

JESUS IN THE PSALMS

Today's Text: (a) The Messianic Psalms; (b) Luke 24: 44-45

Extracts:

1. They *pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones. They look and stare at me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots* [Ps. 22: 16-18]
2. Then He [Jesus] said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that *all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures [Lk 24: 44-45]

*The book of Psalms got its title from the Hebrew word, **Tehillim**, which means, “praises.” However, the English word refers to the stringed instruments used for worship. Thus, the main theme of the Psalms is Praise of God in song.¹ That is why the word of God says, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms” [Jam. 5:13]. On the whole, there are 150 psalms, the bulk of which (73) are attributed to David. The Psalms are very popular among believers and non-believers alike because they contain prayers for every purpose and every season. They are used in worship services by most denominations and you can hear any of the Psalms in melodious songs, especially in the Anglican Communion.*

*The Psalms are more than songs of praise. Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ drew His disciples' attention to the Psalms, saying that all the things written about Him there must be fulfilled [Lk 24: 44]. In deed, the Psalms are about the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. Those Psalms that contain prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, are known as the **Messianic Psalms**. Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 102, 110 and 118 are generally regarded as Messianic.*

In today's lesson, we shall examine some of those Psalms, their prophecies and how they have been fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

¹ “The Messianic Psalms,” www.lwwbc.co.uk/messianic_psalms.htm

1. Prophecy is not a forecast!

All last week, it rained heavily in the Caribbean, leading to heavy flooding in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. We had had to pay serious attention to the daily weather *forecasts* before planning our activities for the next day. One day during the week, the weather man on *TV6*, the most popular TV station in Trinidad & Tobago (where I live) said, “Don’t leave home tomorrow morning without your umbrella because it is going to be a rainy day.” Religiously, I listened to him and took my umbrella. You know what? The next day was the brightest that I had seen in recent times!

What happened? I looked forward to his explanation that evening. He said, “*the weather pattern on which we based our forecast did not hold.*” In other words, forecasts are based on *assumptions*. According to the *Webster Dictionary*, a forecast is an anticipation or calculation or prediction of a future condition, *usually* as a result of *rational study and analysis of available pertinent data*. It follows that if the scientific data on which the forecast is projected are flawed, the whole forecast falls down flat. That was what happened to our weather expert.

Prophecy is different. The *Webster Dictionary* defines it as *a declaration of divine will and purpose, a declaration of something to come*. It is a *foretelling*, not forecast of what is to come. This is well stated in the word of God as follows, “No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy *never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” [2 Pet. 1: 20-21]. Consequently, a prophet has no *scientific basis* for his/her utterances other than faith in the word of God for He is not a man “that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” [Num. 23: 19].

A good illustration of the difference between a forecast and a prophecy can be found in **Acts 27: 9-44**. Paul was a prisoner in chains, being taken to Rome for trial, along with other prisoners. Paul, the man of God, turned to the centurion, leading the team of soldiers taking the prisoners to Rome, and said, “I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.” Paul was speaking as the Holy Spirit moved him. But did they listen to him? No! “The centurion was *more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul*” [vv. 10-11]. In other words, why pay attention to this ignorant prisoner when the weather experts had a more informed *opinion*?

Soon after they had left Crete, they ran into a furious storm, and out of overwork and anxiety, they skipped food for several days, and threw the cargo and supplies overboard. The man of God came back to them and said, “You should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss” [vv14-21]. Thereafter, they began to listen to prophecy over forecasts! By faith,

Paul led them to safety, as God had told him the night before through an angel [vv. 22-44].

It is necessary to give this background for you to appreciate that the Messianic Psalms were prophecies concerning Jesus the Christ. They are not *interpretations* by early church leaders but exactly the word of God ministered by the Holy Spirit through inspired psalmists like David, concerning the coming Messiah. The writers of the Psalms, David, Solomon, Moses, Asaph, Korah and others, lived over a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. We know that even scientific theories have changed radically over the last 100 years and they keep changing!

When David wrote, “They pierced my hands and my feet” [Ps. 22: 16], he could not have been referring to himself! Firstly, he was never so tortured by King Saul who was pursuing him. Secondly, crucifixion was a Roman practice, never part of the Jewish culture or law. By any stretch of human imagination, there was no way that David could have anticipated the birth of the Roman Empire over nine centuries later. Finally, Jesus Himself has told us through His disciples that the book of Psalms, like the Law of Moses and the Prophets were speaking of Him and He had come to earth to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies [Lk 24: 44]. In this short piece, we may not be able to treat every one of the prophecies in detail. However, they have been summarized in the table below.

