

## **“THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST”**

# ***“A Prophecy Of His Passion”***

### **Scripture Reading – Psalms, 22:1-31**

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: “He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him”.*

*Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no-one to help. Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.*

*But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honour him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.*

*From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfil my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him – may your hearts live for ever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him – those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn – for he has done it.*

*‘Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.’*

**Isaiah, 53:4-5, NIV**

**This series is based on the book ‘THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST AND THE PURPOSE OF LIFE’.**

Two years ago, Mel Gibson’s film ‘THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST’ debuted amidst media hype, audience participation and bitter controversy. Whilst critics scorned, denounced, and dismissed the work as a piece of narrow-minded religious propaganda, Christians wept aloud and openly in cinemas across the country and around the world. Some used the film as an evangelistic tool to enable them to show their non-Christian family members and friends how Jesus had suffered for their sins. Many reports told of people being saved in their cinema seats.

*This series, ‘THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST’, gives us opportunity to discover what the Bible says about the life, death, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus...*

### **“A PROPHECY OF HIS PASSION”**

**The cross does not appear in the Old Testament.**

The cross was invented by the Romans, who ruled Israel in Jesus’ day, as an instrument of torture and death. The Jews practised execution by stoning, not by hanging someone on a cross of wood. Nonetheless, God revealed to some Old Testament prophets that the Messiah, or the Redeemer, would come and give his life as a ransom for sins. They did not know exactly the manner of his death, but they were aware that it would be brutal in nature.

**Isaiah’s picture of the suffering of the Messiah hints at the crucifixion.**

*‘He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.’*

**Isaiah, 53:5, NIV**

**King David’s prophecy in Psalms, 22 is remarkable in its detail.**

Although David had never seen a crucifixion, by the Spirit of God he was able to foretell the means by which Jesus was nailed to the cross. It is doubtful that David fully understood what he was writing, but he did not have to. Those standing at the foot of the cross as Jesus was executed could not understand everything that was going on at the time.

As you look at the Psalm, you cannot help wonder if it was written by someone who was actually standing at the foot of the cross as Jesus was crucified. Such is the accuracy of detail that we are forced to conclude that the writer was a prophet who had been given supernatural knowledge of what was to come.

*‘They have pierced my hands and my feet.’*

**Psalms, 22:16b, NIV**

Let us consider closely this amazing prophecy of his passion...

## 1. THE PROPHECY OF THE CROSS

David gave an amazingly accurate description of the suffering the Messiah would endure hundreds of years later. The cross is prophesied in all its human horror, ugliness and agony. Yet, at the same time, we see something of its redeeming glory...

### THIS IS PROPHECY IN AMAZING DETAIL

*‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.’*

**Psalms, 22:1-2, NIV**

#### **‘MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME’**

The psalm begins with the very words Jesus Christ would say from the cross. Some may claim that Jesus was simply looking backward, quoting from the Psalms that he had learned, in order to enhance his claim to be the Messiah, but the truth is that David was looking forward, quoting Jesus!

*‘About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”’*

**Matthew, 27:46, NIV**

#### **‘I CRY OUT BY DAY, BUT YOU DO NOT ANSWER, BY NIGHT, AND AM NOT SILENT’**

The Bible tells us that Jesus was crucified at 9 am and died at 3 pm. How could Jesus cry out by day and cry out by night? When the Son of God hung on the cross, even the sun in all its brightness had to hide its face amid the darkness of men's hearts and sinfulness. At midday, the land was darkened as Jesus died at the behest of cruel hands and bore the filth and stench of all the world's sins upon himself. During the last three hours of his agony, the land was engulfed in a supernatural darkness. Therefore Jesus cried out to God from the cross both in the day and in the night, just as the prophecy states.

*‘From the sixth hour until the ninth, darkness came over all the land.’*

**Matthew, 27:45, NIV**

*‘All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: “He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”’*

**Psalms, 22:7-8, NIV**

#### **‘ALL WHO SEE ME MOCK ME; THEY HURL INSULTS, SHAKING THEIR HEADS’**

Whilst critics claim that Jesus deliberately quoted from the Scripture to make his death seem Messianic, how do they account for the words of his enemies? Surely, Jesus could not force his opponents to say words he wanted them to say so that Scripture could be fulfilled. The enemies of Jesus testified unwittingly to the prophecy of the cross.

