**Psalm 22 – The Messiah’s Mind (Part 5)**

What an amazing transition. The one who had felt in anguish that God “hearest not” (v2), now came to proclaim openly that God “had heard” (v21) and that he would be saved from the power of his enemies.

Yet the opening phrase of Psalm 22:22 uses the future tense: “I will declare”. This means that this was said while still on the cross, before the ordeal finished! The most astounding fact that this highlights is that the Messiah’s mind had now come to the greatest realisation of all. For him to confidently say, “I will declare thy name,” means that he must rise from the grave in order to do that! This was the same realisation as Abraham’s when he “lifted up his eyes” (Cp Gen 22:4, 13 and Heb 11:19).

**“I will declare”**

Like Abraham, Christ on the cross was now thinking and seeing “afar off”. In his final moments, Jesus’ attention was fixed on two aspects of the “joy set before him:” the first when he declared God’s name and the second when he spoke about his “brethren” (v22).

God’s name, Yahweh, means “He who will be”. It expresses His desire and purpose to be manifested in a race of people who are replicas of His character and glory (Ex 3:14-15). It is a name that expresses the wonder that the One Uncreate Power (El) of the entire universe Himself is “the first (singular), but with the last (plural)” (Isa 41:4). These are the things that relate to His work “concerning my sons” (Isa 45:11).

God would first manifest Himself in His “only begotten son”, having “raised him up in righteousness and directed him in all his ways” (Isa 45:13). Jesus became obedient to his Father, even to a death on the cross (Phil 2:8). Therefore “God highly exalted him and gave him THE name (Yahweh) which is above every name”. Isa 45:23-24 had expressly said that “unto me” (i.e. God) should all flesh bow. When Paul quotes this he writes, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil 2:10-11). The Son is the express image of his Father’s character and therefore all flesh shall bow to him as the perfect representation of the Father’s majesty.

Every verse in Psalm 22 from v22-31 has something to do with the praise, fear, worship or exultation of God, culminating in the diffusion of the glory of God across the world. In the Kingdom, Jesus will sit on the throne of Yahweh (Psa 22:28) and although he will be the king in Jerusalem, he clearly acknowledges that it is his Father’s dominion; “He … is the governor among the nations” (cp Isa 2:2-5). All who come up to worship God will bow down “before Him” by bowing down to Christ. All will honour the Father by honouring the Son (John 5:23).

**“My Brethren”**

Jesus was the captain of “many sons,” every one of which God was bringing to glory (Heb 2:10). “In Yahweh” they would be made righteous and strong (Isa 45:25). It is Paul in Hebrews 2 that picks up Psalm 22 and powerfully expounds the wonder of this relationship we should have with our Lord. He writes: “for both he that sanctifieth (Christ) and they who are sanctified (meaning us) are all of one (Father); for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11, cp also Psa 22:5).

Here Paul explains the vital and important connection between Christ and his “brethren.” They both share the same nature but, more significantly, there is an emotional connection too because the Lord has secured deliverance of his brethren from sin and death (Heb 2:14-15). Death had become an enemy and reigned in our nature since the time that sin entered the world. But only “through death” could its power be disannulled (Heb 2:14) and the grave conquered (Hos 13:14). God raised him up, “having loosed the pains of death” (Acts 2v24), and those who are dead “in Christ” will shortly share in his resurrection. Christ indeed is called the “firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).

It is amazing to see how often the phrase “my brethren” is connected with the idea of resurrection. This is seen in John 20:17 where Jesus uses this phrase for the very first time. Significantly, it was only after his resurrection that he said, “Go to ***my brethren*…”** Note what Jesus asked to be declared to them: “I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Notice this parallelism in Psalm 22:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MY FATHER…MY GOD** | **YOUR FATHER…YOUR GOD** |
| v22 – “I will declare… | v31 – “They will declare…” |
| v22 – “I will praise” | v23 – “They will praise” |
| v25 – “My praise” | v27 – “They shall praise” |
| “That He (My Father and Your Father…My God and Your God) has done this” (v31) | |

**“In the midst of the congregation”**

Jesus himself was very conscious of manifesting God’s name to those “God had given him” (John 17:6, 26). It was “for their sakes” that he sanctified himself “that they also might be sanctified”. These sanctified ones would make up the “congregation” or the “ecclesia” (Heb 2:12) - brethren in Christ.

The second half of Psalm 22 begins with “I” (Christ) declaring God’s name (v22), but ends with “they” declaring it (v31). What lies in between is the amazing amplification of God’s name from the small out of the way place in Israel to the all the world, in both location and time (Acts 10:37). Immediately following the words of John 20:17, Jesus appears to “his brethren” and notice the very words John records: “then … came Jesus and stood in the midst” (v19). This is an echo of Psalm 22:22 - “in the midst of the congregation”.

