

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

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JESUS CHRIST WAS NOT FORSAKEN ON THE CROSS

Introduction

We read in Ps. 22:1, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" This verse was written by the Holy Spirit through David and quoted by Christ as He hung on the cross as recorded in Matt. 27:46 which reads, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is to say, **My God, My God**, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Most believe as I had for most of my life, that God forsook Christ on the cross because Christ had taken on the sins of the world. But if that were true, that would mean that **Christ's sacrifice was not accepted**. That is to say, Christ was **the Lamb** of God as He hung on the cross, if God had forsaken Him that would mean that God did not accept the Sacrifice. That is an untenable thought because if the Sacrifice had not been accepted, **Christ's blood never covered the sins of believers, i.e. believers' sins remain unforgiven**. I suggest, therefore that we take a fresh look at this question.

Was David Forsaken?

Because Christ quoted David, as recorded in Ps. 22:1, let us first consider the question in terms of whether David was actually forsaken. To begin, I believe we must not read into this verse something that is not stated. That is to say, the Holy Spirit **did not write that David had been forsaken**. Rather, what He **actually wrote** is David's question, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" This **is not a statement** that God had forsaken David, and we must not **assume** that David had indeed been forsaken. I believe that as we consider **the context**,

the reader will see that David **felt forsaken** by God because his enemies were all around him and harassing him.

Let us consider a few key verses of Ps. 22 in order to determine what David was **feeling and why** he was feeling that way when he made the statement recorded in verse one. We read, for example in verse 2, "Oh my God, I cry in the daytime but Thou hearest me not". Verse 6 reads, "I am a worm and no man: a reproach of men and despised of the People". Verse 16 explains why David felt that he was "a worm", and "a reproach of men and despised of the People". That verse reads, "For (note the word "for" as it gives **the reason** for the previous statement) **dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me**". In other words, David's own People, Israel had turned on him, therefore he felt like a worm and no man. Let us continue with verses 20-21 as they explain quite succinctly **why David felt forsaken** by God and by his own People. Those verses read, "Deliver my soul from **the sword.....save me from the lion's mouth....**"In other words, David's people had turned against him and had become his enemies and because God had not rescued David from his enemies, David **felt** forsaken. The question remains then, was David actually forsaken by God?

Most assume that David's outpouring of emotion is due to his sense of guilt from the sin he had committed against Uriah, the Hittite when he sent Uriah into battle so that he, David, could have his wife Bathsheba (see II Sam. 11). But David was a believer which means that **God had forgiven him his sins**. There was therefore **no reason for God to have forsaken him**. Consider also, if God had forsaken David, that would imply that God would forsake any believer. I do not believe that is consistent with God's dealings with believers, therefore I do not believe that God had actually forsaken David. But I can see that David may have **felt** forsaken by God in the same way, as many believers today, might have at times, felt forsaken.

Further, the word **"sin" is never used in Psalm 22**, i.e. David's **sin is nowhere to be found in this context**. Further, verse 16 tells exactly why David was so distraught, "For dogs have compassed me: The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me....".

What can we learn from the passages quoted above? I believe David was having difficulties with his enemies to the point of his being afraid for his very life. What has this to do with verse 1, i.e. "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" I believe David **felt** that God had forsaken him because of the difficulties that had beset him. But God has never forsaken **His own** as we read in Heb. 13:5, "....He hath said, 'I will **never leave thee nor forsake thee**'" (the Greek word translated "forsake" in this verse is the same word used in Matthew's quote of Christ asking "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?").

In short, there are two reasons to believe that God had not in actuality forsaken David, even though David might have felt forsaken by God. One reason is that because David was a

believer, his sins had been forgiven and therefore God would not have forsaken him. The other reason is that, as stated in Heb. 13 quoted above, God promised that He would never forsake His own.

