

What is the Gospel? The good news in the Psalms
"My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1)

The book of Psalms has been described as a collection of 150 prayers, expressed through music to fit the mood of their various circumstances, and finally fulfilled by Christ on behalf of all humanity. Psalm 22 gives us a clear example of this description of the Psalms. Without any knowledge of the events of Christ's crucifixion, Psalm 22 reads as a raw and desperate prayer, composed in the midst of some obviously life-threatening and agonising personal circumstances. But one thousand years later Jesus took up these words of his great ancestor, King David, and made them his own when from the cross he screamed, *"My God! My God, why have you forsaken me?"* It seems likely that Jesus may have prayed through this entire Psalm during his six hours hanging on the cross, since David's prophetic words so closely mirror the events of Christ's crucifixion. But Jesus wasn't praying this Psalm only in reference to his own deadly circumstances, but also on behalf of a dying humanity.

However, from the cross Jesus was also fulfilling *the hope* found beyond the desperate cries of this Psalm. It is striking that the final words of Psalm 22, *"He has done it"* are almost the mirror image of Jesus own final cry, *"It is finished [i.e. fulfilled]"* (See Psalm 22:31 and John 19:30). On the cross Christ bore the death penalty of our condemned human race. But there is even more good news found in the final sentences of this Spirit inspired song: *"All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn— for he has done it."* (Psalm 22:27 – 31)

Read the following gospel passages describing Christ's crucifixion and compare them with just some of the verses from Psalm 22:

Matthew 27:45 – 46 (Psalm 22:1 – 2)

Matthew 27:37 – 44 (Psalm 22:3 – 8)

John 19:28 – 29 (Psalm 22:15)

Mark 15:24 (Psalm 22:16 – 18)

John 19:30 (Psalm 22:31)

1. Read the whole of Psalm 22. What sort of personal circumstances does David seem to be describing in this Psalm?
2. In what way is Psalm 22 related to the events of Christ's crucifixion?
3. How has Christ fulfilled the hope of Psalm 22?
4. How might this study affect the way that you read, pray or sing the Psalms?
5. What personal thoughts or insights have you discovered in this Psalm?