

Psalm 22

Intro:

What is the single most well known movie or piece of media about Jesus? Many would say it is “The Passion of the Christ” by Mel Gibson. But that movie doesn’t focus on the life of Jesus, or his teachings, or the miracles he worked. The movie focuses almost exclusively on the suffering Jesus went through during his final hours.

Mel Gibson was asked why he chose to depict Christ in such a vivid and graphic way.

Mel Gibson once explained that he didn’t set out to make a conventional religious film—he “tried to make something that was real to me.” He told *Christianity Today* that wrestling with Christ’s Passion “got inside me and started to grow, and it reached a point where I just had to tell it, to get it out.” In doing so, he sought to convey the full weight of Christ’s sacrifice, particularly the “enormity of blood sacrifice” rooted in Biblical truth from Leviticus. Gibson said, “The life of the flesh is in the blood... I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls.” His film, with its graphic intensity, was born out of a conviction that the Gospel’s deepest truths cannot be softened—and that the brutality of Christ’s suffering must be felt to be truly known.

Why is it so important that we understand the depth of the suffering of Christ?

Firstly, We must recognize the extent of Christ’s suffering to live in the sufficiency of Christ suffering

Secondly, The suffering of Christ fulfilled mountains of biblical prophecy.

Thirdly, understanding the depths of Christ’s suffering for you is the first step in understanding how much he loves you.

Psalm 22

Psalm 22 is a perfect prophetic mirror of what Christ suffered at and before the cross.

What we see when we look at it:

- Just How much Christ suffered for us
- Just How much of His suffering fulfilled God’s Word
- Just what that suffering means for us

Context and Background

- **Author:** David, the shepherd-king.
- **The Shepherd Psalms:** 22, 23, and 24. The suffering of the Shepherd, the care and provision of the Shepherd, the Glory of the Righteous Shepherd King.
- **Historical setting:** No single event in David's life matches all the suffering described. Likely David is poetically expressing intense distress (possibly betrayal, enemies, personal illness, or persecution).
- **Spiritual context:** David speaks as a righteous sufferer who feels forsaken by God but still clings to Him in faith.
- **Messianic lens:** The details go far beyond David's life and find their fulfillment in Jesus' crucifixion.

Cry of Forsakenness (vv.1–2)

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Why are You so far from helping Me,

And from the words of My groaning?

²O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;

And in the night season, and am not silent.

- David feels abandoned in suffering, prayers unanswered.
- Spoken verbatim by Jesus on the cross (Matt. 27:46). Represents not loss of faith, but the weight of sin and separation.
- This is the only time Christ refers to Him as God and not Father, demonstrating that He has taken the place of sinners, separated from God, bearing His wrath.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Contrast Between Past Deliverance and Present Silence (vv.3–5)

³But You are holy,

Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

⁴Our fathers trusted in You;

They trusted, and You delivered them.

⁵*They cried to You, and were delivered;*

They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

- David remembers that God delivered the fathers when they cried out. Despite his cry for help, he still believes God can deliver him.
- Jesus Mirrors this by crying out, “My God, My God,” demonstrating that His faith in the Father is still unbroken.

Mockery and Scorn (vv.6–8)

⁶*But I am a worm, and no man;*

A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

⁷*All those who see Me ridicule Me;*

They ^[b]shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

⁸*“He ^[c]trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him;*

Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”

- Perfectly Mirrors how Christ was mocked on the cross (Matt. 27:39–43).

³⁹*And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”*

⁴¹*Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the ^[d]scribes and elders, said, ⁴² “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. ^[e]If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe ^[f]Him. ⁴³ He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”*

God’s Care from Birth (vv.9–11)

⁹*But You are He who took Me out of the womb;*

You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts.

¹⁰*I was cast upon You from birth.*

From My mother’s womb

You have been My God.

¹¹*Be not far from Me,*

*For trouble is near;
For there is none to help.*

- Despite David's current feeling that he's been abandoned, he recognizes that God has had his hand on him since he was born.
- Christ, uniquely, was upheld from birth to cross by the Father's providence.

