



## Victory in Messiah

### Psalm 40

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#### Introduction

It's Christmas again – that time of gifts, celebration and joy – and believe it or not, Psalm 40 has much to say about it! But first, permit me to share another small slice of our lives to illustrate the point. Years ago, my wife Margaret and I were given a unique present. It was a copper-art wall plaque, personally inscribed and finely decorated by an artistically gifted young married couple. We had discipled and mentored them as part of our congregation over the years.

Now they were setting out to train for full time Christian ministry. The poignant text on their gift has challenged us time and again as we've faced life's inevitable crises through the decades since. It reads: **"NOT SOMEHOW, BUT TRIUMPHANTLY!"**

The truth of this maxim reflected David's 'Pit to Praise' experiences recorded in Psalm 40 – an ostensible "Christmas Psalm". Through David's reflections on his past and present threatening experiences, a shining messianic light shone out from his personal gloomy darkness and focused on a gift. The details of that gift would be further expounded by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years later when he wrote, "The people who walked in darkness, have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined." (cf. Is 9:1-7, esp. verses 2, 6-7 where he referred to "a Child ... born" and "unto us a Son is given" [emphasis added]). This

gift, therefore, is none other than Jesus the Messiah – the all sufficient Gift from God (cf. Lk 4:18 and Is 61:1-2; Jn 3:16; Rom 3:23; Eph 2:8ff)!

Let's further unwrap David's Christmas Gift package so that all – whether Jew or Gentile – may discover the life-changing truth of God's "indescribable gift" the Messiah, and His promise of victory for those who, like David, put their trust in Him! Observe His ...

to God's mercy and his deep gratitude to his LORD as he yielded himself afresh to Him (v. 1-10). Then observe in the latter verses how new crises confronted him as enemies approached, so again he called out to God for further deliverance (vs. 11-17). Though Jesse's son, the shepherd-king of Israel, would not have been aware of all the messianic details, he nevertheless recorded for perpetuity how God's perfect Gift, Israel's Messiah, would be born; how He would live and minister; why He would die; and finally, the significance of His being

raised out of the "pit of death" (His resurrection).

Psalm 40 then, implicitly pointed to the forthcoming Messiah, the Source of David's victory as verses 6-7 revealed. The writer to the Hebrews would later refer to them in Hebrews 10:5-9 in this way: quote is from v. 6ff

*In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin*

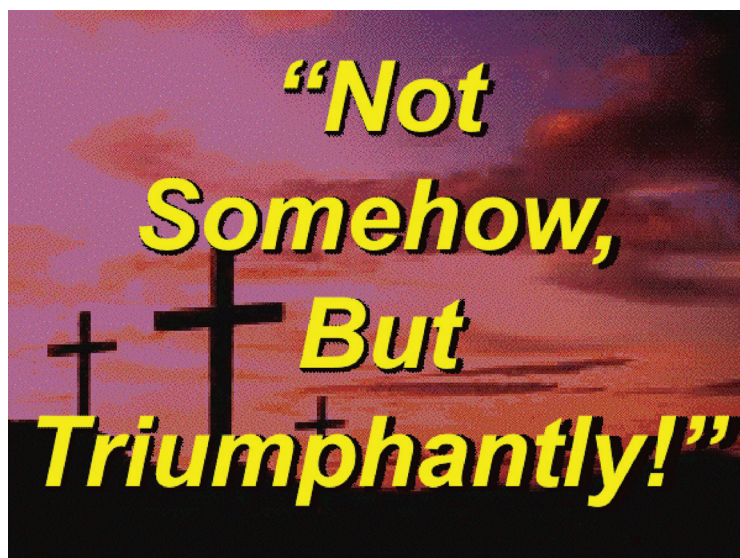
*You had no pleasure.*

*Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—*

*In the volume of the book it is written of Me—*

*To do Your will, O God."*

*Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ▶*



#### I. Miraculous Birth (Ps 40:6-7)

Historically, of course, Psalm 40 records certain, undisclosed, crises in David's life. His circumstances were dire; his situations desperate. He revealed that it was as if he were in "a horrible pit" and through his crying out to God in utter desperation and dependence, discovered His marvellous deliverance and victory. Notice how the first part of the psalm described his testimony

