

Psalm 22 is a psalm of suffering and a psalm of crowning. It is a psalm of humiliation and a psalm of coronation. However, as Dr. G. Rawlinson said, “There is no psalm which has raised so much controversy as this” (*Psalms*, Vol. 8, p. 151).

The author of the psalm is not controversial; it is David. The theme of the psalm is not controversial; it is a theme that teaches that after times of great suffering and persecution will come times of great prosperity and praise. **The matter of controversy in Psalm 22 surrounds the identity of the one suffering.** Some believe David is describing himself and others believe David is prophetically describing the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

There can be no doubt that David is prophetically speaking of Jesus Christ and the reason we know this is because we have many New Testament references that clearly link what is in this psalm to Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:39-46; Mark 15:29-34). The writer of Hebrews clearly connects this psalm to Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:12/Ps. 22:22). Many commentators believe that Jesus Christ actually quoted the entire 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm while hanging on the cross. Charles Spurgeon thought it was likely that Christ quoted this psalm word for word while on the cross.

The reason many believe this is because the last sayings of Jesus Christ, which are recorded in the Gospels, either appear in this psalm or become the background for the psalm. **Dr. J. Vernon McGee said that in this psalm we do not view the crucifixion standing beneath the cross looking up, but hanging on the cross looking down.**

We get to see in this psalm what went through the mind of Jesus Christ while on the cross. We get a photograph of Christ’s darkest hour. Those who conclude that this psalm only refers to Jesus Christ and not to David, take this position on the basis of four main arguments:

- 1) David was never forsaken by God. **22:1**
- 2) David was never without someone to help. **22:11**
- 3) David never had his hands and feet pierced. **22:16**
- 4) David was never stripped of his clothing. **22:18**

Now certainly there are applications that may be drawn by every suffering believer; however, this is one psalm that we must always connect to Jesus Christ. As Mr. Spurgeon said, there is much in this psalm that cannot be applied to any other than Jesus Christ. Only if we see Jesus Christ in this psalm may we experience the full majesty and splendor of the psalm. The theme is this:

**AFTER JESUS CHRIST HAS CRIED TO GOD IN THE MIDST OF HIS PERSONAL SUFFERING, HE WILL PRAISE GOD FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS ETERNAL SALVATION.**

Psalm 22 is a very touching psalm. In the first part, Jesus Christ cries out to God because of His terrible suffering, but in the last part of the psalm Jesus Christ praises God because of His tremendous salvation.

Now we may observe from the superscription, “Ajeleth Hashshahar” literally means “the hind of the morning” or “the hind of the dawn.” The hind is a red deer. In using this imagery, this psalm was to be a psalm that gracefully moves and leaps from darkness to dawning, from sorrow to joy, from depth to height.

The psalm breaks down into two main divisions: 1) The prayer of the suffering Christ (**22:1-21**); 2) The praise of the rejoicing Christ (**22:22-31**).

**DIVISION #1** – The prayer of the suffering Christ. **22:1-21**

In these verses there are five prayer observations we want to make:

**Prayer Observation #1** - Prayer is made even in a moment of divine abandonment . **22:1-5**

**Verse 1** opens with the very words Jesus Christ cried on the cross—“My God, My God why has thou forsaken me” (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). This does raise an interesting theological point in that even though Jesus felt forsaken He kept looking and crying to His God and His Father.

When Christ was groaning these words, deliverance seemed nowhere in view (**22:1b**). Prayer was offered both day and night, which is probably a partial reference to Gethsemane, but God did not answer (**22:2**). There was a complete awareness of the fact that God was holy and was in sovereign control over everything that was happening (**22:3**). There was a complete awareness that God had delivered the Jewish fathers who trusted in Him and when they cried out to Him, He did answer them (**22:4-5**).

But what had happened to them was not happening to Him. He was crying out day and night and God was silent. The big question in all of this is “Why?” Why did God forsake His Son who is crying out to Him? **The answer is because of us** . He who knew no sin was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21), and He bore our sins in his own body on the cross so we could be healed and made righteous in the sight of God (I Pet. 2:24). When Christ cried those words from the cross—“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me”—every person present should have responded “because of us.” We are the reason He suffered so much.

No matter how distressed we have ever been in our sin, we have never experienced the agony and abandonment that Christ experienced when He bore our sin.

**Prayer Observation #2** - Prayer is made in a moment of public humiliation . **22:6-8**

Jesus Christ was not esteemed, He was demeaned. He reached the lowest point possible and considered Himself to be a worm, not a man. He considered Himself less than human; He lost all sense of human dignity. This is the Holy Son of God feeling less than a dog. He saw Himself as a helpless worm about to be crushed and trampled by men.

He was a reproach to men; He was despised by men; He was mocked by men. They all scoffed and said, “Let’s see God deliver you or rescue you.” Don’t overlook the fact that “all” who saw Him sneered at Him. They hurled one insult after another and actually mocked His faith in God. During times of great adversity when it seems there has been divine abandonment, mockers and scoffers will rise to make the most of their opportunity. Let’s face it; Jesus Christ looked like a loser hanging on that cross.

