

my god, my god why have you forsaken me?

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“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groanings.” Psalm 22:1

The mystery of Christ cannot be explored by using Old Testament texts alone. If the OT is used alone, we miss the very heart of the New Testament. Christ, our Lord, is quoting the text of the psalm to the Jews to let them understand His affliction; that He, the mighty, powerful Messiah, came to suffer, to establish a road of freedom, not like that of the ancient judges of Israel, who died with their hands stained with the blood of their enemies, but He died with His body stained with His own blood, according to Isaiah 63:1-7. By asking the question which was asked before Him, Christ points to two things. First of all, the Jewish understanding of His forsakenness, but He came in order not to be forsaken by God the Father, but to put an end to every forsakenness, which puts an end to every forsakenness. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.”* (Eph. 2:13-14)

Secondly, he proves to us that He is the peace of God that allowed the good thief to enter into Paradise: *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”* As He gave up His spirit, He did not die as a separated, forsaken person, but told God the Father, *“Into your hands, I commend my spirit,”* and when He said that, He gave up the spirit. We have to consider the immense power of peace that reconciled us with God that has been expressed in the most over-sweeping statement of Paul: *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38-39)

The Jews thought that he was forsaken by God because he did not die like the ancient fighters of Israel, victorious over His enemies. For God, who promised in the Old Testament to subdue the nations with the power of the sword of Israel did not intervene to save His Son from the cross but, on the contrary, He allowed him to die in this horrible, frightening way. From an Old Testament point of view you could consider him as forsaken, because He did not Himself walk like King David who saw the fallen bodies of his

dead enemies and said in Psalm 68, *“Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God. But let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy,”* and later on: *“So that you may bathe your feet in blood, so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe.”* But on the cross the feet of Christ were covered with the blood of righteousness, the blood of peace, the blood of love, the blood that put an end to the enmity between God and man. For we were enemies in the evil thoughts of our inner life. But Christ came to cleanse that enmity, to remove that obstacle that separated us from God, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. II Corinthians 5:18 *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”* This new aspect of the ministry of Jesus, has some roots in the Old Testament, but its fullness is in the New Testament. That is why He quoted the text of the psalm in order to point to enmity’s glorious end when the psalmist will live again and when the Lord will bring many nations to declare the righteousness of God. This happy end of the suffering is the heart of the New Testament.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” was also the question that Adam did not ask openly in Genesis when he accused the woman, whom God created out of his rib, and was the same question that David in his trouble posed to the Lord in Psalm 13:1-6: *“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say, ‘I have prevailed’; my foes will rejoice because I am forsaken. But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”* Those who were chosen by God to lead the nation of Israel were always leaning on the divine support and help. You can see this in many Psalms, and even in the prophecies. So, there was also the triumphant end of people like David and some of the judges. But these were the heroes who came to settle disputes between human beings. Especially in the battlefield. All with God who appointed them to bring Israel to repentance. The account of these were resonate with the account of the Cross, but not fully. Because Christ did not come to be a king and a judge, as in the Old Testament, but to become the King and the Judge of the whole creation. That is why in the New Testament the account of the crucifixion, Christ did not speak of enemies, but He said, *“Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.”* (Luke

23:34) A forsaken person in the prayers of the Old Testament is someone who cannot ask forgiveness for those who have injured him because the law stands on their side to recompense evil for evil, wound for wound, eye for an eye. Also, a forsaken person could not have had the power to let someone like the good thief enter paradise with him. Neither would Christ have been able to enter paradise himself if he were forsaken.

In Christ Jesus a new relationship between God and humanity and between human beings has been established on the firm foundation of eternal love that does not experience separation or forsakenness: “. . .nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39)

Christ came as ambassador for God, apostle, and the one that represents God the Father who bestowed on him, the name that is above every name Philippians 2: 6-7. Therefore, God the Father could not have punished him on our behalf to show us mercy and kindness, but put in Christ Jesus, the ministry of reconciliation to put an end to the alienation between God and humanity. Even when we hear the apostle Paul saying in II Corinthians 5:21, *“he made him who knew no sin, sin for us that we may become the righteousness of God in him.”* Commentators made a big mistake by thinking that the only Son of God became sin, while in all ancient commentaries, the fathers of the Church, always quoted that text, with an additional word. *“He made him who knew no sin a sacrifice for sin.”* It is impossible for us to imagine that the one who came to redeem us, He himself will be tarnished for iniquities. It is equally impossible to believe that from Christ Jesus to remove sin as the obstacle between God and humanity, He himself becomes that very sin, which he came to undo. He offered Himself freely because no one can remove the obstacle of sin, death and condemnation and establish eternal peace except the ambassador of God the Father.

From what we have said above, we have to establish the firm difference between Jesus and the Old Testament figures. In the eyes of the Jews, he was forsaken; In the eyes of the Father he was not.