

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Messianic Psalms

Psalm 40

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

I'll start today by reading Psalm 40 from the ESV:

“To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.” I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me! For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me! Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonour who delight in my hurt! Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, Aha!” But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the LORD!” As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!” (Psalm 40:1-17).

Introduction

We know that Psalm.40 is a Messianic psalm as it is referenced in the New Testament's Letter to the Hebrews ch.10. The writer of Hebrews cites vv.6-8 from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, and states that these very words were spoken by Christ himself, [when He came into the world](#). So my talk today will mainly focus on vv.6-8, but I'll also suggest that vv.1-5 &

vv.9-10 can be applied to Messiah. Like most psalms in Psalms Book 1, Ps.40 was written by David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, by whom the Spirit spoke to the nation of its coming Messiah (cp. 2 Samuel 23:1-5).

David himself

Let's first consider what David said about himself in vv.6-9. These verses are a most remarkable summary of David's commitment to serve Jehovah, who chose him as Israel's king in place of Saul. The words, "In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted", echo Samuel's words to Saul, when Saul "broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD" (1 Chronicles 10:13). Due to the unrest amongst his army, Saul had panicked when Samuel didn't turn up at Gilgal at the expected time and he'd impatiently (and unlawfully) offered the burnt offering and the peace offerings himself. Therefore, Samuel pronounced judgment on Saul:

““You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God. ...For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. **The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.**” And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal” (1Samuel 13:13-15).

Sometime later, Samuel instructed Saul to totally obliterate the Amalekites in accordance with Moses' instruction in Deuteronomy 25:19:

“**When the LORD your God has given you...the land...for an inheritance to possess**, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget.”

But Saul again failed. He spared their king, Agag; and the Israelites took sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the LORD prompting Samuel to exclaim:

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king” (1Samuel 15:22-23).

In Psalm 40:6-8, David seems to have grasped the significance of these two instances, especially the words, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” Time and time again, throughout the psalms he wrote, David expressed his reliance upon God to help him through all the difficult circumstances he experienced. That is, he had faith in his God. But to David, faith primarily meant he must obey God:

“I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (v.8).

He learnt God's will by studying God's word. And here's a challenge for all of the Lord's people because we, too, only discover His will for our lives by prayerful study of the Bible.

In v.4, David exclaimed that the person who trusts in the LORD is blessed. Psalm 1 pronounces similar blessings on the godly person who's committed to obeying God's word:

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his

delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers” (vv.1-3).

In Psalm 40:6b, David acknowledged that God, in His grace, had given him opened ears to obey His commands. The original Hebrew reads “ears you have dug for me” (Young’s Literal translation), meaning that the LORD had prepared David’s ears to listen to Him. In that respect David was a type of Messiah the true Disciple, who said:

“The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward” (Isaiah 50:5).

David was also conscious that God had specifically chosen him to be Israel’s king:

“[God] chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds...to shepherd...his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart [David] shepherded them and guided them with his skilful hand” (Psalm 78:70-72).

Unlike Saul, God found in David a man after His own heart, who would do all His will (cp. Acts 13:22). In Psalm 139, David praised the LORD for everything that was written about him in God’s book:

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you” (vv.13-18).

David committed himself to live out what was required of him:

“Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (Ps.40:7-8).

I therefore conclude this section about David by again saying that he was a type, or picture, of Messiah, especially in his commitment to do God’s will:

“The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting” (Isaiah 50: verses 4-6).

Messiah

In my introduction I referred to Hebrews 10:5-7, where the writer stated Psalm 40:6-8 were spoken by Christ as He came into the world. The writer had just declared that Christ (the Greek word for Messiah) had specifically appeared in the world to effectively deal with the sin problem once and for all time:

“He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26).

The writer then provided two reasons why Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross was necessary: first, to save those who believe in Him from the coming judgment of God (Hebrews 9:27-28); second, the sacrifices of the Old Testament law system were totally inadequate to deal with mankind’s sin.

Let’s now read the explanation of this second point in Hebrews 10:1-10:

“For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Did you notice vv.5-7 are almost a direct quotation of Psalm 40:6-8? Except that “...but you have given me an open ear” of Psalm 40:6 is rendered “...but a body have you prepared for me.” That’s because Psalm 40 was originally written in the Hebrew language whereas the quotation in the Letter to the Hebrews is directly from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. An additional fact in Hebrews 10:5 is that it was when Christ came into the world, as a Man in time, that He uttered these words; thus complementing His commitment, as Son, “Here I am! Send me” when the question, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8) was raised at the divine counsel in eternity past. It parallels another pronouncement Christ prophetically made about His birth:

“I will [declare] the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”” (Psalm 2:7, cited in Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5 & 5:5).

- “You are my Son” - a statement of Christ’s eternal Sonship.
- “Today I have begotten you” – His Sonship as a Man in time.

Both these Messianic Psalms enhance the vital truth of the Incarnation.

Also, the quote, “a body have you prepared for me” in Hebrews 10:5 from the Septuagint, reveals that the Son was also speaking to the Father about the reality of His incarnation, that a special

body was prepared for Him. This amazing truth is amplified by the Greek word for “prepared” used in Hebrews 10:5, where its use is “apparently intended to describe the unique creative act of God involved in the Virgin Birth” (p.857, *W E Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Macdonald Publishing Company, Mclean, Virginia, 22101). The only other use of this word in the New Testament is in Hebrews 11:3, where it’s translated “created”:

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

Just think of that! And place it alongside Gabriel’s announcement to Mary:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The awesome wonder of the Babe in the manger!

