

SBC – Oct. 9, 2022

Psalm 35 (NKJV) - “The Messiah Hated Without a Cause”

Psalm 35 (NKJV)

A Psalm of David.

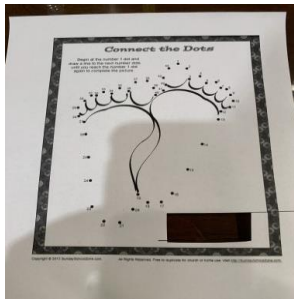
Psalm 35 is yet another of David’s Psalms. He is accounted for writing at least 75 of the 150 Psalms. This particular Psalm has been classified under different headings such as being a lament Psalm, an imprecatory Psalm, and also a Messianic Psalm.

A Messianic Psalm is one that prophetically connects with the coming Messiah with the proof as seen in the revelation of the NT.

Many of the Psalms labeled as “Messianic” only contain a nugget of prophetic truth and that is true of Psalm 35 as well. In fact we would not know this is a Messianic Psalm except that we have a direct connection to the Messiah in John 15:25.

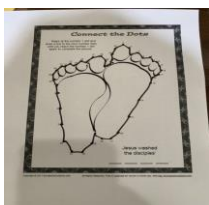
God revealed prophetic truth about the Messiah a little at a time. It is sort of like “connect the dots” in the sense that you really can’t make it out clearly until you have the dots all connected in the NT.

Slide # 1



What does this diagram portray? Well, until you connect the dots it’s hard to tell. Messianic prophecy was like this. It is like seeing in a glass dimly. The OT was largely like this. But once God connects the dots for us through further revelation we see it all lines up perfectly and makes the truth come to LIGHT.

Slide # 2



2 Timothy 1:10 (NKJV)

10 but has now been **revealed** by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to **light** through the gospel,

Once you connect the dots the TRUTH is plain to see. This was the point Jesus made with the disciples on the Emmaus Road after His resurrection.

Slide # 3**Luke 24:25–27 (NKJV)**

25 Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in **all that the prophets** have spoken!

26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”

27 And beginning at **Moses and all the Prophets**, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning **Himself**.

Slide # 4

“The Lord Jesus gave them the great key to the understanding of Scripture – that He Himself is its subject and that in Him the entire Book finds its unity.” – C.I. Scofield

Slide # 5**Psalm 35*****David's Appeal to God to deal with his Enemies***

v. 1-3 - David's Plea

v. 4-10 – An Imprecatory Prayer for Help

v. 11-18 – A Cry Against Malicious Witnesses

v. 19-28 – A Call for Justice

It is within the context of David's experience that the greater David – the Messiah could identify in His experience as well.

v. 1-3 - David's Plea

1 Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; Fight against those who fight against me.

2 Take hold of shield and buckler, And stand up for my help.

3 Also draw out the spear, And stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, “I am your salvation.”

David begins by asking the LORD to plead his cause – which is to say contend for him. He wants God to defend him.

And he speaks in graphic terms as he wants God to fight or wage war against these enemies on his behalf.

We don't know the actual occasion when David wrote this Psalm but many commentators think it was most likely written when David was on the run from Saul (1 Sam. 24:15). The bad actors David is speaking about may not have been Saul directly as other places we see he had great regard for the fact that he was the “LORD's Anointed” and therefore was very hesitant to act or speak against him (cf. 1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 26:9; 2 Sam. 1:14).

More likely this has David's peers in view that at one time were his friends when he served in Saul's army, but now they are aligned viciously against him. And this had serious implications because at this point it was clear that God had Samuel anoint David to be the next king. Those opposed to David were therefore opposed to the will of God. It is from this vantage point that David speaks.

v. 4-10 – An Imprecatory Prayer for Help

An imprecatory prayer is one in which the request is for curses or destruction to come upon one's enemy. David more than any other Scriptural writer is associated with imprecatory prayers. Again, he speaks as “God's Anointed” in keeping with what is in keeping with righteousness.

Psalm 35:27–28 (NKJV)

27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor **my righteous cause**; And let them say continually, “Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”

28 And my tongue shall speak of **Your righteousness** And of Your praise all the day long.

These prayers were written not so much to exact revenge upon one's enemies, but rather to emphasize God's abhorrence of evil, His sovereignty over all mankind, and His divine protection of His chosen people. Many of these prayers were prophetic and could be seen taking place later in the New Testament in actual historical events.

In the New Testament, Jesus exhorts us to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44–48; Luke 6:27–38), but praying for their death or for bad things to happen to them isn't what He meant. Instead, we are to pray for their salvation first and foremost, and then for God's will to be done. ... If a personal wrong has truly been done to us, we seek God in prayer about it, and then leave room for God's judgment and trust Him to do what is best. **-Gotquestions.org**

4 Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor Who seek after my life; Let those be turned back and brought to confusion Who plot my hurt.

5 Let them be like chaff before the wind, And let the angel of the LORD chase them.

6 Let their way be dark and slippery, And let the angel of the LORD pursue them.

Again, Psalm 35 is considered to be the first of the imprecatory Psalms. The best way to understand the imprecatory Psalms is that David from a position of "righteousness" is asking God to deal with his enemies. It assumes he is in the position of righteousness and is being sinfully abused.

