

Psalm 22 - The Bigger Picture

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[0 : 00] So turn your Bibles to Psalm 22, which is where we're going to be this evening. It's page 554. And Hannah is going to come and read for us. So page 554, Psalm 22.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer. By night, but I find no rest. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One. You are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust. They trusted and you delivered them.

To you they cried out and were saved. In you they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man. Scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

All who see me mock me. They hurl insults, shaking their heads. He trusts in the Lord, they say. Let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

[1 : 08] Yet you brought me out of the womb. You made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you. From my mother's womb you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me. Strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.

I am poured out like water. All my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax. It has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd. And my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me. A pack of villains encircles me. They pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display. People stare and gloat over me.

They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength. Come quickly to help me.

[2 : 13] Deliver me from the sword. My precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of lions. Save me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will declare your name to my people.

In the assembly I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you descendants of Jacob, honour him. Revere him, all you descendants of Israel. For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one.

He has not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help. From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly. Before those who fear you, I will fulfil my vows.

The poor will eat and be satisfied. Those who seek the Lord will praise him. May your hearts live forever. All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord.

All the families of the nations will bow down before him. For dominion belongs to the Lord. And he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship. All who go down to the dust will kneel before him.

[3 : 16] Those who cannot keep themselves alive. Austerity will serve him. Future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness. Declaring to a people yet unborn.

He has done it. Amen. Thank you, Hannah. So Psalm 22. We're going to start.

And we're going to start with a question here. Who here likes jigsaw puzzles? Raise a hand.

Participation. Who likes jigsaw puzzles? Like a few.

Half-committal over here. Some people over here. Okay. There's maybe 40-60 split here. People that like it versus people that don't. My wife, Megan, and I, we don't normally have a jigsaw puzzle out.

But there's something about the time of year when it smells like gingerbread in the air. And how the Grinch stole Christmas is on our TV. That it makes us say, I think we want to do a puzzle.

[4 : 16] Actually, I probably should rephrase that. It makes Megan want to do a puzzle. I don't like jigsaw puzzles that much. In fact, I'm quite rubbish at them.

I get two jobs when we do jigsaw puzzles. One of them is to find the corner pieces and the side pieces. Like the ones with the straight edges, Seth, look for those. And then once we've found those, my job is to turn all of the pieces over so that you can see the color side. And then start to group them by like blue goes over here, red goes over here. And space them out that way. See, I have a hard time seeing the vision of the puzzle that we're trying to make, right? And see, I would say that what helps, though, when you pick out a piece and you pick out a blue piece and you go, Ah, wait a minute. Do I know if this blue piece belongs to the sky? Or does it maybe belong to the ocean? Or maybe it belongs to the face of a member of the blue man group. Whatever it is, how I know where this puzzle piece goes is because of the picture on the box, right?

[5 : 19] You have a reference point outside of that. See, I think it would be very, very hard to put together a puzzle. I know there's some people that probably could do it, but it would be very, very hard to put together a puzzle if you did not have the picture on the box.

David here is going to tell us that basically our lives are like pieces of a puzzle. We don't get to see the whole thing.

But there is a picture that we can see, the picture on the box. So we won't see exactly how this puzzle is going to look. But there's a picture on the box that we can look to and point to and know eventually we know what this completed puzzle is going to look like.

So today we're going to look at just a few pieces of the puzzle in Psalm 22 here to help us understand what Psalm 22 is saying so that we can better understand this puzzle that we're a part of, which we call life, and see that bigger picture.

All right? Does that make sense? All right. So let's go there. We're going to start with the first piece of the puzzle. And the first piece of the puzzle is David. You have to know who is writing this and kind of the context of what David is writing in order to understand the puzzle.

[6 : 34] So David, if you've been a part of church any amount of time, you know who David is, right? Shepherd boy with a meteoric rise to being king of Israel.

He defeats a giant. He unites the 12 tribes. For my Gen Z audience, he is him. Did I use that right? Lucy is dying back there in the back.

He is the guy that everybody in Israel is looking up to and points to. But he didn't always have an easy life. See, there's multiple times that he went on the run.