Because sections of Psalm 40 are quoted in Hebrews 10, David's psalm is rightly designated 'Messianic'. In this context, it became clear that God did away with all the Hebrew sacrifices through the Messiah's (first) coming and through Him, did what those sacrifices could never do: take away sins! Sins then were covered by the blood (cf. Ps 32), and even the atoning blood of the Yom Kippur sacrifice (Lev 16; 17:11) was only *temporary* and needed daily and annual repetition under Judaism's old covenant regime. But now, by Jesus' death, once for all (v. 10), the "old" had passed and the "new" had come. For a "once for all" sacrifice to be offered to "take away the first that He may establish the second", the Messiah had to come in bodily, human form, without sin, as a man. Hence, in His Incarnation, Jesus said to the Father: "Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me." (See Ps 40:7). Here, He referred to the many prophecies of the Old Testament, of which Psalm 40

is but one. That's why the Messiah had to be born, miraculously!

Let's investigate His miraculous birth more closely. The text stated that "a body You have *prepared* for Me" (v. 5, *emphasis added*). Elsewhere in Scripture, we read that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:26-38, esp. v. 35; cf. Is 7:14), and therefore His was a sinless nature. He was "without sin" (cf. Mt 1:16 ... "Mary, of whom was born ..." [not "begotten" as in the previous 15 verses]; Heb 4:15; 2 Cor 5:21). Significantly, God the Father bypassed the other three ways by which He had been involved in the creation of human

kind, viz (1) out of "the dust of the earth" (Adam: Gen 2:7); (2) out of man (Eve: Gen 2:21); and (3) out of the conjugal union of a man with a woman (normal human birth: Gen 9:1, 7; cf. 1:28). God "prepared" Jesus' body to be *perfect* in every way. The word used is freighted with meaning. The original text (Greek: *katertiso*) connoted the ideas of "fitting together", "to make whole" or "equip" [for specific use]. Had God's Son not been of sinless nature, He could never have been the Saviour who died for sinners.

Well may Major Ian Thomas say in his book, *The Saving Life of Christ*: "The life that He lived qualified Him for the death

(cf. Mt 4:4 and the repeated mention of "this was done that ... might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet ..."); He preached the Word (Mk 1:14-15; Jn 17:4, 8). That's why no one could ever accuse Him of sin (Jn 8:46) throughout His ministering life. Even at the end, just prior to His crucifixion, liars were hired to speak against Him, yet even Judas His betrayer had to admit He was innocent (Mt 27:1-6). The reason was as simple as it was Scriptural: "I always do those things that please (the Father)" (Jn 8:29). Never once did He contravene God's Word or will. In life and by lip, Messiah's testimony manifested the "righteousness" (Ps 40:9-10) and "loving kindness and tender mercies" of the LORD (v. 10).

In light of this awesome summary of Jesus' servant life of ministry, the same challenge confronts His followers: Do we delight to do His will, and is it being done "Not Somehow, but Triumphantly"?

### III. Mediatorial Death (Ps 40:6)

Jesus, the Messiah, came as the perfect Babe, born with a perfect (God-prepared, miracle) body, lived a perfect

life, all of which qualified Him to be the perfect sacrifice for sins.

Psalm 40:6 provides the clue as to Messiah's perfect sacrifice: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire ... Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require". Notice the four kinds of offerings mentioned: (1) *sacrifice* – (any kind of blood offering, e.g. as in 1 Kgs 18:33); (2) *offering* – (non blood offering, as in the Meal Offering, e.g. (Lev 2); (3) *burnt offering* – this was the whole burnt offering that spoke of total dedication to the LORD, e.g. (Lev 1); (4) *sin offering* – the offering made for the sin of the offerer, e.g. (Lev 4).



that He died; And the death that He died qualifies us for the Life that He lives"! Are you experiencing Jesus' miraculous Life, day by day? The Christmas Gift is available to you for the taking if you are willing to accept it by faith!

