

Exalting Christ and Him Crucified (Psalm 22)

Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy lived some striking similarities 100 years apart. They both were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in '46 (Lincoln 1846, Kennedy 1946). Both ran as a vice presidential nominee for their party but lost in the year '56. Both ran for the office of president 4 years later and won against the incumbent vice president (in 1860 and 1960 respectively). Both had for their V.P. a man named Johnson, born 100 years apart (Andrew Johnson born 1808; Lyndon B Johnson born 1908). Both of those VPs were southern Democrats, even though Lincoln was a Republican

Both of those Johnsons became President and served till '69 (1869, 1969) and the presidents after them 100 years apart were both Republicans with a mom named Hannah. Lincoln was assassinated by a gunshot to his head on a Friday before a major holiday while sitting next to his wife, and Kennedy was, too. Both presidents had a bodyguard named William and both were treated by doctors named Charles. Lincoln was shot in a place named Ford's Theatre; Kennedy in a Lincoln automobile made by Ford. Both assassins were shot to death before they got to trial, and some even claim similarities in the shooters, things both said and did, and the men who shot the shooters¹

You can find commonalities between other historical figures and historical oddities or similarities that may be interesting but irrelevant or insignificant. But there's another pair in history with great relevance to our life today and study this summer. Two men who were related to the Abraham of the Bible, King David and King Jesus, have far more significant striking similarities in their lives 1000 years apart, we'll see in Ps 22 today. History actually *does* repeat itself biblically, but not in the sense of fate or freak coincidences in the way some may think who are into numerology or who have too much time on their hands or watch too much of certain cable channels. There are actually more striking similarities with David and Jesus 1000 years apart:

- Both were born in Bethlehem with the same ancestral tribal name Judah
- Both introduced themselves as shepherds (David to Saul, Jesus in Jn 10)
- Both were called on to help people troubled by demons (David w/ Saul)
- Both had Israel's leadership trying to kill them (Saul tried to spear David)
- Both came from small and lowly beginnings to emerge as Israel's King
- Both were popular among the people of Israel but later rejected by many
- Both were betrayed by someone close, at their table (Ahithophel, Judas)
- Both men died as King in Jerusalem with strikingly similar events before

- Both wept on the Mount of Olives, crossed the Brook Kidron in sorrow, were falsely accused by leaders from their own countrymen, and as Jesus came to die, Ps 22 shows us there were even striking similarities in those trying to kill both David and Jesus, what they did and said, movements of their heads. All that David felt; Jesus faced it more fully 1000 years later²
- Some scholars see Ps 22 as pure prophecy, others call it typology (David as a type or parallel or picture who prefigures Jesus). I take Ps 22 as both. Maybe not pure prophecy of future like others in OT (ex: '*a virgin shall bear a son*'). David writes Ps 22 of his past, but it has a future aspect, too

The inspired ancient heading tells us Ps 22 was a Psalm of David written for *the Choirmaster* or *choir director*, and then it gives what was apparently the tune it was sung to, something about a doe/deer. OT Jews understood David wrote this, but because it was sung by the choir in their worship services, it also expressed emotions or experiences of believers in history crying out to God in times of darkness, depression, dejection, rejection, or persecution. It also was read on another level by some ancient Jews of David's greater son³ - the Messiah - who would go through what David wrote of in a greater way

Cecil B Demille is most famous for his big screen 'The 10 Commandments' that came out the year Kennedy ran for VP. 100 years ago Demille made a silent film called Joan the Woman (Joan of Arc), 'and he took it to NY to get it past the censors. After the screening there was a clergyman in the group and he said he didn't find anything offensive in the film. But there was one woman on the censor board that said, "No, there's one thing in there and it has come out. It's where Joan says 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'" Demille asked the woman if she knew who once said those words. She said "it doesn't matter! It implies that God would forsake someone and it has to come out!" Well it didn't, and [Dale Ralph Davis says] we can be thankful it didn't come out of the psalms either. The fine folks who assembled and collected the psalms in the Bible made sure that Ps 22 stood here, undeleted [uncensored unchanging] truth. Here it is ...'⁴

Ps 22:1 *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?* ² *O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.* ³ *Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.* ⁴ *In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.* ⁵ *To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.* ⁶ *But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.* ⁷ *All who see me mock me;*

they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ *“He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”* ⁹ *Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breasts.* ¹⁰ *On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother’s womb you have been my God.* ¹¹ *Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.* ¹² *Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me;* ¹³ *they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and 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 within my breast,* ¹⁵ *my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.* ¹⁶ *For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles*

...

