

# Did the Father Really Forsake Christ?

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In the final hours of Jesus Christ's life on earth, while He was hanging on the cross just prior to His death to atone for the sins of all mankind, He made a series of statements that are oftentimes referred to as the seven last words of Christ. However, one of these statements in particular is oftentimes the subject of a great deal of debate regarding how exactly we should understand what Christ was trying to say. And the reason for that is because if we take this particular statement as just a straightforward literal statement, the ramifications that it suggests for us are kind of concerning.

And what I'm referring to is Christ's statement of, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" As you can imagine, if we interpret this statement to be just a straightforward literal statement that Christ was telling us that the Father had forsaken Him in the worst time of his life -- just right before His death, when He's the most vulnerable and needs the assistance of the Father the most. If the Father had forsaken Him at that particular point, well, the obvious ramifications of that is the Father could forsake us in our hour of greatest need as well.

So, what we're going to do today in the sermon is take a closer look at this particular statement that Christ made and dig a little deeper here to see how exactly we should interpret this particular statement that Christ made. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

## Did the Father Really Forsake Christ?

So, to start off with, let's look at the two accounts where this particular statement is recorded. Let's start first in Matthew 27 and we'll start reading in verse 45.

**Matt 27:45** *"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46) And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" 47) Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" 48) Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. 49) The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." 50) And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit."*  
(NKJV)

So, you can see this statement that He made here. But pay attention to the response of the audience that was hearing Him say it that day, how they responded to it. Because again, if we take this statement to be just a literal statement that Christ was telling us that the Father had forsaken Him and He's in grief, basically questioning why. Why has this happened? Okay. Well, why exactly did the audience who was hearing this

associate this or interpret this as He's somehow calling for Elijah? That's kind of an odd response if they're interpreting this as a straightforward, literal statement. Now we're going to come back and explore that much later in this sermon but just take note of that because that's a clue for us that maybe Christ is not making a straightforward, literal statement here. Maybe He's getting at something else.

But let's turn over to Mark 15. This is the parallel account that also includes this particular statement. And let's notice that it has very much the same account of this particular event. It tells us that the audience has this same association with the statement. In other words, they interpret this as, somehow, He is calling for Elijah. At least that's what they associate with the statement. Which again, is kind of an odd association if they're taking this as a straightforward, literal statement. So, let's pick up in Mark 15 in verse 33.

**Mark 15:33** *“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34) And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” 35) Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” 36) Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.” 37) And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.” (NKJV)*

So, you can see once again, they're obviously taunting Him. These are people that are ridiculing and making fun of Him and cheering on His death. But again, they're associating His statement with, somehow, He's calling for Elijah. Kind of a strange association if they're taking His statement as a straightforward, literal statement. Now again, we'll come back later in the sermon and explore why they're making that connection but just pay attention to that association that the audience had with His statement. Now again, as I mentioned, if we interpret this literally, there's some concerning ramifications for us.

But let's just explore the logic that oftentimes causes people to take this as a straightforward, literal statement. And what I'm going to explain to you is logic that I was taught as a kid growing up in the Church of God that was basically a rationalization for taking this as a straightforward, literal statement. Because the logic kind of went like this. It was the idea that at the very end of Christ's life, just before His death -- which is obviously when this statement occurred from the accounts that we read, because very soon after Him stating this, He officially dies. Well, the logic is then all the sins of mankind are placed upon Him because we know He died as the sacrifice to enable forgiveness of sin for all mankind. Well, the logic is when all these sins were placed upon Him, He basically “became sin”. And as a result of that, well, then the Father couldn't be associated with so much sin. So, He had to turn His back on Christ, and He was literally forsaken as a result of that.

Now this logic comes about from the misinterpretation of a couple of scriptures. But just to illustrate where this logic comes from, turn over to Isaiah 59. We'll see here two particular scriptures that are used to support this logic. But we're going to see here, this is flawed logic used to arrive at this conclusion. Start off in Isaiah 59 in verse 1.

**Is 59:1** *“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2) But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”* (NKJV)

See, this scripture was misinterpreted to mean, well, when someone's in their sins, well, the Father can't hear them. He has to turn away from them. He can't be in the presence of sin. Now we're going to see here in just a few minutes, that's a very flawed idea. Because the Bible literally gives us accounts where the Father is directly in the presence of Satan himself, the originator of sin. And you might say the “poster child” for sin. And He can have a conversation with him. So obviously this is a flawed idea.

