

**Lesson 50**  
**The Last Week – 4/3/30 AD, 14 Nisan Tuesday after Sundown**

In our last lesson we ended with John 14:31-32 “I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. Come now; let us leave.”

Jesus must have understood that by that point in time Judas must have arrived at the designated place where he has to betray Jesus’ location to the High Priests. We know that at this time Judas was indwelt by Satan, the prince of this world.<sup>1</sup> He had gone to the High Priests (Annas and Caiaphas) to betray Jesus to them. They had previously offered him money for that very act. More precisely, Judas had gone to tell them where they could arrest Jesus quietly, away from the crowds who usually thronged about Him. Their first choice would have been in the upper room of the house of John Mark’s parents. That was one of the reasons that Jesus had made sure that the location of the Last Supper was kept a secret until the last moment. Only Peter and John, who had prepared the room, knew the location. Although it was going to take some time for the High Priests to gather enough men from among the Temple guards and their own servants for the arresting party, Jesus knew it was time to relocate to the garden before the guards arrived at the upper room. However, John 18:1 indicates that it wasn’t until after Jesus’ discourse of John 15 through 16, and Jesus’ prayer of John 17 that they finally left the upper room. We will study John 15 in this lesson.

***After the Last Supper – but before leaving the upper room and going to Gethsemane***

After Jesus and His eleven disciples were through with the supper, Jesus delivered some of the most intense teaching of His ministry. He was preparing them for a future of persecution and martyrdom.

John 15:1 **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.**

The statement that Jesus made drew attention to the fact the Jesus was the fulfillment of the figure of the vine often used in the Old Testament. Jesus was the true Israel, and Israel was like a vine that the LORD had planted to bring forth fruit for Himself. That is demonstrated in the two passages from Isaiah and Psalms below:

Isaiah 27:1-6 “In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword (*the cross*), his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent (*Satan*), Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea. In that day: ‘Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire. ~~Or else~~ *Instead* let them come to me for refuge; let them

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<sup>1</sup> *This confirms to us that Judas was an unbeliever. No believer can be indwelt by Satan.*

make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.’ In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.”

It was only through the “true vine” (Jesus) that Israel could become the vine that brought forth fruit:

Psalms 80:14b-15 “Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, the root your right hand has planted, the son (Jesus) you have raised up for yourself.”

John 15:2a **He ~~cuts off~~ lifts up every branch in me that bears no fruit,**



**Picture of a Vineyard in Israel with the Vines Lifted Up**

The word translated “cuts off” by the NIV is the Greek word ἀῤρω {᾿-ῤō}. It doesn’t mean “cut off.” It means “lift up.” The Strong’s Greek Lexicon gives the word the following primary definitions:

- 1) to raise up, elevate, lift up
- a) to raise from the ground, take up:
- b) to raise upwards, elevate, lift up: the hand
- c) to draw up: as with a fish

On every occasion the word is used in the Gospel of John, in his epistles, or in Revelation (27 times), it is used in the sense to take up, lift up, or take away. It is never used in the sense “to cut off.”

So, what did it mean in the context of a vineyard to say that you would “lift up” a branch that bore no fruit? A branch of the vine that lay on the ground wasn’t productive, so the vine was lifted up by the means of posts or supports. On the previous page is a picture of vineyard in Israel showing the lifting up of the vines.

**John 15:2b while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes cleanses so that it will be even more fruitful.**

The word translated “prunes” by the NIV is the Greek word καθαίρω {kā-thī-rō}. It doesn’t mean “to prune.” It means “to cleanse or purify.” In this context it is speaking of dressing the vine, which involved pruning unproductive branches, removing insects, and taking care of other problems.

**John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.**

The word which is correctly translated “clean” here is the Greek word καθαρός {kā-thä-ro's}. As you can see, it is the root word of καθαίρω in the previous verse. This cleansing connects back to what he had spoken to them during the washing of their feet:

John 13:10 “Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.’”

There Jesus had told them that although they were saved, they needed the washing of His forgiveness (after confession) for their walk. Here, He was telling them that, although they were saved, their daily walk needed His cleansing to bear fruit. Here, since Judas was no longer present, He told them they were all clean without exclusion.

