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"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" PSALM 22 AS DIRECT PREDICTIVE PROPHECY CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS

by
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Psalm 22 depicts an afflicted person and his praises to God. As death looms, the sufferer cries out in agony, desperate for deliverance. From whose point of view was the psalm originally written? Several suggestions emerge from antiquity onward, including King David, Queen Esther, and other individuals or communities.[2] According to many interpreters, the original sufferer typified or prefigured Jesus's suffering: Jesus appropriated, actualized, or transformed the original sufferer's words.

By contrast, I argue in this article that Psalm 22 in its original setting expressed the words of a dying man, Jesus Christ, spoken while hanging on the cross. The psalm articulates the outlook and experience of Jesus and no one else. Jesus did not merely quote a short snippet of Psalm 22 on the tree—he spoke the entire psalm. The psalmist and prophet David foretold Jesus's words centuries in advance. My argument rests on the validity of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation, the inadequate evidence of an ancient sufferer before the first century, and the weight of evidence found in intertextual connections with Isaiah 53 and the clear assertions of the New Testament (*analogia fide*).

In my study I assess the historical record and the literary components to determine the authorial intent of Psalm 22. My analysis focuses on the canonical text as opposed to a pre-canonical stage.

The research topic matters because it affects biblical hermeneutics, exegesis, and Christology. Significantly, Psalm 22 is among the most used psalms in the New Testament. In this study I challenge the status quo by evaluating the evidence and addressing two objections to the notion of direct predictive prophecy. If the psalm constitutes predictive prophecy, then it contributes directly to the biographical portrait of

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[2]Susan Gillingham, *A Reception History Commentary on Psalms 1–72*, vol. 2 of *Psalms through the Centuries*, Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 136–44.

Jesus and implies that the New Testament's "seven sayings of Jesus on the cross" represent only a fraction of what Jesus spoke during his crucifixion. In addition, my solution proves a hermeneutical principle: a psalm can predict a far fulfillment without depicting a near scenario in the lifetime of the psalmist.[3]

In order to demonstrate my central proposition, I first call attention to the important matter of tracing the speaker and addressees through the psalm. Then I answer the crucial question: Whose perspective does the psalm originally express? Finally, I consider whether Jesus verbalized the entire psalm on the cross.

Tracing the Speaker and Addressees of Psalm 22

Consider a few basic observations about the speaker and the addressees of Psalm 22. For one, the primary addressee is God. Indeed, much of the psalm is cast as a prayer to God. The suppliant beseeched God forthrightly. For instance, the prayer begins, "My God, my God…O my God, I cry by day" (vv. 1–2). And the petitioner addresses God in verse 19: "You, O LORD, be not far off." Readers can identify the suppliant by tracing the grammatical antecedents through the psalm and by observing the pronoun chains.

The psalm contains lament and praise, giving the initial impression that it may have originally been two separate psalms (vv. 1–21, 22–31). However, all psalm laments transition to praise (except Ps 88), leaving little reason to doubt the psalm's unity. As John Kselman puts it, the two-psalm opinion is "deservedly out of favor now, given the form-critical evaluation of the praise and thanksgiving section as integral to the lament form."[4]

Although the suppliant entreats God often, not every verse constitutes a prayer. A secondary addressee is believers. In 22:23, for example, the poet directly implores believers: "You who fear the LORD, praise him; all you descendants of Jacob, glorify him." The first-person voice markers (*I*, *my*, *me*, and *our*) portray the speaker as an individual.[5] To whom do the voice markers refer?

Candidates for an Original Sufferer of Psalm 22

Numerous people believe that Psalm 22 originally described the circumstances of an embattled psalmist or community who lived before

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[3]A principle also validated in Mark A. Hassler, "Judas Iscariot in the Imprecatory Psalms: The Prophet David Recorded Jesus Christ's Prayers about Judas in Psalms 41, 55, 69, and 109," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (forthcoming).

[4]John S. Kselman, "'Why Have You Abandoned Me?' A Rhetorical Study of Psalm 22," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, ed. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn, and Alan J. Hauser, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 19 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 188.

[5]Davida H. Charney, *Persuading God: Rhetorical Studies of First-Person Psalms*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 73 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 71–76.

the first coming of Jesus Christ. That is, the psalm's first-person pronouns express the perspective of an ancient sufferer. For them, any anticipatory references to Jesus in the original setting were secondary, indirect, or nonexistent. According to some proponents, the speaker's suffering foreshadowed, typified, or prefigured Jesus's suffering; or the New Testament figures appropriated, transformed, or actualized the psalmist's words. Prospects for the original speaker include King David, Queen Esther, and anonymous persons.