But they interpreted this that way rather than what it actually says, which is He will not hear you. In other words, He's ignoring your prayers because you're ignoring Him. You're ignoring His instructions, and you're continuing to live in your sins. So, He's ignoring hearing your prayers. Because if you read the previous chapter, through chapter 58, it's all about describing individuals who are fasting and crying out to God. But then they're complaining, “We're fasting, and we're crying out to You, but you're not hearing our prayers.” And what it's explaining is, yeah, they're fasting, and they're crying out to God in prayer, but they're not changing from their sins. They're continuing in their sins. So, He's ignoring them. Basically, His response is, “You're ignoring my commandments. So, I'm going to ignore your prayers because I'm not going to reward bad behavior.” That's really what this verse is saying. It's not saying that when a person is wrapped up in their sins that God somehow becomes deaf, and He can't be around them. Or that He can't be in the presence of sin because now it's like you've got “sin cooties”, and He can't be around that. That's not what this verse is saying.

Now, as I mentioned before, this logic was also based on the flawed idea that Christ, because He died as the sacrifice for all of our sins, that He somehow “became sin” just right before His death. And this is based upon a misinterpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:21. So turn over to 2 Corinthians 5. We'll notice here, if you read verse 21 in the New King James translation, it kind of sounds like it's saying that. But if we dig a little deeper, we'll realize that this is just an unclear translation of the verse. That is what the problem is. Now, this is 2 Corinthians 5:21. And again, I'm going to read this to you from the New King James translation.

**2 Cor 5:21** *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* (NKJV)

See, when it says that He was “to be sin”, it sounds like, somehow, He was made to be sin. Like when He dies to cover the sins of mankind, that somehow, when they're

applied to Him, He somehow “becomes sin”. Well, that's just because of an unclear translation of this particular verse. Now, let me read to you this particular verse in the Complete Jewish Bible. You'll see a more clear idea of what it's referring to here. Now, this is, again, 2 Corinthians 5:21 from the Complete Jewish Bible.

**2 Cor 5:21** *“God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God’s righteousness.”* (CJB)

See, all it's saying is that He became a sin offering, a sacrifice for us. Because yes, He paid the penalty for our sins. You know, He died and bore the death penalty and the torture and the suffering that He went through. He bore the consequences for our sins so He could pay that penalty and allow forgiveness of sin for us. But He didn't “become sin” and somehow have to be rejected by the Father because of that.

Because see, first, we need to understand that this idea that the Father cannot be in the presence of sin, again, this is another very flawed idea as well. This is actually a Gnostic concept. Now, I'm not going to go into the Gnostic end of this in this particular sermon, but I'm going to clearly demonstrate to you that this is obviously not a Biblical concept. Because we can see very clearly from the Bible, the Bible directly contradicts this idea. So, it is definitely NOT an idea that the Bible teaches.

And to see that, just turn over to the book of Job. Let's turn over to Job 1, because I think all of us would agree that Satan himself, if you were to pick an individual to maybe call in modern day terminology the “poster child for sin”, that would obviously be Satan, wouldn't it? You know, if you say, well, an individual who's kind of the worst sinner in existence and the originator of sin, that would obviously be Satan the devil. Now, let's read a couple of accounts here in the book of Job where it directly tells us that Satan comes right up to God's throne in heaven and directly has a conversation with Him. At no point is it a situation where the Father is like, “Oh, he's got sin cooties. I can't be around him.” You know, “I can't hear what he's saying because he's a sinner.” No, they have a direct conversation with each other. Pick up here in Job 1 in verse 6.

**Job 1:6** *“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7) And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” 8) Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” 9) So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? 10) Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11) But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” 12) And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”* (NKJV)

So, you can see here, Satan himself, the worst sinner in existence, can come directly before the throne of God and have a direct conversation with Him. And He doesn't have a problem. God the Father doesn't have a problem with being in the presence of sin. He's in control the whole time. He has a conversation with Satan. He can hear everything he's saying. This whole idea that he can't be in the presence of sin is just not backed up by the Bible. But just to see another account of this, just look over at chapter 2 and we'll pick up in verse 1.