He went on the run from Saul. He went on the run from some of his sons. He did not have an easy life. There was even one point that he's a madman. He has to act like a madman in front of the king of Gath.

The king of Gath comes up to him and he starts to scratch on the walls and has spittle running from his beard. And the king of Gath goes, wait a minute. Why did you bring a madman to me?

[7 : 36] We have enough of these. Take him back. Take him away. So David went through a lot of stuff. But never once do we see him go through what's described here.

See, we know more about David than any other king in antiquity. But for our biblical scholars in the room, have you ever seen these words applied to him? Let's look at verse 14.

It says, I am poured out like water and all of my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax. It has melted within me. Or verse 16. It says, they pierce my hands and my feet.

All my bones are on display. And you can even skip down to verse 18. And verse 18 here is actually going to talk about death. It says, they divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garments.

See, a dead man is not in need of clothes. In fact, if a person is being publicly executed, you've got to think one of their last possessions that they actually have is the clothes on their back, right?

[8 : 37] And this person is being publicly executed in this psalm is seeing the people gamble over his clothes and put more stock and more value into the clothes that were on this man than the person that is dying.

So, David had a hard life. Absolutely. Absolutely. But he never went through trials like this where he was being killed.

So, what does this mean? Well, it means we have to look at David here and what he is writing about like the apostle Peter looked at David in Acts 2.

We have to look at him as a prophet. Now, that doesn't mean that David wasn't going through something when he was writing these words. And it doesn't mean that these words don't apply to

David's life.

But it means that he was looking when he was writing this, it was actually going to apply to someone in the future. So, that's when we move into our next puzzle piece.

[9 : 40] And in this next puzzle piece, in order to understand Psalm 22, we have to understand a few more pieces of the puzzle. In Psalm 22, we're going to see that it's referring to a Messiah figure.

And in this Messiah figure, that is going to be Jesus here in just one second, he has two things that go completely wrong in Psalm 22. His relationship with God gets severed and his covenant with God gets severed.

So, we're going to look at Psalm 22 through those two aspects, the relationship with God and the covenant with God. So, let's dive into that first one, the Messiah's relationship with God. And once we understand these, I think we're going to have a better understanding of that picture on the box that we're pointing to, right?

So, let's take a look at verse one. It says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from, that's too far away, I need to read the book closer, saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?

My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer. By night, but I find no rest. See, as I said earlier, these first words here apply to Jesus.

[10 : 49] These are words that Jesus spoke when he was hanging on the cross. And what Jesus does here is he applies these words to himself in that situation. It's somewhat hard to remember, I forget kind of often, that back when Jesus was alive, they didn't have chapter references and verse references.

So, if you were trying to get somebody to go to Psalm 22, look at verse 6, you wouldn't say, hey, turn your Bible, or whatever they had at that moment, their scroll, to Psalm 22, verse 6.

Instead, how they knew their psalms was by the first line of the psalm. And so here, Jesus is saying, My God, my God, why are you forsaking me? And all of the Jewish people that are around the cross would go, Oh, wait a minute.

I know that psalm. He's referring to Psalm 22. But even going one step further, he's not just applying verses 1 and 2, or verse 1, to himself here when he cries out on the cross.

What he is saying to his Jewish audience is that this entire psalm, all of these verses apply to me.

Not just the one that, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[11 : 56] But all of them apply to me. And we'll see that that's very important here later on in the message. So, we understand that Jesus is applying this psalm, but what does it really mean?

Well, see, when Jesus says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? These are not just throwaway words. See, Jesus is using intentional here the language of covenant intimacy when he says, My God, my God.

Think about it like this. When I talk about my wife, if I'm saying something about you, and I say, My Megan, that's going to convey a sense of intimacy, right?

It's going to convey to you that I know something about Megan. I have a more personal relationship than probably you do with her. And I'm conveying that by saying she is mine. She's a part.

I know her in a deeper way. What Jesus is saying here is he's invoking that same kind of intimacy. When he is hanging on the cross, he says, My God, my God.