### II. Ministering Life (Ps 40:8-10)

Read the above verses carefully and you will surely agree with Howard Hendricks and his oft-quoted phrase, "Jesus lived by The Book!" No wonder He could say: "I delight to do Your will, O God, and Your law is within my heart" (v. 8). He was taught in the Word (Lk 2:40, 41-51; Mt 5-7, esp. 7:27-28); loved God's Word (cf. Lk 4:18); lived out the Word



These categories bring Leviticus 1-5 immediately to mind, as they all prefigure the atoning, mediatorial death of Messiah Jesus. Schematically, we may show it this way:

Think of it: What millions of lamb sacrifices can never do, Israel's Jewish Messiah, the Lamb of God, willingly did on our behalf in dying as our substitute on the Cross. With song writer Isaac Watts, we gratefully concur:

*Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.*

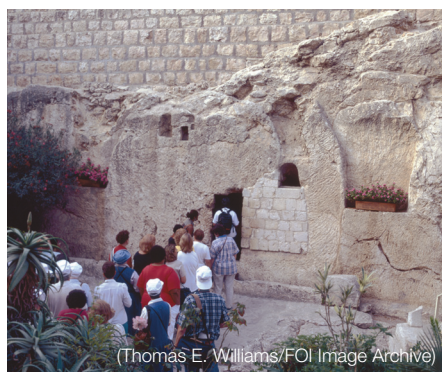
*But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away  
A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.*

*My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine,  
While, like a penitent, I stand,  
And there confess my sin.*

Have you ever done that? If not, do so, now! Then with "born again" reality, join in the chorus penned by Phillip Bliss: *Hallelujah, what a Saviour!*

#### IV. Miraculous Resurrection (Ps 40:1-3)

The opening verses of Psalm 40 reveal David's divine deliverance from some unspecified trouble. He stated how "(he) waited patiently for the LORD, (who) heard (his) cry ... and brought (him) up out of a horrible pit ..." (v. 1). The record went on to reveal that "(the LORD) brought him out of the miry clay and set his feet upon a rock, (established) his steps and put a new song in (his) mouth – praise to (our) God" (vs. 2-3).



Type	Depiction/ Picture	Text	Reference
<b>Burnt Offering</b> (Lev 1)	Total surrender to LORD	I delight to do Your will	Psalm 40:8
<b>Meal Offering</b> (Lev 2)	His perfect nature/our soul feeds on Him and is satisfied!	Behold I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me ... etc	Psalm 40:7-8
<b>Peace Offering</b> (Lev 3)	Peace with the LORD effected by Jesus' death on the Cross.	I delight to do Your will	Psalm 40:8; Rom 5:1, 8; Col 1:20; 2 Cor 5:18;
<b>Sin Offering</b> (Lev 4)	He knew no sin – ours is a sin nature	I delight to do Your will Your law is within my heart. I have proclaimed; Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures!	Psalm 40:8-10; cf. Ps 51:3-4; Rom 3:23; 5:12-21; Eph 2:8ff; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Cor 15:2-3
<b>Trespass Offering</b> (Lev 5)	He who knew no sin condemned our "old nature" on the Cross, thereby He is able to give " <b>victory over sin</b> "	I delight to do Your will	Cf. Sinners' "old nature" dealt with in Christ, on the Cross. Rom 6:6; Col 3:9; Eph 4:22 – "Died" in Christ!
<b>All these offerings were fulfilled in Jesus!</b> (cf. Col 2:17)	Through "progressive revelation", God revealed His "unfolding drama of redemption" <b>culminating in Jesus, the Messiah!</b>	On the Cross, He said: "(It is) <b>finished!</b> "	Jn 19:30 (Greek: tetelestai – "accomplished!"/ "completed" as in " <b>(a debt) paid in full!</b> ")

Prophetically speaking, these words aptly describe Messiah's resurrection. Jesus was made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24) and went into the "pit of sin" for us (cf. Ps 16:10-11; Acts 2:31). Reflect on Jesus' agony in Gethsemane as recorded in Hebrews 5:7 and Luke 22:44 and one can appreciate something of all the Son of God went through. In all His being made sin for us, He prayed to God knowing that He was able to deliver Him out from (Greek: *ek*) death, not in any sense "(merely) from" it, as in bypassing it in some way. The very reason for His Incarnation was to fulfil the divine, salvific mission (Mk 10:45; Lk 19:19; Mt 1:21) and, wonder of wonders, the Father heard those "prayers and supplications" and in grace raised Him from the dead (Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:3), declaring Him "Lord and Christ" (Acts