**John 15:4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. NRSV**

This says that Jesus would never stop abiding in them. That means they could never lose their positional sanctification (their salvation). However, they could stop abiding in Him. That meant they could lose their experiential sanctification (commit personal sin). The answer to that was to wash their feet (personal confession of sin).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

**John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. NRSV**

Only believers who were walking in fellowship with Jesus Christ could bear fruit.

**John 15:6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. NRSV**

In this case the fire here doesn't imply the loss of salvation. This isn't talking about the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15 where all unbelievers will be judged. This is speaking of the Judgment Seat of Christ where the production of all believers will be evaluated.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

### **Further Commentary on John 15:1-6**

The primary difficulty we are dealing with here is the interpretation of this passage by those who do not believe in the efficacy of the work of Jesus Christ in salvation. They would use this passage to say, "See you can lose your salvation if you don't bear fruit!" To accomplish this interpretation, they have to say that when Jesus spoke in this parable of the branches being cut off and burned, He was speaking of believers losing salvation and being thrown into Hell.

Yet in this passage (John 15:3), Jesus insisted that His listeners were already clean: "You are already clean." This harkened back to what He had told them during the foot washing ceremony. There He had told them that they were all clean but one (Judas Iscariot). At the point of this teaching in John 15, they were on the point of leaving to go to the Garden of Gethsemane and Judas had already left them (John 13:30). That is why Jesus could say they were all clean. Only one bath (saving faith) was needed, but many foot washings (confessions of experiential sins) were needed.

One of the signs that this does not involve loss of salvation is that there is no mention of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" which usually accompanies passages which speak of consignment to Hell (Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, and Luke 13:28).

Despite what those who deny eternal security say, I believe it is clear that this passage merely reflects the tension between the promise of eternal security and the warning that we are expected to walk as Jesus walked which is evident in many passages.

In John alone we have already repeatedly had the promise that salvation is by faith, not works:

John 3:14-18 “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already <sup>3</sup> because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

John 6:28-29 “Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’”

John 6:35 “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’”

John 6:40 “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 6:47 “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”

John 11:25-26 “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

John 20:31 “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Yet beyond the assurance of salvation, the Gospel of John also talks about discipleship.

John 8:31 “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”

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<sup>3</sup> *Just as God’s election is of all who believe, so God’s condemnation is against all who do not believe. Each man is saved or condemned on the basis of their free-will choice in the matter of faith. It is not on God’s predestined election of who would choose to believe, and who would not.*

In 1 John we also have the warning of the inevitability of sin in our life despite the promise of eternal security:

1 John 1:8- 2:6 “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.<sup>4</sup> But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”

In 1 Corinthians Paul warned that some would build empty works on the foundation of their salvation in Christ, yet they would still be saved, although their works would be burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We have seen the passage already, but it never hurts to repeat it.

1 Corinthians 3:11-16 “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work.<sup>5</sup> If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.<sup>6</sup> Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”

### *Still after the Last Supper*

**John 15:7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. NRSV**

Here Jesus made clear what He had told the disciples a little earlier in John 14:14 when He had said “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” The words “in my name” were only true when they were walking in fellowship with Christ and asking according to the precepts of His Word.

**John 15:8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

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<sup>4</sup> *Equivalent of Exodus 20:7 “You shall not (take, bear or carry) my name in vain.”*

<sup>5</sup> *Habakkuk 2:13*

<sup>6</sup> *As a man who escapes through the flames of his burning house brings nothing of his possessions with him.*

The word for disciple is the Greek word μαθητής {mä-thā-tā's}. It refers to someone who has learned from a teacher. As the disciples of Jesus, who is the Living Word, it means our lives, our consciences, and our decisions should all be informed and directed by His Word.

**John 15:9 “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. NRSV**

To abide in Jesus’ love here meant to live their lives in the sphere or knowledge of Jesus’ love.

**John 15:10a If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,**

Although these words were addressed to the eleven remaining disciples, they were also intended for all believers. We must live our lives knowing that the commands Jesus has given us are in love. They are intended for our protection, happiness, and joy.

**John 15:10b just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. NRSV**

In the same way Jesus had obeyed, and would obey, the Father’s will for Him. He knew that, although the Father’s will would be difficult to bear, it would result in everlasting joy. Hebrews 12 is very much to that point:

Hebrews 12:1-3 “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

**John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**

The ultimate joy that Jesus would have in obeying the Father’s will would also be theirs if they also obeyed the Father’s will. It can also be ours.