King David

David stands out as a popular candidate. In this view, commentators such as Allen Ross do not pinpoint a historical occasion in David's life, whereas Franz Delitzsch and others do, such as when Saul persecuted David in the Moan Desert (1 Sam 23:25–26).[6] The problem is, Psalm 22 includes statements that do not easily fit the life of David. For example, we have no historical evidence that David's adversaries cast lots for his garments and pierced, pinned, or tore his hands and feet (vv. 16, 18).[7]

Ross acknowledges the difficulty and attempts to alleviates the tension by suggesting that the psalmist used figurative language, such as hyperbole: "We know of no time in the life of David that even comes close to the event that is described here [in Ps 22]…the language must be poetic and somewhat hyperbolic in places…. [T]he psalm is not direct prophecy."[8] But who cast lots for David's clothing? Ross fails to indicate how casting lots pertains to the life of David, what criteria one would use to conclude that casting lots should be taken as a literary device, and where else in Scripture casting lots functions as a poetic device. While everyone agrees that biblical poetry contains literary devices, the question of where the devices occur remains a matter of dispute. The shortcomings of the David interpretation cause several readers of the Hebrew Bible to seek a different way forward.

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[6]Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 1:527–28, 539; F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, vol. 5 of *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1883; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 192.

[7]Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 105. On the alternate reading "as a lion my hands and feet" (v. 18), see Daniele Garrone, "Psalm 22,17b: Textkritische Probleme, Divergierende Deutungen," *Ein pralles Leben: Alttestamentliche Studien fur Jutta Hausmann zum 65. Geburtstag und zur Emeritierung*, ed. Petra Verebics, Nikolett Moricz, and Miklos Koszehty, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 56 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 135.

[8]Ross, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 527; also Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Psalms: Foundations for Expository Sermons in the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 408, 412.

Queen Esther

As early as the third century A.D., some Jews began to interpret Psalm 22 in light of the Esther narrative in order to combat the early Christian belief that the psalm pertained to Jesus.[9] Apparently the David interpretation was unconvincing to early Christians so these anti-Jesus Jews had to resort to another solution. Adherents suggest that verse 1 of the MT (עַל־אַיֶּלֶת הַשָּׁחַר, "concerning the hind of the dawn") refers to Esther.[10] In the rabbinic tradition, sages tended to associate Esther with almost every verse of the psalm.[11] Although this outlook has the interpretive advantage of pointing to an actual historical person, it requires fanciful exegesis. And the book of Esther tells the Purim story without mentioning God, whereas Psalm 22 appeals to God excessively.[12] Moreover, the sufferer of Psalm 22 comes across as a pious saint, but Esther appears ungodly and immoral.[13] For reasons such as these, Bible readers often bypass the Esther option.

Anonymous Sufferers

Since the European Enlightenment it has become fashionable for scholars to let the writer of the Psalm remain anonymous. For instance, L. P. Maré favors an anonymous Old Testament sufferer.[14] Joyce Rilett Wood argues that Psalm 22 comprises two editions with two distinct agendas: David wrote the first edition as an individual lament (vv. 2–19), and an anonymous author wrote the second edition to express the concerns of the exilic and postexilic community (vv. 4, 10, 20–32).[15] In the feminist stream, Jonathan Parker proposes that the psalmist, an anonymous female or "metaphorical plenipotentiary for the nation," portrays God as her midwife and mother.[16]

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[9]Abraham Jacob Berkovitz, "Jewish and Christian Exegetical Controversy in Late Antiquity: The Case of Psalm 22 and the Esther Narrative," in *Ancient Readers and Their Scriptures: Engaging the Hebrew Bible in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Garrick V. Allen and John Anthony Dunne, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 107 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 223, 239.

[10]Esther M. Menn, "No Ordinary Lament: Relecture and the Identity of the Distressed in Psalm 22," *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (Oct 2000): 329–30.

[11]Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Esther, Jesus, and Psalm 22," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (Oct 2008): 720.

[12]Raymond Apple, "Psalm 22: The Esther Connection," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 47 (Oct 2019): 227.

[13]Elaine A. Phillips, "Esther 6: Person," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 190.