Let’s pause there and notice David is writing poetically of how he truly felt. These weren’t literal dogs, v. 16 explains he’s talking about men doing evil. He didn’t actually have all 206 bones in his body out of joint, and his heart wasn’t physically melting in his ribcage, and David wasn’t really an earth-worm, but that doesn’t mean David didn’t actually literally feel like all this. There’s metaphor, poetry, hyperbole here, but don’t miss the reality of how a believer emotionally interprets reality at times, and because this is written to be sung by the OT Israelites, this isn’t limited to just 1 man in history. It may be you have or will feel forsaken by God, that He’s not answering your prayers or even hearing them, they’re hitting the ceiling, He seems far away and distant and you don’t understand why you’re not getting help you want?

If you’ve ever felt the rejection of men’s mocking words or felt rejected by God, you need to know even this man after God’s own heart felt that way, and wrote it down so all God’s people would sing and see how God helped him and helps us. David as a shepherd boy actually fought off lions, wolves and bears (oh my!) and that’s what gave him courage to face Goliath who mocked him like this psalm and said he would feed him to the beasts. Here he speaks of people like roaring lions or raging bulls or rabid dogs - don’t think of cute fluffy fi-fi dogs - think mean mangy ravening rabid jackals or wild laughing hyenas. The original language compares their words to biting sarcasm, their mocking cuts deep, and makes him feel less than human, as a *worm* in v. 6: worthless, detestable. David feels dehumanized by their scorn.

But the worst pain is in v. 1: it seems to him God has forsaken him, and he groans that God seems so far from saving him. Before we read of our Savior in Ps 22, we need to read it first as from David, a sinner in need of saving. It was only true of David in v. 2 that he cried day and night without an answer

With Jesus it was only that way for part of one day. In v. 4, only David, not Jesus, could speak of ‘our fathers’ (Jesus had no earthly fathers or a fatherly ancestry to speak of, His one Father was God). We need to see David is in real agony as he describes in Ps 22 in feeling he was alienated, abandoned. We need to also see what David felt like, Jesus faced fully to deliver from.

In the end of v. 15 David may have felt like God was killing him in all these events, Jesus actually faced that. In the end of v. 16 David's stabbing pain of persecution emotionally pierced but only Jesus physically could truly say ‘...*they have pierced my hands and feet—¹⁷ I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*’ Scripture doesn’t record anything like that in the life of David, but for Jesus it happened exactly. In piercing crucifixion, His garments were divided by soldiers casting lots, gambling for Christ's clothes

v. 16 is even more pointed prophecy of the cross: ‘*dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have **pierced** my hands and feet—*’ ‘Dogs’ is often a term for Gentiles and it was Gentile Romans who pierced the hands and feet of Jesus. But get this: when David wrote this about 1000 BC, no Gentiles practiced crucifixion by piercing hands or feet – it wasn’t invented for many hundreds of years and only came to Israel 2nd century BC. The Dead Sea Scrolls prove many key prophecies were written before the time of Christ, there’s a Ps 22 scroll they found in Nahal/Hever (5/6 HevPs)

Later Hebrew manuscript copies 1000 years later have something like a lion at the hands and feet (no verb, debatably a lion tearing, biting, puncturing). But the Dead Sea Scroll discovery gives strong support that the ancient text had a verb for *pierced* hands and feet, and at least 200 years before Christ, Jewish scholars translated this into the Septuagint as ‘pierced,’ and other ancient rabbis and sources, including the Targum and a Kethiv-Qere text support the idea of hands/feet ‘pierced.’⁵ Isa 53:5 on Messiah’s piercing is also part of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Zech 12:10 agrees He would be pierced.