In that position David was not bashful about asking God to intervene – and that in a very destructive way. But note this is only after they have completely betrayed David's love as we will see in a few verses.

The angel of the LORD is thought to be the preincarnate Christ appearing in the form of an angel. This designation is found 3 times in the Psalms (Ps. 34:7; 35:5,6). NEVER after the incarnation does the angel of the LORD make an appearance. After the incarnation Christ is forever in the form of a man – the God-man.

But back here in the OT the angel of LORD speaks as God, identifies Himself as God, and exercises the prerogatives of God (cf. Gen. 16:7-14; 21:17-21; 22:11-18; 31:11, 13; Ex. 3:2; Judg. 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12, 3:1; 12:8).

In effect David appeals to God as the hound of heaven to hunt down his enemies. And David knows that with God after them they won't get away with what they are doing. God will track them down and have His way with them. That is the essence of this imprecatory prayer.

7 For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit, Which they have dug without cause for my life.

Here is the heart of the matter. David has not done anything to deserve this evil attack and yet they are all about it. Note that twice in this verse he says, “without cause” they are trying to take him out. They had no justifiable reason for doing this. This is the KEY issue in this Psalm and the trigger for the imprecatory nature of it.

8 Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly, And let his net that he has hidden catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation.

10 All my bones shall say, “LORD, who is like You, Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?”

David asks for God’s dramatic intervention and in anticipation of it says he will rejoice in God’s deliverance. David gives praise to God saying, “LORD, who is like You” as He delivers the vulnerable from those who are too strong for him. God is a God of deliverance for those who trust in him. David loves this about God and praises Him for it.

v. 11-18 – A Cry Against Malicious Witnesses

11 Fierce witnesses rise up; They ask me things that I do not know.

12 They reward me evil for good, To the sorrow of my soul.

13 But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart.

14 I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother.

David sheds some light on the level of treachery involved here. These are malicious false witnesses that make accusations that are totally unfounded to where he doesn’t even know what they are talking about. This level of evil is so high octane that only God can do something about it.

They repay evil for good. Evil for evil is man-like. Good for evil is God-like. But evil for good is devil-like. Appropriately the word “devil” means “slanderer). This is the devil’s work. And as David says it is a sorrow (“bereavement” – cf. NASB) to the soul. This goes deep!

In contrast to their malicious spirit when they were sick David intensely prayed for them with fasting. He paced about as he considered them as a close friend or a brother. He was so concerned that mourned as one mourns for their mother who has died. David had really felt close to these people.

Slide # 6

To understand the psalmist's deep emotional involvement, we must realize that these people who are now testifying against him were once his friends. Now they malign him and accuse him of things of which he has no knowledge. For all the kindness he has shown to them, he is getting paid with hatred. – **William MacDonald**

This explains a lot of things. It explains why this hurt David so deeply. There is no wound so deep as that which betrayal of trust inflicts. When one has put their heart into the life of another person and they stomp on that friendship with malicious betrayal – that hurts.

Really, such friends are no different than an enemy and in fact are the worst sort of enemies. With friends like this, who needs enemies?

Slide # 7

Those that criticize David for his imprecatory (cursing) prayer in verses 4-8 should remember that first he prayed for their help and healing. – **Warren Wiersbe**

15 But in my adversity they rejoiced And gathered together; Attackers gathered against me, And I did not know it; They tore at me and did not cease;

16 With ungodly mockers at feasts They gnashed at me with their teeth.

17 Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, My precious life from the lions.

When a person is going through an experience like this it seems like it will never end. It is so human to cry out, **“Lord, how long will You look on?”** and then plea for deliverance.

Andrew Brunson was held imprisoned in Turkey for his Christian faith for an extended period of time. The Turkish government was threatening him with 3 life sentences. He speaks about HOW LONG every day seemed to be.

At one point he wrote this to his wife...

This sentence keeps resonating in my mind as I go through the daily – sometimes hourly – struggle of submitting myself – beyond that, of intentionally embracing – whatever God’s plans are that have allowed for ongoing imprisonment. ‘Shall I not drink the cup?’ I want to ‘drink the cup’ faithfully, to the dregs. But then I also say, ‘Lord, I’ve been drinking this cup for close to two years. How much longer?’ But, may I be faithful to the end. May I be willing to drink the cup – continue drinking it. ...How could I do otherwise?...I want to be an obedient son.

This is the humanness in even the most committed of God’s children. When we are going through a very difficult time we want to obediently endure and yet in our humanness we cry out, “How much longer?”

Andrew then says...

This was the last letter I wrote in prison, totally unaware that the very next day I would be released to house arrest.

-Decision Magazine, Oct. 2022, p. 32

This reminds us what we saw in Psalm 31:15 where David says, ***“My times are in Your hand”***. God providentially controls both the kind of trial and the length of the trial. He is God and He is in control. We are human and it is challenging to trust Him day by day – hour by hour in the context of waiting under intense duress.