[14]L. P. Maré, "Psalm 22: To Pray Like Jesus," *Old Testament Essays* 17 (2004): 451.

[15]Joyce Rilett Wood, "Writing and Rewriting of Psalm 22," *Studies in Religion* 48 (June 2019): 190, 203.

[16]Jonathan D. Parker, "'My Mother, My God,' 'Why Have You Forsaken Me?':

According to the reader-response school, the speaker can be whoever the audience wants him to be. As Peiter van der Zwan explains, "The exact background of Ps 22 remains open to numerous possibilities, as there is no clear context supplied by the text or by historical-criticism. It therefore allows—and perhaps even invites—the reader's projections to become the context."[17] In other words, the audience gets to decide the identity of the sufferer. While this interpretive approach enjoys great flexibility, unencumbered by the constraints of history and context, it cannot arrive at an objective meaning for the psalm. Such instability does not satisfy interpreters who wish to ascertain the authorial intent.

To summarize, scholars often propose that Psalm 22 expresses the voice of a sufferer or community who lived before Jesus's first coming. Suggestions include David, Esther, and anonymous sufferers; however, these suggestions each have their drawbacks.

Jesus Christ as the Sufferer of Psalm 22

In the direct-prophecy approach, Psalm 22 never originally described the psalmist's situation; instead, the psalm represents the Messiah's words on the cross. The first-person pronouns (*I*, *me*, *my*, and *our*) refer exclusively to Jesus Christ. The psalmist and prophet David wrote Jesus's words centuries in advance. This view presupposes a core tenet of Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam—namely, that the Bible contains predictions.

Allusions to Psalm 22 in Isaiah 53

Scholars recognize the lexical and thematic parallels between Psalm 22 and the book of Isaiah.[18] The literary allusions prompt some exegetes to equate the petitioner of Psalm 22 with the servant of Isaiah 53.[19] To mention a few allusions, Isaiah 53:3 ("he was despised [בזה] and forsaken by the people") evokes Psalm 22:6 ("a reproach of men and despised [בזה] by the people"). And Isaiah 53:5 ("he was pierced through [חלל]") resembles Psalm 22:16 ("they pierced [כָּאֲרִי, Leningrad Codex] my hands and my feet").[20] Further, Isaiah 53:10 and verse 12

An Exegetical Note on Psalm 22 as Christian Scripture," *Expository Times* 131 (Feb 2020): 201, 203.

[17]Peiter van der Zwan, "The Body in Poverty: Psalm 22," *Journal for Semitics* 26 (2017): 84.

[18]For example, Michael A. Lyons, "Psalm 22 and the 'Servants' of Isaiah 54; 56–66," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77 (2015): 640.

[19]George Dahl, "The Messianic Expectation in the Psalter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 57 (1938): 11; Shon D. Hopkin, "'My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?' Psalm 22 and the Mission of Christ," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52 (2013): 124.

[20]Compare Zech 12:10 ("they will look on me whom they have pierced [דקר]");

("the LORD was pleased to crush him, causing him to suffer…he poured out himself to death [מָוֶת]") calls to mind Psalm 22:15 ("you lay me in the dust of death [מָוֶת]").

Uses of Psalm 22 in the New Testament

The New Testament unanimously treats Jesus as the only sufferer of Psalm 22. Nowhere does the New Testament indicate that the psalm expresses the perspective of David, Esther, or any other precursor.

The Gospels use Psalm 22 to describe Jesus's suffering on the cross.[21] Jesus spoke the opening words of the psalm on the tree: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1; Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). Quoting Psalm 22:18, John explains that the Roman soldiers divided Jesus's garments by casting lots "to fulfill the Scripture."[22] Sinners blasphemed Jesus (βλασφημέω), wagged their heads, and chided him to trust God and be delivered.[23] In Matthew 27:43, Jesus's detractors knew that he claimed to be the Messiah so they mockingly quoted Psalm 22:8 at him because in early Jewish tradition the psalm described the suffering Messiah.[24] The famous line "they pierced my hands and my feet" invokes crucifixion (Ps 22:16; cf. Mark 15:25; John 20:25). The last word of Psalm 22 (עָשָׂה, "it is finished," v. 31) corresponds with one of Jesus's last words before his death (τετέλεσται, "it is finished," John 19:30).

