

Why Psalm 22?

- Proof of the necessity that Jesus must suffer and die

*Is apologetic function
directed towards those
outside or inside the faith?*

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- Proof of fulfillment of messianic prophecy (The Davidic but not David so has to be messianic argument)

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*... but Ps 22 was never understood
messianically in pre-Christian antiquity*

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*Ps 22 is not the best text for talking about the
Righteous Sufferer.*

*Was there ever held the abstract concept of a
Righteous Sufferer?*

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*But verses 27-32 never even alluded to in NT
The PLOT of Ps 22 is not the important factor*

How was Psalm 22 in particular regarded by the early Christians as meaningful in understanding the crucifixion of Jesus?

My Presuppositions

- Use of historical-critical method that permits an initial skepticism about historicity
- An appreciation for how Biblical texts were read and interpreted in antiquity

How were Biblical texts read and interpreted in antiquity?

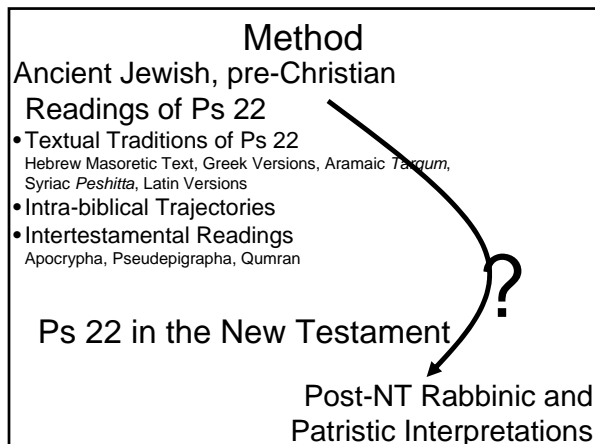
We can identify a matrix of texts where Scripture is used to interpret Scripture.

These constellations of texts create trajectories of potential readings.

Focus is on shared words, phrases, and contexts, especially ones that are distinctive or problematic.

My Presuppositions

- Use of historical-critical method that permits an initial skepticism about historicity
- An appreciation for how Biblical texts were read and interpreted in antiquity
- Jesus as Messiah is *presupposed* by early Christians– the issue is discerning how Ps 22 helped in understanding the crucifixion of Jesus as Messiah



Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

- Focus on the Title (verse 1) of Ps 22
 - Importance of David authorship
 - Interpretive opportunities
 - Masoretic Text
To the music-master (לְקַנְיָח) according to the Hind (תְּיָלֵחַ) of the dawn - psalm of David
 - LXX
For the end, concerning the support of the morning - psalm of/for David

Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

- Verse 2 was a distinctive and extreme phrasing that required some explaining (away)
 - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

- None of the versions explicitly identify the cause of the psalmist's suffering or assert the psalmist's innocence
 - Ps 22.2b
 - Masoretic Text
Far from my salvation (are) the words of my bellowings (שִׁעָגוֹתַי).
 - LXX
Far from my salvation (are) the words of my transgressions.

The LXX reading of “transgressions” is also found in the Syriac Peshitta and the Latin versions.

Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

- Extensive discussion on Ps 22.17c
For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me...
 - Masoretic Text
... like a lion (כְּאֵרִי or כְּאֵרוֹ) my hands and my feet.
 - *Targum*
... biting like a lion my hands and my feet.
 - LXX
They dug/gouged my hands and feet.
 - Aquila
They disfigured my hands and my feet.
 - Syriac *Peshitta*
They pierced my hands and my feet.

Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

- None of the pre-Christian traditions give any indication that Ps 22 was read as a messianic reference, but pathways to a messianic psalm like Ps 89 are possible
- Associations achieved through
 - Identifying titles
 - Network of related passages

Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

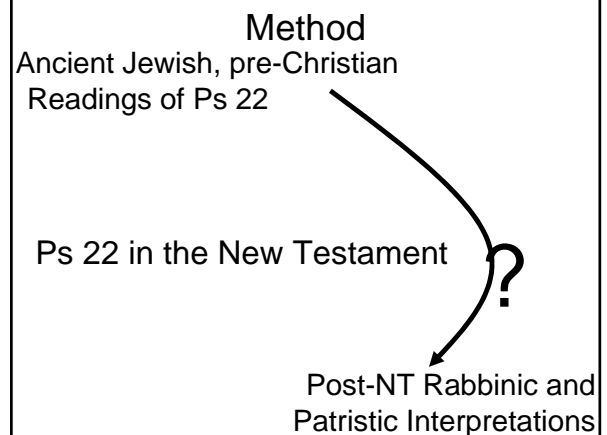
- Constellation of significant, identifying titles:
 - Servant / Child (παῖς / עבד) of the Lord
 - A son of God
 - Righteous
 - A chosen one
 - A devout one
 - A poor or needy one

Pre-Xn Interpretations of Ps 22

- Ps 22's network of association with:
 - Jeremiah's prophetic calling (Jer 1.5)
 - 'Servant' passages of Deutero-Isaiah
 - Psalm 71 (the earliest written, sustained interpretation of Ps 22)
 - (Syriac) Apocryphal Pss 152 and 153
 - Wisdom of Solomon 2-5
 - Qumran hymns

