# **Psalm 22:22-31**

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Psalms for Lent 2021

# [Psalm 22:22-31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.22-31)

**Psalm 22:22–31 NRSV**

I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:   
  
You who fear the Lord, praise him!   
  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;   
  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!   
  
For he did not despise or abhor   
  
the affliction of the afflicted;   
  
he did not hide his face from me,  
  
but heard when I cried to him.   
  
From you comes my praise in the great congregation;   
  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.   
  
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;   
  
those who seek him shall praise the Lord.   
  
May your hearts live forever!   
  
All the ends of the earth shall remember   
  
and turn to the Lord;   
  
and all the families of the nations   
  
shall worship before him.  
  
For dominion belongs to the Lord,   
  
and he rules over the nations.   
  
To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;   
  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,   
  
and I shall live for him.  
  
Posterity will serve him;   
  
future generations will be told about the Lord,   
  
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,   
  
saying that he has done it.

[Psalm 22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22) is a psalm of lament. It faces the reality of the adversity squarely but also remembers and relies on the facts about God already known and experienced. New Testament writers quote from or allude to it a couple of dozen times. These show the importance of [Psalm 22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22) to the early church but should not detract from its relevance for us. The psalm is not just there to predict events that would happen to Jesus and words He would speak during His passion and crucifixion. It does that, but the psalm had been used in the community of God’s people for centuries before Jesus learnt it and used it as a young man. When we grasp the psalm’s significance, we can better appreciate why Jesus used its words to describe his agony and use it ourselves.

## Psalm 22:1-21

We experience trials and afflictions. Some are small but may seem bigger at the time; some seem catastrophic because they are. One beauty of the psalms is that they are honest about our relationships with others and with God. They have been the prayer book of the people of God for thousands of years. The book of Psalms was the prayer book of all the apostles. It is the prayer book of Jesus.

### [Psalm 22:1](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.1): Introduction

As he dies on the cross, Jesus quotes the first verse of this psalm. His words were mostly Aramaic: *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabchthani*, *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* ([Matt 27:46](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt27.46), [Mark 15:34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk15.34)). Jesus was appropriating this Hebrew psalm for himself. *[****Richard Bauckham****, Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 255–56, cited in* ***Ortlund,*** *below]*

Jesus wasn’t simply repeating David’s experience of a thousand years earlier as a convenient parallel expression. Rather, every anguished [Psalm 22:1](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.1) cry across the millennia was being recapitulated and fulfilled and deepened in Jesus. His was the true [Psalm 22:1](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.1) of which ours are the shadows. As the people of God, all our feelings of forsakenness funneled through an actual human heart in a single moment of anguished horror on Calvary, an actual forsakenness.

*[Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 201]*

In this cry, “Jesus identifies himself with forsaken Israel and with all who can take the words of the psalm as their own.” *[Bauckham, loc. cit.]*

Yet this cry shows great faith: though forsaken by God, Jesus cries out to Him. God is still His God. Crying out to God during our trials is right.

### [Psalm 22:2-11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.2-11): God as silent and absent

When written by the psalmist, perhaps a thousand years before Jesus was born, the psalmist wrote about personal suffering and the experience of God’s absence. The psalmist goes through questions we can share such as: why is this happening? God has stepped in to help others; why not me (verse 4-5)? I have been faithful to God; why does He not answer?

As the psalm predicts the suffering of Jesus the Messiah, and He quoted it, it helps us appreciate the depth of suffering that Jesus the Messiah suffered on the cross. His suffering and isolation were far more profound than anything we will ever experience. Thinking about that can support and encourage us in our suffering and trials. It will also deepen our appreciation of and love towards God. It should also establish our faithfulness.

Further, we can step into the tradition of lament, crying out to God in our trials and suffering. God already knows where we are, how we feel; there is no reason not to be honest with him. This psalm addresses affliction, whether being overwhelmed or persecuted, *including violence and scapegoating,* or through awareness that God has abandoned them, that God is not intervening to save them from this affliction. The psalm is a model for a prayer of ordinary Christians experiencing affliction.

## [Psalm 22:12-21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.12-21) Attacks from enemies

#### [Psalm 22:19-21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.19-21): Still calling out to God

**Psalm 22:19–21 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

These three verses use metaphorical language, allowing the believer going through affliction to adopt the psalm for their use, as Jesus did on the cross.

