!” ... “I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh: He said to me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you. *Ask of Me*, and *I will surely give* the nations as your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like a potter’s vessel.’”

In the very next chapter (Psalm chapter three), we see the nations raging and the peoples meditating on a vain thing. We see God’s anointed king being threatened and mocked, and we also see him praying to Yahweh in the light of His decree.

- Psalm 3:1–2, 7–8 — O Yahweh, how my adversaries have become many! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, “There is no salvation for him in God.” ... Arise, O Yahweh; save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to Yahweh!

Sandwiched between the promise and the foretaste of the fulfillment—between the triumph of the first two chapters and the last six chapters of Psalms, there are numerous laments. These laments must always be read in the light of the promise and the fulfillment—in the light of the triumphant introduction and the concluding finale. In fact, the laments, themselves, often end with a reminder of the certainty of triumph. Psalm 22—the psalm that John quotes—is one of these laments.

IV. The Context of Psalm 22

Psalm 22 is a psalm of David, the royal son of God, that begins with these words:

- Psalm 22:1 — My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

These are words that *David* prayed as a result of his own personal experience of suffering and shame. There’s no prediction here. But one thousand years later, these words were fulfilled—or “filled up”—in the experience of his greater Son Jesus, when He cried out from the cross:

- Matthew 27:46 — “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Jesus wasn’t just quoting a memory verse. He didn’t pray this because He had to—in order to match a prediction. There was no prediction. Jesus prayed this because He Himself was already the fulfillment of the Psalms—the one in whom the Psalms are “filled up.” Jesus prayed this

because He *is* David's greater Son—the royal Son of God—whom God will install as King upon the heavenly Zion, His holy mountain. The words of the psalmist came as naturally to Jesus in prayer as any words of His own, because the words of the psalmist belonged, ultimately, to Him. But what does this tell us? Even in the language of Jesus' *real* lament (“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me”), we can see the promise of His victory. When Jesus draws His lament from Psalm 22, this is—in itself—the assurance of His triumph — and of the triumph of His kingdom.

David, the royal “son of God,” cries out in Psalm 22 verses 7-8:

- Psalm 22:7-8 — All who see me mock me; they smack their lip, they wag their head, saying, “Commit yourself to Yahweh; let Him rescue him; let Him deliver him, because He delights in him.”

In Matthew 27, we hear these same words from the lips of those who were mocking Jesus as He hung on the cross.

- Matthew 27:39, 43 — And those passing by were blaspheming Him, wagging their heads... the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying... “HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

Were the chief priests and the scribes and the elders consciously quoting Psalm 22 while they mocked Jesus? Almost certainly not, because that would obviously make them the “bad guys”! But Matthew sees in their words, even if they might not have been an exact quotation (cf. Lk. 23:35), the “filling up” of Psalm 22. Therefore, Matthew sees even *in* the mockery of Jesus' accusers, the guarantee of His final triumph. Psalm 22 cannot be read apart from the context of the triumphant introduction and the glorious finale of the whole book of Psalms.

David, the royal “son of God,” cries out in verses 14-16 of Psalm 22:

- Psalm 22:14-16 — I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.

David likens his experience to that of a nearly dead corpse that's being picked at and bitten by a pack of scavenging dogs: “They pierced my hands and my feet.” The New Testament never quotes this verse as being “filled up” in the crucifixion of Jesus, but it doesn't need to for us to see that this is the case. As the scavenging dogs pierced the psalmist's hands and feet with their teeth, now the enemies of Jesus pierce his hands and feet with nails (Lk. 24:39-40; Jn. 20:25). The experience of David is “filled up” in the experience of his greater Son, Jesus.

And then the very next words of David are these:

- Psalm 22:17–18 — I count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

David is metaphorically describing his own personal experience of suffering and humiliation. As one commentator puts it, this was “the last and greatest indignity... The last possession a person would retain was the garment—that was his until he died. Here they were dividing up his property [his clothes] because they considered that he was as good as dead” (Ross). One thousand years after King David wrote these words, we see His greater Son, Jesus, hanging on a cross, encompassed by a band of evildoers who were not just metaphorically, but even literally dividing up His clothes and casting lots for His tunic. We have to remember that not only were there many other men whose hands and feet were pierced when they were hung on a cross, but Roman soldiers also divided up the clothes of multitudes of other crucified victims. Very likely, they also cast lots for the personal effects of many other crucified victims. The simple fact that these things happened to Jesus doesn’t “prove” anything. And that’s not John’s point. This isn’t about a “prediction” that came to pass, because there was no “prediction” in the first place. John’s apologetic is that even the Messiah—even the royal Son of God—must suffer humiliation. Therefore, because the humiliation of Jesus is the “filling up” of the humiliation of Yahweh’s anointed king, we see even in His real humiliation the assurance and the promise of His triumph.

Psalm 22 cannot be read outside the context of the psalter’s triumphant introduction and concluding finale. Neither can it be read apart from its own triumphant conclusion.