Post-NT Interpretations of Ps 22

- In Rabbinic traditions
 - Earliest traditions focused on title
 - Anti-Christian and non-messianic reading associating Ps 22 with Esther
 - A late (6th or 7th century CE) messianic reading incorporating Ps 22, Ps 89, Isa 53
- In Christian traditions
 - Reliance on Greek LXX
 - Messianic application
 - Verse 17c was not useful at the earliest stages
 - Verses 25-32 were not addressed until Eusebius



Psalm 22 in the NT

- Only 2 explicit quotations of Ps 22 in the NT
 - Verse 19 (garments) in John 19.24
 - Verse 23 in Hebrews 2.12 where it is introduced as a saying of Jesus himself

Psalm 22 in the NT

- Outside the Passion narratives, the only other clear references to Ps 22 are:
 - Verse 23 in Hebrews 2.12; John 20.17; Matthew 28.10
"I will proclaim your name to my brothers..."
 - In 2 Timothy 4.17-18
At my first defense no one came to my support, but all had forsaken me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom.

Psalm 22 in the NT

- Ps 22 was not the earliest Passion narrative
 - Is not used at all by Paul to refer to Jesus
 - Order of references to Ps 22 is the reverse of their order in the psalm

Psalm 22 in the NT

- The NT authors are consistent with traditional ways of interpreting and understanding Ps 22
 - A messianic understanding of the text is not required
 - Explains why Ps 22 could be applied to Paul in 2 Timothy 4.18-19

Psalm 22 in the NT

- Ps 22 allusions occur in contexts where Jesus is described as “son of God,” “Christ (of God),” “Chosen One,” “King of Israel,” or “King of the Jews”
- All these titles could properly be applied to the psalmist in a generic sense (a son of God, a chosen one, a [Davidic] king)

Psalm 22 in the NT

What is innovative in the NT’s interpretation of Psalm 22?

The claim that the psalm uniquely applies to Jesus who is confessed as *the* Son of God, *the* Chosen One, *the* (Davidic) king of Israel who is the Christ.

Questions?

Say, why does Luke record as Jesus’ last words Psalm 31.6—
“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”—instead of the cry of abandonment of Psalm 22.2?

MARK 15

33 When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ... [Elijah] ... 37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last... curtain torn in two ... 39 Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

LUKE 23

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. 47 When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."

The Death of Jesus in Luke

- Luke 23.45 reads:
τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλιπόντος =
while the sun eclipsed
- Problems:
 - Eclipses can only last for moments, not hours
 - It was Passover which means there was a full moon which means that an eclipse is impossible
- Solutions:
 - Textual emendations: “the sun was darkened”
 - Paraphrased translations: “sun’s light failed”

So why would Luke make this difficult addition?

MARK 15.33-34

Καὶ γενομένης
ᾠρας ἕκτης
σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ'
ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἕως
ᾠρας ἐνάτης. καὶ τῇ
ἐνάτῃ ᾠρᾷ ἐβόησεν ὁ
Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ,
Ελωι ελωι λεμα
σαβαχθανι; ὃ ἐστὶν
μεθερμηνευόμενον Ὁ
θεός μου ὁ θεός μου,
εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;

LUKE 23.44-45

Καὶ ἦν ἤδη ὥσει
ᾠρα ἕκτη καὶ
σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ'
ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἕως
ᾠρας ἐνάτης

τοῦ
ἡλίου

ἐκλιπόντος,

The Death of Jesus in Luke

- Cry of Ps 22.2a is so important that it cannot just be omitted
- For Luke, more likely for a Passover eclipse than that God would abandon Jesus

Questions?

I've got another question. What about Psalm 22.17c and that business about the piercing of hands and feet? Why don't we hear more about that in the New Testament?

Psalm 22.17c

- It was a confused and disputed text
 - Only the Greek, not the Hebrew, text could possibly be applied
 - Even in the Greek, ὀρύσσω would not really suggest nailing
- Early Christian apologetic texts found better proofs for crucifixion (Ps 119.120a: “Nail my flesh...”; Isa 65.2; Exod 17.11-12)

Psalm 22.17c

- In the whole NT, only Luke 24.39-40 possibly alludes to Ps 22.17c:
“Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”
- This formulation avoids the disputed verb
- Is it a reference to nail marks or to non-ghostliness?

Psalm 22.17c

- Perhaps Ps 22.17c is not used because of a historical recollection that Jesus' feet were not nailed?

Questions?

*Really, you ask the questions
this time!*

A Concluding Postscript

Psalm 22 in the NT

What is innovative in the NT's interpretation of Psalm 22?

The claim that the psalm uniquely applies to Jesus who is confessed as *the* Son of God, *the* Chosen One, *the* (Davidic) king of Israel who is the Christ.

I have indicated *how someone could* read Ps 22 as a messianic text, but I have not demonstrated *why someone should* read it so.

Why are the details from Psalm 22 important?

Psalm 22 and the Crucifixion of Jesus

Simplest and most reasonable explanation is that Jesus was believed to have actually cried out Ps 22:2a.

The claim that Ps 22 was about *the* Son of God was made as an article of faith and exegetical possibility, not as an article of prophetic or exegetical necessity.

Psalm 22 and the Crucifixion of Jesus

“My God, my God,
Why Have You
Forsaken Me?”

