



6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. (Psalms 22:6)

In the 1998 Spring edition of the Logos of St Andrews, I published an article entitled, *“The Crimson Worm.”* I was surprised to see the story published on the web by another Christian magazine in 2011 and the content was very nearly verbatim from my own account. The more widely the story is published, the greater glory to God. I have decided to include the story from that edition of the Logos as a part of today’s devotion:

The Crimson Worm

Psalm 22, a Messianic Psalm, begins with these woeful and wonderful words, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Of the seven words from the cross, these words are perhaps the most mysterious. And of these words, the central word is, ‘WHY?’ Why did the Creator of the world and the King of Glory condescend to be made lowly as man and to offer himself a sacrifice for the Redemption of men?

Lenten Season is past for many months but perhaps we should continue to observe the great promise and meaning of these holy days throughout the Church year.

WHY did Christ suffer and die for you and me? Because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb 9:22), and that sacrifice must be one without blemish or guilt. Jesus Christ is the One and only substitute who could qualify to be the atoning Lamb whose blood could redeem us. The ONLY One in all of time and eternity. And He was willing to make the uttermost sacrifice for sinful man.

*In verse 6 of this great Psalm describing the suffering of Christ on the cross, our Savior makes a rather puzzling statement: **“But I am a worm, and no man.”** As a child I used to ponder those words in disbelief. How could Jesus describe Himself so? A close study of the word ‘worm’ as used in this text will render a deeper appreciation for what our Savior is relating. The Hebrew word for worm used in this text, is TOLA’ATH. The precise meaning of this Hebrew word is ‘Crimson Worm’. The Crimson Worm (coccinella) is common to the region of old Israel and was used in the dyeing of garments to scarlet. The natural characteristics and life cycle of this worm are noteworthy.*

While living in Iran (old Persia) my curiosity was aroused by many trees that had what appeared to be a large bloody spot on their trunks. When I asked the locals about this, they told me the

bloody spot was made by a crimson Worm.

When the Crimson Worm is prepared to reproduce offspring (and she does so only once in her life) she rigidly attaches herself to a tree or a wooden fencepost in such a way that she can never be removed without tearing her body completely apart. And when her young ones arrive, they feed upon the LIVING body of the mother - a decidedly painful sacrifice – just as the Christian feeds upon the Living Bread of Heaven (Jesus Christ). Then, when the young are able to survive apart from the mother, she dies. And as she dies, she exudes a scarlet dye which not only stains the tree, but her young ones as well. Thus they are colored by the mother's scarlet dye and remain so for the remainder of their lives. How like the blood of Jesus, forever shed as a covering for us!

The most important and critical question any of us can ask ourselves is, "Are we covered by the blood of Jesus? Are our doorposts and lintels stained with his redeeming blood (Exodus 12:22)? When others look upon us, do they see the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ?"

How about you, my friends? Are you covered by the Blood?

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There are many types of Christ in the Holy Bible, especially the Old Testament; and here, we find that a lowly worm of crimson nature is also a Type of Christ! He died that we might live.

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. (Psalm 22:7-8) It seems unnatural that the very ones for whom Christ died scorned Him with ridicule and taunts. And, yes, it was truly unnatural, because this was a Divine sacrifice and not the execution of a convicted criminal! It is not a natural characteristic of mortals to suffer so for those who hate us and are our soul's enemy. Thank God that the perfect Man – Jesus – also had a Divine Nature of Love.

