

Jesus in the Dark

The Cross (Part 15)

Mark 15:33-34 (Mt.27:45-46; Lk.23:44-45) 2/11/2023

While Jesus was on the cross, darkness came upon the whole land for 3 hours. What happened in that darkness? And why is it important for us to know about it? In this study we'll look deeply into that darkness and discover truths about the cross you may have never heard before.

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Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour. **34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Darkness

God Has His Say

We're studying the crucifixion account in Mark 15 and we left off last time at the half way point. Jesus was on the cross 6 hours; we covered the first three, which puts us right at high noon. And at noon, everything changes.

The first half of those six hours was full of mockery. Everybody wanted to get in on it, and it was a loud, raucous three hours. But then came high noon.

Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour (that's noon¹) darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour.

That's everything Mark has to say about those three hours. What were the soldiers doing? We don't know. What about the crowds, the chief priests, the other criminals? What was Jesus saying? Not a word about any of that. For Mark, the only thing that mattered during those three hours was the darkness.

Mark divides Jesus' time on the cross in half. The first half, man had his say. The second half, God has his say. But God doesn't use words. He has his say by turning off the sun.

It wasn't an eclipse. No eclipse lasts 3 hours, and you can't even have a solar eclipse at Passover, because Passover is always at the time of the full moon. It wasn't a storm, it wasn't cloudy—it's an awesome, terrifying, supernatural darkness. And it rattled the people.

Luke 23:48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away.

God shut the mockers' mouths.

Darkness Means Judgment

Now, if that darkness is the only thing that mattered, we need to think carefully about what it meant, right? So that's all we're going to do tonight is try to take a peek into that darkness and see what it means. And I'll tell you right now, it's loaded with meaning. This will take us two sessions.

What is the significance of the darkness? Well, it doesn't take a Bible expert to figure out that if you're doing something and the sky goes black in the middle of the day, God's not happy with you. Darkness in the middle of the day would be interpreted as a sign of divine wrath by Jews, pagans, polytheists—pick your religion.

And that interpretation is confirmed throughout the Old Testament. For example, in Dt.28 where God describes what it's like to come under his judgment.

Deuteronomy 28:29 At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark.

¹ Sunrise to sundown was divided into 12 even segments they called hours. Sunrise was zero and sunset was the 12th hour. So the length of each hour would be shorter in the winter than the summer. But there were always 12 "hours" of daylight.

That's one of many examples. So generally speaking, darkness indicates judgment.

Judgment on the Powers

So it was a sign of judgment—judgment on whom? What has Mark said about the sun going dark? Back in ch.13, when Jesus preached on the end times, he said that in between the tribulation and his glorious Second Coming, the sky would go dark.

Mark 13:24 "But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

When we studied that, we found the powers of the heavens are rebellious spiritual beings—the gods who are worshipped by the nations. And generally speaking, all the lights in the heavens—sun, moon, and stars, are associated with those powers.

So Jesus had previously spoken of Judgment Day when those powers would be judged. And now, when Jesus is dying on the cross, we get a preview of that. The sun goes dark. Mark is showing us that this moment is a model of judgment day, and the evil powers, who were orchestrating all the evil behavior of the people, were under God's judgment. Listen to how Paul described what Jesus was doing on the cross.

Colossians 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

The day Jesus died was a very bad day for the powers of the heavens who were in rebellion.

Judgment on the People

The Judgment of Blindness

So the heavens going dark implied judgment going on in the heavens. But that's not the most important aspect. The part Mark emphasizes is the judgment down on the ground.

Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour.

So it's not just a judgment in the heavens; it's a sign of judgment on the people murdering Jesus. So back to our question—what is the meaning of darkness in the book of Mark?

One of Mark's biggest themes has been spiritual blindness and spiritual perception. All through the book, when God takes away the ability to see, it's a judgment on people who have been refusing to see. If you close your eyes to the truth, God will take the light away altogether. Just like Dt.28 says, this darkness is a sign that the whole rest of your life will be a stumbling around in the dark.

