

Messianic Psalms: Rejection Psalm 41, 118, 88 bible-sermons.org March 17, 2013

As we approach Passion Week, we will be focusing on the Psalms describing Jesus' suffering. Today we are going to look at three psalms concerning those who betrayed and abandoned Jesus. This is a painful topic, and considering it was only two weeks ago that I spoke on the discipline of joy, we'll have to remember that through this agony we have received the most gracious gift anyone could ever hope to receive. We are grieved that the price was so costly, but since we are the recipients of this gift given out of so much love, we should have great joy. (Psalm 20:5)

The first psalm we will look at is Psalm 41. David asks for the LORD's healing on account of his faithfulness to help the poor. He confesses that he is afflicted because of his sin. But then he points to the desires of his enemies who wish he was dead. They go around telling people he is about to die, that he will never rise from his sickbed. They are looking forward to the day when no one can remember the name of David.

Slandering the servants of God is pleasure to those who are evil. (Psalm 109:20) The reason is very easy to see. The believer's godly life exposes the sin of others. The ungodly are motivated by a different spirit so they will always see things upside down from the way the godly person sees things. (1Corinthians 2:14) Whether they realize it or not, they are Satan's pawns. Certainly they have reasons to accuse the godly, except in the case of Jesus. God's servants are never perfect, but they are God's anointed. One can always justify hatred in their own mind if one desires to do so.

I see the psalm shift toward the prophetic right after David confesses his sin. ⁵ *My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die, and his name perish?"* ⁶ *And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad.* Psalm 41:5-6 (ESV) In these verses we see the religious leaders plotting to catch Jesus saying something with which to condemn Him. (Luke 20:20)

Just as the psalm hits the lowest point, "... he will not rise from where he lies", we clearly see the connection to our Savior. ⁹ *Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.* Psalm 41:9 (ESV) We know it turned a Messianic direction because Jesus quoted the passage as being prophetic in John 13:8. ¹⁸ *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'*

Jesus could hear the slander of those who hated Him and knew of their plans to end His life. The similarity with David and his foes became clear. Suddenly at the Last Supper, Jesus knew this passage was being fulfilled at that very moment. It wasn't just about

Commented [notes1]: Psalm 20:5 (ESV)

⁵ May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions!

Commented [notes2]: Psalm 109:20 (ESV)

²⁰ May this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD, of those who speak evil against my life!

Commented [notes3]: 1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Commented [notes4]: Luke 20:20 (ESV)

²⁰ So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

David, but David was a type that was ultimately to come to pass in the life of the Son of David. (Romans 5:14) Perhaps Jesus quoted the passage to encourage the disciples' faith in that trying evening. Listen to the rest of the passage.

¹⁰ *But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them!* Jesus will rise, not from sickness, but from death. He will give to each man according to His deeds at the judgment. (Jeremiah 17:10) But in a way, even His resurrection would repay them, for what they sought to extinguish would burst into a flame that would spread throughout not only Israel, but the entire world. (Acts 17:6)

¹¹ *By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.* At least they would not be shouting for long. Sunday morning was coming. Their shouts would turn to whispers of fear and wonder. Jesus is the only One that could say God delighted in His entire life. (1Peter 2:22) He was the only One that never sinned. Therefore, He knew His enemies would not triumph, for God was on His side.

¹² *But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever.* Psalm 41:12 (ESV) It was because of His sinless life that He conquered death. He is the only one that did not deserve to die. He is now and forever at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. Even if the disciples knew the passage and took to heart what Jesus was implying, it would have been so difficult to trust in this word after watching Him die. But David is making a declaration that was more certainly true of Jesus than of anyone. If God delighted in the Messiah, He would be gracious to Him, raise Him up, uphold Him and set Him in His presence forever. (Mark 16:19) How different their behavior would have been had they trusted in God's word more than their natural reasoning. That is the essence of faith. It is the struggle of the spiritual life. We walk by faith and not by sight. Our vision is to be fixed on the unseen reality. (2Corinthians 4:18)