Israel Forsaken

In the paragraph above I stated that God would never forsake **His own**. But we do read in the Old Testament that He forsook Israel. As we consider those passages we will see that God forsook Israel **because they had forsaken Him** by forsaking the covenant He gave them. My point is that by forsaking the covenant, Israel showed their **lack of faith** in the God Who gave them the covenant. To be one of God's own, one must have faith, and Israel's lack of faith proved that **they were not God's own**.

Let us consider the reasons given in the Word as to why God had forsaken Israel. There are two reasons (which actually comes down to one) that God forsook Israel. They are given in the paragraphs below.

In Deut. 31:16-17 we read that God forsook Israel because **they had forsaken His covenant**. That passage reads, "and the Lord said unto Moses, 'Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land whither they go to be among them, and will **forsake Me**, and **break My covenant** which I have made with them. Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and **I will forsake them**, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured...".

And we read in: Is. 54:7, "For a small moment (the 70 year captivity) have I forsaken thee: but with great mercies will I gather thee". Here again Israel was lo-ammi (i.e. "not My people". Hosea 1:9) for 70 years **because they had forsaken** God's covenant. As we learned from Deut. 31 quoted above, with Israel's **disobedience of God's covenant** they had proven their lack of faith and had forsaken **Him**. So there really is one reason that God forsook Israel, i.e. because they had forsaken His covenant and in doing so forsook Him.

Was Christ Forsaken?

We are now prepared to consider the question of whether God forsook Christ on the cross.

To begin, Christ **had not forsaken God** in any way. In point of fact His crucifixion was in **obedience** to God. And He **had certainly not forsaken the covenant**. My point is that the only reason, **according to Scripture**, that God had forsaken anyone was because they had forsaken Him through their disobedience. We may not, in my opinion, **manufacture a reason** that God may have forsaken Christ, (such as because He had taken on the sins of the world) and then conclude that Christ had therefore been forsaken.

Let us also consider the fact that Christ was the **fulfillment** of the Old Testament type of the burnt offering and the sin offering. Consider, for example the offering of a burnt offering as described in Lev. 1:2-17. We read in Lev. 1:4, "And he (the man offering the burnt offering) shall **put his hand upon the head** of the burnt offering; and it (the burnt offering) shall be **accepted for him** to make atonement for him". I believe the type is rather obvious, i.e. when the man making the offering laid his hands on the head of the animal that was to be offered, God saw that as **his sins being placed on the animal's head**. The animal then had taken on the sins of the sinner, and **God accepted it**. Thus atoning for (Heb. "covering") the sins of the one offering the sacrifice.

In terms of this study, it is important to note that the animal used for the burnt offering **was accepted by God**, in spite of the fact that in God's eyes the **sins of the man offering the sacrifice had been placed on it**.

Christ was the fulfillment of that type. So while on the cross, Christ, as the burnt offering, had the sins of the world placed, so to speak on His head. But to say that God had forsaken Him **contradicts the type He was sent to fulfill**. That is to say, if God accepted the animal that had taken on the sins of Israel, as the fulfillment of the type, so too God would have accepted the burnt offering that was Christ.

Also, as mentioned above, if God had not accepted the offering of His chosen Sacrifice, the sins of believers would not have been atoned for, i.e. not forgiven. In short, **the offering must have been accepted because it was to fulfill the type and because if it had not been accepted our sins would not be covered by the blood of the holy Sacrifice**.

Let us consider once again Christ's statement on the cross as He quoted Ps. 22:1, "My God,,, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" With that in mind consider Christ's last statement on the cross as recorded in Luke 23:46, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, 'My Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit': and having said thus, He gave up the ghost". "Father" is God. But Christ's last words were made to the Father. In my opinion, this suggests that like David, Christ **felt that God had forsaken Him because of the fact that He was surrounded by His enemies. But like David, Christ **knew** that **His Father** had not forsaken Him which is proved by His last statement which was a prayer made to His Father, i.e. "**Father**, into Thy hands....".**

This paper was written by Joyce Pollard. If you would like to respond please e-mail me at: janjoyce@aol.com

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