**Job 2:1** *“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2) And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” 3) Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.” 4) So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5) But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” 6) And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.” 7) So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” (NKJV)*

So, we see here, once again, a very graphic description of Satan himself -- the worst sinner in existence -- coming right up before the throne of the Father. Having a conversation with Him, and obviously the Father can be in the presence of sin. And just to further clarify this, turn over to Revelation 12, because we'll see this described again. And notice in particular in this account, it's going to mention both the Father and Christ, making it very clear that it's the Father that we're talking about here. And this is in Revelation 12, and we'll pick up in verse 7.

**Rev 12:7** *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8) but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9) So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.” (NKJV)*

Notice he referred to "our God" and "His Christ." So "our God" has to be the Father, because He's contrasted with "His Christ." So, it's obviously referring to the Father here. And Satan himself, the worst sinner in existence, is right up before His throne having conversations with Him. Obviously, He can be in the presence of sin.

But just to add to that, let's also keep in mind that for converted Christians, the Father's presence dwells through His Spirit inside sinful human beings. Yes, this is sinful human beings who've had the sacrifice of Christ applied to them, and are striving to obey Him, but we're still all sinners. We still all make mistakes and we still have to regularly repent. But let's notice that the Father's presence can dwell inside sinful human beings. If He can dwell inside us and tolerate our faults and our sins through our day-to-day lives and our mistakes, certainly He can not forsake Christ and stay loyal to Him -- an individual who never sinned and never made any mistakes.

And to see this, turn over to 1 Corinthians 3. We'll see here where it refers to New Covenant Christians as the "temple of God". Now, if you think about this, the analogy being made here is obvious. Because in Old Covenant Israel, they had literally a physical temple where the presence of God dwelt. And they would literally go there and make sacrifices to worship God. They were commanded on the Holy Days -- they had to journey to Jerusalem there to worship God. Three times a year, they were commanded to go there where His presence was. That's where He had placed His name because that's where His presence dwelt.

And just to further clarify that, when Christ was a physical human on earth, He referred to the temple as "my Father's house". The house where His Father dwelt. Well, the point that the New Testament makes for us in describing our relationship as New Covenant Christians with the Father is He doesn't dwell in a building where we have to go to that physical building to sacrifice and to worship Him. No, He dwells inside us. And that's why it refers to us as the "temple of God". But what that means is that the Father's presence is dwelling inside imperfect physical human beings who sin. And notice this in 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 16.

**1 Cor 3:16** *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17) If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."* (NKJV)

So, he's saying as New Covenant Christians, you're the temple that the Father's presence dwells in. And see, if you'll turn over to John 14, we'll notice here where Christ was talking to the Apostles and He mentions to them when the Holy Spirit comes, both He and the Father will make Their home inside New Covenant Christians. In other words, He will dwell inside imperfect Christians. Of course, those who've had the sacrifice of Christ applied to them and who've repented of their sins. But let's face it, we're still sinners. We're still imperfect. Let's pick up here in John 14 and verse 22.

**John 14:22** *"Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23) Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."* (NKJV)

In other words, They will dwell inside you is what He's saying. "We'll make our home, our dwelling place inside those who have repented and received the Holy Spirit." Again,

we're seeing the picture of the Father's presence. If it can dwell inside sinful human beings, He can obviously be in the presence of sin. So just to notice this again, turn over to Romans 8. We're going to pick up here in verse 9.

**Rom 8:9** *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”* (NKJV)

And notice it's “He who raised Christ from the dead”. Well, Christ didn't raise Himself from the dead. Obviously, it was the Father who raised Christ from the dead. Obviously, it's the Father that we're talking about here. And he's saying that the Father can dwell inside carnal physical human beings. Yes, obviously carnal physical human beings who have repented of their sins and had the sacrifice of Christ applied to them. But nevertheless, we're talking about flawed sinful human beings. So, you can see that this idea that the Father somehow cannot be in the presence of sin, it's just a flawed idea. And again, I'm not criticizing those in the past that believed this idea. There was a time in my life when I believed this as well. It was what I was taught from childhood. But again, if we just compare this idea to scripture, scripture clearly does not teach the concept.

