

Introduction

It is generally understood that although the Psalms were written over a long period of time (several centuries), they were gathered together as part of the Jewish Scripture after the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile. They were Hebrew poetry, often set to music to be sung as part of worship. Many of the Psalms refer to the king or the LORD's anointed. Joe Henderson tells us that in the Psalms, "...references to David, the king, and the LORD's anointed do not merely refer to historical figures in Israel's past. They point to a coming king who will fulfill the LORD's promise that David's house would rule all the nations of the world forever. It is in this way that the Psalms speak of a coming Christ."

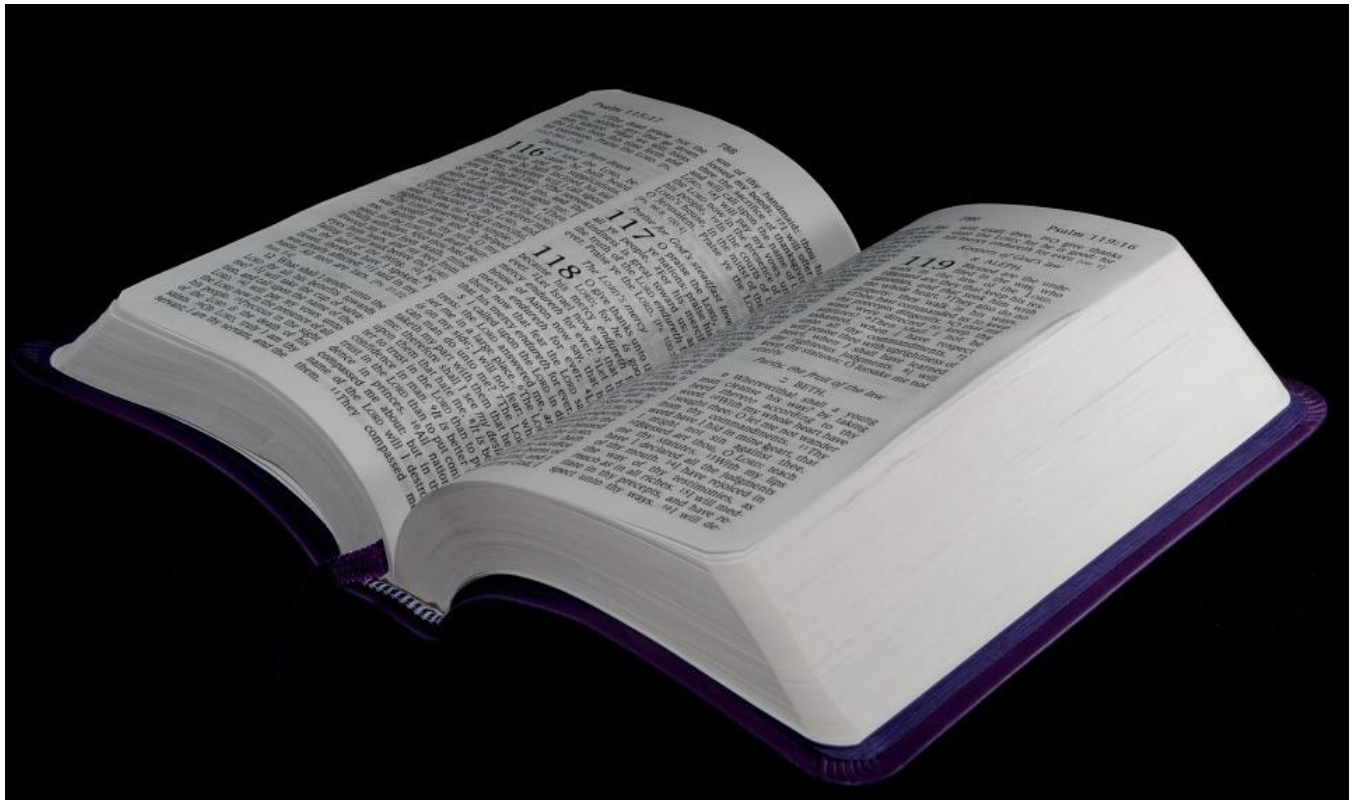
The everlasting reign is a key from Psalm 132: *The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne."* (vv. 11-12, ESV) Of course we know from the history of Israel (and Judah) that the subsequent kings were prone not to keep the covenant, but were engaged in idolatry, corruption and other evils. God, however, was faithful and true to His promise. As an example, when Joash was one year old and the sole survivor of a massacre at that time of the descendants of David, God, through Jehoshabeath, protected him from being killed. (II Chron 22:11-12) He was made king when he was seven years old and reigned forty years. (24:1) Although Joash turned to apostasy late in his reign, God used him to preserve David's descendants down through the ages to the birth of Jesus, the anointed King of kings.