[12 : 59] And why is this so important? Well, it's because from the beginning of time, Jesus has always been in relationship with the Father.

It's something we can't even wrap our minds around, right? With the Father and the Spirit, God, Jesus has always been in an intimate relationship with. And in this moment, he is feeling for the very first time separation.

There's this hormone that can be produced. It's called oxytocin. It can be colloquially known as the love hormone or the cuddle hormone, okay? This hormone is responsible for the good feelings that you get when you touch a loved one or when you cuddle with a significant other, right?

This hormone operates on a positive feedback loop, meaning if I go up to you and I hug you, I get a release of oxytocin. This then makes me feel good and makes me want to go and hug more people to continue to get that release of oxytocin.

Positive feedback loop. Colloquially around West Kilburn, we call it the Louise hormone. Just kidding, Louise. But genuinely, it operates on this positive feedback loop, but the same can be said in reverse.

[14 : 23] It can also operate on a negative feedback loop. So if you don't get a hug from a significant other or whatever, and you spend a significant time apart from them, then oxytocin doesn't fire.

And actually, you want to remove yourself from the situation even further and remove yourself from physical touch until you kind of start to spiral down. So why long-distance relationships are so hard, right? Because there's a person that you care about, but you're not getting this release.

You're not getting this hormone that you normally do when you're in the presence of that person. And so imagine here this relationship that is in perfect harmony.

It's basically an unlimited amount of oxytocin, if you will, that exists between this relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are perfectly aligned.

They have always been connected from eternity past until eternity future. They will always be together. But right here at this moment on Calvary, Jesus has that relationship severed.

[15 : 26] And he feels the anguish of it, right? I'm going to ask you a question. Have you ever thought why Jesus was so distraught in the Garden of Gethsemane?

See, there's been a lot of people, if you really think about it, that have faced death, quote-unquote, braver than Jesus, right?

I mean, I can name you a few. William Tyndale was an English reformer. He was burned at the stake, and before they burned him, he's known for saying, Lord, open the king of England's eyes. Tyndale got in trouble because he was translating the Bible into English. And as he's about to face death, he calls out not to save his own life, but to open the eyes of the king of England.

Or, going way back to the third century, there's Perpetua and Felicity. These are two women that were killed in a Roman amphitheater because of their belief in Jesus.

[16 : 33] Right before they're about to be devoured by wild animals, Perpetua is, or Perpetua, I don't know if I'm saying that right, is known as saying, she's recorded as saying, stand fast in the faith and love one another, and do not let our sufferings be a stumbling block to you.

I mean, you can list people in the Bible that face death. Stephen, when he was stoned, Peter is widely believed to be crucified upside down because he didn't want to be crucified the same way his savior was.

The disciples in the beginning of Acts are actually rejoicing the fact that they get persecuted because they get to be counted like Jesus. So all of these people faced death a bit braver than Jesus, if you will.

So why is Jesus, all these other people, die these brave deaths in the name of Christianity, why is Jesus then so distraught that he is sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Well, it's because he's not just facing death, but he's facing, for the first time in his life, his relationship with the Father, this intimacy that he has had from all of eternity, is going to be severed.

[17 : 53] See, this relationship with the Father was responsible for him being able to do his ministry. It was responsible for him to be able to serve God. I mean, it was his entire identity, and yet here, in this moment, it's gone.

And so he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He is completely wrecked. But see, the fracturing relationship isn't the only reason Jesus is so distraught when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

See, there's another reason, and we'll have to understand that piece of the puzzle as well to get a better picture, get a better view of the picture on the box. And that piece of the puzzle is covenant.

See, Jesus had a covenant with the Father. When he went to the cross, he wasn't just dying, but instead, he was a sacrifice for us, right? All of the sins of the world were laid on his shoulders.

And so, as a sacrifice, he goes to the grave, and all the sins of the world were laid on his shoulder, and they are buried with Christ in the grave.

[19 : 05] Look again at verse 1. It says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Forsaken there is a covenant word. To forsake means to break the covenant.