Again, though God is absent, not acting on our behalf as we would want, the psalmist keeps calling out to Him. Compare this, for example, to the parable about the judge and the persistent widow, [Luke 18:1–8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk18.1-8).

As you will remember, most English translations of the Old Testament represent God’s personal name by LORD in capital or small capital letters. In this psalm, God’s personal name is first used, outside of a quotation in verse 9, here in verse 19, when the psalmist calls on the name of the Lord. Then the psalmist uses it four more times as the deep, personal relationship is restored and experienced once again.

## [Psalm 22:22-31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22.22-31) Praise the God who saves

The final section of [Psalm 22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps22) is our text for today and turns decisively from lament to praise. The psalmist responds to God’s salvation, whether already experienced or assured though yet to be experienced, by praising the LORD among the Lord’s people.

The passage divides into two parts, verses 22 to 24 and 25 to 31.

Each part opens with a promise to praise the Lord because he is worthy of praise and to praise him with others who fear the Lord.

### Verse 22

**Psalm 22:22 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you.

The psalmist looks forward to opportunities to once more join other worshippers in corporate praise of God, their Lord, giving glory to God. The verse is quoted in [Hebrews 2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb2) as evidence that Jesus is not ashamed to call those being sanctified his brothers and sisters.

**Hebrews 2:12 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

He says, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.’

Jesus delights to be among His people. He wants us to delight among them, too.

### Verse 23

**Psalm 22:23 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honour him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

The previous verse may be looking forward to when the psalmist can rejoin God’s people in corporate worship, but this verse is firmly in the present.

All those in God’s people are included: the descendants of Jacob, of Israel, and all those who fear God. This is not the fear that, as the apostle John puts it, is cast out by perfect love: instead it is the humble awe of God that results in praise, in worship, in silence, in joy, in adoration, in glorifying, and in obeying the Lord our God.

The message is heard again in Revelation:

**Revelation 19:5 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small!’

### Verse 24

**Psalm 22:24 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

Jesus was afflicted more than anyone else before or since, but not because the Father despised or abhorred Him. Before time began, God, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one being, had, for the love of us, agreed on the plan of salvation. Jesus’ suffering was because of His love and the Father’s love for us, for each one of us, for his people, called to be his priests, his bride.

This does not imply that Jesus’ forsakenness was not real, or just how he felt. God did leave Him to die. But God heard and answered his cry out of his forsakennesss. *[Bauckham, op. cit.]*

God may despise some stances, especially of those who follow other gods, but God never despises the lament of the weak. Reading the gospels leaves no doubt of that. God always hears the cries of His beloved, His people. That differs from giving them what they want when they want it.

## Second part: verse 25 to the end.

### Verse 25

**Psalm 22:25 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfil my vows.

This verse links the ideas of thanksgiving and a thank offering. God does not act because we pay him in some way: all we have is His anyway. Rather our thanks are expressed through all we say, all we have, all we are, and all we do.

### Verses 26 and 27

**Psalm 22:26–27 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him— may your hearts live for ever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,

Testimony should glorify God and deepen the faith of the hearers. What God does for the weak carries a message for all. We need to remember it and turn to the Lord.

Further, the completion, the final fulfilment, of God’s kingdom is certain, is coming, and affects every person and nation.

### Verse 28

**Psalm 22:28 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.

The Lord reigns. We may not always feel it is so, but we can and should believe it. We will hear these words again one day when there will be no doubts remaining for anyone:

**Revelation 11:15 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’

**Revelation 19:6 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

The Lord reigns; it is right that we submit to Him, serve Him,and are unconditionally faithful to Him, just as He is to each of us.

### Verse 29

**Psalm 22:29 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive.

The rich and powerful of this world are not excluded. Good news for us as, in global and historical terms, that includes us. God’s redeeming grace is available to all, though some may find it harder to receive, as our Lord pointed out. There is no room for self-confidence.

### Verses 30 and 31

**Psalm 22:30–31 NIV (Anglicised, 2011)**

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

The Lord always has His witnesses on earth. Our final hymn will remind us that, as the day progresses, the setting sun that bids us rest, elsewhere is rising on others of the Lord’s people worshipping Him and living for Him. Similarly, the psalmist reminds us that new generations take God’s message forward after our generation. The church is the Lords, and He grows His Church.

Nothing can defeat God’s purpose. Nothing takes Him by surprise or limits His sovereignty. The message of the psalm is the Lord God is faithful. As Jesus said as He died on the cross: It is finished! God has done it! Amen.

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