Piercing crucifixion was unknown to David or OT history but God inspired this like video footage back from the future, filmed at the foot of the cross:
 - rewinding it back in the text, v. 14 also describes in advance exactly what happened to Jesus on the cross, as blood flowed like water, and the soldier pierced His side and water poured out with blood. When He says ‘*all my bones are out of joint,*’ crucifixion could literally cause dislocation as the shoulders and arms were stretched like on a rack, a cross post slammed in

- what we know of crucifixion could certainly make one feel like his heart's melting, of in v. 15 feeling dried up like fire-baked clay pottery, drained of all moisture, severe dehydration making the tongue cleave to the roof of the mouth, till death came about, often by asphyxiation or inability to breathe by gasping for breath when pushing up with one's weakened legs
- rewinding to v. 12, their rush to get Jesus to the cross was like the running of the bulls, seeing the red blood of Jesus after Pilate brought Him beaten to a pulp before them made them rush with the mob saying 'crucify Him!'
- In v. 13, Jesus says all these animal-like beastly enemies '*open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.*' Think of Amos 3:4: '*does a lion roar...when he has no prey?*' In other words, seeing they had Jesus as their prey now, all the savagery and ravening hatred toward Jesus came out as He's pinned there, and we can also think how the Bible calls Satan a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, he's ultimately behind this scene
- rewinding to v. 11 it says '*there is none to help,*' also literally true that day
- back in v. 6, Jesus more than David, was treated as a worm and not a man, as sub-human in His dehumanizing brutalizing torture worse than animals, and those words *scorned* and *despised* describe exactly Jesus on the cross
- in v. 7 they mocked him, same original language (LXX) word as Lk 23:35
- what they did with their lips and their wagging heads is an exact prophecy
- the very words of v. 8 are echoed in the gospels, this is not a coincidence!

Mt 27 '*And those who passed by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads...mocking Him and saying '...He trusts in God, let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him'...Jesus cried out with a loud voice ... 'Eli, eli, lama sabachthani...my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'*' (NASB)

The gospels just quote those words, they don't comment on them, but Ps 22 is the commentary on what that means and what Jesus was going through as He said those words. The NT briefly gives the facts of what happened at the cross, but Ps 22 gives what our Lord was feeling and facing as it happened. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give a little explanation of the event from a 3rd party perspective, but Ps 22 gives first-party emotions from Jesus' heart:

- v. 1 Jesus cried out from the cross in Hebrew so all the Jews there got it
- At that moment God *was* forsaking Jesus for the sake of the sin He bore
- the end of v. 31 '*he has done it*' or '*it is done,*' is also similar to what He said later on the cross '*It is finished.*' This is about the cross, start to finish.
- like v. 2 Jesus did cry out in the day that became like night to no response, there was no voice like before '*this is my beloved Son, in Him I'm pleased.*' There aren't angels sent to help like after the wilderness or in Gethsemane, for the 1st time ever the Father didn't answer the Son, and God turns away

- in v. 3 Jesus affirms His Father is holy and still enthroned as sovereign of His people and worthy to be praised, but in His humanity Jesus wrestles in v. 4-5 with God delivering people in the past who cried out, why not now?
- in v. 6 it should stagger us to think not only was as Ps 8 says, God the Son made lower than the angels, in Ps 22 He's treated lower than the animals. Not only did God come all the way down to earth, He's like an earthworm, lower than lowest dirt, seen as a pest fit to be trampled, or buried in dirt. This is the Savior speaking, the sovereign 'I Am' now says '*I am a worm!*'
 Alas and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die?
 Would He devote that sacred head **for such a worm as I?**

That isn't a self-esteem-boosting song, so some change to 'such a one as I,' but that takes the amazing out of grace and takes the wonder out of this text. Job 25:5 says if '*the stars are not pure in his eyes; how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!*' The gospel comes to the lowly from the Son of Man who is lowly in heart (Mt 11:29). We're not 'big stuff,' but our big God became small like us, for us worming sinners, blind and burrowing away from God, He came after us into the dirt. Isa 40 says all mankind is like grass, or grasshopper pests, all the nations are as a speck of dirt on a scale, '*All the nations are as nothing before Him...regarded as less than nothing and meaningless...Do not fear, you worm...I will help you*' (40:6, 15, 17, 41:14 NASB). God doesn't tell His people 'think more highly of yourself, you're really something,' He says all nations of the earth are as nothing before me, less than nothing, as a speck of dirt (that's a subcategory of dirt)! But God says to His people '*fear not, you worm, I will help you!*' It is 'to such a worm as I' a big Savior came to help and save so I can fear not.