If you think about it, this was actually an answer to the Pharisees' prayers. Remember back in ch.8 when they demanded a sign from heaven? "Sure, you can do all kinds of earthly miracles, but we want to see something up in the sky. Then we'll believe." Kind of like what they said during the first three hours on the cross. "Do the miracle we're demanding so that we may see and believe." That's the same thing they were saying back in ch.8 about a sign in the heavens. Do a sign in the sky and we'll see and believe.

Was that true? Would a miracle up in the sky finally open their eyes to see the truth and make them believe?

Do you remember Jesus' answer back in ch.8? It was an incomplete sentence. He said, "I tell you the truth, if any sign is given to this adulterous generation ..." and that's all he said. It's kind of like in our vernacular saying, "If any sign from heaven is given to this generation, so help me ..." and then he walked away.

What's the end of a sentence like that? Nothing good, right? If someone says, "so help me" instead of finishing the sentence, that's a sentence you don't want to hear the end of. If Jesus stops in mid-sentence and walks away, that's a really bad sign.

We've waited 7 chapters for the rest of that sentence, but now we finally get it. If this generation is given a sign from heaven ... what? Here's what. They get their sign from heaven and guess what—it didn't bring light to their eyes. Just the opposite. Instead of opening their eyes so they could see and believe, it made their eyes useless. That's what happens to people who reject the evidence God already gave and demand different evidence.

The Light of the World

If you want to see the real world, you have to accept the truth about Jesus. Have you ever thought about the fact that at Jesus' birth there was light in the middle of the night? And at his death, there was darkness at noon. It's Jesus, not the forces of nature, that determines whether it will be light or dark, and he is a more reliable source of light and life even than the sun.

All of Humanity

So, the darkness was a judgment on the powers of the heavens and it was a judgment on the people murdering Jesus. And what kind of people were involved in that? Every kind. And we've seen that every sector of humanity is represented in the murder of Jesus. The Jewish leaders, the crowds, Gentile rulers, soldiers, bystanders, criminals—even Jesus' own disciples betraying him and abandoning him. Every segment of humanity is represented in the murder of Jesus, everyone had a hand in it... , which means if you and I had been there, we would have acted the same way. And so the darkness didn't just descend on the chief priests and Pharisees. When darkness came upon the whole land, that was a sign of God's judgment on the entire human race.

Judgment on Jesus

But why just a sign of judgment? Why didn't God actually punish them? He did, but the punishment landed on mankind's representative—the last Adam, Jesus. The only response to that darkness Mark gives us is v.34.

33 At the sixth hour darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" --which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The judgment on Israel fell on Israel's shepherd, who came to fulfill all that Israel was supposed to be. The judgment on humanity fell on the ultimate human, who stands for the whole human race as the last Adam.

What Was It Like for Jesus?

So what was it like for Jesus during those three hours of darkness? The reason darkness is so often used as an indication of God's displeasure is that God is light. So darkness is what happens when he turns his face away.

Light brings life. Darkness brings death.

With light comes perception and understanding. When there is light, you can see. With darkness comes ignorance and confusion and stumbling. Light exposes threats. Darkness surrounds you with danger—danger that you can't even see coming.

As Psalm 22 describes, bulls and wild beasts surrounded him. Wild animals often stand for evil spirits. All the forces of darkness swirled around Jesus to torment him without any protection from God.

Light is connected to joy. Darkness with gloom.

Think of the very first reference to darkness in the Bible.

Genesis 1:2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep.

That's what it was like before the days of creation. God's first act of creation was to create light and put darkness in its place. So for darkness to show up at noon, in the time and place where light belongs, is a sign of de-creation. The undoing of everything God has done to make human life possible. It's like the very creation is coming apart at the seams when Jesus dies. All that sustains life is being withheld. All the horrible things darkness represents—that's what Jesus endured in those three hours.

