

Messiah in psalm 22 essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many psalms contain references that are considered to be messianic, but none more than Psalm 22. Modern readers may read this passage and consider it as prophecy pertaining to Jesus. This is a logical conclusion considering that it is referenced in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament passage and contains imagery incredibly similar to what is found at Jesus' crucifixion. The purpose of this paper is not to prove that Psalm 22 is prophetic and thus, predictive of Jesus, but to examine Psalm 22 in its historical context and its value to future interpretation of this psalm.

Approach

The temptation for the lay reader is to read this passage in light of the New Testament and read Jesus back into the words of the psalm. This is very easy to do because of the striking similarity between the words of the psalmist and the events that transpired during the passion of Jesus. However, to do this is to build a house without first building a proper foundation. The proper approach is to lay the foundation by examining the passage in its grammatical-historical context while acknowledging that there is more to responsible interpretation of the Bible. It is only then, that the rest of the house may be constructed. Walter Kaiser warns against using the New Testament to reinterpret passages of the Old Testament while discounting the meaning of the original author. Kaiser states that the meaning established by the original author is important and to ignore it “ is to make nonsense out of the revelation...” He does acknowledge, however, that while the author may not have a sense of writing prophetically, the Holy Spirit promulgates the underlying theme of the “ Promise”. This approach provides a basic framework with which this passage may be viewed. Liturgical Use

Psalm 22 is similar to other prayers found in the psalms. This psalm is a petition for help. It begins with a lament and then moves to requests for deliverance as the psalmist describes what he fears will take his life, before moving to statements of trust and then the psalmist's response to his prayers being answered. The psalm ends with thanksgiving being voiced by the psalmist and then by the congregation. While tradition has credited David with authoring this psalm, there is no historical record of his circumstances that would fit the despair found in this text. Even though the words of this psalm describe the trials of a particular person, those who were sick and facing death would probably have used this psalm. By taking the words of the psalmist as their own words, they would have been able to voice their distress and petition to God, while being reassured of His faithfulness and ability to redeem them. By using this psalm the reader was able to place himself within its text and identify with the suffering king and as a result, also share in his redemption and subsequent praise of God. Type of the Messiah

In the Old Testament, messiah denotes a person who has been anointed by God to do His work. Anointing is associated with the beginning of the work of a prophet or king and marked them for the service of the Lord. It is not until David that messiah is associated with the prospect of a coming king based on 2 Samuel 7: 16. It is interesting to note that none of the prophets employ the word messiah in reference to the anticipated king. The use of the term messiah is typically anarthrous until the rabbinic writings and the New Testament authors use the phrase “ the Messiah.” While the articular phrase is not specifically used, the theme of the Messiah of Israel coming from the

line of David is found in the Psalm of Solomon 17, which is dated in the first century BC. Much of David's life is seen as a type of the coming messiah. This is grounded in the belief that the coming Kingdom would be like that of David's and that it would be ruled by his direct descendant, a " Son of David." David was God's anointed leader over Israel, and as such, God's promises would come through him and his descendants. The main difference being that the coming king would be a greater David.

Many psalms have been traditionally accepted as being messianic. Yet, some scholars still maintain that none of the psalms are messianic. The distinction first must be made between messianic and prophetic; while similar, they are not synonymous. A messianic passage will point to a type of the Messiah while a prophetic passage will speak directly with a foretelling of future events. With the understanding that the entire Old Testament is positioned around the theme of looking for the Promised One it is appropriate to read the psalms with an eye toward the coming One. Messianic passages have a sense of prophecy in that they point to a future fulfillment of a prior promise, but they are not given as predictors of specific future events. Due to their nature, messianic passages share a duality as that of pure prophecy. This duality is expressed in the meaning of the text to the original hearer within the context of that day and the future fulfillment of that same text. This is a common device throughout the Bible. A particular passage is not limited to only addressing the original situation; it may also hold a future significance.

An example of this is Isaiah's prophecy to King Ahaz, that God would send Immanuel and that both the kings opposing Ahaz would be vanquished while the child was still young was definitely meant for that time period. In addition

to having a near time fulfillment, this passage is also viewed as messianic and looking for a greater fulfillment in the Promised One of the Old Testament. At the very least, this passage contains a type of the coming messiah. Immanuel, in the immediate context, was a sign to Ahaz that God would provide relief from the attacks he was enduring. The name Immanuel represented the fact that God would show His presence among His people by providing this relief. The Immanuel of Ahaz' day would provide relief from oppression. Immanuel Jesus would provide relief from the oppressor, Satan and, through the Holy Spirit God would remain with each believer. A review of The Psalms shows this duality as passages concerning the king describe what is a type of the future king.