We also see rejection in the 118th Psalm. In this psalm David is singing praise to God because of the miraculous defeat of all his enemies. There is a Messianic ring in some of the early verses. ⁶ *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?* ⁷ *The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.* Psalm 118:6-7 (ESV) Once again we see Jesus' confident assurance in the face of death. (Matthew 20:19) We would answer the question of what can man do by saying, "Plenty!" But in the eternal sense, they have no power at all. (Proverbs 29:25)

The verse just before those the Lord Jesus quoted may have been referenced by Jesus in John 10 when Jesus called Himself the gate. (John 10:9) The psalmist calls the gate his salvation. ²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.* ²¹ *I*

Commented [notes5]: Romans 5:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Commented [notes6]: Jeremiah 17:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Commented [notes7]: Acts 17:6 (ESV)

⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,"

Commented [notes8]: 1 Peter 2:22 (ESV)

²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

Commented [notes9]: Mark 16:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

Commented [notes10]: 2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Commented [notes11]: Matthew 20:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

Commented [notes12]: Proverbs 29:25 (ESV)

²⁵ The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

Commented [notes13]: John 10:9 (ESV)

⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. Psalm 118:20-21 (ESV)

Now we come to the passage Jesus' quoted. These verses were sung at Jewish festivals, and so they were familiar to most Jews. ²² *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.* ²³ *This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.* Psalm 118:22-23 (ESV) Jesus quoted these verses as a punch-line after the parable of the wicked tenants. (See Luke 20:9-18) The parable had the landowner, God, rent out the vineyard, Israel, to tenants, the religious leaders, who were supposed to pay rent with the fruit, righteousness, from the vineyard. But when it came time for the harvest the tenants beat the man, the prophets, who came to collect. Another they killed. Finally the landowner sent his son. They saw him coming and thought if they killed the heir the vineyard would become theirs. So they took him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Jesus asked what the landowner should do to the tenants. The Pharisees answered that he should destroy them and rent the vineyard out to others. They pronounced their own judgment. Jesus is the Son. They were about to kill Him. Then Jesus quoted this psalm in reference to what they were doing. Jesus is the cornerstone of the eternal temple. (Ephesians 2:20) A cornerstone was what the rest of the building was based on. They were rejecting the key component. But it was not as if God would wring His hands and wonder what to do next. This was God's marvelous design. Through their rejection, salvation would come to the Gentiles. (Romans 11:11)

Once again, the passage that followed had more to say about the moment. ²⁴ *This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* God had given them the day of the Messiah. They should have been rejoicing in it. ²⁵ *Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!* They should have been asking Him to save their souls and transform them into good and fruitful tenants who yielded the fruit of righteousness in their own lives and in the nation.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the crowds shouted out the next verse. ²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.* (Matthew 21:9) They added a portion of the previous verse. "Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna in the highest." Hosanna means "save now". They were asking the Messiah to save them, but save them from what, their sins or from Rome? Apparently they meant Rome for they chose the rebel Barabbas over Jesus the Savior of souls. This is why Jesus, a short time later, quoted the same over Jerusalem's ultimate rejection of Him. "I tell you, you will not see me again until you say..." ^{26a} *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!* That is to say until they quoted the verse for the right reason, the salvation of their soul.

Commented [notes14]: Ephesians 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Commented [notes15]: Romans 11:11 (ESV)

¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

Commented [notes16]: Matthew 21:9 (ESV)

⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

The psalm goes on to say, ^{26b}*We bless you from the house of the LORD.* ²⁷*The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!* Indeed God had made His light to shine on them in the face of Jesus, the light of the world. (John 8:12) Many of the things attributed to the LORD in the Old Testament we see in the life of Jesus. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the psalmist says the LORD is God.

Commented [notes17]: John 8:12 (ESV)

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jehovah Witness say we are making a mistake in worshiping Jesus and that the focus should be on Jehovah. The name Jehovah is simply a mistranslation of YHWY and things ascribed to YHWY alone we see in the life of Jesus. (Job 9:8; Psalm 23:1 see *Divine Messiah?*) YHWY is God! He made His light to shine on us. Did He not say that as long as He is in the world, He is the light of the world? I believe Jesus expected them to think of the rest of the passage when He quoted a verse. After all, they sang it every year.