When God turns the light of his countenance toward you, you can handle anything. We read about martyrs who were burned at the stake who had tears of joy while they were burning. Paul and Silas were singing while they were in stocks in prison. In Acts 4 the Apostles rejoiced when they were flogged for Jesus' sake. So often God gives special grace to his children in severe suffering that brings them joy. That's how it had always been for Jesus. In the past, when Jesus drew near to the Father in prayer, he experienced joy and hope and strengthening... —all the various benefits that come from the light of God's presence. Even in Gethsemane God sent angels to comfort him.

But not this time. When he turned to God this time, no joy, no feelings of hope, no comfort—none of that. This time God allowed Jesus to feel the ice cold, pitch black, outer darkness as if he had been completely abandoned by the Father.

It was in the depths of that darkness that Jesus took our sin upon himself so that our evil was credited to his account in God's eyes. It was in that unbearable blackness that the Son of God was cursed and made a curse as God laid on him the iniquity of us all. It's a wonder he was even able to cry out.

What was it like for Jesus during those three hours of darkness? Judging from his response, it was evidently worse than all the previous torture. There's no record that Jesus made a peep through the whole flogging, nailing to the cross, all the physical torture, the mocking, the humiliation. As a lamb before its shearers is silent, so Jesus didn't make a

sound. But the darkness—that got to him. All the hours of the people barking their jeers at him, he could handle. But three hours of silence from heaven pushed Jesus to the breaking point and he finally cries out.

Think about the extremes of emotion Jesus was feeling at that point. When you're in a crowded area, how strong would your emotions have to be for you to say a prayer to God out loud at all, much less shout it at the top of your lungs?

That cup that made Jesus sweat blood just to think about, the cup he begged God not to make him drink it—it was in this terrible darkness that Jesus drank the bitterest dregs. If just the anticipation of that cup almost killed Jesus in Gethsemane, what must the reality have been like?

The Exodus Plague

What else does Mark want us to see in this darkness? When he describes it, he uses language from the darkness plague on Egypt at the Exodus.² At the Exodus, darkness came upon the whole land for three days. At the cross, darkness came upon the whole land for three hours. I'm convinced it's an intentional hyperlink back to the darkness plague.

They call that the penultimate plague, because it was the second to the last. The ultimate plague, the worst of all of them, was the killing of all the firstborn. But of all the plagues leading up to that one, the worst of those was the darkness.

That's amazing when you think about it, because there had been some really, really bad plagues. Horrible sickness, pain, insects, frogs, blood—really bad stuff. But nothing was as bad as the darkness.

That's remarkable because darkness is nothing. Fleas can hurt you, locusts can destroy your crops, frogs can cause problems, but what power does darkness have? It doesn't even exist. It's just a word we use to describe the absence of light. Darkness is literally nothing. And yet it's our greatest threat because of how much we need light for us to exist. We're so needy that all it takes to kill us is nothing—just take away the light.

So why does God want to direct our attention to the Exodus? Because what Jesus was doing was the fulfillment of what happened back then. At the Exodus, there were three days of darkness followed by the death of the firstborn. On the cross, three hours of darkness followed immediately by the death of God's firstborn.

At the Exodus, what was the purpose of the darkness and the death of the firstborn? Salvation. God was delivering his people from bondage. And now, in the ultimate work of salvation and deliverance, the final two plagues are reenacted. But God inflicts those plagues on his own Son.

And at the Exodus, what protected God's people from that final plague? The blood of the lamb. They called it passover, because the angel of death passed over every house marked with the lamb's blood. So in each Israelite house, the lamb died in place of the firstborn. That was the first Passover. And when did Jesus die? Passover.

