

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Easter Messages from the Psalms: Incarnation, Obedience and Betrayal: Psalm 40:1-17; Psalm 41:1-13

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*. Today is the second talk of four, entitled, "An Easter series from the Psalms". Last week the speaker brought before us "Who Jesus is" from Psalm 2. Today we will be concentrating on Psalms 40 and 41 where we will be looking at verses that clearly point forward to the Lord Jesus. We will see His Incarnation, His Obedience and His Betrayal, all of which are spoken about prophetically. It's really wonderful to see the references to Christ from these Psalms that are very plain and describe the events in the life of our Lord very accurately and most graphically.

Both Psalms 40 and 41 are psalms of David. David was a very interesting character who had many ups and downs in his life. But we need to remember that David was chosen by God to be king and to lead Israel after Saul died (see 1 Samuel 16:1-13). David loved the Lord and the Word of God by and large ruled his life. Unlike the judges before him, he led the people of Israel in the right ways before God. During his reign as king, David won many great victories against the enemies of God's people. David had many enemies who hated him; he also had many problems in his family life and he often felt very isolated, downcast and fearful during those years.

Many of the prophecies in the Psalms, have, no doubt a reference to some of the incidents in the life of David, but they find a more complete fulfilment in the life of our Lord. David seems to be given a vision of a distant but more important though similar event in the times of our Saviour, thus "*testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow*" (1 Peter 1:11). David was a man who we could really say had a chequered history but he was used to foretell so many things about the Lord Jesus Christ. How gracious God is to David and to each and every one of us who have been "*chosen in Christ*"! (see Ephesians 1:4-5)

Psalm 40

When studying a passage of the Bible, I always like to break it down into sections to help me understand it better. We could divide Psalm 40 into three parts:

1. Psalm 40:1-5 are a song of thanksgiving for past deliverance and a declaration of God's goodness;
2. Psalm 40:6-10, describe the incarnation, devotion and perfect obedience of Jesus Christ;
3. Psalm 40:11-17, are a petition (or prayer) for continuing preservation and divine help.

Psalm 40:1-5 seem to indicate that David had just been delivered from some sort of trouble that was weighing him down at this point. He had waited patiently for the LORD (Psalm 40:1), the great and mighty LORD who did wonderful works. The great and mighty LORD had heard David's cry and lifted him out from the horrible pit and the miry clay (Psalm 40:2). This language is figurative, of course; it simply means his heart was lifted out of the present circumstances that were making him almost depressed, to once more finding his joy in the LORD. David first of all can't see past his own troubles, then he sees the wonder and glory of the LORD which he rejoices in.

I would like to read Psalm 40:6-10: "*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.*"

I would also like to read Hebrews 10:5-9: "*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*"

We have read Psalm 40:6-10 and Hebrews 10:5-9 which both speak of the Lord's incarnation into this world as the Son of God, and His obedience to His Father. It's amazing to note that Psalm 40 was probably written about one thousand years before the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, and the book of Hebrews probably sixty four years after the death of the Lord Jesus. I suppose we could say that the words in Hebrews are the interpretation of the words in the Psalms. I looked up the meaning of 'incarnation' in the Oxford dictionary and this is what it said: 'the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh as Jesus Christ.' So one thousand years before the incarnation of Jesus Christ, David was given this wonderful prophecy that the Son of God would come in flesh.

In Psalm 40:6 we have four kinds of offerings mentioned, the details of which you will find in the early chapters of Leviticus:

1. "*Sacrifice*", the Peace Offering;
2. "*Offering*", is the Meat Offering;
3. "*Burnt Offering*"; and,
4. "*Sin Offering*."

You may also notice that the offerings mentioned here are in a different order to what we have in the beginning of Leviticus. The peace offering (Leviticus 3:1-17; Leviticus 7:11-34) was a thanksgiving offering which speaks of fellowship or communion which is enjoyed through settled peace with God. The meat or meal offering (Leviticus 2:1-16; Leviticus 6:14-18) speaks so wonderfully of the perfect life and pathway of the Lord Jesus here is this world. The burnt offering (Leviticus 1:1-17; Leviticus 6:8-13) typifies Christ offering Himself without spot to God in delight to do His Father's will even unto death. The burnt offering was all for God. The sin offering (Leviticus 4:1-35; Leviticus 6:24-30), in its various forms, was, of course, a shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins. As we read in Hebrews 10:5-9, God had no pleasure in these sacrifices (Hebrews 10:6). What would really have brought delight to God would have been a life lived in such perfection that no such offerings were ever necessary, a life wholly consecrated to God and spent for His pleasure. With man of course, this was not possible, hence the offerings were required to be made continually. But Jesus was coming!

