

# How Psalm 22 Changed My Life

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I suppose all of us have had watershed moments that we can look back on--those moments when our lives were drastically changed—when something clicked, and our outlook was rearranged. That moment for me came when I dug into Psalm 22 for the first time in the spring of 2013. I was finishing my junior year of high school, and after investigating the cosmological, teleological, and moral reasons to believe in a higher power, I was convinced that a transcendent, uncaused first-cause was logically necessary to explain reality as we know it. But I wasn't sure if the God of the Bible existed or if Christianity was valid. Then, someone helped me investigate Psalm 22. Before long—and for the first time ever—I believed that the God who exists speaks to us through the Bible and has given us His Son.

## Background and Text of Psalm 22

Psalm 22 was most likely written during the reign of David as king of Israel (1010 - 970 B.C.). Before the life of Jesus, the psalm was often read as a desperate prayer to God in a time of trouble. David, the author, captured the pain and agony of extreme suffering, while

also highlighting the glory of God. Before we continue to discuss Psalm 22 and its fulfillment, I invite you to take the time read Psalm 22:1-22 right now if you can.

## Psalm 22 Led to My Faith in Jesus as the Messiah

When I read Psalm 22 initially, some things stood out to me, but I did not really understand how it would impact my faith (or lack thereof). Then, when I went through Psalm 22 with another Bible open to the Gospels, my beliefs began to shift. The first twenty-two verses of Psalm 22 foreshadow, with uncanny detail, the crucifixion of Jesus even though it was written nearly 1,000 years before the event. Notice the similarities:

- The psalm begins with the exclamation, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psa. 22:1). Jesus undoubtedly caught the attention of the many who were in Jerusalem for the Passover when He made the same exclamation in Aramaic from the cross (Matt. 27:46).
- The psalmist goes on to describe how his deep suffering is being mocked by those who chant, “He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver him” (Psa. 22:7-8). In all three of the synoptic Gospel accounts, Jesus is similarly mocked on the cross and told to deliver Himself from His execution because He claimed to be the Son of God (Matt. 27:39-43; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-36).
- Psalm 22:16-18 reads, “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” The way these references are fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus is incredible (Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:23, 37).

As one who was skeptical of Christianity and its claims, after reading these parallels, my mind began to race to explain them away. I started thinking of alternative possibilities until I settled on what I perceived to be the best explanation. I figured that the writers of the New Testament simply opened up to Psalm 22, or were familiar with it, and fabricated the events surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion. I believed this was sufficient enough to ignore this incredible testimony to Jesus’ identity. However, the more I pondered it, the more this idea fell apart. First, there were other witnesses to Jesus’ crucifixion. They could have easily rebutted that these events were false, but they never did. Similarly, many of the Jewish leaders who would have been extremely familiar with this event (and could have easily denied any inflated details) ended up converting to Christianity, being convinced that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 6:7).

Secondly, the men who wrote the four Gospels (in which the crucifixion of Jesus is described) all did so relatively independent of each other, *yet their accounts corroborate*. Even if they got together to tell this grand lie, why would they? We lie to gain something we cannot achieve with the truth. Yet these men who wrote the historical accounts of Jesus gained nothing but hardship—being thrown in prison, executed by Roman leaders, and harassed by Jewish leaders.

Do not get me wrong, people die for lies all of the time. But who dies to defend a lie they fully know is a lie? These early disciples lost almost every earthly thing because of their testimony, yet none of their contemporary opponents could say that their account was false. It's easy for us, 2,000 years removed from an event, to be skeptical. But those who opposed Christianity at its inception never once (as far as we can tell) disputed the historicity of the circumstances surrounding His crucifixion as foretold in Psalm 22.

Eventually, I had to face the music. Psalm 22 is a powerful testimony to the fact that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

## **Psalm 22 Led to my Belief in the Inspiration of the Bible**

I still needed to explain how a psalm could so vividly foretell events that would occur 1,000 years in the future. Once again, I searched for an explanation that excluded the possibility of the Bible being certifiably supernatural. I came to the conclusion once more that the New Testament writers simply fabricated the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion to fit the description in the psalm. But, the same logic led me to dismiss that conclusion yet again. I thought, perhaps the psalm was tampered with to reflect what Jesus experienced. However, there are copies of Psalm 22 much older than Jesus that read the same way.

I came to firmly believe that the fulfillment of the psalm at the crucifixion of Jesus can only be adequately explained by David having been influenced by a supernatural being who was involved in history. Before, this option was not even on the table because of an assumed anti-supernatural bias that I had carried around most of my life. I had to realize that after a while, some skepticism ceases to be reasonable. The sort of knowledge on display in the fulfillment of Psalm 22 is beyond human capability and natural explanation. Its ultimate source wasn't David, but God. The transcendent, eminent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, omnibenevolent Creator who has specifically revealed Himself through the written testimony of the Bible and has been active in history—the same God from whom I had been running my entire life. Psalm 22, I had to concede, was proof-positive for what I

would later know was referred to as the inspiration of the Scriptures; the Bible is breathed out by God (2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

After investigating and thinking about the origins and apparent fulfillment of Psalm 22, my life changed. I became convinced that the God who exists directly influenced the composition of the Bible. Also, for the first time, I became convinced that Jesus was who He said He was: the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

## Tying Up Loose Ends

If you are reading this as a skeptic, I know that this does not answer all of your questions. It wasn't necessarily meant to. The investigation of Psalm 22 was more of a capstone on my journey to faith than the foundation. Maybe it has caused you to think. Then again, you might only think that I am mistaken. Either way, I encourage you to give some time to unbiasedly investigating the claims of biblical Christianity. For the church, I hope this can give you hope. The Word of God will always be powerful, and an open-minded skeptic is never a lost cause.