² Ex. 10:22: ἐγένετο σκότος ... ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν (LXX translation). It came, darkness ... upon all the land

Mark 15:33 σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν Darkness came upon the whole land

His death was not only during Passover, it was the fulfillment of Passover. It was everything Passover pointed to. Jesus was both the firstborn who dies and the lamb who dies in place of God's people who are being delivered from bondage. That's why the night before Jesus transformed the Passover when he told his disciples the bread was his body and the cup was his blood in the New Covenant. All the lines of the entire Old Testament converge on the one, single point of the cross of Christ.

Jesus' Cry

So all that is the significance of the darkness, now let's look at Jesus' response. This is the only time on record Jesus ever speaks to God without calling him Father.

34 ... Jesus cried out³ in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Those are the last words we hear Jesus speak in the Gospel of Mark.

Authentic

You might have expected the Messiah to go out with something a little more victorious. "I will rise!" or he points to the chief priests, "This isn't over!" "I'll be back" or something a little more positive than "My God why have you forsaken me?"

Many Christians through the ages have been embarrassed by this. In the early years when Christians were trying to defend the idea of the Trinity, a question like this from Jesus wasn't much help. They found this verse hard to explain.

But I'd like to suggest that if this verse is a stumbling block for your faith, it should really be the opposite. Verses like this are some of the bedrock cornerstones to give proof to Christianity because even the most liberal critics admit these words are authentic. There's no way the disciples or the church later on would have invented a saying like this and put it in Jesus' mouth if it didn't actually happen. If you're trying to invent a religion and convince everyone that a crucified carpenter is actually almighty God... , and you're trying to invent the doctrine of the Trinity, you wouldn't have him cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And Jesus did say it in a moment of weakness, you're not going to include it in your gospel. If the gospel writers were even the slightest bit dishonest, they would have left stuff like this out.

Passages like this are the best ones to keep in mind whenever you have doubts about the Scriptures. They are proof that the gospel writers were incredibly honest men writing accurately about things that really did happen.

Psalm 22

So what is the explanation? Is it a shock that Jesus uttered these words on the cross? Not if you understand that Jesus was doing what many Christians since then have done when they were in the throes of death—he quoted a line from a favorite hymn—Psalm 22. And if you look back at what those words meant in the context of Psalm 22, they explode with meaning.

³ This word is used twice in Mark. Mark 1:3 and here. The story begins with the forerunner crying out in the desert and it ends with the Messiah crying out on the cross.

And it gives us a whole lot of insight into the meaning of the cross. Jesus isn't just crying out in pain—he's also teaching us. Even in the agony of death, he's still teaching.

So let's take a look at the psalm Jesus pointed us to when he died. Psalm 22 has three very clear sections. All three sections are crucial for understanding the psalm in its original context and all three are crucial for understanding the cross.

Section 1: The Groaning

The first section is the longest. And you could title it “groaning.” The psalmist is absolutely miserable, and he expresses that misery for 21 verses.

What kind of trouble was the psalmist having? Was he sick? Did he lose a loved one? A financial crisis, got into a really bad wagon accident, gored by an ox—what was the problem? He never says. He spends the first 21 verses talking about how devastated he is, but he never gets around to telling us what the hardship was.

So what does he talk about for 21 verses? He talks about the one part of it that he can't handle. Whatever the physical trouble was—he could deal with that. But this one thing, it was too much. What was it? He tells us in the very first verse.

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Everyone else turning against me, that I could take. But you? That I can't bear.

He doesn't say, “My God, my God, why did you let me get sick?” Or, “My God, why did you take my child?” He could endure any hardship if God were close to him, strengthening him. But the part that was unbearable was that distance.

Psalm 22:1 ... Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my roaring⁴?

That is the most intense suffering God's servant can know—God being distant. And to really ratchet up the pain, he's got people all around him rubbing it in.

6 I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. 7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: 8 "He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

The implication is, “God isn't helping you because God has rejected you.” When I lost my ministry, I got a letter from a man that had been my friend and he said, ... “Just like when Samuel told King Saul that God had rejected him as king, God has rejected you too.” I can tell you, that is an exquisite kind of pain when, based on everything that's happening, it has the ring of truth. It really does feel like God has rejected you.