In Psalm 40:7 we have the language of that one unique and Blessed Man who came to do the will of God: "*Then said I, Lo I come...*" the One who alone would bring delight to the heart of God. The One who alone would live a perfect life and carry out in entirety the perfect will of God would come. His coming was promised throughout the Bible; for example, Moses and all the prophets spoke of Him. When Jesus came He was able to carry out the will of God perfectly because of who He was, "*Emmanuel, 'God with us'*" (Matthew 1:23). He preached truth and righteousness because He loved righteousness and He is the Truth (see John 14:6). His words of grace and truth and His manner of life showed out God's heart of love to this wicked world. John the Baptist could declare in John 1:14 the greatness of the One who was coming, the One who would bring grace and truth. John declares that Jesus was so great that he was unworthy even to undo His sandals. John when he sees Jesus coming toward him cries out, "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29, 36). Jesus Christ was the only One who could be the once and for all sacrifice for sins, the Lamb of God's providing. Hebrews 10:11 speaks of all the sacrifices of old that were continually made, that would never take away sins. But in Hebrews 10:12 we read the following words: "*But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.*" Jesus Christ was the only suitable, perfect, willing sacrifice for sins.

My mind goes back to the vision of Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-13 where we read in Isaiah 6:8: "*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*" We are very privileged to hear this eternal discussion between the Father and the Son in a past eternity, which underlines the willingness of the Son to come into this world. The Lord Jesus was the only one who could come in flesh and carry out the will of God which was not just for the Lord Jesus to live a perfect life but to go to the cross and take upon Himself your sins and mine.

In Psalm 40:8 we read of the Lord Jesus delight to do the will of His Father God. What was the will of God for His Son? We read in John's Gospel many instances of the Lord Jesus referring to His obedience to His Father's will. We read earlier in Hebrews 10:8 "*Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.*" His Father's will was for Him to come into this world in flesh (in bodily form like you and me). He would declare righteousness and truth throughout His life. But the ultimate will of God He fulfilled as He offered up His life as a once and for all sacrifice for sins in His body in death at the cross of Calvary.

Jesus, that perfect Man whose body was ill treated by the very men He created and loved, willingly gave it up in death on the cross. In Philippians 2:7-8 we read that Jesus "*was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*"

In Luke 22:42 we read of the Lord Jesus as He was in the garden in His deepest anguish of soul hours before the cross saying to His Father: "*Nevertheless not my will but thine be done*" The Lord knew what was before Him, the

anguish, the shame, the ridicule at the hands of men. The judgement of a thrice Holy God was to be poured upon His head when He was to be made sin for us. Yet He moved forward to the cross without deviation in obedience to His Father's will!

Psalm 40 finishes by David praying that he may continually be preserved from all the things that troubled him. His own sins (Psalm 40:12), the hatred of his enemies toward him (Psalm 40:13), his family troubles, they all weighed heavily on his soul. He struggles to lift his head as he feels downcast and so unworthy. But David still wants to magnify the LORD (Psalm 40:16) and to acknowledge the LORD's help in his life, as he recognises how poor and needy he is (Psalm 40:17).

Psalm 41

Now can we please turn to Psalm 41. The main theme of the Psalm is the prophecy of the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot. Once more it's amazing, that, this psalm as we remarked about Psalm 40, was again written about one thousand years before the actual betrayal of the Lord Jesus took place. Once again, the same thing that was going to happen to the Lord Jesus happened to David, but for different reasons.

