Intertextual Study 2 – The Bible Study Assignment

“As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”” – Romans 8:36 & Psalm 44:22

**Psalm 44:22**

*Context*

Psalm 44 was written by the Sons of Korah, who were Levites. It is suspected that at the time the Sons of Korah wrote Psalm 44, David and his army were out of Israel, fighting the Syrians. While Israel was vulnerable, the Edomites invaded, causing fear and distress among those remaining in the land, including the Sons of Korah, who wouldn’t have been out fighting because they attended the tabernacle.

*Audience*

Psalm 44 was written, primarily, as a prayer to God. This can be seen all throughout the psalm as the psalmists talk to God directly, asking Him questions and addressing Him as “You”. However, the heading of the psalm reads, “To the Chief Musician”, which shows that the psalm was also written to be sung by the people.

*Purpose*

The purpose of Psalm 44 was to both be a plea for God’s help, as well as to make the people remember when they sing the psalm that only God can deliver them, and they need to put their trust in Him rather than in themselves and their armies. The psalm also delves into the theme of why the righteous suffer, which is seen in verse 9 to 22. The psalmists ask God why the righteous suffer in the psalm, which is another of its purposes.

*Meaning of passage*

Psalm 44 starts with a reflection on Israel’s past victories and God’s presence with them in battle, but it shifts in verse 9, where the psalmists struggle to comprehend why God was not giving them victory despite Israel’s faithfulness to God. This suffering is especially highlighted in verse 22, where strong language and hyperbole is used such as “killed all the day long” and “sheep to be slaughtered”. This language shows the meaning of the passage, as the people in Israel at the time felt truly oppressed and forgotten by God. The use of the phrase, “For thy sake”, also shows that the psalmists felt that their suffering was caused by their belief in God.

**Romans 8:36**

*Context*

Romans was written by Paul in Corinth. The epistle was written in AD 57, three years after Nero became Emperor of Rome, but before the Great Fire of Rome and Nero’s methodical and brutal persecution of the Christians. Christianity at the time was regarded with suspicion amongst the population because its message challenged Rome’s ideas, hierarchy, and ruler. The population were also distrustful of some of Christianity’s practices, such as eating of the bread and wine, as they were seen as strange and cannibalistic. The treatment of Christians at the time was quite random and inconsistent, as some Christians were put to death, some imprisoned and some completely unharmed.

*Audience*

The audience of this epistle was the ecclesia in Rome. The Roman ecclesia was made of majority Gentiles because Emperor Claudius, the previous ruler, had expelled the Jews from Rome due to unrest to do with “Chrestus”, who is thought to be Christ. The Gentiles, who, unlike the Jews, were not raised with the discipline of the law, did not have background knowledge of the Scriptures, and were still finding their faith and learning the gospel, would have found persecution especially hard, which leads into the purpose of Paul writing Romans.

*Purpose*

The purpose of Romans was to exhort the ecclesia on the doctrine of the Gospel of Christ, and to encourage them to stand up for it. The main message of Romans is that all humanity is sinful, and all humanity is given the opportunity to be forgiven and blessed through Jesus Christ. Chapter 8 of Romans was used to encourage the ecclesia to stand up for all the doctrines detailed earlier in the letter amidst persecution.

*Meaning of passage*

Romans 8 is all about how those who are in “the Spirit” will receive life. This is said to encourage the ecclesia to remember that the eternal life they will receive in their future far outweighs the sufferings they encounter in this present life. In verse 36, Paul acknowledges their hardship and reminds them that people in the past suffered too, by quoting Psalm 44. He goes on to say that no suffering or anything else can separate them from the love of God and Christ, which further encourages them.

**Paul’s reasons for use**

Paul used Psalm 44:22 in his letter to the Romans to encourage the ecclesia amidst persecution.

The context of Psalm 44 would have been an encouragement to the Romans because it showed that godly people experienced hardship and suffering in the past, and that the Roman ecclesia was not alone in this. This would have helped the Gentiles, who were not aware of Israel’s past, to find comfort.

Another aspect Paul’s audience would have found helpful was the audience of Psalm 44, which was primarily God. The way the Sons of Korah addressed the suffering by immediately turning to God would have been a helpful reminder to the Romans to turn to God in prayer, and to trust He will provide.

The purpose of Psalm 44 would have been encouraging to the Romans because the psalmists address the question of why the righteous suffer, a question which would have been on the Roman ecclesia’s minds, especially with the majority, who were Gentiles, as they would never have suffered hardship for God’s sake like the Jews had before.

The meaning of Psalm 44:36, which speaks of how the people suffered for God’s sake, would have been incredibly encouraging to the whole of the Roman ecclesia, as they were also being, or going to be in the very near future, persecuted for God’s, and the Gospel’s, sake. This would have helped them to fully grasp Paul’s purpose in writing to them, which was that, fundamentally, those who suffer for God’s sake, in the past and the present, will be saved.

**Word count - 973**