

- *Pray for those who are lost without hope of resurrection, especially people who attend church but have never fully accepted that God has a purpose for them beyond death. Pray that the Holy Spirit will come into their lives with power to open their hearts to receive His promises.*

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Your death and resurrection are beyond my comprehension, and yet I depend upon them for my salvation! I offer You my faith and my love, and I long to be a part of the great renewal of Your Creation, and that I might stand with You before God, and know that I am safe in You! Thank You, Lord Jesus AMEN

Prayer

We praise You for the amazing universal truth that is represented by this day; Jesus Christ, Son of God, risen Lord of all, and Victor over death! Jesus, we worship You because the eternal plan of salvation has proved to be successful; You have been raised from the dead and have taken on Yourself the punishment for our sins! In You we find our redemption, and in You we find our hope! Let us praise You all day long, and for evermore! ALLELUIA!

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Security

We who live in relatively stable countries do not often appreciate the benefits of our security. Let us therefore give thanks to God for the peace in which most of us live.

On-going prayers

- *Give thanks to God for the victory of love over all evil*
- *Pray for people who have lost much during the recession*
- *Pray against the darkness of evil that still haunts this world*

Meditation

'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!' (Psalm 150:6)

We praise You, Lord Jesus Christ, unreservedly!

Jesus has been raised from the dead, eternally!
 Love has won its victory over sin, comprehensively!
 Mercy has arisen in triumph over judgement, finally!
 Faith has been justified and doubt banished, irrefutably!
 Grace has been poured out on all humanity, abundantly!
 Angels have proclaimed God's Good News, universally!
 Satan has been defeated on the Cross, conclusively!
 The heavens rejoice at the triumph of God, lavishly!
 God's prophets have been vindicated, decisively!

We are glad because God loves us, unquestionably!

Bible Study - Psalm 22:25-31

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| ²⁵ <i>From You comes my praise in the great assembly;</i> | <i>and all the families of the nations will worship before Him,</i> |
| <i>I will fulfil my vows before those who fear You.</i> | ²⁸ <i>for the Kingdom belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations.</i> |
| ²⁶ <i>The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise Him</i> | ²⁹ <i>All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;</i> |
| <i>may your hearts live for ever!</i> | <i>all who go down to the earth will bow before him;</i> |
| ²⁷ <i>All the ends of the earth will remember</i> | <i>for they cannot keep themselves alive.</i> |
| <i>and turn to the Lord,</i> | ³⁰ <i>Future generations will serve him;</i> |

they will be told about the Lord.
³¹ They will come and proclaim his
righteousness

to a people yet unborn
for he has done it!

Review

Thank God for Easter Day! How can we give enough thanks to God Almighty for what He has done for us in raising Jesus from the dead! God has had this plan from the beginning, and it has now come to fruition, for all of us! All of us who have faith in Jesus Christ can place our trust in Him because He has suffered for us to the point of death, and been raised to stand before God. Our hope is in Him, our faith is in Him, and now our life is lived for Him! It is therefore a privilege to look back at Old Testament Scriptures, and find that God had been pointing in the direction of this miracle of grace for centuries. Resurrection is part of the logic of life, and it is not surprising that it breaks through in the Psalms! Some people question whether the end of Psalm 22 really does speak about what lies beyond death, but it is entirely logical that after describing a death like experience (22:6-18) and then seeking salvation (22:19-24), what we have read is indeed an Old Testament example of a vision of God's future beyond death. We will therefore find pictures of what we now know as the resurrection within this passage.

Resurrection and worship

What is surprising to us, however, is the general background to these astounding words about God's world beyond death. We do not know the origins of this psalm, and we do not know the circumstance of David's life that might have inspired its writing (see the heading of the psalm before verse 1), but the writer was able to perceive that what lies beyond death is the worship of God (22:25f.)! In almost every one of the verses we have read today, the theme of worship is dominant. For example, the vows of God's people are fulfilled 'in the great assembly' (22:25), the poor worship the Lord and 'live for ever' (22:26), the whole world worships the Lord (22:27), the rich will bow down and worship the Lord even in death (22:29), and future generations will worship the Lord having been told about 'His righteousness' (22:30,31)! The range of pictures presented by this text is extraordinary, and it is surely valuable to let the Spirit speak to us about how this passage illuminates God's ultimate purposes, including those beyond death.