2. Jesus in the Psalms

Speaking through Moses, God has set two criteria for testing true prophecy. The first (the necessary condition) is as follows:

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has spoken?’ - When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken [Deut. 18: 20-22]

The second (sufficient condition) states, “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’- which you have not known- ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams” [Deut. 13: 1-3]. In other words, you must test the spirit through which the message is delivered. Prophets rely on the Spirit of revelation, the Holy Spirit, while false prophets rely on the spirit of divination, which is satanic [Acts 16:16]. That is the point that is reinforced by John when he wrote, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God” [1 Jn 4: 2]. Certainly, the Messianic Psalms pass the two tests! Let us take a few examples:

a) *Christ's suffering, death and resurrection*

Remarkably, the Psalms give us details of the nature of Christ's suffering and death. It was prophesied that a familiar friend that He trusted would betray Him [**Ps. 41: 9**]. He was in deed betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of His Apostles who served as the treasurer [**LK 22: 47; Jn 12: 6**]. Certainly, you would not appoint somebody you did not trust as your accountant!

The psalmists prophesied that He would be scorned and mocked [**Ps. 22: 7-8**], that they would pierce His hands and feet [**v.16**] and that they would gamble for His garments [**v. 18**]. In deed, He was crucified on the cross, with His hands and feet nailed to it, the marks of which He showed to His disciples after His resurrection [**Jn 20: 25, 27**]. "They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then, they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets: "They divided My garments among them, and My clothing they cast lots"* [**Matt. 27: 34-35**]. As He suffered on the cross, He cried aloud, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" [**v. 46**] which is the opening verse in **Psalm 22**. The people mocked Him saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save" [**vv. 39-43**]. In spite of all that, He prayed His Father to forgive them "for they do not know what they do" [**Lk 23: 34**], just as the psalmists had prophesied that He would pray for His enemies [**Ps. 109: 4**].

Alluding to His resurrection from the dead, Peter based his first sermon on Pentecost Sunday on **Psalm 16 verses 8-11**. After quoting those verses, Peter said [**Acts 2: 25-32**]:

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ.

b) *The nature of Christ*

The Psalms say clearly that God will declare Jesus His Son [**Ps. 2: 7**]. This was fulfilled at His baptism when a voice came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" [**Matt. 3: 17**]. In fact, in comparing the angels with Jesus, the writer of the Hebrews said, "For which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You'?" [**Heb. 1: 5**]. He was actually quoting **Psalm 2:7!**

Continuing the reference to the Psalms, the writer of Hebrews also demonstrated that all things would be put under the feet of Jesus [**Heb. 2:**

8] and that His throne will last forever [Heb. 1:8]. In both cases, Hebrews quoted copiously Psalm 8: 4-6 and Psalm 45: 6-7 respectively.

PROPHECIES IN THE PSALMS CONCERNING JESUS THE CHRIST			
THEME	PSALM	PROPHECY	FULFILMENT
THE NATURE OF CHRIST	2:7	God will declare Him His Son	Matt. 3:17; Heb. 1:5
	8: 4-6	All things will be put under His feet	Heb. 2:8
	45:6-7	His throne will be forever	Heb. 1: 8
CHRIST'S WORK	40:7	He will come to do God's will	Heb. 10:7
	69:9	Zeal for God's house will consume Him	Jn 2: 17
	110:1	His enemies will be made subject to Him	Matt. 22: 44
	110:4	He will be a priest of the order of Melchizedek	Heb. 5:6
	118:26	He will come in the name of the Lord	Matt. 21:9
CHRIST'S REJECTION	41:9	He will be betrayed by a familiar friend	Lk 22: 47
	118:22	He will be the chief cornerstone	Matt. 21:42
CHRIST'S SUFFERING & DEATH	22:1	God will forsake Him in His hour of need	Matt. 27:46
	22:7-8	He will be scorned and mocked	Lk 23:55
	22:16	His hands and feet will be pierced	Jn 20:25,27
	22:18	They will gamble for His garments	Matt. 27: 35-36
	31: 5	He will commit His spirit into God's hand	Lk 23: 46
	35: 19	He will be hated without a cause	Jn 15: 25
	69: 21	He will be given vinegar and gall to drink	Matt. 27:34,48
	109:4	He will pray for His enemies	Lk 23:34
109: 8	His betrayer's office will be given to another	Acts 1:20	
CHRIST'S RESURRECTION	16:10	He will be resurrected from the dead	Mk 16: 6-7; Acts 2: 22-26
	68:18	He will ascend to Heaven (God's right hand)	Mk 16: 19; Eph. 4:8

3. Conclusion

I have provided a few illustrations to whet your appetite! I encourage you to do your own search of the Psalms, using the chart provided above to convince yourself that that book is full of prophecies concerning Jesus that have been fulfilled in the New Testament. The outstanding ones have to do with His second coming. Through the Psalms, we have also come to know that Jesus is the Anointed of the Lord [**Ps. 2:2**], the King of Glory [**Ps. 24:7**], the Most Mighty [**Ps. 45:3**] and the Chief Cornerstone [**Ps. 118: 22**].

What lessons do the Psalms teach you? Firstly, that the Old Testament is an integral part of the New Testament. Therefore, you cannot claim to know the word of God if you deliberately ignore or avoid the Old Testament. Secondly, you become deeply rooted in the knowledge that Jesus was the Son of God before He became the Son of man.

May God enrich your study of His word so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” [**Jn 20: 31**].