The worm in scripture sometimes symbolizes a curse and even hell where it says the worm never dies. Jesus suffered hell for us on the cross, became a curse for us, became as a worm for us, that's why God's grace is so amazing

Alas and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die?
 Would He devote that sacred head **for such a worm as I?**
 Was it for crimes that I had done He groaned upon the tree?
 Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

Paul prays in Eph 3 that we might comprehend or grasp how wide and long and high and deep it is, to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge

- the Lord who made man's mouth endures those mouths scorning Him, v. 7
- Col 1 says Christ holds everything in the universe together, but in v. 14 His bones and ligaments can't hold together and He feels all coming apart

- Christ said in the gospel He's the source of living water, but now He's all poured out and all dried up with nothing left. The One who formed man out of the dust and breathed into His mouth the breath of life, this One now can't breathe and He's about to lay down in the dust of death in v. 15
- The mouth that spoke and all life began to move now is unable to move
- The hand that created trees is now pierced and nailed to one of His trees
- Jesus said 'come to me, I will give you rest' but in v. 2 says 'I have no rest'
- Jesus said 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' but He's forsaken in v. 1

Jesus isn't just practicing Bible verses on the cross, Jesus is being forsaken by God! David may have *felt* forsakenness, Jesus *faced* fuller forsakenness than we ever will or can, as sins of a vast multitude are placed on Him. The wrath of God is being poured out His Son, and this is the only time He can't speak to Him as 'Father.' Every other time Jesus speaks to God it's 'Father' – but this time because of sin's separation and alienation He says '*my God!*' In the garden He cried '*Abba,*' and even earlier on the cross '*Father forgive.*' But as sin is put on Him, the intimacy Father-and-Son had from all eternity now shatters as Jesus shouts *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

But as we come to communion today, consider this: the eternal communion within the Trinity was interrupted so we can have uninterrupted communion with both Father and Son eternally. Jesus was forsaken by God on the cross, so all who trust what He did on the cross for them will never be forsaken by God. Jesus suffers God-forsakenness temporarily so we never will eternally.

[if you've never turned from your sin to trust Him, do it today]

C. J. Mahaney's *Living the Cross-Centered Life*: 'The personal desolation Christ is experiencing on the cross is what you and I should be experiencing – but instead, Jesus is bearing it, and bearing it alone. Why alone? He's alone so that we might never be alone. He cries out to God, "*Why have You forsaken Me?*" so that you and I will never have to make a similar cry. He was cut off from His Father so that we can boldly say, "*Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.*" He's forsaken so that we might be forgiven.'⁶ Because He screamed v. 1, we get to sing of His grace.

In the end of v. 15 Jesus says to His Father: '*you lay me in the dust of death,*' but that's not the end of the story, or the psalm. In v. 20 Jesus asks His soul to be delivered from the sword (Roman govt. executioners in Rom 13). In v. 21 God does answer and deliver Jesus from the mouth of the lion so He says ²² *I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:* ²³ *You who fear the LORD, praise him!* He calls us to praise

God in the midst of the congregation, just as He did. We need to praise God in the midst of a congregation in corporate praise and this is its great motive --the risen Lord died for us and calls us brothers! He rose from the grave to lift us up from the dirt who are wormy, treating as family all who fear Him.

First words to His disciples after He rose were the first time He called them 'my brothers': *'Go...to my brothers and tell them, "I am returning to My Father and your Father" (Jn 20:17, notice He calls Him 'My Father' again).* v. 22 is yet another prophecy Jesus fulfilled: Heb 2:11 says of the risen Lord *'he is not ashamed to call them brothers,'¹² saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."*

That applies Ps 22:22 to Jesus, the application for us is in v. 23, *praise Him, glorify Him, stand in awe of Him.* God's people have sung this thousands of years, including v. 25, as we praise Him in the congregation. v. 25 commits also to perform vows made, and many of you have made vows before this congregation as members or in marriages we're to be faithful to fulfill in the power of the cross. That's what communion today reminds us of, this is the power of the cross, do this in remembrance of what He did to adopt brothers and know that He is faithful and promises to never leave us or forsake us!