That was the David's situation—for the first time in his life. He had been in plenty of tight spots, but never without God's nearness.

9 You brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. 10 From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.

All my life I've been able to turn to you and find comfort and strength. But this time it's different.

⁴ This is the word used for a lion's roar. Roaring is a better translation than groaning.

And without God to help him, he was at the mercy of his enemies.

11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. 12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. 13 Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.

It was common in Jewish literature to use wild animals as metaphors for demonic powers and evil spiritual beings. Not only are his human enemies closing in, but dark spiritual forces are swarming him. And it's pushing him to the brink of death.

14 I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.⁵ You lay me in the dust of death. 16 Dogs have surrounded me a band of evil men has encircled me, like a lion they pin⁶ my hands and my feet. 17 I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. 18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

Jesus Felt Abandoned

So what did Jesus mean when he quoted the opening line of Psalm 22? He's letting us know that he was going through the same thing David was going through when he wrote Psalm 22.

Did God really forsake Jesus? No. God did not forsake Jesus on the cross. Did Jesus believe God had forsaken him? Or for that matter, did David believe God had forsaken him when he originally wrote that? No, David didn't believe that.

That's the whole point of section 2 of the psalm (Psalm 22:22-26). The whole purpose of that section is to make the point that God didn't really forsake him.

Psalm 22:24 For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

And we don't even have to go all the way to v.24 in section two to prove that. It's obvious just from the line Jesus quoted in v.1.

⁵ This figure is used five times in Scripture that I could find (Job 29:10, Ps.22:15, 137:6, Lam.4:4, Ezekiel 3:26). In Ezekiel, it's a hardship because of the inability to speak. In Lamentations it's a hardship because it's a sign of desperate thirst.

⁶ Here's the note from NET Bible:

Heb "like a lion, my hands and my feet." This reading is often emended because it is grammatically awkward, but perhaps its awkwardness is by rhetorical design. Its broken syntax may be intended to convey the panic and terror felt by the psalmist. The psalmist may envision a lion pinning the hands and feet of its victim to the ground with its paws (a scene depicted in ancient Near Eastern art), or a lion biting the hands and feet. The line has been traditionally translated, "they pierce my hands and feet," and then taken as foreshadowing the crucifixion of Christ. Though Jesus does appropriate the language of this psalm while on the cross (compare v. 1 with Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34), the NT does not cite this verse in describing the death of Jesus. (It does refer to vv. 7-8 and 18, however. See Matt 27:35, 39, 43; Mark 15:24, 29; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24. (If one were to insist on an emendation of כָּאֵרִי)ka'ariy, "like a lion" (to a verb, the most likely verbal root would be) עָרָהkarah, "dig"; see the LXX). In this context this verb could refer to the gnawing and tearing of wild dogs (cf. NCV, TEV, CEV). The ancient Greek version produced by Symmachus reads "bind" here, perhaps understanding a verbal root כָּרַךְ, which is attested in later Hebrew and Aramaic and means "to encircle, entwine, embrace" (see HALOT 497-98 s.v. כָּרַךְ and Jastrow 668 s.v. (כָּרַךְ). Neither one of these proposed verbs can yield a meaning "bore, pierce."

My God

Look at how he addresses God. “My God.” That’s not an insignificant way to address God. Remember back in Mark 12 when Jesus told the Sadducees God is Abraham’s God? When we studied that, we took a deep dive into the concept of God being *your* God. That study was one of my favorites from the whole book. That concept of God being *your* God is a precious truth.

And it’s something most people can’t say. Most people can’t address God as “my God” any more than they can walk up to a random woman on the street and call her “my wife.” They can’t call him “my God” because he’s not their God. If you refer to a lawyer as “my lawyer,” it means he serves as a lawyer for you. If God is your God it means he functions as a God *for you*. It means you have a unique and very special relationship with him where he has agreed to be *your* God and to exercise his divine attributes on your behalf.