This is seen in Psalms 2 and 110 in the hostility directed at the king and then, in the king's ruling over the nations. His kingdom is everlasting. The king is also viewed as God's son and who is seated at His right hand. The kingly connection is obvious in the above-mentioned psalms and a strong case can be made for their consideration as messianic psalms in light of the Davidic expectation. Psalm 22, when read in its grammatical-historical context, is not as easily associated with the prophesied king and his eternal rule. The language of this psalm does not carry the royal tones of other messianic psalms and as a result points the reader to the type of the messiah in David's sufferings, not just in his regal endeavors. The foundation for interpretation of this passage is anchored in the use of Psalm 22 in the liturgy and the people's identification with the suffering king David. If the people could identify with David, then it is but a small step to identify the suffering king David with a suffering king who would come after him. It is this

nature of the psalm that qualifies it as being messianic. This provides a solid foundation for the early church's view of this psalm. Jewish View of Messiah

The Jewish writings prior to, and just after the death of Jesus, do not connect the term 'messiah' with a suffering servant. It would seem that Isaiah's suffering servant would complete the connection, but the suffering servant is never referred to as God's anointed, or messiah. This presents a problem when considering Psalm 22 as a messianic psalm prior to the advent of Jesus. Psalm 22 is not a royal psalm that would readily be associated with the promised king. This leaves the reader to establish a different association with the Messiah. The view that David is a type of the Messiah allows Psalm 22 to be categorized as messianic. However, this logic would render all of the psalms that speak of David as messianic, which is not a foreign concept to some scholars. Interpretation of Psalm 22 before the Christian era is scarce. Rabbinic literature does comment on this psalm in apparent rebuttal to its use by the early church. Literature such as the *Pesiqta Rabbati* and the *Yalkut Shimoni* address the messiah in relationship to the psalms.

The *Pesiqta Rabbati* holds that David wrote Psalm 22 for the "son of David," who would suffer for his people. In addition to this, the Babylonian Talmud's *Sanhedrin Tractate* speaks of the prophets foretelling of the Messiah. It also puts forth that the Messiah will rebuild the temple and restore the Levitical priesthood and the practice of sacrifice. While these rabbinical sources give insight to the Jewish mindset on the Messiah, it must be stated that the earliest of these sources is approximately the third century AD. This indicates that these writings may be a response to the prevailing Christian view of the early church. One argument is that the early church appropriated

<https://assignbuster.com/messiah-in-psalm-22-essay-sample/>

Psalm 22 and used it as a proof text that the psalm was a prophecy of Jesus. One of the main proofs used to make this argument is the translation of verse 17, which according to Jewish tradition is translated, “like a lion my hands and feet” as opposed to “they have pierced my hands and feet.” The difference between the two translations rests in whether one word (פָּאַרַי) ends in a waw (ו) or a yod (י).

The LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls support the translation of “pierced” and negate the idea that the text was manipulated in order to fit Jesus into it. In addition, it is possible that around the second century AD the translation of “like a lion” was preferred because it avoided the problem of dealing with the Christian interpretation. Psalm 22 depicts the anointed one as seeing himself abandoned by God and hated and mocked by the people around him. This view of a suffering messiah was not the typical Jewish view, but it must be taken into account if David is truly considered a type of the future messiah. Since the time of David, the messiah was expected to come as a stately king and a view of a suffering messiah ran counter to what the people expected. However, the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant by Jesus would bring to light that even the picture of the suffering messiah would be a correct one. Future Interpretations

Justin Martyr, Origen and others in the early church did not view this passage as liturgical or as merely a type of the coming messiah; they believed that it was a direct prophetic statement pointing to Jesus. It is difficult to fault the early church for their hermeneutic when Jesus stated that the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms were written about him and that he was the fulfillment of them. In addition to this, Jesus' words from the cross point the

<https://assignbuster.com/messiah-in-psalm-22-essay-sample/>

reader back to Psalm 22. He cries out from the cross using the words from verse 1, “ My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” It would not have been unusual for Jesus to use the psalms in his personal worship or to know this Psalm or how the people would have used it in their time of distress. By recounting Psalm 22 Jesus joins the people in their suffering; he identifies with them. By doing this, his followers may now identify themselves with him rather than King David. John recounts Jesus’ last words from the cross as, “ It is finished.” These words mirror the final words of Psalm 22, “ that it has been done.” It appears that Jesus has pointed his hearers back to Psalm 22 as if to say, “ From beginning to end, it is about me.”