**John 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**

Jesus’ supreme command was to obey and follow Him in His love for all of them. It also applies to all of us in our relations with other believers. It is often a hard command to keep. It demands a Divine point of view.

**John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**

This was the difficult standard of love that Jesus was laying down for them. They were to learn to be willing to lay down their lives for each other. As far as we know, all but John died a martyr's death in carrying the Word of God to others.

**John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.**

They would be acting as His friends if they “loved each other as He had loved them.”

**John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**

We should understand that in the Living Word of God we can know all that we need to know to walk the life God wants us to walk. That is the walk that leads to joy.

**John 15:16a You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.**

This wasn't speaking of predestination or election as Calvinists think of it. It was speaking of the fact that the Lord chooses for each one a gift with which to bear fruit. These eleven men had been chosen to be apostles to the world. They faced a future of hatred, opposition and martyrdom. They would all feel unequal to the task they had been chosen for. The Lord was reminding them, for future reference, that He was the one that had chosen them and He had known what He was doing.

**John 15:16b Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name**

In the fulfillment of their gift and the bearing of the gift's fruit, God would answer all of their prayers.

**John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.**

He reiterated the command. It was critical to bearing fruit.

**John 15:18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.**

They shouldn't worry that the world would hate them. It was inevitable if they were true disciples.

**John 15:19a If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world,**

There was no obstacle to being loved by the world if they subscribed to the worldly system of thought.

**John 15:19b** **but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.**

However, Jesus had called them to be separated from the world. Therefore, they should be prepared to be hated by the world.

**John 15:20a** **Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.**

Jesus reminded them of what He had said when He had finished washing their feet as a servant (John 13:16). The standard of humble service which flowed from that principle also applied to the standard of persecution that they could expect.

**John 15:20b** **If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.**

However, on the plus side, they could also expect hungry hearts to respond to the Word of Jesus in their mouths as hungry hearts had responded to Jesus' words in His mouth. For the rest of us we can be assured that if we are faithful to communicate the Word of God accurately,<sup>7</sup> the Lord's sheep will hear the call, just as they did in Jesus' day.

**John 15:21** **They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.**

It would be distressing to them that the Jewish leaders would be the ones to take the lead in persecuting them. They had to understand that the real problem of those leaders wasn't that they didn't accept that Jesus was the Messiah that was sent by the God of Israel. Their problem was that they never knew or accepted the God of Israel. In other words they didn't recognize the "Son of God" or the true Israel (Israel means "Prince of God") because they didn't know God at all.

**John 15:22a** **If I had not come and spoken to them, ~~they would not be guilty of sin~~ *their sin would not have been exposed to themselves.***

The phrase translated "they would not be guilty of sin" here are the Greek words ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ εἶχον {hä-mär-tē'-on ük ā-khon} which is literally translated "they would not have kept having sin." "Having sin," here does not mean committing sin, but "to find one's self in a condition of sin." In other words, "their sin was exposed to themselves."

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<sup>7</sup> *To some extent every believer who isn't a spiritual infant should be teaching someone: Hebrews 5:12 "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!"*

John 15:22b **Now, however, they have no excuse camouflage for their sin.**

The word the NIV translated “excuse” here is the Greek word πρόφασις {pro'-fä-sēs} which is better translated “pretense” or “camouflage.” When Jesus came, He exposed them to themselves. They were exposed as hypocrites without any real relationship with God. They hated Him for it.

John 15:23 **He who hates me hates my Father as well.**

They not only hated Jesus, but they actually hated God the Father who they purported to love.

John 15:24a **If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin their sin would not have been exposed to themselves.<sup>8</sup>**

This is basically a repetition of the principle in verse 22a which underscores that it is an important principle for understanding the enmity of the world. It is bad enough for one’s sin to be exposed to others. It is far worse when one’s sinfulness is bared to one’s own proudful soul.

John 15:24b **But now they have seen these miracles, and yet<sup>9</sup> they have hated both me and my Father.**

Those who expose the truth among people of deceit should never expect to be accepted. They are usually hated.