If David really believed God had actually forsaken him, he wouldn’t say, “My God, my God.” David still believed he had that special, privileged relationship with God even though it didn’t feel like it.

For that matter, you can tell it just from the fact that David is praying at all. If he really believed God had forsaken him, why would he even be praying this prayer? What would be the point if he didn’t believe God would even hear it?

People who really believe God has abandoned them don’t talk to God. They don’t go to God with their heartache. They just walk away. They give up on God and look for some other way of being rescued. They definitely don’t write a Psalm like Psalm 22.

So no, David didn’t believe God had forsaken him when he wrote v.1. He was just expressing how he felt, then in section 2 he shifted from what he felt to what he knew, and that’s when praises started to flow. We’ll plan on covering that in some detail next time—that shift from feeling to knowing in section 2. And I want to also dive in to section 3 of the psalm, which is where it really gets interesting. And we’ll talk about whether the original readers could have known Psalm 22 was intended to be a messianic psalm. But tonight our focus is on section 1.

No Comfort

Even though Jesus knew God hadn’t really forsaken him, that didn’t change the way it felt.⁷ For the first time in Jesus’ life, he was suffering and there was no comfort, no strengthening, no ability to draw near to God at all. So much so that, judging by Jesus’ re-

⁷ Many commentators insist that Jesus was saying God actually had forsaken Jesus. That was part of the cup he had to drink, and they say Jesus couldn’t have had the rest of the psalm in mind. He couldn’t have been thinking about section 2, where the psalmist affirms God didn’t really abandon him because that would diminish Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

I strongly disagree. First, even without the rest of the psalm it’s clear just from the words Jesus quotes that he didn’t really believe God had forsaken him, otherwise why would he call him “my God”?

Second, the gospel writers make numerous other allusions to Psalm 22 in the crucifixion account. The Holy Spirit clearly wants us to view the crucifixion through the lens of Psalm 22. Even the writer of Hebrews applies Psalm 22 to Jesus.

Third, why assume Jesus would quote a verse out of context to mean the opposite of what the verse originally meant? David made it clear in the Psalm that he didn’t really believe God had forsaken him. David expressed how he felt, but then he affirmed what he knew. If Jesus meant something other than that, then Jesus would be misinterpreting the psalm.

Fourth, it’s clear from section three of the psalm that it’s a messianic psalm.

Does it minimize the suffering of Jesus on the cross to say Jesus felt abandoned, even though he knew he wasn’t? Not at all. Jesus said all along he wouldn’t be abandoned by God. Every time he talked about the cross, he also talked about the fact that God would raise him from the dead. He knew God wouldn’t forsake him.

response, that was the most unbearable part of the whole crucifixion. When darkness enveloped the whole land, the center of that darkness, the darkest spot of all, was the cross where Jesus hung agonizing under the curse of God. And everything that darkness means—emptiness, inability to see, disconnection from the world, danger, misery, gloom, despair, judgment, death—all of that crushed down on Jesus until he finally cried out. If the anticipation of the cup made him sweat blood and almost killed him, what must the cup itself have been like?

Isn't it an astonishing thing to realize Jesus knows from experience what it feels like to be distant from God?

The Gravity of Sin

How extreme must have been our guilt to require such a price! Our culture tries to imagine there is no such thing as sin. You never hear the word used outside of Christian circles unless it's in mockery of the idea.⁸ But no matter how deep they bury their heads in the sand... , the inescapable reality is our sinfulness and indebtedness to God staggers the imagination and is so deep... , so pitch black, so incurable... , that nothing short of the sacrifice of the Son of God and the Father turning his face away from his own Son in his dying hours would be enough to pay that debt.