Jesus, Himself said: *"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* (Luke 24:44)

The first mention of Christ in the Psalms is in Psalm 2: *"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed..."* (v. 2) The English word "anointed" is translated from the Hebrew word *mashiach*, from which we also get the word "Messiah". In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word is *Khristós* or *Christós*, from which we get the word "Christ". So, the Lord's Anointed in the Old Testament Psalms is surely pointing to the Messiah, the Christ of the New Testament. This is the Son of David, the Son of God, the King of kings.

As we progress through our devotionals for Holy Week we will see how things written about Jesus in the Psalms were fulfilled. While many Psalms present the king's songs of both praise and lament, we will turn our thoughts mainly to the "Passion of Christ": hated, betrayal, arrest, humiliation, forsaken, crucifixion and resurrection. And, although Jesus is definitely shown to be the victim of human atrocity, it is He Who is actually in control, obeying His Father, submitting to the Father's will until the bitter end, death on the cross. And on the third day, as Jesus predicted: He is risen! The tomb is empty!

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:22-24 ESV*



Monday, April 6 - **A Better King than David: Son of David, Son of God**

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." (Ps 2:1-6)

This passage initially seems to be speaking of David, but it transitions into a declaration of the Kingship of the Anointed Messiah (Christ). The perfect tense "have set" indicates a "done deal" in the past which continues in effect today and forever. David during his reign was threatened many times, in deep trouble and called on God: "Save me, O God!" (Ps 69:1a). Many of the Psalms which are prayers of "lament", seeking God's deliverance, end with praise to Him for His benevolence in answering that prayer.

In Psalm 2 we learn that the rulers of the heathen states hate God, His people and His Anointed and plan to wipe them off the face of the earth. They get together and plot how to destroy King David, who is anointed by God (through Samuel) to be the king of Israel. Plotting against God's anointed is the same as plotting against God Himself. If they can wipe David and his kingdom off the face of the earth, then they have "destroyed" David's God and David's descendant (Son of David). God's plan is to supply David's descendant as the Anointed Messiah, Son of God. The LORD merely laughs at these threats. He cannot be undone or defeated. Nor does He change His mind. God declares that He will accomplish His plan for the coming of the King of kings regardless of resistance by the "nations". No power on earth can prevent it. "Wicked men may... conduct themselves as wickedly as they please, but they shall at length feel what it is to make war against heaven. The whole mass of them could not possibly obscure his glory in the least degree." (John Calvin) *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.* (Ps 45:6) Therefore, a King is coming Who will reign forever, Whose ties and commands with His people cannot be burst apart or cast away. And Zion has been chosen by God to be the center of the kingdom, the Holy City, the place of the activities of salvation and the seat of His government.

After Jesus entered Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) and cleansed the temple He was not without opposition. The kings, rulers and authorities of Jesus' day were against Him in the same manner as those mentioned in Psalm 2 were against David. They schemed and plotted against Him and often used "trick" questions to try to catch Him. At one

point He was approached by the Pharisees (Matt 22:36-44) and He asked *them* a question: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" Their answer of course was "The son of David." He said to them "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord saying: *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* (referring to Ps 110:1) They could not answer Him and from then on, they didn't ask Him any more questions. We know the answer: the common view of the Christ (or Messiah) was too limited. They couldn't understand that the Son of David is the Son of God. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to come on a war horse or driving a chariot to overthrow the Romans and free them from oppression. They had no comprehension of the Son of David Who would die a humiliating death.

David tells us in Psalm 2: *The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."* (v 7) At this point Yahweh proclaims sonship of David and establishment of him as king of Israel (God's chosen people). And, He also alludes to the Son of David: The Messiah is Jesus, the Son of God, a better, greater King than David or his sons and descendants. It is Jesus Who will be King of kings to reign over all nations. "He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God has said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder." (Matthew Henry) Later we will see that the word "begotten" (to bring forth) is used in describing the resurrection of Jesus.