*‘Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads... In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others”, they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, “I am the Son of God”’. In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.’*

**Matthew, 27:39, 41-44, NIV**

### THIS IS PROPHECY IN AGONISING DETAIL

*‘I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint... My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.’*

**Psalms, 22:14-15, NIV**

#### **‘I AM POURED OUT LIKE WATER’**

When Jesus was on the cross, Roman soldiers came to break the legs of the two thieves being crucified with Jesus. Because Jesus was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, they pierced his body with a spear. Physicians say that when fluid builds up around the heart like this it is a sign that the victim has been under great duress. Jesus literally died of a broken heart.

*‘One of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.’*

**John, 19:34, NIV**

#### **‘ALL MY BONES ARE OUT OF JOINT’**

After a person was nailed to a cross, the Romans roughly turned the cross over to continue their work before roughly dropping the cross into a hole. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that when the cross was dropped, the jolt would wrench the victims bones out of joint, greatly increasing the pain suffered.

#### **‘MY TONGUE STICKS TO THE ROOF OF MY MOUTH’**

A potsherd was a broken piece of pottery – nothing but useless, dried, hardened clay. The striking irony is that the One who made the oceans, rivers, lakes and fountain springs of water was parched with thirst as he died for you and me on the cross.

*‘Knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”’*

**John, 19:28, NIV**

*‘You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.’*

**Psalms, 22:15c-18, NIV**

**'YOU LAY ME IN THE DUST OF DEATH' is a reference to God.**

But the Gentiles also crucified Jesus. The Jews referred to Gentiles as 'DOGS', a reference to Pilate and the other Romans who condemned the innocent Son of God to death on the cross. **'A BAND OF EVIL MEN HAS ENCIRCLED ME'** is a reference to the Jewish religious council, the Sanhedrin, headed by the cowardly high priest Caiaphas, that found Jesus guilty and demanded his death. All of them played some part in the crucifixion of Jesus.

**'PEOPLE STARE AND GLOAT OVER ME'**

One of the many things people fail to realise about the crucifixion is that Jesus was stripped of all his clothing. Christ hung between heaven and earth stripped naked. He who was perfect purity and undefiled modesty was exposed to the taunts and stares of those around the cross. Jesus suffered the shame of nakedness on the cross.

***'Sitting down, they kept watch over him there.'***

**Matthew, 27:36, NIV**

**'THEY DIVIDE MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM AND CAST LOTS FOR MY CLOTHING'**

People wore four minor pieces and one major piece of clothing in these days. The major piece was a woven undergarment, a seamless robe. The soldiers divided the clothes four ways, with one part for each soldier, but they did not want to tear the seamless robe; so they cast lots, or played dice for the prize.

***'When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.'***

**Matthew, 27:35, NIV**

*God lead David to write such precise detail with incredible accuracy because the cross was at the heart of the Father's plan to redeem lost mankind...*

## 2. THE AGONY OF THE CROSS

**No one ever suffered like the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Others were crucified, but no one suffered like Jesus. This is because Jesus not only suffered at the hands of cruel and wicked men – Jesus also suffered at the hands of Satan, and even at the hands of a holy God – his heavenly Father, with whom he had previously lived in eternal and unbroken fellowship.

 **JESUS SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF A HOLY GOD**

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

**Psalms, 22:1, NIV**

One of the most important aspects of Jesus' suffering was the rejection he had to suffer at the hands of God who is so holy that he cannot look on sin. It is a profound mystery how God the Father could forsake God the Son, but I believe that God deliberately turned his back on his darling Son, whom he deeply and intimately loved. As a result, Jesus called out **"MY GOD, MY GOD"** because he was referring to **"MY GOD (THE FATHER)"** and **"MY GOD (THE HOLY SPIRIT)"**.

***'Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.'***

**Habakkuk, 1:13, NIV**

As Jesus hung on the cross, the heaviest weight that bore down upon him was not the suffocating weight of his own body as he struggled to push himself up on nail-pierced feet in order just to breathe. His greatest agony was not the searing pain of his bloody, laid-open back rubbing against the rough splintered wood or the imaginable torture of every bone being ripped out of joint. The greatest weight and agony Jesus carried on the cross was the weight of being our sin-bearer.