If you look into the philosophy of Gnosticism, what you'll see is this is really more of a Gnostic concept. There's this whole idea that God cannot be in the presence of sin, cannot be around the physical. That's really a Gnostic concept. It's not a Biblical concept. It's not a concept that scripture teaches. So, as I mentioned before, this flawed idea was basically used to justify the idea that the Father literally did forsake Christ in the final moments of His life because all the sins of mankind were placed upon Christ. And the Father therefore had to kind of turn His back on Christ in the lowest, most vulnerable point of his life.

Now again, another very obvious point of logic that shows us that this is a flawed idea is the Father directly promised ancient Israel -- a nation that He didn't even offer His Spirit to. Just a bunch of carnal human beings that He just made a physical covenant with and promised them if they obeyed the letter of the law and just did their best that they could to obey those basic requirements, that He would never leave or forsake them. He would be with them through whatever that they faced, and He would continue to bless them. Now, if He can promise to never leave and forsake a carnal nation of people that didn't even have His Spirit, obviously He would not forsake Christ.

But just to notice this, turn over to Deuteronomy 31. Just to set the context on this, you're probably familiar with the fact that when Moses first led the Israelites out of Egypt, they initially tried to go into the Promised Land. Well, the people lacked the faith. You know, they send in the spies to basically do reconnaissance of the land. Well, 10 of the spies come back basically with a report of, “We're all going to die. There's giants in

the land and they're all going to squash us like bugs." So the people all get discouraged and they don't have the faith to go in.

Well, God basically then sentences them to 40 years of wandering in the wilderness until that generation dies off and then the younger generation of all those that were under 20 years old when they came out of Egypt -- and of course all the children then born from that generation -- that's the group that then later goes into the Promised Land. Well, the book of Deuteronomy, particularly the latter part of Deuteronomy here, is addressing God's instructions to them right before they're about to head into the Promised Land. And let's notice here that God is reassuring them that when they go in and take on these nations that they have to conquer to be able to take over the Promised Land, that He is going to deliver them through all this. That they have nothing to fear because He's never going to leave or forsake them. Let's pick up here in verse 6 of Deuteronomy 31.

**Deu 31:6** *"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." 7) Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. 8) And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed." (NKJV)*

Notice He's reassuring a carnal physical people -- who are constantly going astray -- that He would never forsake them. Now, let's turn over to Joshua 1, and we'll see where this same promise is repeated again. This is Joshua 1, and we'll pick up here in verse 5.

**Josh 1:5** *"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6) Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7) Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (NKJV)*

Notice God promises to be faithful and to never leave or forsake them. Now, He did warn them, particularly in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. We oftentimes refer to those chapters as the blessing and cursing chapters because the first half of the chapter is all the promises of how wonderful life's going to go for the Israelites as long as they steadily obey. And the second half of the chapter is how bad things are going to go for

them if they disobey and disregard God's commandments. So, He did tell them if they steadily disobeyed, yes, God was going to let them face the consequences and things were going to go badly for them.

See, that's the key to understanding what He's referring to there in Isaiah 59. Because we read there where He said, "Because of your sins, I will not hear you." He's not saying, "I can't hear you. That because you've sinned so much, I've somehow gone deaf and I can't hear what you're saying." He says, "No, I'm not going to hear you because you refuse to hear Me. You refuse to repent of your sins, and you keep rebelling and continue in them. Okay, well, then I'm going to ignore your prayers, and I'm not going to listen to you because I'm not going to reward bad behavior." That's the point that He's getting at.

See, we have to consider in the case of Christ that we know He never made any mistakes. He never sinned. He never did anything wrong. The Father never had any reason to step back and to ignore Him because Christ was always faithful. But we also have to take into consideration that during Christ's ministry, He repeatedly told the Apostles that the Father was always going to be with Him. He even told the Apostles, not long before Christ was taken captive and then later tortured and murdered, He directly told the Apostles that they would forsake Him. The physical humans, the Apostles and all the others around Him, that all of them would turn on Him. But He said, "The Father is going to always be with Me."

So, see, Christ directly told us that the Father would not forsake Him. So just to notice this, turn over to John 8. We'll start with a statement that Christ makes earlier in His ministry. This is John 8 and verse 25.