The evidence in the Gospels indicates that first-century exegetes interpreted Psalm 22 as direct prophecy of Jesus's crucifixion. Abraham Jacob Berkovitz agrees: "The pervasiveness of psalm quotation and allusion leaves no doubt that the Gospel authors constructed their passion narratives with Psalm 22 in mind. Thus, Jewish and, later, Gentile followers of the early Jesus movement saw Psalm 22 as a traditional prophecy of Jesus' execution."[25]

In Hebrews 2:12 the writer argues that Jesus is superior; to prove his point he quotes Psalm 22:22 and identifies Jesus as the speaker (the pronouns *I* and *my*).[26] And Hebrews 5:7 ("In the days of his flesh, he [Jesus] offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one able to save him from death, and he was heard")

John 19:37; Rev 1:7.

[21]Jörg Frey, "Vom Sinn-Raum der Schrift zur erfüllten Prophetie: Zur Psalmenrezeption in den Passionserzählungen der Evangelien," in *Beten*, Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 32 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 101.

[22]John 19:23–24; cf. Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34.

[23]Ps 22:7–8; Matt 27:39–43; cf. Mark 15:29–32; Luke 23:35, 39.

[24]Ross, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 536.

[25]Berkovitz, "Jewish and Christian Exegetical Controversy," 225.

[26]Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1986), 191.

alludes to texts such as Psalm 22:24 ("when he [Jesus] cried to him [God] for help, he heard").

In the Second Temple period, Jews viewed the entire Psalter as characteristically predictive and messianic in nature, as the Qumran documents attest.[27] For instance, the Great Psalms Scroll (11QPs^{a}, xxvii) reads, "David, son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and learned, and discerning, and perfect in all his paths before God and men. And YHWH gave him a discerning and enlightened spirit. And he wrote psalms…and songs…. All these he spoke through (the spirit of) prophecy which had been given to him from before the Most High."[28]

Without question, the New Testament interprets Psalm 22 differently than scores of scholars do today. Notably, Ronald Cox observes that "our own culturally conditioned training cautions us to eschew most of the principles inherent to this first-century exegesis."[29] Brad Pribbenow concurs: "Premodern exegetes held to a Christological perspective of the Psalms that was broadly accepted and pursued but that, in the modern era, this perspective became problematized and was largely displaced in favor of the pursuit of historical, sociological, psychological, and cultic concerns."[30] Such concerns characterize Psalms studies in the modern era. In the 1937 presidential address of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, George Dahl observed a "serious spiritual flaw in recent Psalm literature." Specifically, he noticed a "trend toward minimizing both the extent and religious importance of the Messianic element in the Psalter. This has resulted in the wrong of giving a purely secular interpretation to many Psalms."[31] In light of the move away from the predictive and messianic interpretation, it seems pertinent to address common objections to the concept of direct prophecy.

Counterarguments to Direct Prophecy

Consider the following two counterarguments to the claim that Psalm 22 contains direct predictive prophecy.

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[27]Larry W. Hurtado, "Early Christological Interpretation of the Messianic Psalms," in *Ancient Jewish Monotheism and Early Christian Jesus-Devotion: The Context and Character of Christological Faith*, ed. Larry W. Hurtado, Library of Early Christology (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 565–66; Cox, "New Testament Preaches the Psalms," 85–86.

[28]Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *4Q274–11Q31*, vol. 2 of *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1179.

[29]Ronald Cox, "The New Testament Preaches the Psalms: Problems and Possibilities," in *Performing the Psalms: With Essays and Sermons by Walter Brueggemann, J. Clinton McCann Jr., Paul Scott Wilson, and Others*, ed. Dave Bland and David Fleer (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005), 104.

[30]Brad Pribbenow, *Prayerbook of Christ: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christological Interpretation of the Psalms* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), 173.

[31]Dahl, "Messianic Expectation in the Psalter," 2.

Counterargument 1: A psalm must describe a near scenario (in the lifetime of the psalmist) in order to be relevant to the original audience (e.g., David's contemporaries). According to Randall Otto, a prediction normally had to transpire in the prophet's lifetime or generation, "not hundreds of years into the distant future, after both he and his audience are dead, when the matter would hardly be relevant to either."[32]

Yet what could be more relevant to an ancient person than divine revelation of the coming Redeemer? A psalm or prediction does not need to be about the prophet's contemporaries to be relevant to them. After all, scores of Bible prophecies are not about us today, but all Bible prophecies are relevant and profitable for every generation. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable" (2 Tim 3:16). A prediction remains profitable even if describes a different generation than one's own.