Psalm 22:12-18 Intensity of Suffering

*¹² Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.*

*¹³ They ^[a]gape at Me with their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.*

- "Bulls of Bashan" refers to the well-fed, powerful cattle of the fertile region east of the Jordan (Amos 4:1).
- Symbolizes Powerful domestic enemies like the religious leaders who surrounded and mocked Jesus at His crucifixion (Matt. 27:20, 27–31, 39–43).

*¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted ^[a]within Me.*

- Total weakness, exhaustion, and despair, as if his very strength has drained away.
- On the cross, Christ's body was literally stretched and disjointed by crucifixion.
- His heart "like wax" parallels both the emotional anguish (Luke 22:44, sweating blood in Gethsemane) and the physical strain on His heart under suffocation and shock.
- When His side was pierced, "blood and water" flowed (John 19:34), a detail some medical experts see as evidence of heart failure under extreme stress.

*¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.*

- Completely dried out, parched, and lifeless — like a piece of broken pottery.
- Jesus' extreme thirst on the cross fulfills this (John 19:28, "*I thirst*").
- The dehydration, blood loss, and fever from scourging would have left His tongue sticking to His jaws.

¹⁶*For dogs have surrounded Me;*

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.

They¹⁶ pierced My hands and My feet;

- David refers to being surrounded twice- "Bulls" representing domestic enemies, religious leaders, and "Dogs" referring to foreign enemies and scavengers.
- Christ was surrounded by both Jew and Gentile, religious leaders and Roman soldiers.
- "They have pierced my hands and feet"- can only refer to Christ's literal crucifixion, nailed to a cross
- Later Jews would try to translate it as "lions sat at my hands and feet", most likely because of its clear fulfillment in Christ, but the Greek Septuagint which came hundreds of years before Christ, clearly says "they pierced my hands and feet."

¹⁷*I can count all My bones.*

They look and stare at Me.

- He was so emaciated, weak, or stripped that his bones showed through his skin. His enemies gloated over his condition, staring at his humiliation.
- Jesus' scourging left Him severely lacerated, losing flesh, making His bones visible.
- On the cross, He hung stripped and exposed (John 19:23–24), surrounded by gawking crowds. His enemies watched Him suffer with morbid fascination.

¹⁸*They divide My garments among them,*

And for My clothing they cast lots.

- Fulfilled word-for-word by Roman soldiers at the crucifixion (John 19:23–24; Matt. 27:35).
- The seamless tunic was too valuable to tear, so they cast lots for it.

Psalm 22:19-21 Urgent Plea for Rescue

¹⁹ But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me;

O My Strength, hasten to help Me!

²⁰ Deliver Me from the sword,

My ^[2] precious life from the power of the dog.

²¹ Save Me from the lion's mouth

And from the horns of the wild oxen!

- David ends his lament with one more desperate prayer. The first half closes with tension unresolved.

Other Old Testament Prophecies about Christ's Suffering

1. Betrayed by a Close Friend

Psalm 41:9

"Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me."

- **Fulfillment** – John 13:18; Matthew 26:47–50
"He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me."
Judas arrives with the mob and betrays Him with a kiss.

2. Sold for Thirty Pieces of Silver

Zechariah 11:12–13

"So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. ... the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—that princely price they set on me."

- **Fulfillment** – Matthew 26:14–15; 27:9–10
"What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you? ... they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver."
Later the silver was thrown in the temple and used for the potter's field.

3. Silent Before His Accusers

Isaiah 53:7

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter...”

- **Fulfillment** – Matthew 27:12–14
“He answered nothing... not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.”

4. Spat On and Struck

Isaiah 50:6

“I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.”

- **Fulfillment** – Matthew 26:67
“They spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands.”

5. Counted Among Transgressors

Isaiah 53:12

“... He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many...”

- **Fulfillment** – Mark 15:27–28
“With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled...”

6. Given Gall and Vinegar

Psalms 69:21

“They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

- **Fulfillment** – Matthew 27:34; John 19:28–30
“They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink...”
“Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, said, ‘I thirst!’”

Jesus was offered gall (a numbing agent of sour wine or vinegar, and myrrh) twice during his suffering. Once before his crucifixion, which he refused, as a symbol that he was bearing

the full weight and pain of our sins. Then, to fulfill this prophecy, after his suffering had been complete, he cried out I thirst so that they would give him the gall as a symbol that the suffering had been endured and the price was paid, after which he declared it is finished.