Forsaken to Save Us from Being Forsaken

And that cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”... —that cry encapsulates more than anything else what Jesus was saving us from by dying on the cross. Jesus endured the feeling of being forsaken in order to save us from the fate of *actually* being forsaken forever.

That's where section 3 of Psalm 22 comes in. Look at how the psalm ends. Section 2 affirms that God will indeed hear the pray of his suffering servant and deliver him. And God will deliver him in such a way that this will be the result:

Psalm 22:27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him. 30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. 31 They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn.

One man will suffer the extremes of darkness to the point where he cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And God will respond by saving him in a way that brings light to people throughout the entire world, for generation after generation.

⁸ It's amazing the lengths mankind will go to bury our heads in the sand when it comes to the depth of our guilt. In our culture, they've pretty much eradicated the very word, “sin.” Turn on your TV, watch the news, movies, shows, reality TV—watch anything you want for as long as you want and you'll never hear the word “sin” spoken a single time—unless it's to mock Christians. Bring up the word sin in our culture and just watch the eyes roll. They hate that word.

I would like to ask them a simple question: “Would you really say no one has committed any sins? Do you honestly believe that sin plays no role in the problems of society?” Now, if I ask if they believe there is such a thing as wrongdoing, they would say, “Of course.” It's possible to do wrong, it's possible to do bad things, they might even agree there's such a thing as evil. So what ever happened to sin? Why is that word so taboo?

It's because sin is against God. They're fine with the idea that people can do bad things because that's a human standard. “Those people are bad compared to me.” They're fine with that. What they can't abide is the idea that there's a divine standard to which we're responsible.

That's what happened at the cross. And when Psalm 22 talks about salvation coming to a people who were yet unborn in David's time—that's us. Jesus endured the worst men could do to him. Then he endured the terrifying darkness of God turning his face away for three hours in order to save us from an eternity of that darkness. The cry, "Why have you forsaken me" encapsulates exactly what Jesus was saving us from.

You could actually endure a lake of fire if God's presence were with you. If he turned his face toward you, you could be in a lake of fire and even have joy. But nothing is more unbearable than for God to cut off the light from his face altogether.

We have a lot more to cover about Psalm 22 next time, but for now let me just give you this bottom line. When Jesus came into the world there was bright light at midnight. When Jesus died, there was deep darkness at midday. Jesus is the light of the world.

Conclusion

What is your outlook for 2023? As you look to the year ahead, what are the factors that will have an impact on your wellbeing? Is it whether your health goes one way or another? Your financial situation? Your marriage or how your kids do this year? Here's the truth: there is one factor that will determine your wellbeing or lack of wellbeing in 2023: light. The light of God's presence.

The more Jesus Christ, the light of the world, dwells in your heart through faith, the greater the chances 2023 will be the best year of your life so far. If it gets a little cloudy and the light of God's presence gets dimmed for one reason or another, it's not going to be a great year.

There are a lot of factors that can affect how brightly God's face shines upon you, not all of which are under your control, but the highest goal every one of us in this room right now could set for ourselves this year is to seek his face with everything in us.

Summary

The first three hours man had his say; the second three God has his: darkness. This showed God's judgment on the powers of the heavens as well as a sign of judgment on sinful humanity. But the judgment landed on the representative of humanity, Jesus. Darkness shows God's disfavor and a removal of life from God and all that comes with it. Mark uses the language of the Exodus, where 3 days of darkness was followed by the death of the firstborn to bring salvation to God's people on Passover, God's people being saved by the blood of the lamb who died in their place.

Section 2 of Psalm 22: God didn't really abandon Jesus (or David); it just felt that way.

Section 3: God would deliver the righteous sufferer in a way that would cause people all over the world to turn to him. Jesus endured feeling forsaken to save us from actually being forsaken.

Harmony

<p>Matthew 27:45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "<i>Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?</i>"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." 48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."</p>	<p>Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "<i>Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?</i>"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." 36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.</p>	<p>Luke 23:44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 for the sun stopped shining.</p>
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