In Ps 110:4 we read: *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* Not only is the Messiah the King, but also a priest, which David was not. In fact, Jesus, the Messiah is the High Priest forever, replacing Israel's human priesthood of the descendants of Levi and Aaron. As our High Priest, He fulfills the office by making intercession for us and by making Sacrifice for our sins once and for all, He Himself being the Sacrifice. And He fills the office of Prophet by His teaching of the word of God, He Himself being the Word (Jn 1:1-2). The Messiah, Jesus, is proclaimed as the eternally begotten, (one and only) Son of God: Prophet, Priest and King.

Prayer: Holy God, all praise and glory belong to You, for You are the Creator and Sustainer of all things. You have established Your kingdom and supplied for us the King of kings, our Lord and Savior on Your Holy Hill. Thank You for choosing us to be Your people and for providing us with Your generous blessings. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Tuesday, April 7 - **Obedience and Humility**

Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." (Ps 40:7-8)

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the Son of man that you care for Him? Yet You have made Him a little lower than the heavenly beings... (Ps 8:5)

Jesus was obedient to the Father, the Scripture and the law because his life and ministry was focused on doing the will of the Father. Scripture points to this in Psalm 40, "...I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." (v 8) Jesus Himself said: "I can of Myself do nothing... I seek not Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me." (Jn 5:30)

The "obedience" (Greek, *hupakoe*) of Christ is mentioned 3 times in the New Testament: "Through the *obedience* of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). "He humbled himself, becoming *obedient* even unto death" (Phil 2:8). "Though he was a Son, yet he learned *obedience* by the things which he suffered" (Heb 5:8).

He was blameless from birth; He was obedient to his parents and to the Book of Law (Tora). It had to be that way for him to be the "Lamb without blemish." This made him "worthy" of sacrifice for sins. "For our sake he made him to be sin *who knew no sin*, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5:21) And it was his obedience to the Father's plan that led him to the cross. He prayed: "...not My will but Your will be done" (and we will touch more deeply on that later). While we might debate the issue of "active" vs "passive" obedience, it is true that those who trust in Christ not only receive the forgiveness of sins, but they also gain positive approval and benefit from the Father, because the *obedience* of Christ as well as His righteousness is imputed to all believers. In other words, In the sight of God our sin of disobedience is taken away and replaced by the obedience of our Lord; our unrighteousness is taken away and replaced by His righteousness.

Think of this: Just becoming a human, *a little lower than heavenly beings*, was humiliating for the Creator of all things. The Second Person of the Godhead gave up His glory and humbled Himself to become a helpless baby, totally dependent upon His earthly parents who held Him, fed Him, changed Him, bathed Him, taught Him and protected Him in every way until He reached adulthood. He was born in a lowly stable, He lived in low esteem, He mingled with sinful people, He worked in a humble job as a carpenter, He was rejected by those in His hometown and even by His own family, He

referred to Himself as a lowly shepherd, and most humiliating of all, He was crucified and died on a cross like a common criminal between two transgressors. But remember: It was not the divine nature of Christ that died, it was His human nature. His divine nature cannot die. The two natures of Christ is a mystery that is beyond the scope of this treatise.

Paul reminds us: *(Christ Jesus,) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:6-8)* He “emptied” Himself. R C Sproul comments: “There was no emptying of any divine attributes, but an emptying of status, of exaltation, of glory, for the sake of redemption and for the sake of the ultimate glory of the Father. For these purposes, our Lord put aside His own glory for a season.”

During the upper room Passover meal, Jesus truly showed us humility in action when *He rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet. (Jn 13:4)* This action, at that time, was reserved for the lowest of the household servants. Again, imagine Jesus, God Incarnate, stripping off His clothing, assuming the attire of a slave and washing the dirt and grime of Jerusalem off His guests’ feet. Is this not an indication that He will wash away the filth and pollution of the sins of all His people? Can we emulate His humility? “Let us daily strive to copy our Savior's humility.” (J.C. Ryle, 1816-1900)

Celebration of Passover included singing the *Hallel* (Praise God) Psalms as the meal progressed, passing a cup of wine, breaking unleavened bread and eating the lamb. As Jesus and His disciples departed the upper room for the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane they probably sang Psalm 136, known as the *Great Hallel*. Its theme is “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

Prayer: We give thanks and praise to You, O LORD, for You are good and Your infinite love takes care of us forever. Help us to be humble as we live to imitate our Lord Jesus, to put all our trust in Your hands and be faithful witnesses in obedience to Your Word. In Your Name, Lord Jesus, amen.

