

Summer Psalms
PSALM OF THE CROSS

Monday, August 18
Reading: Psalm 22:1-18

Psalm 22:14 *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. 15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. 16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.*

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” While we do not know the exact situation in which David wrote this psalm, it was obviously a time a great trouble when he felt abandoned by God. Through many vivid poetic pictures, he describes his present agony. But this psalm goes deeper than that! The Holy Spirit used this situation in David’s life to inspire him to write more than he knew. Torture such as described here never happened in David’s life. Through inspiration, the Spirit had David write about what would happen at Jesus’ crucifixion over 1000 years later! Through David’s words (though not realized by David himself), we see the suffering of Christ and the thoughts of His heart as He hung on the cross.

The opening cry are the very words Jesus cried out during the hours of darkness as He bore the sins of the world (22:1-5). The following verses picture the ridicule and mockery Jesus endured from His enemies (22:6-13). The religious leaders surrounding the cross unthinkingly echo the language of this psalm in their contempt for the Savior (see Matthew 27:39-44).

The description in verses 14-18 is not of illness or persecution, but of execution. Specifically, execution on a cross, a form of death not yet invented in David’s time. As one hung on a cross, their body would quickly become dehydrated through loss of blood and bodily fluids. Their bones would slowly be pulled out of joint from the weight of their hanging body. Thirst would be a constant torture. Most victims of crucifixion would not die from blood loss but from either asphyxiation (their hanging weight pressing in on the lungs and not allowing them to exhale) or from heart failure (the stress on the heart causing it to burst). The psalm even predicts the nails piercing His hands feet and the soldiers gambling for Jesus’ clothes (Matthew 27:35).

It was the most agonizing way to die that man could devise. Our word excruciating is from the Latin for “to crucify.” It was meant to send a clear message: Crime doesn’t pay! And in Jesus’ case, it was OUR crimes that put Him there!

Why was Christ forsaken? The Father turned His back because He is holy (22:3) and cannot have fellowship with sin. In those hours of darkness Jesus was bearing all our sin - - - and so he felt forsaken by the Father. The punishment for sin that we deserved (God’s wrath) was poured out on the sinless Son of God so we could be forgiven.

Look at the suffering Savior dying in agony on the cross. See all the horrible sins - your sins and my sins - being heaped on Him. He was forsaken by the Father that we might never be forsaken. After the resurrection, Jesus promised His followers “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20) and “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).