Counterargument 2: A predictive psalm must include a near fulfillment in order to authenticate the prophet. In Randall Otto's words, "Fulfillment within the prophet's lifetime constitutes the predominant criterion of legitimate authority."[33]

Although immediately fulfilled prophecy could certainly authenticate a prophet (cf. Deut 18:21–22), a true prophet could also establish his or her reputation over time.[34] As a teenager, David was already Spirit-filled and validated as God's anointed one by Yahweh and the prophet Samuel at the anointing ceremony (1 Sam 16:13). Furthermore, David offered many prophecies at various times in his life, and not every single prophecy needed to authenticate him by way of immediate fulfillment. In addition, ancient Israelites could test a prophecy against already revealed Scripture. And importantly, Peter's use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2 disproves the false requirement of a near scenario.

In Acts 2:24–31 Peter preached about Jesus's resurrection using Psalm 16. According to Peter, the first-person voice markers of Psalm 16:8–11 refer to Jesus rather than David—and David himself realized it. As Peter declared, "David…knew he was a prophet and knew [that he prophesied concerning] one of his descendants" (Acts 2:29–30). In other words, David understood that he was speaking not about his own situation but about the Messiah. In Psalm 16 the first-person markers (*I*, *me*, and *my*) in verses 8–11 extend back to the beginning of the psalm (but not back to the psalm heading) without indication of a speaker change, thus confirming that the psalm was written from Jesus's point of view. Just because a psalmist such as David wrote the psalm, it does not mean that the first-person markers refer to him. In

[32]Randall E. Otto, "The Prophets and Their Perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63 (2001): 228.

[33]Ibid., 226.

[34]Richard E. Averbeck, "The Tests of a Prophet," in *"An Excellent Fortress for His Armies, a Refuge for the People": Egyptological, Archaeological, and Biblical Studies in Honor of James K. Hoffmeier*, ed. Richard E. Averbeck and K. Lawson Younger Jr. (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 14.

short, Peter's use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2 confirms that a psalm can be written from Jesus's perspective—not the psalmist's perspective.

To summarize, I argue that Psalm 22 consists of direct prophecy. The psalm prognosticates the voice of the suffering Savior on the cross. The Bible itself confirms the predictive and messianic interpretation of the psalm via quotations and allusions in Isaiah 53, the Gospels, and Hebrews.

How Vocal Was Jesus on the Cross?

Jesus spoke on the cross more than we sometimes assume. The New Testament famously records seven sayings of the Savior on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"; "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise"; "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother"; "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"; "I thirst"; "It is finished"; and "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."[35]

Altogether these seven sayings take only fifteen seconds to recite. Knowing that Jesus hung on the tree for six hours, do we really suppose that he spoke for only fifteen seconds? More pointedly, three or perhaps four of the seven sayings were prayers to the Father. Did Jesus, a man of prayer, pray only a few short snippets while on the cross in his most desperate time?

When Jesus's time on the cross came to an end at about three o'clock, witnesses heard him pray to the Father. According to Matthew, "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (27:46). Soon thereafter he exclaimed, τετέλεσται, "It is finished" (John 19:30), possibly quoting the final word of Psalm 22, עָשָׂה, "It is finished" (Ps 22:31). Jesus spoke the entire psalm on the cross—not just the opening and closing snippets. The Gospel writers were selective not exhaustive in recording his words. What is more, Jesus articulated many complete psalms on the tree, but for now I will limit the discussion to Psalm 22.

Four pieces of evidence support the claim. First, Bible authors often used allusions to evoke whole contexts. Such was the case with Mark's use of Psalm 22.[36] C. H. Dodd articulates a widely accepted hermeneutical principle: biblical quotations and allusions routinely point to an entire Old Testament context behind the allusion and not merely to the allusion itself.[37] As Claus Westermann rightly suggests, "When the evangelists employ Psalm 22 to interpret Christ's passion, they have in view the entire psalm where suffering and deliverance from

[35]Matt 27:46 // Mark 15:34; Luke 23:34, 43, 46; John 19:26–30.

[36]Holly J. Carey, *Jesus' Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark's Gospel*, Library of New Testament Studies 398 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 172.