- Psalm 22:19–22 — But You, O Yahweh, be not far off; O my Strength, hasten to my help. Deliver my soul from the sword, my only life from the power of the dog. Save me from the mouth of the lion; from the horns of the wild oxen You have answered me. **I will surely recount Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.**

The author of Hebrews sees that these words, which were originally spoken by King David because of his own personal experience, are “filled up” in the personal experience and testimony of Jesus. These words ultimately belong not to David, but to His greater Son, Jesus.

- Hebrews 2:10–12 — It was fitting for Him [God], for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies [Jesus] and those who are being sanctified are all of One [of God]; for which reason He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I WILL RECOUNT YOUR NAME TO MY BROTHERS [when You have saved Me from death through resurrection], IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSEMBLY I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.”

And what, exactly, did David say when he recounted Yahweh’s name to his brothers?

- Psalm 22:24 — He has not despised and He has not abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and He has not hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him for help, He heard.

These are the words that Jesus speaks now to us as the one whom God has raised up from the dead, and as the one through whom God is now bringing many sons to glory—even in the midst of our present sufferings. These are the words that Jesus speaks now to us as the one who has “filled up,” in His own experience, *all* the afflictions of Yahweh’s anointed.

How does Psalm 22 end? It ends not with lament, but even as the entire psalter ends. It ends with a joyful celebration of the universal and everlasting kingship of Yahweh, mediated in and through His Son whom He has anointed and installed on Zion, His holy mountain.

➤ Psalm 22:27–31 — *All the ends of the earth* will remember and turn to Yahweh, and *all the families of the nations* will worship before You. For the **kingdom** is Yahweh’s and He **rules** over the nations. *All the prosperous of the earth* will eat and worship, *all those who go down to the dust* will bow before Him, even he who cannot keep his soul alive [the poor who are without resources]. *Their seed* will serve Him; it will be recounted about the Lord to *the coming generation*. They will come and will declare His righteousness to *a people who will be born*, that He has done it.

This is how the psalm ends, that began with these words: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” This is how the psalm ends, that describes the humiliation of God’s anointed—the one who is mocked, whose hands and feet are pierced, whose garments are divided up among his enemies. So now let’s read again from John 19:

V. John 19:23–24 — Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus [when they had lifted Jesus up], took His garments and made four parts, a part to each soldier and also His tunic; now that tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be;” this was in order that the Scripture would be fulfilled [“filled up” / “made full”]: “THEY DIVIDED MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.

Is this just about an Old Testament “prediction” that’s now happened? If that was the case, it “proves” nothing because the same thing could be said of many other crucified victims. John’s agenda is deeper and richer. John doesn’t quote this psalm as an isolated proof text that gives us a neat connection; he quotes it in the light of its surrounding context—not only of the conclusion to Psalm 22, but also of the triumphant introduction and the concluding finale to the book of Psalms as a whole. What John sees, then, in this fulfillment—in this “filling up” of Scripture—is proof that even God’s own anointed King experiences humiliation before triumph; seeming defeat before victory. And that’s not all John sees. Since, in the humiliation of Jesus, He is “filling up” the Scriptures—He is “filling up” all the afflictions of Yahweh’s anointed—we can see that even His humiliation is—in some mysterious and wonderful way—*part of* His triumph. Even His apparent defeat is *part of* His victory. Even His cross is His being “lifted up.”

In the experience of David, God answered him by keeping him *from* death—by keeping him *from* the grave. In the experience of Jesus, God answers Him not by keeping Him from death, but by raising Him up *after* He has suffered death and been laid in the grave (cf. Heb. 5:7). And so as the one who “fills up” Psalm 22, John sees even in the humiliation and seeming defeat of Jesus

the *means* by which the concluding words of Psalm 22 are also being fulfilled: “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to Yahweh, and all the families of the nations will worship before You. For the **kingdom** is Yahweh’s and He **rules** over the nations” (cf. Jn. 12:32).

Conclusion

Why does John single out this particular fulfillment for special mention? Why is he the only Gospel writer who quotes Psalm 22:18 — “They divided My garments [*himation*] among them, and for my clothing [*himatismos*] they cast lots.” Maybe because John is also the only Gospel writer to tell us how Jesus laid aside His own “garments” only the night before (cf. Carson).

- John 13:1–5 — Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end [to the uttermost]. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments [*himation*]; and taking a towel, He tied it around Himself. Then He poured water into the washbasin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel which He had tied around Himself.

Even now, as the soldiers divide Jesus’ clothes among themselves, we see in this humiliation the continued *self-emptying* of Jesus, so that we might be born into His kingdom; so that we might enjoy all the blessings of His Kingship — of cleansing and pardon; of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

What does it mean to live under His kingship? It means that this way of thinking which was in Christ Jesus is to be in us as well (Phil. 2:5). It means that if we would reign with Christ (Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5; 2 Tim. 2:12), then we must be the slaves of one another (cf. Mat. 19:28-20:16). It means that when we have become as “the scum of the world” and the “refuse of all things” (1 Cor. 4:13), we are to glory in our humiliation because this is the sign that we’ve been made partakers of His triumph. We glory in our humiliation because this is the sign that we’ve come to share in His kingdom and that we have even now been seated with Him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6).