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“The Shepherd Psalms” Psalm 22, 23, 24

If you have spent much time around the capitol you have probably seen displayed some of the sketches and blueprints Cass Gilbert developed when he designed our wonderful statehouse. Simply viewing these drawings gave an inkling of how grand the actual building was to be. We might have been impressed with the drawings, but we are truly in awe when we view the “real thing” when we pass by the capitol or walk along its beautiful halls.

This gives us a hint of what it means when we see Christ in the Psalms and throughout the rest of the Old Testament. What we see of Christ in the Old Testament – the Tabernacle; the sacrificial system; the priesthood; are all just sketches or pictures that point us to the real thing – Jesus Christ. Those things merely gave us an inkling of the glorious reality of who Christ was to be and what He was to do for us. Some of the clearest and most vivid sketches we have of our coming Savior are found in Psalm 22-24, - “The Shepherd Psalms”.

As we look for Christ in the Psalms, we have no clearer or more detailed sketch than what we see in Psalm 22, 23, and 24. These three Psalms have often together been called “The Shepherd Psalms” and indeed give us a wonderful sketch of who Christ is and what He has done for us.

In Psalm 22-24 David prophetically describes for us the roles Christ would serve as He came to live, suffer and die, rise again from the dead, and return triumphantly to heaven. While David was writing from his own life and experiences, God was using him to describe the coming Savior 1,000 years before the events took place.

In Psalm 22 we see **the cross** - the Good Shepherd dying for His sheep and rising again from the Dead. (John 10:11) Here we learn of what Christ did for us in the **past**.

In Psalm 23 we see **the crook** - the Great Shepherd caring and providing for His sheep. (Hebrews 13:20) Here we see what Christ is doing for us in the **present**.

And in Psalm 24 we see **the crown** - the Chief Shepherd coming for the sheep and to rule and reign over all creation. (1 Peter 5:4) Here we look forward to what Christ will do in the **future**.

The Good Shepherd Dying for His Sheep

(I encourage you to take the time at this point to read Psalm 22 in its entirety.)

In Psalm 22 we find the most vivid description of

crucifixion found anywhere in the Bible. The amazing thing is it was written nearly 500 years before crucifixion as a means of execution was invented and 1000 years before Christ came to earth.

David may have been writing figuratively and poetically regarding some terrible trials he experienced, but the Holy Spirit inspired him to prophetically write of the anguish that was to be endured by our Savior. We see a personal description from one undergoing the horrors of execution by crucifixion. Psalm 22 captures the suffering of our Savior in the first person.

The Psalm begins with these familiar words, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” These words are so familiar because we know they were spoken by our Savior as He hung upon the cross. We read of the other details of Christ’s horrific experience: He was scorned and mocked by onlookers (vs. 6-7); He thirsted greatly (vs. 15); He was surrounded by ruthless enemies (vs. 16); His hands and feet were pierced (vs. 16); His garments were divided, and lots were cast for His clothing (vs. 18).

Why Have You Forsaken Me? We cannot help but be struck by Jesus’ anguished cry. David may have been writing of His feelings in his own struggles and suffering. However, he only *felt* that God had forsaken him, He writes just a few verses later of God’s care and deliverance of his faith and trust in Him. We read in the New Testament that God promises His children, “**I will never leave you nor forsake you**” (Heb. 13:5). Yet Jesus, as the ultimate singer of this Psalm, truly

experienced the forsakenness of God as He bore our sin and suffered all the punishment we deserved. Jesus was forsaken by His Father that we might be accepted. This Psalm reminds us in a powerful way of all that Christ endured for us when He suffered and died on the cross.

While this Psalm certainly draws our attention to what Christ experienced during His crucifixion, it also points us to His deliverance at the resurrection. Verses 19-31 tells of the deliverance God provides and the honor and glory Christ would be given. Verse 22, "***I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.***" is said to be fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 2:12). This points us to the truth that Jesus would ultimately be delivered in His resurrection from the dead and receive all the praise, honor, and glory He deserves.

Psalm 22 closes with a description of Christ's rule over the nations (vs. 28). It ends with the words "***He has performed it***". This could literally be quoted, "It is finished". Many believe Jesus' final words on the cross come from Psalm 22 as well. As He died, Jesus completed – finished – God's plan to bring grace and salvation to us.

The Chief Shepherd Returning for His Sheep

(I encourage you to take the time at this point to read Psalm 24 in its entirety.)

David writes of God creating the earth and ruling over all things (vs. 1-2). He then writes of the One who might enter into God's holy presence – "He who has clean hands and a pure heart" (vs. 3-6). David then finishes this Psalm with these glorious words:

***Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory.***

What a stark contrast from Psalm 22:1 – "***My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?***" and the description of pain and suffering with the words of Psalm 24 – "***Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.***"

The gates and doors are describing those of the temple – the entrance into God's holy presence. They may also describe the entrance into heaven itself, God's holy kingdom. Here we see Christ's return to His Father's side following His triumph over sin and death. We also see His future return to rule and reign over all things.

The King has triumphed, and He proceeds to the place from where He will rule the nations (Psalm 110:1-2). This is what is described for us in Psalm 24.

Encouragement for Us

As we have considered our series on looking for Christ in the Psalms, we have discovered there are multiple ways we might look at each one. We learn how we should respond to the various trials and struggles of life. We look for the Psalms that point specifically to Christ as shown us in the New Testament. And we can consider Jesus as Himself the singer of the Psalms.

What do we learn from the example of David, and of Jesus about how we respond to our own trials? Psalm 22 shows even when feeling forsaken by God we know that "***He is holy and enthroned upon the praises of Israel***" (vs. 3). We can know that God is not far from us and that He is our strength and deliverance (vs. 19). From Psalm 24 we are reminded that Christ ultimately rules over all things and will one day return for His sheep. From Psalm 23, which we will consider in our next study, we know that Christ is the Great Shepherd presently caring and providing for His sheep. In these truths we find encouragement and assurance in the midst of the greatest of trials.

What We Learn from Psalm 22 & 24

Psalm 22 reminds us just how much Jesus has done for us in His suffering and death on the cross.

We realize there is no other way of salvation but through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. If the Father would allow His Son to suffer so, there can be no other way.

We know that if we trust in Christ we can never be forsaken by God, because Christ was forsaken for us.

We know that Christ will ultimately rule and reign over all things and that if we have repented and trusted Him, though we might suffer now we will eventually be with Him!

The glorious truth of Psalm 22 and 24 are well captured by this hymn by Phillip Bliss:

*Lifted up was He to die
"It is finished!" was His cry
Now in heaven exalted high
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Tuesday, August 30

12:00 Senate President's Conference Room
(Located near Senate President's Offices)