

"Trouble Is Near"

The Psalm of the Cross

Psalm 22

This is by far the most moving of all psalms, and possibly of all Scripture for it relates to us the exact image of the suffering Jesus went through on the cross.

The title of the psalm is a difficult one to decipher, but its purpose is to point to the importance of the content of the psalm. We have seen the title, "To the chief musician" in the past few psalms so we know that it is a psalm that was meant to be sung in a corporate worship setting. What is unknown is what "upon Aijetleth Shahar" means in relation to the title. "Aijetleth" in Hebrew refers to a doe and the word "Shahar" in Hebrew indicates the dawn of the morning. Literally, the words mean "hind of the dawn." The best explanation I could find that makes sense to me is from Spurgeon:

"Our Lord Jesus is so often compared to a hind, and his cruel huntings are so pathetically described in this most affecting psalm, that we cannot but believe that the title indicates the Lord Jesus under a well-known poetical metaphor; at any rate, Jesus is that Hind of the morning concerning whom David here sings."

The immediate occasion of the psalm is unknown with any certainty, but it is quite possible that it is David's suffering at the hand of Saul. Although the occasion may not be clear, the purpose is: the obvious purpose of the Psalm is the death and resurrection of our Lord.

The psalm is divided into 2 primary parts. Verses 1-20 are a cry for help; verses 21-31 are a foretaste of deliverance. It breaks down to the future crucifixion of Christ, and then

His subsequent resurrection and glory in heaven.

This psalm very clearly shows the humanity of Christ, and as such, the psalmist uses terms that we would understand as it related to His humanity.

Even though this psalm is clearly a Messianic psalm, there were very real circumstances in the life of the psalmist that are scattered throughout. They are there to help us know that no matter what we go through in life, the Lord is there with us every step of the way.

I. THE CRY FOR HELP - THE SUFFERING OF THE CROSS - VS. 1-21

These are not in chronological order as they are found in the New Testament, but they are in an order to fit the purpose of the song.

A. Vs. 1 compared to Matthew 27:46 - a view of Jesus when the Father turned His back on Him for the sins of mankind.

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

1. The word for “forsaken” in both the Hebrew and the Greek mean to leave behind – in the Greek, to leave behind in any place or state. As used in Matthew 27:46, it has the meaning of to leave in the lurch, desert, abandon.
2. The second part of the verse serves as a parallel to the first and restates it. It describes in detail what is meant by the question, “Why hast thou forsaken me?”

3. The word for "roaring" - שָׁאָה - is literally the roaring of a lion. Used figuratively here, it means to roar in distress, moaning or groaning. It describes the agonizing pain our Savior was in while on the cross, magnified exponentially by the forsaking of the Father.

B. Vs. 2 compared to Matthew 27:45 - the hours of darkness.

Matthew 27:45

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

C. Vs. 3 - David knew, as did Jesus, that no matter what happens God is still absolutely Holy.

D. Vs. 4-5 - the deliverance of God's people in the past can be a great comfort to us in our time of need.

E. Vs. 6-8 compared to Matthew 27:39-44

Matthew 27:39-44

³⁹ And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

⁴⁰ And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

⁴¹ Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

⁴² He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be 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 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast

the same in his teeth.

F. Vs. 9-10 - a picture of the birth and childhood of Jesus.

G. Vs. 11-13 - another cry for help - a picture of the Garden of Gethsemane.

H. Vs. 14-17 - a vivid description of the suffering the body goes through during a crucifixion:

1. Bones of the hands, arms, shoulders and pelvic out of joint - vs. 14a
2. The action of the heart affected - vs. 14b
3. Strength exhausted and extreme thirst - vs. 15
4. The hands and feet pierced - vs. 16
5. His body was so tortured while hanging on the cross all his bones could be seen and counted ("tell all my bones"). Another aspect here is that His body was so mutilated by the scourging and the beatings that His bones would have been literally visible - vs. 17.

Isaiah 52:14

¹⁴ As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

I. Vs. 18 is fulfilled at the cross as recorded in Matthew 27:35.

Matthew 27:35

³⁵ And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among

them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

J. Vs. 19-21 is the final cry from the cross.

These verses point back to verse one and the forsaking by the Father. Now, the Savior is aware of the Father's presence and is crying out one last time for deliverance. This most likely was done in his heart and not out loud.

II. THE FORETASTE OF DELIVERANCE - VS. 22-31 - PROPHECY OF THE RESURRECTION AND THE SETTING UP OF THE KINGDOM.

A. Vs. 22; John 20:17; Heb. 2:9-18 - the time between the death on the cross and the ascension to heaven is in view here.

John 20:17

¹⁷ Jesus saith unto her, **Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.**

B. Vs. 23-25 - the result of the resurrection is that the same God that raised up Jesus will raise us up, too.

Romans 8:11

¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

C. Vs. 26-31 - a picture of the Millennium where all will praise the Lord.

On one occasion Michelangelo turned to his fellow artists and said with frustration in his voice, "Why do you keep filling gallery after gallery with endless pictures on the one theme of Christ in

weakness, Christ on the cross, and most of all, Christ hanging dead?" he asked. "Why do you concentrate on the passing episode as if it were the last work, as if the curtain dropped down there on disaster and defeat? That dreadful scene lasted only a few hours. But to the unending eternity Christ is alive; Christ rules and reigns and triumphs!"

Michelangelo was right. Even though the cross is vitally important because of the redemption Jesus accomplished for us there, we must not emphasize His death to the exclusion of His resurrection victory. We should think of Him now in His glorified state in heaven.

Conclusion: In this Psalm we saw the crucifixion. We also saw the glorious account of the resurrection and future reign of Christ as King. What will we do with it?