**John 8:25** *"Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. 26) I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.' 27) They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. 28) Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29) And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.'" (NKJV)*

And we know all the way to the end of His life He always did the things that pleased the Father. Even if we read through Matthew 26, right before He's about to be taken captive, where He's literally pleading with the Father for plan B. He knows the ugly ordeal He's about to go through, and He's not looking forward to it. And He's pleading with the Father, "Is there some other way that we can accomplish the objective and avoid this?" But even while doing that, He repeatedly says to the Father, "But your will be done. If there's no other way, then I'll willingly submit to what your will is." And we know that's exactly what He did.

And as we're about to see, if we turn over to John 16, Christ even directly told the Apostles that they would wind up deserting Him. That they would forsake Him, but the Father wouldn't. The Father would always be with Him. Now, let's notice in John 16, and we'll pick up in verse 31.

**John 16:31** *“Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? 32) Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”* (NKJV)

And notice here, He's directly telling them, "You guys are going to scatter. You're going to forsake Me and leave Me alone and deny that you know Me. You guys are going to pull that on Me, but the Father is not going to do that to Me. He's going to be faithful and fulfill His promise, and do just what He's always done, and be faithful and not leave or forsake those who obey Him."

So, understanding that obviously the Father didn't forsake Christ, now how are we to understand Christ's statement? Because we clearly read in both Matthew and in Mark, Christ directly said, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" So, how are we to understand this? Why is Christ saying this and asking this question if we know for sure that that's not what Christ meant? We know for sure that the Father could not have forsaken Him. Well, we have to understand what Christ was doing is He was directly quoting Psalms 22 in verse 1. So, turn over to Psalms 22 in verse 1. Let's notice here that the opening statement of this Psalm is word for word what Christ was quoting.

**Ps 22:1** *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?...”* (NKJV)

Notice it's word for word exactly what Christ stated. Now, to understand why He would say that, -- and again, as we go through this, you'll also understand why the audience that was listening to this associated His statement with Him calling for Elijah. Because again, think about that logically when He just says, "God has forsaken me". If He meant that as a literal straightforward statement that God had literally forsaken Him or just expressing His own emotion like He felt like He was forsaken, why would the audience associate that with Elijah?

Now, we're going to see as we understand what this Psalm is saying, they understood that He was just making a reference to this Psalm. He wasn't making a straightforward statement that they should take literally. Now, to understand why I say this, think about the context of the time frame in which this happened. Now, today, if you or I were to refer to this Psalm, we would simply say "Psalm 22" or "turn over to Psalm 22". Now, that's using a numbering system that did not exist in the day of Christ. You know, they wouldn't refer to it like that because that numbering system hadn't been invented yet.

Also consider today we all walk around -- those of us that are religious and care about the Bible -- we all have a copy of the Bible, if not multiple copies of it. We may not have it in book form -- not just in book form -- but we oftentimes will have a laptop with a

software program with it or even have it on your phone. You have access to it in multiple places. Well, that wasn't true back in the time of Christ and the Apostles. The Bible was written on scrolls. And they would have scrolls in the temple, or maybe scrolls in the synagogues, and maybe some rich people might have some scrolls, but the average person didn't have a scroll handy that they were carrying around with them. They had to memorize large sections of scripture. And the way that they would refer to something, they couldn't say "turn over to Psalm 22". They would cite a section or a common phrase that everybody recognized from a particular chapter -- what today we would call a chapter. And because people were familiar with it, they would recognize the reference.

Just to give a modern-day example, where you can kind of relate to this. I know at least this is a reference I think most people that are my age or older would certainly relate to. And the reason I say that is back when I was going through school -- through middle school and high school -- one of the things that was common for kids to have to learn and to have to recite -- particularly like in history class as a school assignment -- would be reciting the Gettysburg Address. Now, for those of you that are not from the U.S., you may not immediately recognize that reference. The Gettysburg Address was a famous speech that was given by President Abraham Lincoln back during the U.S. Civil War back in the 1800s. Even if you're not from the U.S., you're probably familiar with the fact that there was a U.S. Civil War where the North and the South fought for several years with each other. Well, during this time frame, President Abraham Lincoln gave a famous speech that's referred to as the Gettysburg Address.