Wednesday, April 8 - **Agony, Betrayed by a Friend, Surrounded by Evil**

Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. (Ps 69:20)

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. (Ps 41:9)

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; (Ps 22:16)

After the Supper, Jesus led his disciples across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives and into the Garden of Gethsemane (Olive Press). The mount was a fertile hillside east of Jerusalem where the inhabitants of the city grew crops. Jesus apparently had a disciple who owned a beautiful olive grove where He and the disciples often visited. Matt 26:38 teaches us that as they entered the garden Jesus said to Peter, James and John: *“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”* And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”* A more meaningful translation begins *“Abba, Father...”* Three times He prayed essentially the same prayer, so intense that His sweat was as drops of blood. Peter, James and John were Jesus’ closest companions and they were cognizant of His sufferings, yet they couldn’t remain awake while He prayed. That prince of preachers, C. H. Spurgeon comments: They couldn’t “penetrate the secret places of the Savior’s woe.” Our Master’s grief was “shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. There Jesus is ‘left alone.’” Jesus was alone in His agony. He knew what lay ahead for Him: pain of torture and death on that terrible cross. But that can’t compare with facing the wrath of God against the sins of His people. Here, in the garden, He suffers agonies unknown to us as He faces the wrath of God in our place. Spurgeon in his analytical way tells us: *“It was a humble prayer: He fell on His face. It was a filial prayer: He prayed: Abba, Father, as a child to his Daddy. It was a persevering prayer: He prayed three times. It was the prayer of resignation: Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done.”* And Spurgeon adds instructions for us as we pray: *“...be content, pleading... as did Jesus.”* Isaac Watts describes Jesus’ agony in the hymn- *The Gospel Feast* verse 6:

*“It cost him death to save our lives,
To buy our souls it cost his own;
And all the unknown joys he gives,
Were bought with agonies unknown.”*

Jesus, being in agony, was nevertheless obedient to the Father and was in control of the events. So, when He finished praying, He said: *“Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”* (Matt 26:46) Then, Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus, appeared at the

garden leading “a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, ... with lanterns, torches, and weapons.” (Jn 18:3) During the supper, Jesus had said to the disciples “...one of you will betray Me.” (Jn 13:22) It was Judas, who betrayed Him with a kiss. (Matt 26:49) It has been estimated that a detachment consisted of about 600 soldiers and along with the Temple police, about a thousand men were sent to capture one man. Jesus met the entourage at the entrance to the garden and asked them “Whom do you seek?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus told them “I am He”. (Jn 18:2-6) They fell on their faces when Jesus told them “I Am He”, using the Greek phrase *ego eimi* which literally means “I am I am”. The religious leaders would have been familiar with God’s instructions to Moses when He told him to tell the people: “The I Am sent me.” (R C Sproul, paraphrased)

John in his gospel tells us *Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear... Jesus said to Peter: “Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”* (Jn 18:10-11) Can’t you just see Peter, being Peter, barging out front with a small dagger, taking on the entire mob of 1,000 who are accosting Jesus? Later he would deny association with Jesus but still later, at Pentecost and after, he would be bold in speaking out for the Lord (Acts chs 2-4) The “cup” to which Jesus refers is the cup of God’s wrath against sin. Our sin. Could Jesus have avoided His arrest? He could have called legions of angelic warriors to drive away the troops who were there to take Him. However, if He had done so, it would have been contrary to the plan among the Trinity from before the creation of the world. So, He went, obedient to the Father’s plan, the plan of salvation for all His people. He went without resistance, requesting that His companions be let go, saying: *“If you seek Me, let these go on their way,” that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, “Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none”* (Jn 18:7-9) Jesus was not concerned for His own safety, but for the safety of His disciples. And they abandoned Him and fled.

Prayer: O Lord God, not our will, but Your will be done in our lives. We trust in your providence to protect us from the evil that may surround us. Strengthen us and guide us that we may bring glory to Your Name and never betray or abandon our Lord Jesus. In His name, amen.