One of the hardest things in life to deal with is those who once claimed to be friends who now maliciously attack you – especially if they are in a power position of strength (as it would seem). David, in calling them ***“lions”***, sees them in a position of strength. As those aligned with king Saul (if that was indeed the case), they were in the predator position of strength as they viciously stalked David. And so David pleads for divine intervention.

18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.

And then once again David in faith anticipates deliverance and then praising God publicly in the context of the assembly of worshipers.

v. 19-28 – A Call for Justice

It's in this context of malicious betrayal by those previously thought to be friends that we come to verse 19 that contains a Messianic prophecy.

19 Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies; Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause.

Once again David speaks of those who “are wrongfully” his enemies and who hate him “without a cause”. This was so hurtful.

He repeats it three times in this Psalm. It was this type of deep hurt that Jesus the Messiah also experienced as this very truth is applied to Him in the NT.

Slide # 8

John 15:24–25 (NKJV)

24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.

25 But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘***They hated Me without a cause.***’

And what types of works did they see Jesus do among them? Yes, they saw unparalleled miraculous works. But beyond that this overwhelming show of miraculous power was benevolent and constantly for the good of people. Jesus constantly healed and delivered people.

Slide # 9

Acts 10:38 (NKJV)

38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, **who went about doing good** and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

In spite of all the GOOD that Jesus constantly did by the power of the Holy Spirit, yet He was hated. Thus, He was hated for no good reason. He was hated without a legitimate cause. When you haven't done anything wrong – and indeed have done nothing but GOOD for people and they hate you anyway – that is really tough. That was Jesus' experience.

It is in this very same context in John 15 that Jesus says that just as the world hated Him it will also hate us (cf. Jn. 15:18-21).

When you are abused, persecuted, and slandered for no good reason, then remember that this was also the experience of Christ. They too hated Him without cause. This is the lot of those who follow Christ. We can expect that in depravity the world will slanderously abuse us for no good reason – in fact they will do it in spite of the GOOD we seek to do for them. They are a ruthless – thankless bunch. They are the devil’s children.

Footnote: This same reference in Psalm 35:19 about being hated without cause is also found in Psalm 69:4 which is also a Messianic Psalm. So, we are not sure which reference Christ was referring to but since they are the same either or both could apply.

**20 For they do not speak peace, But they devise deceitful matters
Against the quiet ones in the land.**

Note that in contrast to peace (well-being) they speak deceit in an effort to destroy David. The quiet ones in the land were David and his supporters who were not causing trouble. They wanted to just live in peace in the will of God but these deceitful ones insisted on trying to destroy him.

21 They also opened their mouth wide against me, And said, “Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it.”

“Aha” is the sneer of contempt and ridicule as they make their false accusations. They claim to have the dirt on David, but it is all a lie. They claim to have “**seen it**” but David takes refuge in the truth that God sees the truth. And so, he again appeals to God...

22 This You have seen, O LORD; Do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me.

23 Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, To my cause, my God and my Lord.

David here refers to God as “my God and Lord”. God is literally Elohim and Lord is Adonai. Elohim acknowledges God as the most high supreme and powerful Being. Adonia means Master in the sense of the One Who is sovereignly in control. Thus, in effect David here calls God His Supreme Being and His Sovereign Master.

**24 Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness;
And let them not rejoice over me.**

25 Let them not say in their hearts, “Ah, so we would have it!” Let them not say, “We have swallowed him up.”

26 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who rejoice at my hurt; Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor Who exalt themselves against me.

Once again, at the end of David’s request for vindication he anticipates God coming to his rescue and then praising God with the congregation of God’s people.

27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, “Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”

28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness And of Your praise all the day long.

In Psalm 35 we have “a threefold elaboration of David’s petition to the divine Judge, each concluding with a vow to praise” God for what He will do. (NIV Study Bible)

Slide # 10

Psalm 35:9 (NKJV)

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation.

Psalm 35:18 (NKJV)

18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.

Psalm 35:28 (NKJV)

28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness And of Your praise all the day long.

Some of the hardest times in life come from those who wish to do us harm for no good reason.

I want to speak frankly. I have turned several people over to the Lord when what I wanted to do was smack them in the mouth. There is no use beating around the bush – I have that feeling sometimes.

– J. Vernon McGee

Being human we all have that feeling sometimes. But as God's people we need to wait on the Lord and give such situations over to Him. Vengeance belongs to the Lord – and He will repay. What we must do is not play God but turn it over to Him. He is a whole lot better at handling these things than we are.

And in the midst of being wrongly slandered and rewarded evil for good let us remember this was the treatment our Lord endured too – only on a greater level than we will ever know. He too was hated without a cause. In this Jesus is our ultimate example.

God help us to emulate Him!

Slide # 11

1 Peter 2:23 (NKJV)

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but **committed Himself to Him** who judges righteously;

1 Peter 4:19 (NKJV)

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God **commit their souls to Him** in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

The end goal for us as believers is as David says in Ps. 35:27 “Let the LORD be magnified”. In the end it's all about Him and God being glorified in whatever we go through and whatever He brings us through.

Indeed, may “***the LORD be magnified***”.