Now, this speech starts off with the phrase "Four score and seven years ago". Now, again, anyone who's had to study that in history or particularly like it was common in my days of going through middle school and high school, you had to memorize it, and you had to recite it in class to get a passing grade. Well, anyone who had to do that, if you simply say the words "Four score and seven years ago", everyone immediately knows you're referring to the Gettysburg Address.

See, this is what was happening there. When Christ was up on the cross, when He said, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" He wasn't asking a straightforward question. He wasn't making a statement to express His emotion or pondering the subject. He was making a reference that the crowd who was listening to Him recognized. They recognized He's referring to Psalm 22. Because we're about to go through this Psalm and what you're going to see is sections of this are obviously a prophecy foretelling what would take place and what was happening right before people's eyes there with Christ's crucifixion. Because it describes it in graphic detail.

So, see, what was happening is Christ is there on the cross and He says, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" He's not asking a question. It's the equivalent of Him saying "Four score and seven years ago" if He wants people to think about the Gettysburg Address. He was quoting the opening line of Psalm 22 because He wanted the audience to think about Psalm 22. Because what He was trying to say to them is, "If you think about the details of what's described in this Psalm and look at what's

happening before your eyes, just connect the dots." You know, "You're seeing Psalm 22 play out before your eyes and if you pay attention, you'll realize that."

And see, as we go through this Psalm, you'll also understand why the audience came away with the conclusion of "He's calling for Elijah." Because as we go through this, what I want you to see is this Psalm starts off in the first five verses, basically expressing the very common human emotion that lots of us have felt in our lifetimes. You're at your lowest point and you feel like life is just beating you up and you feel like God's not answering your prayers. Because you're just getting beat up with trials and you're not getting relief when you'd like to see it happen. And you feel like you're just left alone and you're wondering, "Where did God go?" You know, "I'm asking for help and I'm not seeing it. At least, I'm not seeing it when I want to see it, as quickly as I want to see it." What's a very common emotion for us to wonder? "What happened? Did God desert me?"

And we'll see here as we read through the first five verses, this is what David's expressing. You know, he's expressing what he's gone through in his life and also what many of us can feel in our lives. And we'll see here, beginning in verse 6, it starts to transition and obviously uses Christ and His suffering as an example of positively enduring through this. Because you'll notice then as we start reading through this, as it starts giving you details that are strikingly familiar with what you can read through in the Gospels of what Christ went through. I mean, it's so on point with the details, it has to be a prophecy of what Christ went through.

But you'll see as it's going through describing Christ's example, it doesn't express doubt in God's faithfulness. Because you'll see as it goes through this, it describes Christ's suffering, but then as it keeps speaking, it just expresses total faith and trust in God. And then it transitions in the very end of the Psalm, basically looking forward to God delivering all mankind in the promises of the Millennium -- how wonderful that would be.

And we'll see as we go through this, why the people who are hearing this associated that with Elijah. But let's just start off here reading through the first five verses here. And again, start at the beginning here of Psalm 22 in verse 1.

**Ps 22:1** *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2) O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. 3) But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. 4) Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. 5) They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed."* (NKJV)

And notice it's like a person here who's grappling with this going, "Oh God, you've got a track record of being faithful. And I know you've been faithful to many people before, but I feel deserted. Where have you gone?" Again, this is what David is saying, but again, this is a very common feeling that lots of people go through when they're being beat up by harsh trials. But what we're going to see as we go through this this is a Psalm of

encouragement for people who are struggling with this. Because we're going to notice, it transitions about halfway through verse 6, obviously then talking about the Messiah -- of Christ and what He went through. And notice here, for about the next dozen verses, it's going to give us a graphic description that's obviously a prophecy of what Christ went through, because the details are just too spot on. Now pick up in verse 6.

*"6) But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. 7) All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8) "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" (NKJV)*

Notice they are taunting Him. "He trusted in God. Well, let Him come bring Him down from that cross." And we're going to read here in just a minute from Matthew 27, this is exactly what they were doing. And continue in verse 9.