Thursday, April 9 - **Abandoned, Despised, Accused, Mocked**

Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. (Ps 31:11) All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me... (Ps 41:7) for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. (Ps 27:12) I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; (Ps 22:6-7)

Jesus' disciples fled as He was being arrested. A little later, John and Peter followed the crowd to the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest, who was interrogating Jesus. Peter was by a fire warming himself in the courtyard with others who had gathered there. (Lk 22:55) When questioned if he was with Jesus, he denied three times that he had any connection with Him. The rooster crowed, as Jesus had predicted... *And he [Peter] went out and wept bitterly.* (vs 60-62) David's laments in Psalms 31, 41 and 27 describe his (David's) predicament which also foretells that of Jesus: He is in contempt of his neighbors because his enemies hate him and spread lies about him. They flee from him as if he were useless as broken pottery. He feels rejected by his friends, the object of mockery and slander. His enemies plot to take his life.

Caiaphas, earlier, along with other leaders plotted to kill Jesus when the feast was over. Jesus had performed many signs and miracles which were noticed by the Jewish leaders. They were concerned that everyone would believe in Him and the Romans would come, abolish the political establishment and take over the nation. So, Caiaphas said to the leaders, *"You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."* (Jn 11:49) *So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.* (v 53) Little did Caiaphas know the fullness of the truth contained in his prophetic statement! Matthew Henry comments: "There can hardly be a more clear discovery of the madness that is in man's heart, and of its desperate enmity against God, than what is here recorded. Words of prophecy in the mouth, are not clear evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. The calamity we seek to escape by sin, we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; as those do who think by opposing Christ's kingdom, to advance their own worldly interest." Caiaphas sped up his plan to kill Jesus when Judas Iscariot offered to betray Him.

Jesus was questioned by Caiaphas in an illegal "trial" by the Sanhedrin. Many false witnesses were brought forth but no two could be found who agreed on charges which

was necessary for a verdict. There were no witnesses for the defense. Finally, two were found who claimed that Jesus had said He could tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days. It had taken 46 years to complete it. They misquoted Him, for He had said *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”* This was pertaining to “the temple of His body.” (Jn 2:19, 21) Psalm 109 puts it this way: “...the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.” (v 2, NKJV) When Caiaphas asked Jesus if He was “the Christ, the Son of God”, Jesus answered: “It is as you said”. (Matt 26:63) Based on this statement, the Sanhedrin found Him guilty of blasphemy, issued the death penalty and turned Him over to Pilate, Prefect of Judaea, to be executed. Rome didn’t meddle in the religious affairs of the Jews so the charge against Jesus was changed to sedition, a crime against the Roman establishment. Pilate couldn’t find any wrongdoing of Jesus and declared Him innocent: *Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him (Lk 23:13-15)* and he offered to let Jesus go. Caiaphas and the other leaders wouldn’t accept that, so they asked that Barabbas be released rather than Jesus. Then when a riot was about to begin, for political reasons Pilate capitulated to their demands, declared Jesus guilty and gave Him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

The soldiers took Jesus and continued mocking, spitting on Him and beating Him. Like the Psalmist, Jesus feels that He is less than human (a worm). He is scourged, mocked and beaten, scorned and despised; He is suffering. Ps 22:7-8: *All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”*

Jesus was declared both innocent and guilty by Pilate, the Governor of Judaea. Little did he know how right he was.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts, hands and eyes to you in praise and thanksgiving. May all glory be to You. Please protect us from the evil one, comfort us and strengthen us when we are mistreated or persecuted by those who hate You. We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

Good Friday, April 10 - **Condemned, Mistreated, Crucified**

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (Ps 22:16-18)

As dawn approached on Friday the Roman soldiers continued to surround, mock and torture our Lord. They had fashioned a “crown” with large thorns and mashed it down on His head, covered him with a purple sheet and mocked Him with “Hail to the king of the Jews”. They stripped Him, scourged Him and paraded Him in public. Then they marched Him to Golgotha where they nailed Him to the cross and raised Him up over the hill between two evildoers who were crucified one to His left and one to His right. Pilate had written on a board above the cross piece: **King of the Jews** in three languages. Again, he didn’t know just how right he was.

Golgotha, or Calvary as we refer to it, was located just outside the city wall of Jerusalem, probably on the north side of the city, near a heavily travelled highway. This location was probably chosen with the purpose that the passersby would see the terrible “justice” of the Romans being meted out to those convicted of treason and other crimes against the empire. Crucifixion was one of the cruelest, most tortuous methods of punishment ever dreamed up by human minds. It was not even lawful for a Roman citizen to be executed by crucifixion except for insurrection. The sadistic treatment by the Roman soldiers often resulted in the victims dying before they were actually nailed to the cross.