John 15:25 **But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’<sup>10</sup>**

Here Jesus referred to Psalm 35 which He referred to as part of the Law. We will study that Psalm in detail just below.

John 15:26 **“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.**

Although Jesus would no longer be present to speak the truth to the world, He would send the Holy Spirit to help them understand and speak the truths of God.

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<sup>8</sup> In the verse we find the same Greek as we saw in verse 22a: ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ εἶχον {hä-mär-tē'-on ük ā-khon}. This should be literally translated “they would not have kept having sin.”

<sup>9</sup> Every other translation does not have a “yet” and it is not in the original. A “yet” would seem to imply that they hated Jesus “in spite” of the miracles, but a true interpretation is that they hated Jesus “because” of the miracles.

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 35:19, Psalms 38:19, Psalms 69:4, Lamentation 3:52

John 15:27 **And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.**

Although these words of obligation were spoken to the disciples who had been with Jesus throughout His ministry, they also speak to every believer. In spite of the hatred that it will engender, we are obligated to testify about the salvation of God. It is our obligation to the lost.

### **Psalm 35**

Psalm 35 is another Messianic Psalm written in the voice of Jesus a thousand years before Jesus' incarnation. How do we know this is a Psalm in the voice of Jesus Christ? First, we know that it is written in the first person. That means the Psalm uses the words, I, me, and mine throughout. Then we have to determine who the "I" in the Psalm is. For Psalm 35, we know the psalm was written by David, but is David the "I" in the psalm? We know that the Bible gives us a more detailed account of David's life than of any other person in the Old Testament. I believe that the main reason why we have that detailed life is to help us understand that the "I" in these Messianic Psalms is not David. Although there are parts of the history of David which match the trials of the "I" in Psalm 35, there are other parts of the Psalm which definitely do not describe David. However, there is no part of the Psalm that does not describe some aspect of Jesus Christ's life. However, the fact that the "I" in the Psalm is definitely Jesus the Messiah is established in verse 19. This verse was quoted by Jesus Himself, as we saw in John 15. He clearly said that referring to Himself:

John 15:24-25. "If I had not done among them what no one else did, their sin would not have been exposed. But now they have seen these miracles, and they have hated both me and my Father. But **this is to fulfill** what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'"

This makes clear that the "me" in this Psalm was Jesus Christ.

### ***Psalm 35*** ***Of David.***

Psalm 35:1 **Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me.**

Here Jesus enlisted the Father to fight his battle against the forces of evil who wanted to kill Him before his time had come. At the time He quoted this Psalm, they had already tried to throw Him off a cliff in Nazareth. They had also tried to stone Him in the Temple.

Psalm 35:2-3a **Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me.**

Since this was addressed to the LORD, the armor and weapons here are clearly speaking of spiritual weapons. Who were those that pursued Jesus? Certainly, Herod, the High Priests and

most of the Sanhedrin, Pharisees, and Sadducees were involved in seeking His death. However, most of all, I think this was speaking of Satan and the fallen angels and demons who were the strongest moving forces behind the plots to kill Jesus.

**Psalm 35:3b Say to my soul, “I am your salvation.”**

Jesus was confident that although His human eyes could not see the future, with the eyes of faith in the Father’s word He could know that He would be resurrected and ascend to be with the Father.

**Psalm 35:4 May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay.**

In fact, this was the fate of Satan and His demons at the cross. Just when Satan thought he had finally won by engineering the crucifixion and death of Jesus, he began to realize that he had actually helped to bring about the fulfillment of what had been the Father’s plan from the beginning. That plan was the glorification of God, and Satan’s final defeat and humiliation.

**Psalm 35:5-6 May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.**

This is the way Isaiah speaks of Satan:

Isaiah 33:11 “You conceive chaff, you give birth to straw; your breath is a fire that consumes you.”

Satan and those who are inspired by him are like chaff and will not only be swept away by the wind (the Spirit), but they will be consumed by the fire of Satan’s evil and rebellion.

**Psalm 35:7-8 Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, may ruin overtake them by surprise-- may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin.**

In this verse, the net and the pit represent the Cross. The ones who hid the net and dug the pit were destroyed by their own devices. In the supreme irony of History, the event that Satan himself engineered proved God’s overwhelming love and condemned the unrepentant hatred of Satan and his angels to Hell where their hatred would consume them forever:

1 Corinthians 2:8 “None of the rulers of this age understood it (God’s plan), for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Isaiah 33:11 “You (*Satan*) conceive chaff, you give birth to straw; your breath (*spirit*) is a fire that consumes you.”