**Prayer Observation #3** - Prayer is made with a concept of God’s sovereignty . **22:9-11**

Even though there was a sense of abandonment, the psalmist knew that God had ordained his life and Christ knew God had ordained His life for a very special purpose. God gave physical life (**22:9a**); God gave faith life (**22:9b**); God had given and could give protection to His life in this time of terrible trouble (**22:10-11**). The only person Jesus Christ could rely on in His hour of greatest need was God the Father. There will be times in our lives when He will be the only one we may rely on and He will prove to be sufficient.

**Prayer Observation #4** - Prayer is made in the midst of great adversity . **22:12-18**

Christ was surrounded by enemies. The soldiers who crucified Him were like the strong bulls of Bashan. Bulls of Bashan were well-fed cattle from the land east of the Sea of Galilee (Amos 4:1; Deut. 32:14). Strong bulls have power. The strong bulls in Christ’s day were the Roman soldiers, Pharisees, Scribes, Priests, Elders and Rulers. They were the ones with the power. Jesus Christ was surrounded by people who appeared to be so strong and they were physically ripping Him to shreds like lions (**22:13**).

**What we have in verses 14-18, is a remarkable prophetic description of Christ’s crucifixion that was written hundreds of years before crucifixion became an invented form of punishment.**

There are eight descriptions of what happens when one is crucified:

1. In crucifixion, liquid leaves the body through the holes of the nails and through perspiration which becomes excessive as a man hangs in the sun—**“I am poured out like water” (22:14a)**.
2. In crucifixion, bones slip out of joint as one hangs on a cross and loses strength (**22:14b**).
3. In crucifixion, the heart weakens and ruptures and what was once a strong muscle becomes weak like melted wax (**22:14c**). Many physicians believe this is what produced the blood and water which came from the pierced side of Jesus Christ—a ruptured heart (Jn. 19:34). Also, emotionally speaking, we could say “His heart was broken.”
4. In crucifixion, all strength dries up in the hot sun and one becomes very weak (**22:15a**).
5. In crucifixion, one becomes so thirsty that the tongue actually sticks to the mouth (**22:15b**).  
One hanging on a cross in the dry heat and perspiring creates terrible thirst.
6. In crucifixion, Christ was surrounded by Gentiles, “dogs” and “evildoers” (**22:16a**).
7. In crucifixion, one’s hands and feet are pierced with nails (**22:16b**).

8. In crucifixion, Jesus Christ was without clothing (**22:17-18**).

Notice the description of the fact that He can count “all my bones” and “they look, they stare at me.” This not only means none of His bones were broken, but that they were all on public display. Christ was totally humiliated on that cross and hanging there without clothing and He could look down and see people gambling for the clothing He did have.

Spurgeon said when a Christian truly grasps this he will never rattle dice and gamble.

Jesus Christ was stripped of His clothing so we might be clothed with His righteousness. His physical clothing was removed as part of His suffering, so we might receive a spiritual clothing that we could wear for all eternity.

**Prayer Observation #5** - Prayer is made with anticipation of God’s deliverance . **22:19-21**

For Jesus Christ, this was a moment of real and true abandonment, but it wouldn’t last long. Christ cried out to God for His swift deliverance. He cried knowing God was not far from Him and would hasten to help Him.

When we have moments when we feel abandoned, we need to pray. We can cry out to God, knowing He is not far from us and will be swift to help us.

**DIVISION #2** – The praise of the rejoicing Christ. **22:22-31**

J. Vernon McGee is one commentator who believes Christ quoted this entire psalm while hanging on the cross. Dr. McGee said this part of the psalm proves Christ did not die defeated or depressed, but died victorious. If this is true, then there are seven thoughts Christ had that brought Him joy as He was hanging on that cross:

**Thought #1** - Christ thought about testifying of God in the future to His brethren and to the assembly. **22:22**

This clearly has a reference to worship services that will take place in the Temple of Jerusalem. There will be a community of God’s people who will participate.

**Thought #2** - Christ thought about those of Israel , who fear God and who will praise God. **22:23-24**

The “for” of **verse 24** explains the specific praise that those who fear God will give. It will be a praise that He answered the prayer of the afflicted Christ and delivered Him from the grave.

**Thought #3** - Christ thought about future worship and praise services. **22:25**

Christ looked beyond the cross to the great assembly and gathering of people who loved God and feared God. This would be a service in which all the redeemed would sing and worship. Jesus Christ loves worship services and he was actually thinking about them while He was hanging on that old rugged cross.

**Thought #4** - Christ thought about the affliction and the eternal deliverance of those right with God. **22:26**

Christ was looking beyond the cross into eternity. He found joy hanging on that cross thinking about those who would live with Him and praise Him forever.

**Thought #5** - Christ thought about a world in which all people would love God and worship God. **22:27**

We cannot worship the Lord until we turn to the Lord. One must go to Calvary.

**Thought #6** - Christ thought about the sovereignty of God and a time when His sovereignty would be seen by all. **22:28**

**Thought #7** - Christ thought about the future physical and spiritual prosperity that would one day exist worldwide. **22:29-31**

This physical and spiritual prosperity includes “us”—“To a people who will be born.” When Christ hung on that cross, He thought about us.

Psalm 22 is a psalm about Jesus Christ suffering the most so He could save the least. All He asks is that we believe on Him. He became sin for us and if we believe on Him, we will become righteous in the sight of God.

Notice **verse 29**—none can keep his own soul alive. There is only one way to have a soul alive to God and that is to look to the cross and the one hanging on it. Believe in Jesus Christ and your soul is forever saved.