*"9) But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10) I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God. 11) Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. 12) Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. 13) They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion. 14) I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. 16) For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17) I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. 18) They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." (NKJV)*

Now, notice the details there. They're casting lots for His clothing. He's pinned up through His hands and feet like a crucifixion. He talks about His thirst here. Now, we read earlier how they gave Him sour wine to drink. Now, keep your finger here because we're going to come back here to Psalm 22. But turn over to Matthew 27. And let's just read the verses that lead up to the account that we read a few minutes ago. And we'll see here the striking details that match what we just read. So, Matthew 27. We're going to pick up here in verse 35.

**Matt 27:35** *"Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." 36) Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. 37) And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38) Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. 39) "And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads 40) and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41) Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 42) "He saved others; Himself He cannot save.*

*If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. 43) He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, "I am the Son of God." 44) Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing." (NKJV)*

Notice the striking similarities between what we just read here and what we read in Psalm 22. It's obviously a prophecy foretelling this, that this would happen. And using this as an example, again as we're about to see here, as encouragement for us when we go through those low times in our life, when we're questioning, "Where has God gone? And has He deserted me?"

Because see, this is what Christ was saying. When He's up on the cross, and He says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" He's not asking a question. He's essentially -- just to use the example that I used before -- saying "Four score and seven years ago," to refer to the Gettysburg Address. He's referencing them to Psalm 22. He's basically saying to the audience, "Pay attention to that Psalm, and pay attention to what's happening before your eyes, and connect the dots. You're seeing this fulfilled." That's what He's saying. He's not questioning God's loyalty to Him.

Because if we just turn back over to Psalm 22 here, let's pick up in verse 19. Let's notice as we keep reading here how He just keeps speaking of complete confidence in God and His faithfulness. It's not doubting that He's going to forsake anyone. Pick up in verse 19 here.

*"19) But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!  
20) Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog.  
21) Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me." (NKJV)*

Notice it's not doubting His faithfulness. And verse 22.

*"22) I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. 23) You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! 24) For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard." (NKJV)*

Notice it's extolling God's faithfulness. It's not questioning that He's going to forsake anyone or not be there in your hour of greatest need. See, it's using Christ's suffering here as an example of encouragement for us that God will be faithful and see you all the way to the end. And then if we trust in Him, it all ends well ultimately for us.

But now let's notice as we keep reading the rest of the Psalm here how the description here obviously applies to the Millennium. The Millennial promises that are going to take place after the Messiah returns. As we're about to see here, that's the gap in understanding that the Jews of His time had. They associated Elijah coming before the

Messiah, but they didn't understand that the Messiah was going to come the first time and then die for the sins of mankind and then a couple thousand years later come again and establish the millennium. They didn't understand that part. But let's continue here in verse 25.

*"25) My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. 26) The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! 27) All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. 28) For the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations. 29) All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. 30) A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, 31) They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this."* (NKJV)

See, when you look at some of the statements that are made here, this will obviously be fulfilled in the Millennium when all the nations are coming to worship Him. That's part of the Millennial promises that will take place after Christ's second coming. See, obviously the people in Christ's time associated the latter part of this Psalm with the Messiah and they also associated Elijah coming before the Messiah. And we're about to see this in a moment here directly stated from the Apostles that that's the association that they had in their mind. But notice Christ is referring to Psalm 22. He's not asking the question, "Why has God forsaken Me?" No, He's quoting the opening line of this Psalm to try to get the audience to connect the dots.

The audience is obviously getting the reference of what He's saying. But they're taunting Him and they're making fun of Him. And they think, "Well, He's looking forward to the promises after the Messiah. We haven't even seen Elijah yet." At least in their minds they hadn't because they didn't recognize John the Baptist as Elijah. And that's why they're taunting him by saying, "Well, this guy's calling for Elijah. Well, let's see if Elijah comes in and takes Him down." See, that's why they're responding like that. They understand the reference to Psalm 22 and what He's getting at with that. They just don't understand what the Psalm is saying. And they're not connecting the dots that they're seeing it fulfilled before their eyes.

And to see the Jews' understanding of this in Christ's time, turn over to Matthew 17. We'll see here the account of the transfiguration that was witnessed by Peter, James, and John. But notice here when this takes place and these three Apostles hear the voice of God the Father directly telling them that Christ is His son and telling them they need to listen to Christ because He's the Messiah. Notice that when they hear this, they later ask Christ, "Well, weren't we supposed to see Elijah before we see the Messiah?" And then Christ has to point out to them that John the Baptist was Elijah. You see, they're missing that point. So, pick up here in Matthew 17 in verse 1.