A Hebrew scholar explains the language in v. 25-26 included 'praise...with a peace offering (Lev. 7), a sacrifice that would actually become a communal meal...one who brought it would stand...and tell people what God had done. Then, all the people would eat together (it was the only sacrifice...Israelites could eat in the sanctuary).'⁷ Jesus has done it once and for all, as v. 31 says, it is finished. His death in Ps 22 is the sacrifice offered for us to bring peace and it's my privilege to stand here to tell you what God has done before we eat together in this sanctuary, all who fear the Lord. v. 26 talks about eating and being satisfied, v. 27 is about us: all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord. If you've turned from your sin to the Lord, communion is for you to remember the cross and worship the King at His table for you. If you're unwilling to turn from your sin, I'm unwilling to offer it to you but if you feel unworthy, like a worm, and trust Jesus who did too, come to eat.

v. 29 says all the blessed on earth will eat and worship. v. 31 prophesies us: *'they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,'* it's those born after Jesus who proclaim His death in communion till He comes. So let's do this in remembrance of Jesus and repent of sin where we haven't and renew our commitments in the congregation and rejoice in praising Him

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincoln%E2%80%93Kennedy_coincidences_urban_legend
<http://oswaldsmother.blogspot.com/2010/12/john-wilkes-booth-vs-lee-harvey-oswald.html>
 (though note it appears the intro is incorrect that Kennedy had a secretary named Lincoln).

² For further study, see

http://d3pi8hptl0qhh4.cloudfront.net/documents/JBGay/the_typology_of_dauids_rise_to_power2008-03-101.pdf

³ ‘A remarkable comment appears in *Yalkut*, 60, applying this passage to Messiah, and using the same words to describe the mocking of the people. *Yalkut* applies v. 15 to the Messiah’ – Allen Ross, *Psalms*, 1:536. William Webster, *Behold Your King*, p. 78-79: ‘The ancient Jewish writing, *Pesikta Rabbati*, also interprets Psalm 22 as a prophetic reference to the sufferings and atoning sacrifice of the Messiah:...The Messiah will say: Master of the universe, with joy in my soul and gladness in my heart I take this suffering upon myself ... It was because of the ordeal of the Son of David that David wept, saying *My strength is dried up like a potsherd* (Ps. 22:16)...the Patriarchs will arise and say to the Messiah...our true Messiah, even though we are thy forbears, thou art greater than we because thou didst suffer for the iniquities of our children...thy strength was dried up like a potsherd...as it is said [then it quotes Ps 22:16 as well as v. 8 and v. 14-15 applied to Messiah’s suffering].’ ‘Rashi explains verse 26[27] with reference to, ‘the time of our redemption in the days of our Messiah,’” – Michael Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, p. 118.

⁴ Dale Ralph Davis, “Answer of the Forsaking God,” Ps 22, www.sermonaudio.com

⁵ See Ross, 1:523-24, and William Webster, *Behold Your King*, p. 80, citing ‘the ancient Jewish writing, the *Yalkut*, gives this translation [pierced] of Psalm...The Talmud reads: What is the cause of the mourning...R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on the point...the cause is the slaying of Messiah...since that agrees with the Scriptural verse [cites Zech 12:10]... A marginal reading in the Targum states...will slay him in front of the gate in Jerusalem. And they shall look to me and shall inquire of me why the nations pierced the Messiah.’ Michael Brown writes on Ps 22:16: ‘According to Rashi, the meaning is “as though they are crushed in a lion’s mouth,” while the commentary of Metsudat David states, “They crush my hands and my feet as the lion which crushed the bones of the prey in its mouth.” Thus, the imagery is clear: These lions are not licking the psalmist’s feet! They are tearing and ripping at them...Would this in any way contradict the picture of a crucified victim, his bones out of joint, mockers surrounding him and jeering at him, his garments stripped off of him and divided among his enemies, his feet and hands torn with nails...? ... the oldest existing Jewish translation of the Tanakh, was the first to translate the Hebrew as “they pierced my hands and feet” (using the verb *oruxan* in Greek), followed by the Syriac Peshitta version two or three centuries later (rendering with *baz’u*). Not only so, but the oldest Hebrew copy of the Psalms we possess...reads the verb in this verse as *ka’aru* (not *ka’ari*, “like a lion”), a reading also found in about a dozen medieval Masoretic manuscripts-recognized as the authoritative texts in traditional Jewish thought-where instead of *ka’ari* (found in almost all other Masoretic manuscripts) the texts say either *ka’aru* or *karu*. (Hebrew scholars believe this comes from a root meaning “to dig out” or “to bore through.”)...This is not a Christian fabrication.”--*Answering Objections*, 3:121-22.

⁶ C. J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross-Centered Life*, p. 94-95.

⁷ Ross, p. 545.