2:36; Phil 2:9-11). Furthermore, believers are raised with Him, too. (Eph 1:19; 2:1, 5; Gal 2:20; 3:1-3; Rom 6:1-6ff)

What does this mean in practical terms? First, Messiah's atoning work has been accomplished "once for all" (Heb 9). Second, He has been raised to die no more (Rom 6:9; cf. 1 Cor 15:11). Third, He is highly exalted and in being seated at God's right hand, ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25; cf. Rom 8:26). Fourth, His atoning work being finished – but not His Great High Priestly work of intercession, as just noted - it is (as it were) that His feet are firmly "on the rock" (cf. Ps 40:2b), and His "new song" is a song of victory and praise to God. (Note Ps 22:22-25 in this regard and compare those verses with Psalm 40:9-10. The "song of praise" is for *Israel*, the *Church* and the *world!* ▶

All His enemies have been conquered on the Cross (Cf. Col 2:14-15), and He is now on his throne in heaven, till "all enemies are put under His feet" (Ps 110:1-2). This prophecy foretells proleptically what will happen when Messiah returns to planet earth and overthrows all anti-God forces and sets up His kingdom, ruling from David's throne in Jerusalem ... and it could be soon!

What a victory it will be! Are you eagerly anticipating His return, and living in the light of it?



(Thomas E. Williams/FOI Image Archive)

## Conclusion

Well, there it is, dear Jewish or Gentile reader – Psalm 40! It really is a veritable "Christmas Psalm", isn't it? Maybe you have read it many times before, but never realized that it foreshadowed Messiah's birth, ministry, death and resurrection - all of which combine to give God's gracious Gift in Jesus (*Yeshua*) and His promise of victory. You can enjoy that victory now, and when He returns again!

All of us at The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry trust you are waiting for 'that Day', just as Eugene Bartlett was in 1939, as World War II loomed large on the international scene. He wrote:

*I heard an old, old story,  
How a Saviour came from glory,  
How He gave His life on Calvary  
To save a wretch like me;  
I heard about His groaning,  
Of His precious blood's atoning,  
Then I repented of my sins  
And won the victory.*

Chorus:

*O victory in Jesus,  
My Saviour, forever.  
He sought me and bought me  
With His redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew Him  
And all my love is due Him,  
He plunged me to victory,  
Beneath the cleansing flood.*

Have a truly blessed, victorious Christmas – in Jesus, the Messiah! We will, and with the plaque's message still deeply rooted in our hearts: "**Not Somehow, But Triumphant!**"

*To complete this edition, here's a touching Jewish, Christmas story – unconfirmed, by all reports, but comes to us out of New York and worth repeating in TAS ...*

## The Jewish Tablecloth

*For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out." **Ezekiel 34:11***

A pastor bought a beautiful used tablecloth to use as a tapestry to cover a rain-damaged wall in his church in New York.

A woman to whom the pastor gave refuge during a storm saw the tablecloth and was stunned to realize it was one she had made 35 years earlier in Austria. That was during WW II and before she had been imprisoned and separated forever from her family, including her husband.

Then on Christmas Eve, an older man from the neighbourhood who came to the church to make an enquiry, was also stunned to see the tablecloth. He recognized it as one made by his wife, whom he had not seen since the war and since he had been imprisoned and separated from his family.

Accordingly, the pastor then drove the man to where the woman who made the tablecloth lived, and husband and wife were reunited after 35 years.

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry team have seen time and again how God does indeed search out His sheep. In buses, on planes or trains, talking with people in shops (the list goes on), we have witnessed the sovereign LORD at work to reach His people. Thank you for being part of the wider



team through your prayers, encouragement and love-gifts throughout another year. With Paul, we say:

*"Brethren, (our) heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved"* (Romans 10:1)

To God be all the glory!



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