Intertextual Study 2

**Psalm 44:22**

CONTEXT

The sons of Korah wrote Psalm 44, who are noted to have separated themselves from their father when he rebelled against Moses’ God-given authority. They have written several psalms which are recorded for the benefit of many. However, this psalm is written at a time when they are feeling fear and distress as the Edomites had invaded the land of Israel while the king was away. It is a cry of anguish to God, as they try to work through why this is happening to them.

AUDIENCE

This psalm’s initial audience was to God as a prayer by the sons of Korah. However, it is recorded so that many others could benefit. For example, this psalm is sung at the time of Passover as the Israelites could look back at the terrible suffering see God’s deliverance.

PURPOSE

Psalm 44 was written as a plea to God for help, while the psalmists work through why the righteous suffer. Verse 15 says, “My confusion is continually before me”, highlighting their tumultuous feelings at this time. It is recorded to show that suffering is extremely hard, but it is God who delivers. This purpose was fulfilled when Jesus looked back at this psalm and could relate as he went through so much suffering too.

INTERPRETATION

The statement, “Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter”, is made by the psalmists as they try to navigate through their anguish and questions. They are suffering greatly from the Edomite’s cruelty, while defenceless with the king and his army away to fight the Syrians. This leads to them crying out to God and asking why he is letting this happen to his people! Throughout the psalm, by recognising God’s deliverance in the past and their trust in God, they come to a conclusion. Yes, they could be killed, and they feel like sheep who are slaughtered, but God is still in control. They recognise that it is for his sake that they are suffering as he is using this experience to increase their faith. The final verse shows their recognised dependence on God as they say, “Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies’ sake” (Psalm 44:26).

**Romans 8:36**

CONTEXT

In around 50-60 AD, Paul is writing to the Roman Christians at a time when they had to endure hardship and persecution that arose from their beliefs and practices. In Rome, Judaism was an accepted religion. However, when Christianity was introduced, they were suspiciously regarded as a new sect which spread civil unrest as their beliefs challenged Roman ideals. With the additional disturbances made by the Judaizers against Christians, Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome, unable to distinguish between these two religions. Emperor Nero soon allowed Jews back into Rome, but the Christians were harshly persecuted in his reign. Paul is trying to strengthen their faith by clarifying their worthwhile beliefs and reminding them of the future glory. Paul knows what it is like to be persecuted, and with his near death for the sake of Christ, he is providing hope and encouragement in a very relatable way.

AUDIENCE

Paul directed this letter to the Roman Christians, an ecclesia mostly made of Gentiles due to the earlier Jewish expulsion. The Gentiles needed more encouragement as they weren’t used to discipline, like in the law, and were still finding their faith.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this overall letter of Paul to the Romans is to give guidance and encouragement as they faced hard trials. He provided a logical grounding for their beliefs to increase their understanding, while making it certain that they were worth fighting for. This verse in particular is a statement that describes their sufferings so well: even if they were being killed, God would not forsake them. Paul is writing to reach out with comfort and assure them that they are not alone in their suffering.

INTERPRETATION

This quote describes suffering. It is a confident statement from Paul, directed to prepare and give strength to the Roman Christians at this time. We have seen that they have a hard life with all the scorn, persecution, and abuse from the Romans. However, he alludes to other people who have suffered for God, including the Israelites in Psalm 44 and Jesus, who was “brought as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7). Yes, in this life they would suffer and even be killed, but as Paul summarises in Romans 8:18, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” This helped to strengthen their faith as God was working in their lives, like so many who have gone before.

**Conclusion**

CONCLUSION & EXPLANATION

In Paul’s letter to the Roman ecclesia, he makes the deliberate choice to quote Psalm 44:22, adding extra power to his message of encouragement. This is because the ecclesia is going through lots of persecution, scorn, and upheaval due to their beliefs. Paul himself has experienced suffering, as seen in the latter part of his life as an apostle to the Lord Jesus Christ. One aspect that would have added meaning is the context of Psalm 44, where the psalmists are going through similar upheavals in their lives. As a cruel army is invading, their fear, struggles and questions are relatable to the Roman ecclesia. They can draw comfort from the fact that God had delivered them. In addition, the Roman ecclesia would have felt isolated in their struggles and persecution. The purpose and audience of the psalm highlight that other people have felt this way too. The nation of Israel in particular had to be reminded of God’s deliverance every year at Passover. In Psalm 44, every reader can see how the psalmists have worked through their questions, and reap the same benefits from the certain statement that they would suffer, and even be killed in this life. However, God is using these circumstances to help them grow as they looked forward to a future hope.

*Word Count: 997*