

The Study of the Book of Psalms: A Introduction:

Author: The brief descriptions that introduce the psalms have David listed as author in 73 instances. David's personality and identity are clearly stamped on many of these psalms. While it is clear that David wrote many of the individual psalms, he is definitely not the author of the entire collection. Two of the psalms (72 and 127) are attributed to Solomon, David's son and successor. Psalm 90 is a prayer assigned to Moses. Another group of 12 psalms (50) and (73—83) is ascribed to the family of Asaph. The sons of Korah wrote 11 psalms (42, 44—49, 84—85, 87—88). Psalm 88 is attributed to Heman, while Psalm 89 is assigned to Ethan the Ezrahite. With the exception of Solomon and Moses, all these additional authors were priests or Levites who were responsible for providing music for sanctuary worship during David's reign. Fifty of the psalms designate no specific person as author, although two of those are designated elsewhere in the Bible as psalms of David.

Date of Writing: A careful examination of the authorship question, as well as the subject matter covered by the psalms themselves, reveals that they span a period of many centuries. The oldest psalm in the collection is probably the prayer of Moses (90), a reflection on the frailty of man as compared to the eternity of God. The latest psalm is probably (137), a song of lament clearly written during the days when the Hebrews were being held captive by the Babylonians, from about 586 to 538 B.C.

It is clear that the 150 individual psalms were written by many different people across a period of a thousand years in Israel's history. They must have been compiled and put together in their present form by some unknown editor shortly after the captivity ended about 537 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Psalms has far more "chapters" than any other book in the Bible, with 150 individual psalms. It is also one of the most diverse, since the psalms deal with such subjects as God and His creation, war, worship, wisdom, sin and evil, judgment, justice, and the coming of the Messiah.

Brief Summary: The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Parts of this book were used as a hymnal in the worship services of ancient Israel. The musical heritage of the psalms is demonstrated by its title. It comes from a Greek word which means "a song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument."

Foreshadowings: God's provision of a Savior for His people is a recurring theme in the Psalms. Prophetic pictures of the Messiah are seen in numerous psalms. Psalm 2:1-12 portrays the Messiah's triumph and kingdom. Psalm 16:8-11 foreshadows His death and resurrection. Psalm 22 shows us the suffering Savior on the cross and presents detailed prophecies of the crucifixion, all of which were fulfilled perfectly. The glories of the Messiah and His bride are on exhibit in Psalm 45:6-7, while Psalms 72:6-17, 89:3-37, 110:1-7 and 132:12-18 present the glory and universality of His reign.

Practical Application: One of the results of being filled with the Spirit or the word of Christ is singing. The psalms are the “songbook” of the early church that reflected the new truth in Christ.

God is the same Lord in all the psalms. But we respond to Him in different ways, according to the specific circumstances of our lives. What a marvelous God we worship, the psalmist declares, high and lifted up beyond our human experiences but also close enough to touch and who walks beside us along life’s way.

We can bring all our feelings to God—no matter how negative or complaining they may be—and we can rest assured that He will hear and understand. The psalmist teaches us that the most profound prayer of all is a cry for help as we find ourselves overwhelmed by the problems of life.

Psalm 22:

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

22 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.

³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises^[a] of Israel.

⁴ In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

⁷ All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

⁸ “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.

¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹ Be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.

¹² Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet^[b]—
¹⁷ I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
¹⁸ they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

¹⁹ But you, O Lord, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!
²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!

²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!
You have rescued^[c] me from the horns of the wild oxen!

²² I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.

- ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.
- ²⁶ The afflicted^[a] shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the Lord!
May your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.
- ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.
- ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
- ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.

A Study of Psalm 22:

1. Structure and Overview -

Psalm 22 divides into **two distinct movements**:

- **Verses 1–21a** – *Lament & Suffering*
- **Verses 21b–31** – *Praise & Vindication*

This mirrors the **death and resurrection of Christ** and the pattern of suffering before glory (cf. 1 Peter 1:11).

2. Historical and Cultural Background -

- **Authorship:** Written by David (cf. superscription), likely during a personal crisis, though its expressions go beyond any experience David himself endured.
- **Cultural Insight:** Ancient Israel understood affliction and divine silence as signs of God's displeasure. The psalm turns this view on its head—**God's silence is not His absence**.
- **Prophetic Nature:** Psalm 22 is a **Messianic Psalm**, pointing forward to the suffering and eventual triumph of the Messiah.

- **Crucifixion:** Although written around 1000 B.C., long before Roman crucifixion was invented, the details (pierced hands/feet, casting lots) align perfectly with the crucifixion of Christ.