Commented [notes18]: Job 9:8 (ESV)

⁸ who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea;

Commented [notes19]: Psalm 23:1 (ESV)

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He is the festal sacrifice. Why be festive when the Son of God is giving His life for us? It's because the plan of God is being completed. Salvation is coming to the world. Justice is served. Our sin debt is paid giving us access to God. (Hebrews 10:19) Our eternity is secure and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore! (Psalm 16:11) He rejoiced to do the will of the Father, as we saw in last week's message. (Psalm 40:8)

Commented [notes20]: Hebrews 10:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

Commented [notes21]: Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Commented [notes22]: Psalm 40:8 (ESV)

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

And the psalm concludes, ²⁸*You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.* ²⁹*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!* Psalm 118:28-29 (ESV) The cross demonstrates the goodness of God in an indisputable way. The Apostle Paul wrote that for a good man some would dare to die, but God showed His love toward us in this, that even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us! (Romans 5:6-7) He is good! His steadfast love endures forever!

Commented [notes23]: Romans 5:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die -
⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

I would add one more psalm to these that tell of the rejection of the Messiah. That psalm is Psalm 88. In Jerusalem there is a church called Peter of Gallicantu. It is the traditional place of Peter's denial of Christ. When we think of rejection, we expect it from the Pharisees, even from Judas, and that of the people, but what surely hurt even more was that of one of His closest disciples. (Luke 22:61)

Commented [notes24]: Luke 22:61 (ESV)

⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."

Under this church is what is believed to be the home of Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priests at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. There is what appears to be an interrogation room hewn into the limestone where people could be tied by their hands and feet. In the lowest room is a pit that was originally to hold water that flowed from rainstorms. It is about 20 feet deep with sheer walls and about a 30 inch hole at the top as the only original access. Water buckets or jars could be lowered by rope to retrieve the stored

water. But when it was dry, the most dangerous of prisoners were lowered into it. Many believe that Jesus was held there and point to Psalm 88 as a description of that time.

Listen as I read this Psalm in the NIV version, and as I do, picture Jesus praying this prayer during that time. (Read Psalm 88) Did you notice in verse 6 the description of where He was? *6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.* Psalm 88:6 (NIV)

The verse that speaks of abandonment is verse 8. *8 You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape;* Psalm 88:8 (NIV). His own disciples whom He had poured His life into for three years had fled with their lives. (Mark 14:50) Only John and Peter were nearby (John 18:15), but soon one of them would deny he even knew Jesus.

Jesus' greatest sense of abandonment was that time of separation from God the Father. *14 Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?* Psalm 88:14 (NIV) Soon those three hours of darkness on the cross would intensify this sense of abandonment. (Matthew 27:45)

I've read this Psalm in that pit with those traveling with me. When we finish the last verse, someone turns off the lighting and in darkness contemplate what Jesus went through for us. *18 You have taken my companions and loved ones from me; the darkness is my closest friend.* Psalm 88:18 (NIV) Rejection and abandonment intensified as Jesus drew near to the climax of His mission.

I would encourage you take time today to also look at Psalm 3. See if you cannot discover in that psalm of David the rejection Jesus experienced, His death and resurrection, Armageddon, and our eternity in His presence.

The enemy of our soul would try to use the rejection of friends and even abandonment to try to turn us away from following God's will for our life. Jesus showed us how to persevere to the end. He didn't let the rejection of man turn Him from completing the mission the Father gave Him to do. When it looked as if all hope was lost, He clung to the promises and what He knew of the Father's character. By God's grace, let us follow His faithful example!

Questions

- 1 Why do we see the passion of Jesus mixed with grief and joy?
- 2 Why do God's servants expect slander?
- 3 How do we know Psalm 41 is about Jesus?
- 4 How would the rest of the passage encourage the disciples?
- 5 Why is it so hard to trust the Word more than circumstances?

Commented [notes25]: Mark 14:50 (ESV)

⁵⁰ And they all left him and fled.

Commented [notes26]: John 18:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

Commented [notes27]: Matthew 27:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

- 6 How did Jesus apply Psalm 118?
- 7 How did the crowd apply Psalm 118?
- 8 What did the rest of the passage teach?
- 9 What parts of Psalm 88 apply to Jesus?
- 10 Go over Psalm 3. Do you see the applications to Jesus?