You will note that verses 7 and 8 are recorded in the Gospels at the crucifixion: *35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. (Luke 23:35) 29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross. 31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." (Mark 15:29-32)*

Even under such horrible circumstances, Christ took courage in His Father: *9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly. 11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. (Psalm 22:9-11) Yes, Jesus was the Son of God from His birth at Bethlehem, and He was His Father's Son in Eternity Past as well. Jesus does not forget who He is, and who His Father is. And He knows that His Father will not finally abandon Him at Calvary.*

Those who accused Christ and advocated His crucifixion were doing the devil's part, and took on the likeness, themselves of devils: *12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. 13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. (Psalm 22:12-13) Read the same account of this Psalm verse in Matthew: 36 And sitting down they watched him there. (Matt 27:36) And further, read of the nature of the devil: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8) I see many depraved souls among those of the Middle East today who are very well fitted to do the devil's work as well.*

Now follows a very scientific explanation of the effects of crucifixion: *14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.* (Psalms 22:14-15) Medical scientists have said that the crucifixion would be described precisely as this passage claims. When Christ was nailed to the cross, the cross was moved to the upright position to allow it to slip into the hole that was prepared for it. It fell perhaps four to six feet and jolted to a halt as the cross impacted the underlying stone foundation. This jolt would pull the arms out of joint of the victim being crucified. It then becomes impossible for one to pull oneself up enough to allow oxygen to freely enter the lungs. The only relief for air would come when the victim struggle with his feet to lift his body slightly. This would result in sharp and excruciating pains and would be only allow for slight relief. Jesus could feel His bones out of joint there on the cross. The strenuous and exhausting struggle, combined with the exorbitant pain, over hours of the ordeal would have caused watery fluid to build up in the thoracic cavity surrounding the lungs and heart. This results in a lack of space for the lungs to inflate properly and the heart to beat normally and without over-working. The medical term for this condition would be acute congestive heart failure.

The acute loss of blood from the beatings, the crown of thorns, and the nail piercings would contribute to severe thirst and dryness of mouth – so much so that the tongue would tend to adhere to the roof of the mouth and the jaws. The final death of Christ was probably a result of a broken heart caused by the congestive heart failure mentioned earlier. You will recall: *32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.* (John 19:32-34) The water gushing forth is consistent with congestive heart failure.

16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. 18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. (Psalms 22:16-18) In the Old Testament, the term ‘dog’ refers to an unclean animal or even a homosexual: *17 There **shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.** 18 Thou **shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog (male prostitute), into the house of the LORD** thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.* (Deut 23:17-18) They parted His garments at the foot of the cross and cast lots on them. This, too, is described in the Gospel account: *35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.* (Matt 27:35)

The next words uttered by our Lord from the cross are uttered near His death. His sacrifice is almost complete, and He can rally His Soul in the knowledge that, very soon, the redemption will be finished, and He may share glory once more with His beloved Father: *19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.* (Psalms 22:18-21) Perhaps the Lord makes reference to the rhinoceros as a unicorn since it was considered the strongest of all wild beasts. The Lord is not pleading for His life here, or for salvation from the cross, but that His Father would be ready, momentarily, to receive His Spirit into His own loving arms. Our Father in Heaven is never closer to one of His children (and His especially His Only Begotten Son) than as they near the point of death. God is now very near to His beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased: *46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, **Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:** and having*

said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46)

At the conclusion of Verse 21, "***It is finished!***" The pain and ordeal of the cross is past. We will discover the words of the resurrected Lord in the remaining verses of this Psalm which we will discuss in following devotions.

Discussion

There are sharply divided opinions among theologians regarding the Person depicted in this Psalm. It is considered a Messianic Psalm because it relates to Christ. Every line of the Psalm has a corresponding meaning in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as proven by numerous passages from the Gospels. But some 'scholars' (i.e. the good Adam Clarke) claim these lines are no more than the words and experiences of David in the wilderness. How can this be? David did not suffer such indignation. His garments were not taken and lots cast on them. He had no nails to pierce his hands and his feet. His bones were not out of joint. The entire seen refutes the argument that this Person is anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in the good company of Matthew Henry in attributing this entire Psalm to Christ!

PSALM 22

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.

- 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*
- 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.
- 3 But thou *art* holy, O *thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
- 6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*
- 8 He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
- 9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
- 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.
- 11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.
- 12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
- 13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.
- 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.
- 17 I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.
- 18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
- 19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
- 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.
- 25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- 28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S: and he *is* the governor among the nations.
- 29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.
- 30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.