Conclusion

A. T. Robertson states, “ Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem able to do.” If only the grammatical-historical context stands, Psalm 22 is a valid type of the Messiah. Jesus’ hermeneutic and his use of phrases from the psalm only serve to strengthen this fact. This is not eisegesis, nor is it an attempt to subjectively fit the text into the doctrine of the church. The use of the entire canon to view this psalm only strengthens what has already been established in the original context. The scholar and the average reader may take very different paths, but both will arrive at the conclusion that the Messiah is to be found in Psalm 22.

Bibliography

Achtemeier, Paul J. *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, 1985.

Arnold, Bill T., and H. G. M. Williamson. Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson. Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich., Nottingham, England: Baker Academic, 2007.

Belcher, Richard P. The Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ from All the Psalms. Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2006.

Craigie, Peter C. Psalms 1-50 Word Biblical Commentary ; 19. Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983.

Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988.

Elwell, Walter A., and Philip Wesley Comfort. Tyndale Bible Dictionary Tyndale Reference Library. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001.

Freedman, David Noel, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck. Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Garber, Zev. The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation Shofar Supplements in Jewish Studies. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2011.

Heinemann, Mark H. " An Exposition of Psalm 22." Bibliotheca sacra 147, no. 587 (1990): 286-308.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. “ Present State of Old Testament Studies.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18, no. 2 (1975): 69-79.

Mays, James Luther. “ Prayer and Christology: Psalm 22 as Perspective on the Passion.” *Theology Today* 42, no. 3 (1985): 322-331.

Poythress, Vern S. “ Divine Meaning of Scripture.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (1986): 241-279.

Robertson, A. T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 6 vols. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1930.

Surburg, Raymond F. “ Messianic Prophecy and Messianism.” *Springfielder* 37, no. 1 (1973): 17-34.

Vall, Gregory. “ Psalm 22: 17b: “ The Old Guess”.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 1 (1997): 45-56.

[1]. Vern S. Poythress, “ Divine Meaning of Scripture,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (1986): 278. [2]. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “ Present State of Old Testament Studies,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18, no. 2 (1975): 74. [3]. *Ibid.*

[4]. The pattern found is Lament, Request and then Thanksgiving. [5]. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50, Word Biblical Commentary* ; 19 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 198. [6]. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Nottingham, England: Baker Academic, 2007), 99. [7]. Craigie, 198.

[8]. James Luther Mays, “ Prayer and Christology: Psalm 22 as Perspective on the Passion,” *Theology Today* 42, no. 3 (1985): 323. [9]. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 33. [10]. Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, 1985), 630. [11]. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 889. [12]. Isaiah 9: 2-7, Ezekiel 34: 20-21 and Psalm 89: 3.

[13]. Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 109, 110, 118 and 132.

[14]. Raymond F. Surburg, “ Messianic Prophecy and Messianism,” *Springfielder* 37, no. 1 (1973): 19-23. Scholars such as Dr. Charles Briggs, Edwin Lewis and E. F. Scott hold this view. [15]. Richard P. Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ from All the Psalms* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2006), 19. [16]. Isaiah 7: 14-16.

[17]. Many more examples of this duality exist such as Isaiah 9: 6-7, Hosea 3: 1-7 and Micah 4: 4-5. The brevity of this paper prevents further discussion.

[18]. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988), 1021. [19]. Psalm 21: 4, 45: 6 and 72: 5.

[20]. Psalm 2: 7, 89: 27 and 110: 1.

[21]. Achtemeier, 631.

[22]. Zev Garber, *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, *Shofar Supplements in Jewish Studies* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue

University Press, 2011), 116. [23]. Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 887. [24]. Mark H. Heinemann, “ An Exposition of Psalm 22,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 147, no. 587 (1990): 299-300. [25]. Gregory Vall, “ Psalm 22: 17b: “ The Old Guess”,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 1 (1997): 45. [26]. *Ibid.*, 47.

[27]. Psalm 22: 1-2, 6-7.

[28]. Garber, 108-9.

[29]. Luke 24: 26-27, 44-47.

[30]. Beale and Carson, 100.

[31]. John 19: 30.

[32]. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1930), Luke 24: 27.