Interestingly, John 20 goes on to record that Jesus commissions the apostles with the words, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you”. John then seems to insert an out of place comment about why he wrote his gospel: “…and that believing ye may have life through his **name”** (v31). We can see it is not out of place when we link it to Christ’s declaration of God’s name in their midst and his commission to send them forth. John is extending that declaration to all his readers then and now inviting them to be part of “the congregation”.

Christ had declared God’s name to “my brethren” and then sent them out as witnesses to the whole world with the certainty that “there is none other **name** under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It was this **name** that was preached (Acts 2:21), for forgiveness (Acts 2:38), miracles (Acts 3:6, 16) and into which people were baptised (Acts 2:38, 8:16).

That message was “to the Jew first”. Psalm 22:23 records this and note the following parallels with the book of Acts:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PSALM 22** | **ACTS 2 & 3** |
| “Ye that fear Yahweh” | “Fear came upon every soul” (2:43) |
| “Seed of Jacob…seed of Israel” | “Jews” (2:5) “Brethren”(4x)  “Men of Judah” (2:14) “Men of Israel” (2:22, 3:12) “All the house of Israel know” (2:36)  “God of Jacob” (3:13) |
| “Praise Him” | “They continued…Praising God” (2:47) |
| Psalm 22:1 quoted by Christ at this time (Matt 27:46) | “Ninth hour” (3:1) |
| “Declare thy name” | “In the name of Jesus Christ” (3:6)  “his name through faith in his name” (3:16) |

It is important to note that Peter’s speeches in Acts 2 and 3 openly concentrate on the fact “that Christ would suffer” (3:18). Despite a suffering Messiah being a stumbling block to the Jews, it was vital that the message of his sufferings was fully understood by Israel so that they could be convinced of the truth of the Lord’s claims. Peter’s words continually emphasized 3 main things:

1. What Christ suffered (2:23, 31, 36; 3:13-15, 17-18)
2. The faithfulness of God in keeping His promises (2v17-22, 30, 33-36; 3v13, 18-25)
3. The resurrection of Jesus and the witness of the apostles (2:24-28, 30-32; 3:15, 26)

This is exactly the message of Psalm 22:24. Jesus suffered the “affliction of the afflicted”. But God did not forsake him. When the Son cried, the Father heard.

**“In the great congregation”**

Although the gospel was to the Jew first, it was always in the plan of God that it would go to the Gentiles. It was Peter again in Acts 15 that “declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for **His name”** (Acts 15:14-18). Around the throne of God in Revelation 4 were the twenty-four thrones, symbolic of both Jew and Gentile in the future age. This is here prefigured in Psalm 22:25 as the “great congregation”.

If we follow the spread of Christ’s declaration of the Father’s name from the Jews to the Gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles we find the images depicted in Psalm 22. In Acts 9:15-16 for example, the commissioning of Paul shows how Paul was to “bear my **name** before the Gentiles”. He would do this by “suffering for my name’s sake”. Both these thoughts find a parallel in Psalm 22.

However, the call of the Gentiles begins in Acts 10 with Cornelius and the Apostle Peter where once again we find some wonderful echoes with Psa 22:25-26.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PSALM 22v25-26** | **ACTS OF THE APOSTLES** |
| Psalm quoted by Christ in the 9th hour | “Cornelius saw a vision about the 9th hour” (v3) |
| “My praise shall be of thee” (v25) | Acts 10v38 – Peter describes the work of God in Jesus… “for God was with him”. Describes the sufferings of Christ and the glory that followed |
| “In the great congregation” | “Every nation” (v34), “Lord of **all**” (v36), “began from Galilee (of the Gentiles)” (v37), “healing **all**” (v38), “the people” (v42), “whosoever” (v43) |
| “I will pay my vows” (Hebrew = promise) | 10v45 “That on the Gentiles was poured out the Holy Spirit”. This is what Christ “promised” to “his brethren” (John 14:16-18, Acts 1:4-5, 2:33) |
| “Before them that fear me” | “Cornelius…one that feared God” (10:2, 22)  Peter in 10:35 “God is no respecter of persons… but in every nation he that feareth Him”, |
| “The meek” (Hebrew = afflicted, poor, needy) | “Healing all who were oppressed” (10:38) |
| “Shall eat and be satisfied” | Peter’s vision “arise kill and eat” was to represent the calling of the Gentiles.  Peter then questioned for eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:3). |
| “Heart shall live forever” | “When the Gentiles heard, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord, as many who were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48) |
| “Declare thy name unto my brethren” | “Through his name…” (v43). “Baptised in the name of the Lord” (v48) |

The ultimate fulfillment of the “great congregation” is still yet future. We saw, in the first article, David coming in before “the congregation” (1 Chron 28, 29). In the days of Solomon’s greatness, when the kingdom extended “from the entering of Hamath unto the river of Egypt,” we read of “the very great congregation” (2 Chron 7:8). The first reference points to the Lord’s work amongst Israel, the second to his work amongst the Gentiles. All of this was in the Lord’s mind as he hung upon that tree. God willing, our next article will focus more on this glorious time.

James McCann, Riverwood, NSW