When the soldiers stripped Jesus of His clothing, they divided them among themselves and then cast lots for His tunic, as it was woven in one piece. (Ps 22:18/Jn 19:24) They continued mocking Him as He was nailed to the cross and the crowd joined in: “If He is the Messiah, let Him come down from the cross. He saved others, Himself He cannot save!” (Ps 22:8/Matt 27:42) Of course He could have prayed the Father to send legions of angelic warriors to take Him down. But, if He had saved Himself or if angels had arrived and taken Him down from the cross there would be no salvation for His people. “It is precisely because He would not come down that we believe in Him. The Jews could see God only in power; but Jesus showed that God is sacrificial love.” (Barclay) And nothing could foil the eternal plan of God.

Think about this: Jesus, on the cross, in pain and exhaustion, bleeding and struggling to breathe, methodically continued His ministry: Concerning those who were crucifying

Him, He prayed to the Father: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." To the penitent thief He said, "Today you will be with Me in paradise". He gave His mother over to the care of the disciple whom He loved. He fulfilled prophecy when He said, "I thirst" and received the sour wine. Even on the cross, He thought mainly of others and continued to be totally in control, in obedience to the Father.

It was about the third hour (9:00 am) when they raised Him up. He would remain on the cross for about 6 hours, 'til 3:00 pm. With the scourging and beating He had endured, His physical state was in such shape that He was hardly recognizable. The lashings had left not only bloody stripes but had exposed His bones and insides. Jeremiah's lament for Jerusalem was most certainly on His mind as He hung there: *Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.* (Lamentations 1:12) Matthew Henry observes: "Whatever may be learned from the sufferings of Jerusalem, far more may be learned from the sufferings of Christ. Does he not from the cross speak to every one of us? Does he not say, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?' Let all our sorrows lead us to the cross of Christ, lead us to mark his example, and cheerfully to follow him."

Jesus was truly "a man of sorrows". ... *he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;* (Isiah 53:2,3) Matthew Henry comments: "The low condition he submitted to, and his appearance in the world, were not agreeable to the ideas the Jews had formed of the Messiah. It was expected that he should come in pomp; instead of that, he grew up as a plant, silently, and insensibly. He had nothing of the glory which one might have thought to meet with him. His whole life was not only humble as to outward condition, but also sorrowful."

Prayer: Father in Heaven, come close to us when we are grieved. Help us to follow our Lord and Savior and depend on His Spirit to sooth our sorrows and heal our hearts when they are broken. Thank You Lord Jesus for giving Your life in order to redeem ours. In Your name, Lord Jesus, amen.

Saturday, April 11 - **Forsaken, Darkness, Death**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? (Ps 22:1)

If Jesus felt alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, and before the Sanhedrin, He surely felt even greater loneliness when His Father withdrew from Him. Never for all eternity had the Father and Son been separated. Now, Jesus was forsaken by His Father and His God. To be forsaken by a friend, or family member, or spouse is a terrible happening, but to be forsaken by God!? No human can fathom. The whole world was plunged into the darkness of sin (Matt 27:45-46). From the sixth to the ninth hour (12 to 3 pm), it was as if God had placed His hand over the sun, the light of the world was withdrawn, and pitch black covered the earth. And in the depth of His suffering, Jesus quoted from Psalm 22: *My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?* The Psalmist goes on to tell that his "...heart is like wax... I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint." (v 14) Spurgeon (*Morning & Evening*) comments: Our Lord was weak as water poured out on the ground... He was wounded, felt the sword; He drained the cup and tasted every drop. In His natural body, every member suffered. (Paraphrased) In *Faith's Checkbook*, Spurgeon adds: "Have we ever in any degree tasted the wormwood and the gall of "Forsaken" in that sense? If so, let us beseech our Lord to save us from any repetition of so unspeakable a sorrow."

Just as the agony and suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane couldn't compare with suffering the wrath of God, the pain and suffering at the hands of men, even death on the cross were as nothing in light of the infinite wrath of God against sin. In all, Jesus suffered from His enemies, from His friends, from His disciples and from His Father. R.M. M'Cheyne tells us that forsaken of God, "... this alone was an infinite suffering. It was little to be bruised by the heel of men or devils; but, ah! to be trodden by the heel of God: 'It pleased the Father to bruise Him.'" (Is 53:10) Why? To save His people (us) from the curse of sin!