Psalms 39-41 were possibly written at the same time, probably during the period of Absalom's rebellion to David his father (see 2 Samuel 15:1-12). This, of course, troubled David greatly as he loved his son. David's conscience also seems to be continually heavy at the remembrance of his sins, although he has long since recognised he had sinned not only against men but against God. David also seems to have an illness, an illness that would even maybe cause him to die. David's enemies actually anticipated it and were waiting, gloatingly and longingly for the news of his death. In Psalm 41:5 we read of what David's enemies were saying: "*When shall he die and his name perish?*" He seems to be have been visited by some of his enemies who feigned sympathy toward him, then perhaps expressed to others that they hoped he would not recover and die.

So here we have David sorrowing as he remembers his sins, and suffering illness, and having to endure the taunts of his enemies. But perhaps the hardest thing he had to bear was that his own familiar, trusted friend, Ahithophel, should turn against him. 2 Samuel 15 and 16 tell us how Ahithophel, who had been David's friend and counsellor, betrayed him and then turns to advise Absalom, David's rebellious son. Psalm 41:9 is no doubt referring to this. "*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*" David had trusted Ahithophel; Ahithophel had eaten bread from David's table and then had betrayed him. David found this very difficult to take.

One interesting observation to note is that Ahithophel was the father of Eliam (2 Samuel 23:34) who was one of David's mighty men. Eliam was the father of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3), so Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. David by his sin had dishonoured and brought shame upon the granddaughter of Ahithophel (see 2 Samuel 11:1-27).

This could be a reason why the loyalties of this old man broke down. Nevertheless Ahithophel, both in his treachery and in his awful fate, is a foreshadowing of Judas Iscariot. As Ahithophel betrayed David and eventually hanged himself (2 Samuel 17:23), so did Judas betray Jesus and then hang himself (Matthew 27:3-5). In John 13:18 the Lord Jesus states that the treachery of Judas was a fulfilment of the scripture here in Psalm 41.

John 13 gives us a real insight into the grace of our Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus knew who was going to betray Him. He had already told the disciples while they were eating together that it was one of them who was going to betray Him (John 13:21). Judas was there; he was sitting around the table eating bread, but the devil was working in Judas Iscariot's heart, preparing him to betray the Lord Jesus. The wonderful servant character of the Lord Jesus is seen as, in all His grace. He rises after supper and prepares to wash His disciples' feet (John 13:1-17). He washes all their feet including Judas Iscariot, the one who was about to betray Him. In Mathew 26:47-56, we read of the betrayal and arrest of the Lord Jesus. While they are in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas comes forward to the Lord Jesus and kisses Him, to identify the Lord Jesus to the soldiers. Jesus does not call him a back stabber or traitor but He calls Judas His friend (Matthew 27:50)! I wonder how this made Judas feel? We read in Matthew 27:3-5 how Judas repented, and recognised he had sinned and betrayed innocent blood. Then just as Ahithophel did, he hanged himself. Once more the scripture was fulfilled.

In Psalm 41:10-13, David turns again to the LORD. In Psalm 41:10 he says, "*But thou, O LORD.*" He turns from the all of his troubles and looks again to the LORD. He knew of many who had forsaken him but he knew the LORD would never forsake him! David asks to be raised up so he could "requite" his enemies. The Hebrew word 'shalam' which is translated "requite" means to make amends (to be friendly). The thought here is that David would repay evil with good! The desire of his heart would surely underline that David was a type (or picture) of the Lord Jesus. In 1 Samuel 13:14, the LORD tells Samuel that He was looking for a man after His own heart, David was that man. The Lord Jesus was referred to on many occasions as the Son of David. Not of course a literal son but a descendant of Abraham and David.

Psalm 41:13 begins as the Psalm 41:1 began with the word “blessed”. In Psalm 41:1 the thought would be of the happiness of the man concerned. In Psalm 41:13, the word signifies praise and adoration to Jehovah. “Blessed” in the New Testament would mean “to speak well of”. We can see this in Ephesians 1:3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* So David speaks well of Jehovah and gives praise to the LORD. May our hearts be lifted from the troubles of this world, that we may give our praise and adoration to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Thank you for listening this morning and, as we approach Easter, I trust you will consider the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who not only came into this world to reveal the heart of God to you and me, but to pay the price for our sins Himself when He died on the cross of Calvary. May God bless you! Amen.

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