**Matt 17:1** *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2) and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3) And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4) Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5) While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” (NKJV)*

Now there's only one individual in all the universe that can claim that Christ is His Son. This is obviously the voice of the Father. Now continue in verse 6.

*“6) And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7) But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” 8) When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. 9) Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.” 10) And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” (NKJV)*

Notice they're confused, thinking, "Weren't we supposed to see Elijah before we could see the Messiah?" But now pick up in verse 11.

*“11) Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. 12) But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” 13) Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.” (NKJV)*

See, the Jews in Christ's time, they had the concept that Elijah was supposed to come before the Messiah. And again, they didn't recognize John the Baptist and his role as the one in the spirit of Elijah. But again, they're thinking that the Messiah is going to come, and then immediately the Millennium is going to be instituted. So that's their association. They're not grasping the idea that Christ is going to come and die for the sins of mankind. And then a couple thousand years later, He's going to return again and set up the Millennium. They weren't getting that part.

And to just further see that, turn over to Acts 1. This is Christ's final comments to the Apostles right before He ascends to the Father. And He's telling them to hang around in Jerusalem and wait for Pentecost so they can receive the Holy Spirit. But notice in particular verse 6, because this tells us the Apostles' viewpoint of things here.

**Acts 1:6** *“Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”” (NKJV)*

See, they understood now that Christ is the Messiah. They were accepting that. But they're still expecting, "Well, that means that the Millennium is going to start right away, and you're going to restore Israel to prominence. And unite Judah and Israel back together. And we'll become a prominent nation, and we won't have to deal with the Romans anymore." They're expecting all that to happen right away. They don't have the concept that, no, that's the first coming. It's going to be a couple thousand years before all those events happen. They're not really grasping that part.

See, this is why when the audience that heard Christ say, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?", they got that He was pointing them to Psalm 22. They got the reference. They knew He wasn't asking a straightforward question. He's referring to this Psalm. But they're sitting there thinking, "He's asking for promises that are happening after the Messiah. We haven't seen Elijah yet." And so, they start mocking Him, thinking, "Well, this guy, He's calling for Elijah. He thinks Elijah's going to bring Him down."

See, that's what was taking place there. Christ wasn't saying that the Father had forsaken Him. He wasn't even saying that He felt like the Father was forsaking Him. He never doubted the Father's faithfulness. He was trying to get them to connect the dots and see that Psalm 22 was playing out before their eyes. That's what He was saying.

But for us, one of the important takeaways in realizing this is as I mentioned in the introduction to this sermon, if we take that statement that Christ made, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" and we take that literally, we'll think that through. If the Father could forsake Christ in His lowest, most vulnerable hour when He needed the Father the absolute most -- if the Father could walk away and forsake Him at that moment, well, that means the same thing could definitely happen to us if it could happen to Christ.

But we have to remember that that's not how God works. In the same way that He promised ancient Israel that He would never leave or forsake them, He's also made that promise to us as New Covenant Christians. And to see that, turn over to Hebrews 13, and we'll pick up here in verse 5.

**Heb 13:5** *"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' 6) So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"* (NKJV)

See, when we face the worst trials in our lives. When we have that feeling that Psalm 22 starts off with. When we feel like, "Man, I feel like I'm deserted. I'm at my lowest and everything's going wrong, and I'm being beaten up with trials." We can rest assured knowing that God will never leave or forsake us. And as Psalm 22 illustrates for us, we need to look to Christ's example. The individual who was forsaken by everyone in His life. Who was mocked and ridiculed. Who was tortured and murdered. But through it all, He maintained His faith in the Father. Knowing that the Father was never going to

forsake Him. He was going to deliver Him through it all, and it would ultimately end well for Him and for all of mankind.

See, we can have that same faith as well. Knowing that the Father will never forsake us. We can absolutely trust in His faithfulness and know that regardless of whatever we go through, He will always be there for us. He will always deliver us through whatever trial that we go through, as long as we're faithful to Him. As long as we hear Him and we're obedient to Him, then He will never forsake us. So, we too can trust in that promise that He will never leave or forsake us.