Jack B. Scott explains: "Psalm 22 deals with the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the unrighteous, ... [similar to that of Job]: the sense of God forsaking the psalmist, the failure to hear God's answer (22:1-2). Unlike Job, however, the psalmist can and does appeal to God's written revelation regarding those who trust in God and draws strength from the assurance that God is near and will hear him though he is despised by men (vs 3-11). ... This psalm was particularly precious to our Lord in the hours of His agony on the cross (Matt 27:46). We can see in it both Jesus' sense of God's leaving Him in the

hour He took on Himself our sins and at the same time Jesus' assurance as He put Himself in the hands of His Father, assured by this very psalm that God would not be far off (vs 19, 24)." Due to His omnipresence, God is always nearby, never forsaking us.

So, Psalm 22 doesn't leave us with the feelings of suffering and "forsakenness". It ends with a promise: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you, for kingship belongs to the LORD, and He rules over the nations. ... They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it." (vs 27,28,31) The final victory of salvation is accomplished by Christ as He proclaimed: *Tetelestai!*, Greek for "It is finished" - "It is accomplished" - "Victory!" (v 31/John 19:30) And He exclaimed: "*Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.*" *And having said this He breathed His last.* (Ps 31:5/Lk 23:46)

Don Fortner comments: "His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed. In fact, he seems to have been completely content and perfectly happy. He cried, "*It is finished,*" because his agony was over. His sufferings were over, finished. It appears that he was already beginning to enjoy a taste of sweet victory. And, yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect, and fluency of words that he possessed, he chose not to say something new, but went to the Book of God, and took from the writings of the Holy Spirit this expression of contentment, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit.*"

Jesus was dead. He gave up His Spirit into the hands of the Father. A Roman soldier pierced His side with a dagger or spear and blood and water ran forth to prove his death. His legs were not broken (Ps 34:20/Jn 19:31-36) as were those of the two thieves who were not yet dead. And, His body was not thrown into the garbage dump or left on the cross to rot as most victims were. On Friday afternoon, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for the body. "Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid." (Luke 23:53) The women procured spices and fragrant oils for His burial, then rested on the Sabbath. His disciples were left as sheep without a shepherd.

Prayer: Thank You O God that because of our Lord Jesus' sacrifice, You will never forsake us. Comfort us when we suffer. Provide for us from Your bounty and guide us in our days and our nights that You may be glorified in all that we do. In Jesus' strong name, amen.

Easter Sunday, April 12 - **Resurrection, Ascension, Exaltation**

Resurrection - *Today I have begotten you* Ps 2:7 “brought forth” (Acts 13:30-34)

O LORD, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit. (Ps 30:3) *You will not leave my soul in Sheol.* (Ps 16:10) *He is risen!* (Matt 28:6)

Redemption Accomplished: Jesus was accused of both blasphemy and treason. He was innocent of both. We, however, as sinners are guilty of both blasphemy and treason against God. For all of God’s people, those sins along with a whole stack of others were imputed to Jesus and He accomplished our redemption by paying the penalty of sin that we owe, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him .” (2 Cor 5:21) That is the heart of the Gospel. (John Murray, paraphrased)

The tomb is empty! He is risen! The resurrection of Christ is just as important as His death. Some consider it more so. When Christ died, the curse of sin (death) died with Him. When He arose, sin and death remained in the grave. Richard Gaffin explains, “As long as [Jesus] remained in a state of death, the righteous character of his work, the efficacy of his obedience unto death remained in question, in fact, was implicitly denied. Consequently, the eradication of death in his resurrection is nothing less than the removal of the verdict of condemnation and the effective affirmation of his righteousness”. And it is His righteousness imputed to the believer that God sees in determining the believer (us) “just”.

In Psalm 16 David expresses his delight in the LORD: ... *You will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption* (v 10). The immediate application of this Psalm is to David. It refers to deliverance from the threat of death, but it points prophetically to Jesus and His resurrection. Peter, in Acts 2:27 quotes this in his Pentecost sermon attesting to Jesus’ resurrection. Matthew Henry comments: “Christ’s resurrection is an earnest of the believer’s resurrection. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy, a fullness of joy; our pleasures here are for a moment, but those at God’s right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

In Acts 13:30-35, Paul teaches us: *But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” And as for*

the fact that he raised him from the dead, ..., he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." As Jesus was raised up ("brought forth") from the dead and affirmed to be the Son of God, we, as God's children, receive the blessings He promised to David!