7. No Bones Broken

Psalm 34:20

“He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken.”

- **Fulfillment** – John 19:33–36

“When they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs... these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not one of His bones shall be broken.’”

8. Pierced Side

Zechariah 12:10

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced.”

The one speaking in Zechariah is clearly God. He says I will pour out my Spirit. But then he says they will look on “Me” whom they pierced.

Now sometimes when we see capitalization on subjects in the Old Testament it’s added later when scribes identified the subject as the Messiah. But, the capitalized “Me” (*Elay*) in this passage goes back to the oldest manuscripts and translations of scripture.

Later Jews would translate the text as “Him” to avoid the obvious implication that God himself would suffer and be pierced. If you have a bible that says “on Him whom they pierced” there is probably a foot note saying that older texts read “Me”.

What this means it that God is saying it is He Himself who will suffer and be pierced. But there’s more. The next verse reads *“they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son..”* the subject changes from Me to Him. This implies a duality, that the One who is pierced will be 100% God incarnate, and 100% someone else.

This is not just a prophecy that Jesus would be pierced through the side, it is a prophecy that the One who is pierced would be God in flesh. And Jesus was.

- **Fulfillment** – John 19:34, 37

“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear... they shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

The full suffering of Christ

- It was physical: scourged, beaten beyond recognition, and pierced
- It was emotional: mocked, scorned, betrayed and abandoned
- It was spiritual: Christ bore the wrath of sin, separated from God

Every layer of suffering was foretold, proving that the cross was **not an accident, but God’s eternal plan.**

When Jesus cried out “it is finished” he meant that the price had been paid and his suffering was finished. But God’s plan wasn’t.

You have Answered me- The Resurrection of Christ

Psalm 22:21-24 Declaration of Deliverance

You have answered Me.

²² I will declare Your name to My brethren;

In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

²³ You who fear the Lord, praise Him!

All you ^[b]descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,

And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

²⁴ For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;

Nor has He hidden His face from Him;

But when He cried to Him, He heard.

- The “Afflicted One” is of course Jesus. And we know that He cried out on the cross, My God, My God...”
- According to David’s prophecy, and the writer of Hebrews, when Jesus cried out to the father, he was heard.

Hebrews 5:7

⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

How do we know that God heard the Son? Because he vindicated Him by raising him from the dead.

Acts 2:23-28

²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you ^[1] have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having ^[2] loosed the ^[3] pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

- Peter proclaims that God raised Jesus from the dead. It was not possible for Christ to be held by it.

God Answers

- God answers David with the hope of resurrection for the Messiah (Psalm 16)
- God answers Christ by raising him from the dead
- This is the ultimate answer to all prayer, that God raised Jesus from the dead. That is why David can conclude Psalm 22 in praise

Psalm 22:25-31 Conclusion of Praise

*²⁵ My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.*

*²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the Lord.
Let your heart live forever!*

*²⁷ All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the Lord,
And all the families of the ^[1] nations
Shall worship before ^[2] You.*

*²⁸ For the kingdom is the Lord's,
And He rules over the nations.*

*²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;*

*All those who go down to ^[k]the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.*

³⁰ A posterity shall serve Him.

It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,

*³¹ They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.*

What does the depths of Christ's suffering mean for us?

It was all according to Plan: the Biblical prophecies show us that nothing happened to Jesus by accident. All the way down to what happened to his clothes and where he was buried, God's plan has perfectly unfolded just as he intended.

Jesus is Greater, even in Suffering: when we go through something difficult, one of the last things we want to hear is "it's part of God's plan." We think "why would a loving God allow me to suffer as part of His plan." But we must recognize that in God's perfect plan no one suffers more than He did on the cross.

He Loves You Beyond Your Understanding:

Ephesians 3:17-19

¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

If you only knew how much God loves you, how much different would your life be, just resting in the fullness of God.

If the world only knew, how much God loves them, surely they would turn from their wicked ways and turn to Him. Will you be the one to tell them?