***'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'***

**II Corinthians, 5:21, NIV**



**JESUS SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF HATEFUL MEN**

***'I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.'***

**Psalms, 22:6, NIV**

The **'WORM'** was a maggot, a grub-like worm.

When the worm was crushed it emitted a crimson dye. The word translated as WORM here is also translated as 'CRIMSON' in the familiar text of **Isaiah, 1:18** – **'THOUGH THEY (MY SINS) ARE RED AS CRIMSON, THEY SHALL BE LIKE WOOL'**. The crimson red blood of Jesus flowed from his crushed body on the cross as he suffered at the hateful hands of men.

***'Peter said, "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross".'***

**Acts, 2:22-23, NIV**

**Jesus was full of humility.**

In humbleness, he willingly submitted himself to those who would trample him into the dirt as one would step on a lowly worm. This attitude of servanthood which Jesus willingly practiced is an attitude that we as Christians must willingly adopt.



**JESUS SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF HELLISH SATAN**

***'You, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions.'***

**Psalms, 22:19-21a, NIV**

**We know that the 'DOGS' are 'WICKED MEN'; but what about the 'LION'?**

In **I Peter, 5:8**, we read that **'THE DEVIL PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO DEVOUR'**.

All the artillery of hell was let loose upon Jesus when he was on the cross. All the powers of the pit were concentrated upon him.

*On the cross, Jesus was abandoned by God, abused by men, and attacked by Satan...*

### 3. THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

Beginning in verse 22, the tone of Psalms, 22 changes.

Prior to this, the Psalm is going down and down as the awful reality of the cross is portrayed. At this point, the Psalm turns upward because there is a resurrection. If ever there was a story that was not over until it was over, it is the marvellous story of Jesus.

*Lord, make Calvary real to me;  
Lord, make Calvary real to me,  
Open mine eyes to see victory in Christ for me;  
Lord, make Calvary real to me.*

*Sidney E Cox, SACS 81*

*In the Bible, we see Jesus portrayed as Prophet, Priest and King...*

#### HE IS THE PROPHET, WHO DECLARES THE FATHER

*'I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.'*

*Psalms, 22:22, NIV*

Jesus considers us as his brothers.

Jesus, the Eternal God, is a close relation to us. If you have received Jesus as Saviour, and made him your Lord, then he is a brother to you. I am next of kin to the Trinity – and so are you! We are family. Jesus Christ meets with us, his people, when we meet for worship. Jesus Christ sings with us as we sing – a truth in itself that should revolutionise our worship – and he receives our praises.

*'Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises".'*

*Hebrews, 2:11-12, NIV*

#### HE IS THE PRIEST, WHO DELIVERS THE FAITHFUL

*'The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him – may your hearts live for ever!'*

*Psalms, 22:26, NIV*

As our High Priest, Jesus delivers the faithful.

As high priest, Jesus leads the people in declaring God's praises. The priests of Israel offered the showbread to the people which was a picture of the coming Christ. Jesus is 'THE BREAD OF LIFE' who feeds his people.

*'The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'. "Sir", they said, "from now on give us this bread". Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty".'*

*John, 6:33-35, NIV*

#### HE IS THE KING, WHO DOMINATES THE FUTURE

*'All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.'*

*Psalms, 22:27-28, NIV*

This is surely the ultimate victory of Calvary.

When he comes as King to take his rightful throne, Jesus shall reign forever and ever. When people ask, "What is the world coming to?" we have the answer – it is coming to Jesus. Jesus owns this world. It was made by him; it was made through him; and, it was made for him. He is coming back to claim this world as his Kingdom.

*'The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever".'*

*Revelation, 11:15, NIV*

*Praise him! Praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!  
Heavenly portals loud with hosannas ring!  
Jesus, Saviour, reigneth for ever and ever;  
Crown him! Crown him! Prophet and priest and King!  
Christ is coming, over the world victorious;  
Power and glory unto the Lord belong.*

*Fanny Crosby, SASB 184:3*

#### JESUS IS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

At the centre of this drama of redemption, rescue and rule, stands the cross of Christ