And humans, man, we are terrible at covenants, aren't we? I mean, from the very beginning of time, we lived in a perfect garden when we were Adam, right? We lived in this perfect garden, and yet Adam still couldn't keep the covenant with God to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Instead, he disobeys God, eats of the tree, and is then kicked out of the garden. Humans are terrible at covenants. But, on the flip side, you look at Jesus.

Well, he's not been terrible at covenants. Look at verse 9 in Psalm 22. It says that, I have always trusted you. I have kept the words of the Lord. I've kept the words of God.

And in verse 9, from the womb, verse 9 says, he has trusted God. And he repeats that covenantal phrase when he says, my God. There's only been one person that's lived a life and didn't deserve punishment.

[20 : 10] It was Jesus. He was the new Adam. He was the new Moses. He was the new Abraham, the new David. He did everything right.

And yet we find him here in Psalm 22 nailed to a wooden cross. His flesh is torn. His bones are on display. His tongue is so dry he can't move it.

And dice are being rolled for his coat. It is in this place that the Lord has all the weight of the sin of the world on his shoulders.

The covenant curse, the curse for breaking the covenant is placed on the only person that didn't deserve it. Why? Well, that leads us to the last piece of the covenant, to the puzzle, us.

See, in order to understand the picture on the box, we have to understand ourselves a bit. We are full of nastiness, aren't we? There's not a day that goes by that we don't try and make ourselves the God of our lives in some way.

[21 : 21] Not one of us is just. Not one of us is righteous. Job, one of the most righteous men in the Old Testament, he said this, how can a man be just before God?

Job got his answer and the answer is good enough for us as well. You want to be just before God? Be perfect. Have no faults, have no blemishes, just be perfect.

But obviously, God knew that we couldn't do that. We were set up in a perfect environment and couldn't do it. And so he had to send his son to be the sinless, perfect sacrifice for us.

He took the shame, he took the sin, he took our suffering so that God's justice could be satisfied. So on him, all of those things go and now what we get if we believe is the blessing of Christ poured out onto us.

This is the greatest news that anyone can hear. This is the gospel. And see, when we put our sins on Christ, our sins are buried. They don't come back up again.

[22 : 33] See, because when Christ died, he didn't just stay dead, but he defeated death by rising three days later, showing who has ultimate authority over everything here. And so, because of this, we can live our lives assured knowing we know what the picture on the box looks like.

Christ loved us. He died for us. The righteous for the unrighteous, this is the picture on the box.

This is how it all plays out. But I know what some of you are thinking. You're saying, great, Seth, this is a great, great, great message. At least I hope you're thinking that.

For a Sunday morning. But listen, Seth, I'm a first-team Christian. I'm here on a Sunday night. I know what I'm doing. What does this mean for me? Well, see, Christ's death and resurrection isn't just good for the sinner when he comes to know Christ, but it's actually the key to living the Christian life.

See, let's look at, you can look at Christ's sacrifice, and when you see Christ's sacrifice, do you see that you can cast your cares upon him and he takes your burdens?

[23 : 50] So we listed two examples in this passage, right, of a covenant and a relationship. Christ is distraught because he has lost his relationship with God and he has lost his covenant with God, right?

We've seen that. But in the midst of this loss, in the midst of this hardship, it's almost as if Christ and the writer of the psalm, David, realize that, wait a minute, this isn't how all of this ends.

See, verse 21, told you I'm terrible at this. Verse 21, sorry, I got ahead. Verse 21 says, sorry, I got out of talk here.

Verse 21, David has just talked about dying. His hands have been pierced, his bones are display, on display. Lions have surrounded him, but in the middle of all of this, in verse 21, the language changes.

See, the NIV translates it as save me. I don't think it's a bad translation, but I just don't necessarily think it's the best translation either of this Hebrew word. See, save me almost makes you think in the future, but the Hebrew word here is almost translated into past tense.

[25 : 04] So I'm going to read verse 21. I want you to follow along with me. Look in the Bible. I'm going to read this from the ESV and just see a little bit how the emphasis changes. So verse 21, it says, save me, past tense, from the mouth of the lion, but check this out, you have rescued me from

the horns of the wild oxen.

