

I Can Count All My Bones...

Jesus was crucified at Passover. In crying out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' while suffering on the cross, He was directing the hearers' attention to the entirety of Psalm 22, thus sending a *complete* message.

Psalm 22 is confirmed at every point to be genuinely David's, and there is reality in the history of Saul's persecution of David (I Sam 23:14, 15 and ff.). But while the anguish of this psalm sprang from the soil of David's life, (though many details regarding his distresses are not known) the specific descriptions contained in Ps 22 far exceed David's own sufferings: the spreading out of the limbs of a naked body, the torture and pain in the hands and feet, the searing thirst and the reproach and blasphemy. In Psalm 22 we discover Jesus' death by crucifixion and the denouement of prophecy. By the Spirit of God, the hyperbolic element is changed into the prophetic, stretching out from David into the final, true Messiah of God and His ultimate purpose for Israel and the world.

Matched by the prophecy of Isaiah 53, this psalm progresses from His remarkable death to foretell the national salvation of Israel and the resulting witness to the gentile nations, thus setting out the 'mystery of Israel' that Paul describes in Rom 11. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, 'we have a more sure word of prophecy', - here and elsewhere - to which we do well to pay

attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19)!

Because it is prophetic *and* poetic, the language is dense and allusive. In the few paragraphs here, I will only be able to look at a small aspect of this psalm, which presents a greatly distilled revelation of God's plan for Israel and the world.

First of all, let us be clear that while Jesus died for the sins – and sin – of the whole world, He first came unto His own. As Kinsman Redeemer and Intercessor, He came through – and to – the Jewish people (John 1:11; Rom 9:5; Heb 2: 17). His life history coincides with that of Israel and in Ps 22, we find a clear example: 'They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture (v.18).' The Hebrew verbs used here are identical to the ones found in Joel 3: 2 & 3: 'They ... parted my land... and they have cast lots for my people'. This is only one of the many parallelisms that reveal Jesus' identification with the nation of Israel and we must keep this connection in mind in order to understand the fullness of the person and work of Yeshua.

Let's examine at least one facet in detail.

Psalm 22:14 reads: 'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint' and verse 17 says: 'I may tell (count) all my bones'. Bones are of great significance in scripture. The Hebrew word from which we get 'bone' (עצם) conveys the idea of 'self' in its strength, power, might and significance. Bones are used as a metaphor to express one's



spiritual condition, whether righteous or sinful. Bones are described as 'broken' when a sinful state is revealed: 'that the **bones which thou hast broken** may rejoice' (Ps 51:8). Job mentions '**bones full of sin**' (20:11). Hezekiah intones: 'I reckoned till morning, that, **as a lion, so will he break all my bones**' (Is 38:13).

In fact, bones crushed by lions are symbolic of judgement and triumph over one's enemies (Num 24:8, 9). In Daniel, we find that 'the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him (Dan 6:4). The lions in the den had no power to kill Daniel: 'My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me' (v.22). However, when Daniel's accusers were cast into the lions' den, 'the lions had the mastery of them, and **brake all their bones** in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den' (v.24).

Psalms 34: 19,20 reads: 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.'

When it comes to the Passover Lamb, the instructions stipulate: 'In one house shall it be eaten... neither shall ye break a bone thereof' (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12). So we can see that unbroken bones signify innocence and righteousness in the substitute of the Lamb.

Psalms 22:14 records that all his bones are 'out of joint' – but they weren't broken! This is an allusion to Jacob, when he wrestled with the Angel (Gen 32: 25) and the later, national prophetic vision of Ezekiel 37, when an entire valley was full of disconnected, very dry bones! (That same dryness – **בָּשָׁר** - also echoes that of the psalmist's strength in Ps 22:15).

Does this mean that because Israel's bones are not broken, they are without sin?? Certainly not! But just as Moses turned aside to see the thorn bush that was burning, yet not consumed (Ex 3:

2-6), we are considering that which Paul describes as a mystery (Rom 11:25).

Let's progress swiftly through the rest of Psalm 22 in order to see what springs from the death and resurrection of Jesus:

Verse 23 reads: 'Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel'. The mention of both names together – as seed - alludes to Gen 32, when The Angel '**touched**' the hollow of Jacob's thigh (v.25) and changed his name to Israel (v. 28). The word 'touched' signifies a very violent blow and is the same verb in Isaiah 53: 4: 'we esteemed him '**stricken**'.

Verse 24 records: 'For he hath not despised nor abhorred the **affliction of the afflicted**; neither hath he hid his face from him.' Gen 32:30 reads, 'And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for **I have seen God face to face**, and my life is preserved,' and Is. 63:9, '**In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence (face) saved them.**'

Verse 25 says: 'My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him'. Gen 28:20 & 21 state: 'And Jacob **vowed a vow**, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go... then shall the LORD be my God'.

Verse 26 states: 'The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live forever'. This is an idiomatic phrase indicating eternal life. See I Sam 25:37 and Ps 69: 32, which refers to Jesus' crucifixion (Ps 69:21) and the resulting salvation of Zion and the cities of Judah (see context vv 20-36).

Verse 29 proclaims: 'All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship'. The Gospel (Good news) is said to 'make the **bones fat**!' (Prov 15: 30). The righteous shall '**be fat** and flourishing' (Ps 92: 14) to declare the Lord's uprightness and righteousness! Ps 23:5 – 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou **anointest** (Lit: makes fat) my head with oil....'

Verse 30 reveals: ‘A seed shall serve him (Isa 53:10 ‘Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him... **he shall see his seed**); it shall be accounted (the same as ‘**count** all my bones’ in v. 17 and Ps 87:6: ‘The LORD shall **count**, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there’ – a census) to the Lord for a generation.’ (Isa 53:8 He was taken ...and who shall declare **his generation**)

And finally, verse 31: ‘They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, **that he hath done this**’, describing those who are saved. See Ps 52: 9: ‘I will praise thee forever, because **thou hast done it**’ and Hezekiah’s thanks for extended life: ‘What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and **himself hath done it**’ (Isa 38:15). Relating to Israel’s redemption, let’s look at Isa 44:23: ‘Sing, O ye heavens; **for the LORD hath done it**: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel’ (see the context in vv. 21-28)!

So while Psalm 22 expresses David’s own distress, it also foretells the guiltless, Suffering Messiah AND the Trouble of sinful, but chosen, Jacob, resulting in Israel’s salvation and witness to the Gentiles. The Lord’s dealings are a mystery that it behoves the Church to understand and embrace. The Lord declares: ‘For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished (Jer 30:11). What was clear to the early disciples, as implied and ratified by Jesus’ death and resurrection (‘Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ Acts 1:6), is sadly ignored by the wider church today. However, God is faithful!

‘And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.’ (Eze 37:3)

For the salvation of Israel, Chrissy Rodgers