3. Important Hebrew Word Studies -

Hebrew Word	Translation	Meaning/Usage
עָזַבְתָּנִי (azavtani)	"You have forsaken me" (v.1)	Root עָזַב, meaning to abandon or leave behind. Expresses emotional and spiritual abandonment .
שָׁעַג (sha'ag)	"Roar" or "cry" (v.1)	Used for a deep, guttural groaning , the cry of desperate lament.
כָּלוּ (kulo)	"All" (v.14)	Reflects totality—"all my bones are out of joint" = complete dislocation, total suffering.
דָּקַר (daqar)	"Pierced" (v.16)	Rare verb often used in prophetic contexts; points forward to Zechariah 12:10 and John 19:37 .
חָלַק (chalaq)	"Divide" (v.18)	Suggests intentional distribution, used for dividing spoils—"they divide my garments".

4. Verse-by-Verse Commentary & Theological Insights -

Verses 1–2: Cry of Forsakenness:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

- Quoted by Jesus on the cross (**Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34**).
- Theologically, this points to **substitutionary atonement**—Christ bore the wrath of God on behalf of sinners (Isa. 53:5–6).
- Shows us that **lament is part of faith**.

John MacArthur: "This was not the wail of unbelief, but the cry of the righteous sufferer."

Verses 3–5: Confidence in God's Character:

- Despite feeling abandoned, David trusts in God's holiness and covenant faithfulness.
- Teaches that **past deliverance encourages present hope**.

Verses 6–8: Public Mockery:

“All who see me mock me... ‘He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver him!’”

- Fulfilled in **Matt. 27:41–43**.
- Reflects Jesus' experience on the cross, fulfilling messianic prophecy with stunning precision.

Verses 9–11: Personal Relationship:

- From the womb, God has been his God.
- Demonstrates **David’s lifelong faith** and points to **Christ's perfect trust**.

Verses 12–18: Physical and Psychological Suffering:

- **“I am poured out like water”** (v.14) – Total exhaustion.
- **“My heart is like wax”** – Inner collapse under divine judgment.
- **“My tongue sticks to my jaws”** – Fulfilled in **John 19:28**, “I thirst.”
- **“They have pierced my hands and feet”** – Fulfilled in **John 20:25–27**.
- **“They divide my garments... cast lots”** – Fulfilled in **John 19:23–24**.

J. Vernon McGee: “There is no place in the Old Testament where we have a more vivid description of the crucifixion than here.”

Verses 19–21a: Final Plea:

- Though forsaken by men, David cries for God's nearness.
- **"Deliver me from the mouth of the lion"** – Echoes **Satanic opposition**, which is also behind the crucifixion (cf. Gen. 3:15; Luke 22:53).

Verses 21b–31: Praise and Vindication:

“You have answered me” (v.21b)

- The psalm pivots to **resurrection hope**.
- **Verse 22** quoted in **Heb. 2:12**, showing Jesus' role as the sanctifier and brother of believers.

- **All nations** will worship (v.27), pointing forward to the **Millennial Kingdom** (cf. Rev. 20:4–6).

Dwight Pentecost: “Psalm 22 moves from the sufferings of Christ to the glories to follow—just as the prophets foretold.”

5. New Testament Fulfillments of Psalm 22 -

Psalm 22	NT Fulfillment
v.1	Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34
v.6–8	Matt. 27:39–43
v.14	John 19:34 (blood and water)
v.15	John 19:28
v.16	John 20:25, 27
v.18	Matt. 27:35; John 19:23–24
v.22	Heb. 2:12
v.31	John 19:30 (Finished = “He has done it”)

6. Conservative Dispensational Commentary Quotes:

- **John Walvoord:** “*Psalm 22 provides a panoramic view of the Messiah’s suffering. Its exact fulfillments in the life and death of Jesus Christ affirm the integrity and divine authorship of Scripture.*”
- **Stephen Davey:** “*This psalm is not a poetic lament alone—it is a prophetic biography, foretelling the Passion of Christ with surgical accuracy.*”
- **Chuck Swindoll:** “*Psalm 22 reveals that God was not surprised by Calvary. It was His plan from the beginning.*”
- **David Jeremiah:** “*This is not merely David’s psalm—it is Christ’s. It draws us to the foot of the cross and invites us to worship.*”

7. Applications for Today’s Christians -

1. **Christ Understands Our Suffering**
He experienced abandonment, pain, and betrayal.
2. **Lament is Worship**
Psalm 22 legitimizes crying out to God in times of pain.

3. **Scripture is Trustworthy**

Prophetic fulfillment affirms God's sovereignty and truth.

4. **Proclaim the Gospel**

Use Psalm 22 to show Jesus as the promised Messiah.

5. **Hope in Future Glory**

Suffering leads to triumph—for Christ and His people (Rom. 8:17).

8. Questions for Reflection -

1. Do I trust in God even when I feel forsaken?
2. How can I use Psalm 22 in sharing the gospel with unbelievers?
3. In what ways does Christ's suffering inform my understanding of pain?
4. Am I anchored in the truth of fulfilled prophecy?
5. How can I turn lament into praise in my own walk with Christ?