In the midst of his suffering, the passage just automatically changes tune. It would catch you off guard if I did that in a sermon, right? As quickly as he started, he changes again.

Okay. It's almost as if the writer of the psalm and then thus Christ when he is talking about himself remembers in the midst of his suffering who has the ultimate victory.

And the same can be applied for us when we are in the midst of broken relationships, when we feel like we cannot go on, when life has been hard, when we have no hope, when we feel like all is lost, we can cast our cares on him.

When life has been beating us down, when we feel weak, when our bones are exposed, when the covenant that we've built our life on is no longer a firm foundation, we can do what Peter says, cast our cares upon the Lord and at the proper time, he will exalt us.

[26 : 25] So let's move to a close and think about how this puzzle plays out in the life of someone that we may or may not know.

John Wycliffe was a 14th century reformer. He's from northern England, a town called Hipswell, and he became a preacher.

He went down to Oxford, studied, and started to become a preacher. And Wycliffe started to develop a theology that wasn't really popular at the time. You see, in the 13th century, 14th century, sorry, in the 14th century, if you could get a job as a priest and as a preacher, go for it.

You had a free house, job security, it can fire you, and income was stable. And it was because of this that people wanted to be preachers, and they didn't actually study the word.

A survey that was run a little bit after Wycliffe's time, actually, says that they ran a poll and asked preachers, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, how many commandments did God give him?

[27 : 51] Preachers looked around and just went... And then a follow-up question on that survey was, and when God, where would you find these 10 commandments that God gave Moses?

What book of the Bible would you find them in? Their best guess was the book of Matthew. And so it was into this that John Wycliffe starts to speak the truth.

He starts to study and he starts to read. When he's reading Paul, he says, by grace alone, by faith alone. And he starts to preach these things.

He makes such a big stink that he actually goes to trial at St. Paul's Cathedral in central London, and he's on trial there for preaching a gospel that's not the truth, according to the Church of England, and then all of a sudden, a fight breaks out at St. Paul's Cathedral and he escapes.

And he spends the rest of his life preaching this gospel. Praying for reformation. Praying for revival. Praying for people to wake up and see that there is a hope out there that is the gospel.

[29 : 09] But in 1384, he dies of a stroke. There's no big movement. There's no change in the hearts of people. And if you look at it, you take John Wycliffe's puzzle piece, you just look at it.

You go, hmm, John Wycliffe, you fought a good fight, but what a waste. What a waste your life was, John Wycliffe.

Except for the Reformation. You see, because Wycliffe wrote down a lot of the stuff that he was talking about, right? And then later, an Augustinian monk is tasked with copying Wycliffe's writings. And he's copying and he goes, by faith alone. Huh? Huh? By grace alone.

That's not what I've been hearing. And it changes that monk's life. The monk was Martin Luther, who would go on to lead the Reformation, a movement that we can trace our roots back to as Wes Kilburn.

[30 : 29] So if you're just looking at the piece of the puzzle, you'd say, what a waste. See, your life and my life, they are just pieces of a grand puzzle that God is creating.

So when we feel beat down, when we feel discouraged, let's not forget to look up and see the picture that is on the box. And we realize that we may not know what this puzzle is exactly going to look like, but we know how it ends and it's going to look like that picture on the box.

I'm going to end it with a verse that kind of shows us what that picture on the box will look like. This is from Ephesians. It says, therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for today. we thank you that your son was crucified on the cross or that went through the pain of being separated from you, went through the pain of not having his covenant relationship with you so that we could.

God, this is the good news. We wouldn't have thought this up if he gave us a thousand tries, but all we have to do is by faith alone, through grace alone, believe in this fact that your son took on our sins, was buried and three days later rose again and we can be changed.

[32 : 24] Lord, we're thankful that we get to be at peace in this grand puzzle. So as we go into a moment here of reflection around the Lord's table, Lord, let us thank you with hearts open for the greatness of your love towards us and let us search to see if there's any part of our little puzzle piece that maybe isn't reflecting that grand picture that we should be.

Lord, and let us confess that to you today. I pray all of these things in your mighty name. Amen.
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