



AREOPAGUS PROCLAMATION

Volume 15 • No. 6 • March, 2005

Revised to 04/2019

WAS JESUS' PIERCING PROPHESIED?

by Daryl E. Witmer

One way to validate the truth of Christianity would be to conclusively demonstrate that the Bible is true revelation from God, right?

One way to demonstrate that the Bible is true revelation from God would be to demonstrate the case for fulfilled Bible prophecy, right?

One way to make the case for fulfilled Bible prophecy would be to substantiate that the scene described in Psalm 22 became reality in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, right?

WHO AUTHORED PSALM 22?

David, the one-time King of Israel, has traditionally been accepted as the author of Psalm 22.

WHEN DID DAVID LIVE?

David reigned circa 1000 B.C.E.

BROADLY ACCEPTED FACT

The Gospels were written sometime in the first century C.E. (or A.D.)

A FAIR CONCLUSION

Psalm 22 was written about 1000 years before the Gospel accounts.

A PROBING QUESTION

How can the uncanny match between so much of Psalm 22 (vv 7-8, 14-18; especially verse 16!) and the crucifixion scene of Jesus be attributed to anything other than Divine inspiration through the psalmist?

KEEP THIS IN MIND

Crucifixion was not established as a form of capital punishment until 600 B.C. or so, being later refined by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians.

STATISTICAL PROBABILITY

A bimonthly thoughtletter published by the AIIA Institute PO Box 262 Monson, Maine 04464

Actual records of the Roman Empire tell us that in the year of Christ's crucifixion about 350 people were crucified by the Romans, as this was, by that time, their official form of capital punishment.

The population of the Roman Empire at that point in history was 85 million. So the odds of anyone being crucified that year were about 1 in 242,857.¹

BUT WHAT ABOUT PSALM 22:16?

Some claim that Psalm 22:16 is not accurately rendered in many Bibles — that it doesn't really say anything about hands or feet being "pierced."

A CREDIBLE RESPONSE

Most English-based Bibles translate the very last phrase of Psalm 22:16 this way: "They pierced my hands and my feet."

Hebrew Bibles (the *Tanakh*) render the exact same phrase: "Like a lion, they are at my hands and my feet."

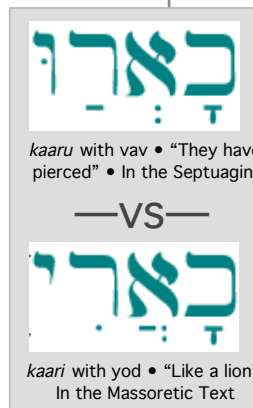
Why the difference? Who is right? Which is correct?

The Hebrew term *kaaru* means: "they have pierced." The Hebrew term *kaari* means: "like a lion."

The two Hebrew terms are identical except for the fact that *kaaru* ends with the Hebrew letter *vav*, and *kaari* ends with the Hebrew letter *yod*.

Vav and *yod* are essentially alike except for the fact that *vav* has a long 'tail' on its end. *Yod* does not (see graphic). And note that Hebrew is read right to left.

It seems possible that at some point a Masorete scribe, tediously copying the Hebrew text, inadvertently or otherwise, failed to attach that longer, vertical, descending extension to the *vav*, thus rendering the *vav* a *yod*.



This very possibly led to most (but not all, and not even the earliest) of the Masoretic text manuscript set on which the Hebrew Bible is based, being similarly henceforth mistaken.

A CRITICAL QUESTION

But isn't it possible that it was actually *Christians* who manipulated the Hebrew text in their English Bibles in order to support the story of Jesus' death by crucifixion?

Not likely, for two reasons:

- The Greek version of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*, or LXX) which was completed two centuries B.C.E., and the *Great Psalms Scroll* (of the Dead Sea Scrolls) both render Psalm 22:16 with *kaaru*, i.e. "they pierced."
- The phrase "they are at my" is not in the Masoretic text, and "like a lion my hands and my feet" makes little sense. Even if those four words were there, the idea of lions being at one's hands and feet seems nonsensical.

OUR CONCLUSION

Psalm 22:16, written about 1000 years before Jesus' crucifixion, really *does* refer to the one aspect of crucifixion that is unique. No other form of human execution involves the piercing of the hands and feet.

In combination with the rest of Psalm 22 and the account of Jesus' death, we have here a dramatic demonstration of fulfilled Bible prophecy and, thus also, the Divine origin of the Christian Scripture.

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

¹ *An Engineer Evaluates the Bible*, M. B. Bleecker, Wanaque NJ, former aeronautical engineer.

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- <https://carm.org/does-psalm-22-16-really-predict-jesus-crucifixion>
- *The Pulpit Commentary*, © 2001 AGES Software Rio, CD-ROM.
- *Clarke's Commentary*, Abingdon Press