When we consider this truth in the overall context of Hebrews, we’re confronted with some further truths of the wonder of the Incarnation:

First, I’ve already read the context of 10:5-7. In 9:26-28, the writer says that to save His people from their sins, it was necessary for Christ to become a Man - to partake of their flesh and blood and die (2:14). Furthermore, His perfect, sinless body had to be sacrificed upon the cross and His precious blood shed, because it was impossible for the blood of animal sacrifices to take away sins (10:4).

Second, that this plan of salvation was decided upon in eternity past by the Godhead and written down in the ‘book of God’s counsel’ about His Christ. What’s involved in God’s counsel is found in 2:10:

“For it was fitting that [God], for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory [that is, heaven], should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

The word “founder” means that we owe everything to Him. He decisively and determinedly sacrificed Himself so that we could be saved and brought into God’s family, whose home is in heaven. Christian believers share in a heavenly calling, and we are eagerly awaiting the Lord’s second coming, when He will take us to be with Himself in His Father’s house. All our blessings were decided upon by divine counsel in eternity past and effected by Christ, who is now seated at God’s right hand in heaven having accomplished everything required by God’s will to make us His holy people, see 10:10:

“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Messiah the faithful Servant, Psalm 40:9-10

Whilst Hebrews 10:5-9 only attributes vv.6-8 of Psalm 40 to Christ, it seems obvious to me that these verses also are characteristic of Him (as well as being David’s own declaration of how he served God). They flow out of v.8, and they concern His faithfulness in His life upon earth. Acts 13:36 states that David did indeed serve the purpose that God had for him in his life and therefore verifies David’s testimony in Psalm 40:8-10. He served his own generation by telling them of God’s enduring love for, and His faithfulness to, the nation of Israel, called “the great congregation.”

Likewise, throughout His public ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ told the Jews the good news about God and His kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). He was the promised Prophet who was to come into the

world (John 6:14 with 7:40, 1:25 & Luke 1:76), the One greater than Jonah (Matthew 12:41). But the majority of His own people would not repent. They took offence at Him and rejected Him (Matthew 13:57). However, Christ remained faithful to the task that God had given Him. He said:

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (John 4:34).

“I always do the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29).

“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (John 17:4).

Moreover, the Lord will again announce the good news of His kingdom to a receptive, repentant Israel and through them to all nations, when He comes again to earth to establish His everlasting kingdom, as scriptures such as Psalm 22:22-31 and Isaiah 52:6-10 prophesy.

The resurrected and exalted Messiah, Psalm 40:1-5

I finish my talk today by speaking on Psalm 40:1-5. We're not told which of David's many harrowing experiences he was referring to when he said, in v.2, that God had rescued him from the pit of destruction, the miry bog. But there's a good reason for me applying these verses to the sufferings, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. Another Messianic psalm, Psalm 69, also describes the Lord's sufferings by using similar graphic language to Psalm 40:2:

“Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. **I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore?**” (Psalm 69:1-4).

From the words, “the LORD ...inclined to me and heard my cry”, of Psalm 40:1, and, “You have answered me” of Psalm 22: verse 21 (footnote), I would say that Christ's cries, both in Gethsemane and upon the cross, were heard by God. The expressions, “He drew me up from the pit...and set my feet upon a rock” in Psalm 40:2 correspond to “God raised [Christ] up from the dead and gave him glory” in 1 Peter 1:21. Christian believers preach the gospel of the grace of God, that He exalted Christ to sit at his right hand to be a Leader and Saviour, who grants repentance from, and provides forgiveness of, sins (cp. Acts 5:31). So, like David and Christ were in their day, are we faithfully telling the good news to the world, the great congregation of our day?

Finally, the words of Psalm 40:3, “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God” find their echo in Hebrews 2:12:

“I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the [church] I will sing your praise.”

Hebrews 2:8 states that we await the coming day of Messiah's universal reign when He will be adored by everyone. But Hebrews 2:9 goes on to say that, at the present time, Christian believers see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand. Christ is their worship leader, who makes known the wonders of the Father's name of love to us, which leads us to worship God in spirit and in truth. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus 10:19 for by it we have been sanctified 13:12

Now He praises in the assembly,
Now the sorrow all is passed;
His the earnest of our portion,
We must reach the goal at last.
Yes, He praises, grace recounting
All the path already trod -
We associated with Him -
God, our Father and our God.

Join the singing that He leadeth,
Loud to God our voices raise;
Every step of faith yet trodden
Is a triumph of His grace:
Whether joy, or whether trial,
All can only work for good,
For He healeth-all who loves us
And hath bought us with His blood.

It is finished! It is finished!
Who can tell redemption's worth!
He who knows it leads the singing -
Full the joy, as fierce the wrath.
Taken up in resurrection,
Desert ways rehearsed above,
Tell the power of God's salvation
And His never-failing love.

Mrs. J A Trench (1834 – 1925)

Thank you for listening to this *Truth for Today* talk on Psalm 40, T1255, from the Messianic Psalms series.

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