**Psalm 35:9 Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his salvation.**

When the work of Christ was done, He would rejoice:

Hebrews 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, **who for the joy set before him** endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Psalm 35:10 My whole being will exclaim, “Who is like you, O LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.”**

Jesus demonstrated the character of the Father in His life. He also fulfilled His own words:

Luke 6:20 “Looking at his disciples, he said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’”

In this case, who were the poor? The poor were all the sons of Adam, from whom Satan had stolen paradise and their life with the LORD by deceit. In the clearly Messianic Psalm 69, these words were in the mind of Jesus:

Psalm 69:4b “Many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.”

**Psalm 35:11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.<sup>11</sup> KJV**

I have used the translation of the King James Version here. This described Jesus’ trial before the Sanhedrin as reported in Matthew 26:59-60 “The high priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.”

**Psalm 35:12 They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn.**

For three and a half years Jesus had healed the sick bodies of the people, cast out demons, raised the dead, preached the love and mercy of God and still had denied himself even a house of his own to lay down his head (Matthew 8:20). And yet at the end of that He found Himself hanging on a cross surrounded by many people who either hated Him or were indifferent to His sufferings. Only four people had enough courage to stand close by the cross to give Jesus support. They were John the Apostle, His mother Mary, Salome,<sup>12</sup> and Mary Magdalene.

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<sup>11</sup> *This cannot be said to describe David.*

<sup>12</sup> *Salome was Mary’s sister. She was also the mother of John the Apostle.*

Psalm 35:13a **Yet when they were ill (or weak), I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting.**<sup>13</sup>

The Hebrew word כָּלַף {khä·lä'} translated “ill” here can also be translated “weak.” It was the word used in Judges 16:17 to describe what Samson would be when his hair was shaved off. This was fulfilled as recorded in Matthew:

Matthew 8:16-17 “When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.”

We know that Jesus literally wore the sackcloth of a prisoner on His way to the cross. The soldiers wouldn't have let Him wear His expensive garment, which they were to split among themselves after His back had been torn to shreds. This also tells us that Jesus must have spent much of those last days in fasting and prayer to prepare Himself for His ordeal.

Psalm 35:13b **My prayers returned to my bosom. ASV, NAS**

The NIV has “When my prayers returned to me unanswered.” Literally in the Hebrew this is, “My prayers returned to my bosom” which the ASV and NAS have used. This would describe when Jesus prayed in the Garden:

Mark 14:36 “‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’”

Psalm 35:14a **I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother.**

This attitude of Jesus was revealed when He approached Jerusalem that last week:

Luke 19:41-42 “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.’”

Psalm 35:14b **I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.**

This attitude was revealed when Jesus turned to the women of Jerusalem who were following the three prisoners to their crucifixion as an act of public charity: - Luke 23:28 “Jesus turned and said to them, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.’”

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<sup>13</sup> *This also cannot be said to describe David.*

**Psalm 35:15a But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; attackers gathered against me when I was unaware.**

This described the reaction of those most closely following the cross when Jesus' stumbled under the weight of His cross so they had to have Simon of Cyrene carry it (Matthew 27:31, Mark 15:21 , Luke 27:26)

**Psalm 35:15b They slandered me without ceasing.**

This described the abuse they heaped on Jesus from the first of His trials right down to the moment when He was hanging on the cross and darkness descended on the earth. At that point they became strangely quiet.

**Psalm 35:16 Like the ungodly they maliciously mocked; they gnashed their teeth at me.**

Acts 7:54 Indicates that “gnashing of teeth” was a figure of speech that indicated anger and frustration. Acts 7:54 “When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him (*Steven*).” See also Job 16:9.

**Psalm 35:17a O Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my life (soul) from their ravages,**

This may tell us that Jesus did not know how long this ordeal would last. It lasted three hours.