God's people will 'live for ever'!

Our passage today begins by talking about 'ordinary people', who live their lives for God. Also, when the psalm speaks about people fulfilling vows and praising God 'in the great assembly' (22:25), the language is personal, as if the writer identifies with the 'poor who eat and are satisfied' (22:26). Of all the great Kings of Israel, David was regarded as a man of the people, who 'danced before the Lord with all his might' when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:14). What is said in the psalm, however, goes far beyond such earthly examples of great worship, for it says 'may your hearts live for ever!' (22:26). There is no other phrase like this in the Old Testament, combining the word 'heart' and eternal life! The idea of the 'heart' in the Old Testament reflects the whole individual, the very centre of the will and character of the 'God-breathed' soul; so put simply, the psalm looks forward to a time when those who worship the Lord will themselves 'live for ever!' This is like a prophecy of the resurrection!

The people of the world 'belong to the Lord'!

The next theme is easy to spot, for in verses 27 and 28, the psalm says 'the ends of the earth will remember ...' (22:27), and goes on to speak about 'all the peoples of the world' who are able to come before God and worship Him. This is surely a vision far beyond what an Israelite of ancient times could have naturally foreseen. They found it hard to perceive

how other nations could be acceptable to God, but this was because they never fully came to terms with the covenant task given to them by God, to be a 'blessing to the nations' (Gen 12:2,3). The psalm does not speak about how God will do this work and 'win the nations', but it certainly anticipates the time when He will indeed be victorious and establish His own Kingdom (22:28). Indeed, 'all the rich of the earth' (in contrast to the poor mentioned earlier), from whatever nation, will find themselves facing God; they cannot 'keep themselves alive' (22:29) and are dependent upon the Lord God! There is only a short distance between this verse and Jesus' teaching about the rich, who need to give everything to Him so that they can 'inherit eternal life' (Matt 19:16f.).

Future generations will serve Him!

The last two verses of this psalm speak of the Lord's intention to pass on the news of His righteousness and His salvation from one generation to another (22:30,31). These two verses have come under close scrutiny for centuries, because the Hebrew text is unclear in several places. However, no one can doubt that the writer is speaking about the faith in God's righteous work exercised by people in the future, and in a way that far exceeds any possible understanding of the one writing the psalm. It is extraordinary to think that one such as David, for example, could see that God would fulfil His promises for people whose experience of God and His righteousness would be quite different to his own. David, or whoever wrote this psalm, could have known very little about the details of what God would do in Jesus Christ, and the prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament only ever give us small glimpses of what would happen when He came. Nevertheless, the psalm gives a clear vision of God's greater work, and it has now been completed in Jesus' resurrection!

Thank God that on this day, we who are the 'people as yet unborn' are named in a psalm of the Old Testament as recipients of God's saving righteousness and glory: 'He has done it' – Alleluia!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss what parts of this text speak to you about the resurrection. How does it help you understand God's plans for the future of the world?
2. Examine what the passage says about the rich and the poor. What does this day about how God views them both?
3. What do verses 30 and 31 tell us today about God's purposes for the future?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

There are so many intellectual debates about the appropriateness of using this passage to speak about the resurrection, it is hard to read any book about the psalms that does not spend most of the time discussing this rather than the implications of saying that it does or it does not. If you come to the conclusion that the end of psalm 22 says nothing about the resurrection, then there is very little you can say about this passage. It speaks about hope and the future rule of God, but little can be concluded. It is only when you accept that the psalmist is writing a vision of something only partially seen, but is in fact the resurrection, that the whole text comes alive!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Look through this passage and make a list of the promises of God that are made within this text. To what extent do you feel that these promises lie within your grasp? What do they tell you about your own hope of resurrection?*