[37]C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 126–27.

suffering together make up the whole."[38] The evangelists peppered the crucifixion narratives with a flurry of allusions to Psalm 22, inviting the readers to recall the whole psalm.[39]

Second, some scholars argue that Matthew and Mark, when writing their Gospels, followed a normal rabbinic practice, choosing to quote only the beginning of a text when the whole was in view.[40] James Luther Mays explains: "Citing the first words of a text was, in the tradition of time, a way of identifying the entire passage."[41] Basically, quoting the opening sufficed as a shorthand way of quoting the whole.

Third, Jesus prayed constantly. Because he prayed at important times in his ministry, it seems reasonable that he would pray a lot on the tree. He "prayed without ceasing" (cf. 1 Thess 5:17). The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray because he was a champion of prayer (Luke 11:1). Sometimes Jesus stayed awake all night to pray. He prayed in the early morning, in the Upper Room, and in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–46; Mark 1:35; John 17:1–26).

And fourth, Jesus alone befits the psalm. As Eusebius of Caesarea writes, "The psalm refers to Him and no one else, for its contents harmonize with none other but Him.... If anyone would apply them to some other person, whether king, prophet, or other godly man among the Jews, let him prove it if he can how what is written is in harmony with him."[42]

One objection to Jesus speaking the whole psalm comes from Richard Mead. Mead speculates that Jesus was not physically strong enough to vocalize an entire psalm: "A crucified man near death would not likely recite psalms at any length."[43] Certainly, Jesus became weak and dehydrated (cf. Ps 22:15), but the executioners did not break his legs as they sometimes did to a crucifixion victim, so he could push

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[38]Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, trans. J. R. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 298.

[39]Stephen L. Cook, "*Relecture*, Hermeneutics, and Christ's Passion in the Psalms," in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse*, ed. Stephen L. Cook, Corrine L. Patton, and James W. Watts, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 336 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 195.

[40]R. Mark Shipp, "Psalm 22: The Prayer of the Righteous Sufferer," *Christian Studies* 25 (2011–12): 58; Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 120.

[41]James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 105.

[42]W. J. Ferrar, trans., *The Proof of the Gospel: Being the* Demonstratio Evangelica *of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Translations of Christian Literature, Series 1: Greek Texts (London: SPCK, 1920), 2:216.

[43]Richard T. Mead, "A Dissenting Opinion about Respect for Context in Old Testament Quotations," in *Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 156, n. 10.

himself up in order to breathe easier. Indeed, "not a bone of him shall be broken" (John 19:36; cf. Ps 34:20). Commentator R. T. France denies that Jesus recited the entire psalm, but he still acknowledges that Jesus was physically capable of sustained speech: "Jesus is not going out with a whimper but in full possession of his faculties."[44] That is, Jesus's mind and mouth remained capable. With a similar sentiment, Alfred Edersheim explains that "His [Jesus's] last cry 'with a loud voice' was not like that of one dying. St. Mark notes, that this made such deep impression on the Centurion [Mark 15:39]. In the language of the early Christian hymn, it was not Death which approached Christ, but Christ Death: He died without death. Christ encountered Death, not as conquered, but as the Conqueror."[45] Indeed, Jesus retained authority over his own life. In John's words, "No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down" (John 10:18).

France raises another objection: if Jesus had recited the entire psalm, the praise in the latter part of the psalm would nullify the force of the lament at the beginning. As France himself puts it, "Jesus echoed not the latter part of the psalm but its opening, and to read into these few tortured words an exegesis of the whole psalm is to turn upside down the effect which Mark has created by this powerful and enigmatic cry of agony."[46] Basically, for France, praise in this setting does not seem fitting juxtaposed to lament. On the other hand, I have no problem with Jesus offering lament and praise to God on the cross. Lamentation does not rule out thanksgiving; the two go hand in hand.

Conclusion

In this article I contend that Psalm 22 records the Messiah's own words—words spoken on the cross at approximately three o'clock, moments before he took his final breath and departed for paradise. The psalm constituted a loud prayer offered to the Father and other words spoken to witnesses. The sufferer of Psalm 22 was Jesus Christ and no other. King David the prophet wrote Jesus's words centuries in advance, and these words enrich the biography of Jesus. My conclusion implies that the New Testament's seven sayings of the Savior on the cross represent only a fraction of what Jesus spoke during his crucifixion. It also confirms a hermeneutical rule: a psalm can predict a far fulfillment without depicting a near scenario in the lifetime of the psalmist.

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[44]R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 652.

[45]Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1896), 609.

[46]France, *Gospel of Mark*, 652–53.