**Psalm 35:17b ~~my precious life~~ “my only son” from these lions.**

The word translated “precious life” here is the Hebrew word יָחִיד {yaw-kheed'}. In most cases it is translated “my only son” or “my only one.” Why the translators chose this translation here is beyond me, except that they didn't understand that this Psalm was talking about Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God. I believe the phrase should be translated “my only son” here. In English usage we might have normally expected this to have been written as “your only son,” but Messianic verses often change tenses and persons in an unexpected way. My preferred reading of the verse would be, “Rescue my life from their ravages, “my only son” from these lions. In this way, Jesus used the name by which the Father thought of Him.

In Messianic Psalm 22 (verses 13 & 21) we see that the “lions” from which the “Son” needed to be rescued spoke of Satan and his demons gathered around the Cross.

**Psalm 35:18 I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you.**

Four times in the Psalms (Psalms 40:9-10, Psalms 26:12, Psalms 22:25 and Psalms 35:18) the voice of the Psalmist speaks of giving thanks or praise in the “great assembly.” Each of the others are Messianic Psalms, and speak of Jesus Christ standing up in the “great assembly”

which occurred on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37-38). The Feast of Tabernacles has great prophetic significance in that it will be ultimately fulfilled when Christ returns and gathers all true Israel (believers) to him in Jerusalem.

**Psalm 35:19 Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye.**

As noted earlier, this was quoted by Jesus Christ and he said it related to the Jews' hatred of Himself: John 15:25 "But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'" This demonstrates that the voice of the entire Psalm is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Psalm 35:20 They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land.**

This speaks again of the fact that Jesus had done nothing but good and had never advocated anything but peacefulness. Pilate knew this. That was why he had no interest in arresting or crucifying Jesus. He had to be coerced by the threats of the High Priests that they would accuse him before the Roman Emperor Tiberius of coddling rebellion.

**Psalm 35:21 ~~They gape at me and say~~ *They opened their mouth wide against me; they said, "Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we have seen it."***

I have substituted the literal translation from the Hebrew for the NIV version. Most of the other versions have the literal translation that I have substituted. I think this phrase refers to the open-mouthed exultations of the human enemies of Christ when they saw that what they had dreamed of and devised for three years had come to pass. They rejoiced to see that Jesus was dying a humiliating death while witnessing how the people were rejecting Him.

**Psalm 35:22a O LORD, you have seen this; be not silent.**

Although the Father and the Spirit had to leave Jesus alone to die on the cross, they saw the suffering of the Son. They not only saw it when it was happening, but they had also seen it in eternity past. They would speak. First the Father spoke by the resurrection of Jesus. Ever since then the Spirit has spoken by the proclamation of Jesus' Gospel.

**Psalm 35:22b-23 Do not be far from me, O Lord. Awake, and rise to my defense! Contend for me, my God and Lord.**

Jesus had confidence that they would come to Him when it was finished.

**Psalm 35:24a Vindicate me in your righteousness, O LORD my God;**

Jesus knew that His righteousness could stand before the Father's righteousness. Because, as believers, we are clothed in Christ's righteousness, we also can stand.

**Psalm 35:24b-25 do not let them gloat over me. Do not let them think, "Aha, just what we wanted!" or say, "We have swallowed him up."**

All those, both demonic and human, who were exulting over His beating, crucifixion and death, were not to be satisfied. Instead of humiliation, His death would result in His glorification.

**Psalm 35:26 May all who gloat over my distress be put to shame and confusion; may all who exalt themselves over me be clothed with shame and disgrace.**

It would also result instead in the shame and disgrace of His enemies.

**Psalm 35:27a May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness;**

This would be the reaction of those who had believed in Jesus. Jesus had prophesied the night before His death:

John 16:20 "I tell you the truth; you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."

**Psalm 35:27b may they always say, "The LORD be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant."**

Jesus was the "servant" in whom the Lord "delighted" as confirmed by Matthew where Isaiah 42:1 was quoted describing Jesus:

Matthew 12:17-18a "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight.'"

As Jesus said of Himself in Matthew 20:28: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Psalm 35:28 My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.**

In His life, death, and resurrection Jesus revealed by His words and His deeds the nature of God. He said to His disciples:

John 14:9b-10 "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

Jesus was the living word (Revelation 19:13, John 1:1-2) and His life and words (tongue) testify to the righteousness of God. They also testify that He is worthy of praise:

Revelation 5:12 “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

**AMEN!!!!**