Ascension – Ps 68:18/Lk 24:51 *You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.* On the fortieth day after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven unto His accession to the Heavenly Throne to reign forever and ever. This is the restoration of His glory that He possessed before His incarnation. He is there now, preparing a place for us and we will eventually be part of His "train" as we go to live in eternity with Him. For us, He intercedes and prays to the Father. And we will never be "forsaken" of God!

Exaltation – Ps 110:1; Ps 97:9 / Act 1:11 *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; Yahweh makes a promise pertaining to David and his dynasty, that one of his descendants will have authority over many peoples (all nations), including his enemies, to the extent of subjugating them to absolute control. Jesus, in His exaltation, finally (completely) fulfills that promise. He sits at the right hand of Yahweh as the King of kings, LORD of lords. For you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. (Ps 97:9) Phil 2:9-11 echoes: Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

"In common language, the terms *exaltation* and *humiliation* stand as polar opposites. One of the most magnificent glories of God's revealed truth and most poignant ironies is that in the cross of Christ these two polar opposites merge and are reconciled. In His humiliation, we find our exaltation. Our shame is replaced by His glory. The songwriter had it right when he wrote, 'My sinful self, my only shame, my glory, all the cross.'" (Sproul, *Table Talk*)

Prayer: Holy God, thank You so much for providing salvation for us in such a remarkable way. Our hearts are sorrowful when we consider all the sufferings of our Savior, then we rejoice greatly and worship Him in His resurrection! May all glory, honor and praise be to You. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, amen and amen.

Afterword

John MacArthur exhorts us: “Because of the death [Christ] died, suffering the penalty of sin on our behalf, we become partakers with Him in His resurrection as well. That is virtually the whole point of Romans ch 6. So don’t ever pass over the meaning of the death of Christ on your way to celebrate the Resurrection. It is the Cross that gives meaning to the resurrection life. Only insofar as we are united with Him in the likeness of His death, can we be certain of being raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection.”

All of the wrath of God for the sins of His chosen people was poured out against those sins, never to appear again. Jesus, the Son of God, took upon Himself those sins as He died on that dreadful cross in our place. “Jesus Himself was deserted of God for a time — that His people might not be deserted forever.” John Flavel (1628-1691)

He is risen! Charles Hodge states: “As Christ died as the head and representative of his people, His resurrection secures and illustrates theirs. As He lives, they shall live also. If He remained under the power of death, there is no source of spiritual life to men; for he is the vine, we are the branches; if the vine be dead the branches must be dead also.”

Ps 118:22-24 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. The corner stone is the beginning point of the foundation and the point on which all other stones are aligned. Jesus, as the Head, is the Cornerstone of His church which is established on Him as the “Rock”. And “the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!” (Matt 16:18)

On Psalm 118, Matthew Henry comments: “His humiliation; He is the Stone which the builders refused: they would go on in their building without Him. This proved the ruin of those who thus made light of Him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God. His exaltation; He is the Chief Cornerstone in the foundation. He is the Chief Top-stone, in Whom the building is completed, Who must, in all things, have the pre-eminence.”

It is the LORD’s doing, this is THE day that the LORD has made!

Out of Christ's condemnation — flows our justification!
Out of His agony — comes our victory!
Out of His pain — comes our ease!
Out of His stripes — comes our healing!
Out of His gall and vinegar — comes our honey!
Out of His curse — comes our blessing!
Out of His crown of thorns — comes our crown of glory!
Out of His death — comes our life!
O what a melting consideration is this! -John Flavel

“Were you there, when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?” If we were chosen by God from before the foundation of the world to be in Christ and predestined for adoption to Himself as sons (Eph 1:4-5), we most assuredly were there, in Him! Crucified with Him. Then, in His resurrection, we are “born again” with Him: *Today I have begotten You* [I have brought You forth]. He is the first fruits of the resurrection, the (One and Only) first-born Son of God; we live in Him, as “adopted” brothers and sisters. We will not be abandoned or forsaken. So, worship Him, follow Him with all your heart, strength and soul! For He has said: ... *I am with you always, to the end of the age.* Amen!

Praise the LORD!

Soli Deo Gloria

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