

Psalms 19-01-10

Good evening, this is the 10th of January 2019 and we continue our study in the Psalms. We're in Psalm 22. Psalm 22.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and then we'll begin. Father, we are grateful for this opportunity to spend time together looking at the truth of your word, hoping to improve our understanding of it and to find those truths that you have for us that will be meaningful and encouraging and that will enable us and empower us to live the life to which we've been called to see clearly the path that is before us and to walk in a manner that is pleasing in your sight and that glorifies the Lord Jesus. We pray that our fellowship tonight and our study will move all of us toward that goal and that as a result we will be ready when the Lord Jesus comes to take us to himself and to present us before your throne.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Well, you'll remember that Psalm 22 is ascribed at the beginning and in your English it says, set to the deer of the dawn.

And I told you last time that I had a few suggestions on what that was, but I was not completely happy with my coverage of it. It just seems to be there for a reason. This is such an important psalm given its use by the Lord Jesus on the cross.

And so there was something nagging at the back of my brain and you know how it is. Sometimes the older you get, the longer it takes for these things to surface. Your pudding gets thick and the bubbles don't come to the top like they used to.

But I did finally realize what it was that I was trying to get ahold of here. And so I want to take a moment and talk about this ascription because it is at the beginning of the psalm. It conditions our understanding of the psalm and it's not there as an aside or a meaningless detail.

It's important. Every word counts. So this is a Psalm of David and it is upon, A-L in Hebrew means upon.

And then we have two words. We have the Ayalet and we have Ha-Shakar. Well, this is translated the deer or the hind of the dawn.

But you may remember, some of you will remember back when we did Isaiah that I quibble. In fact, I don't just quibble. I disagree with the, not only the translation, but with the lexicon definition of Shakar.

And it's a good time for us to review because it changes the way we understand this psalm. You wouldn't think that it would, but it does. So let's take a look at this word.

First of all, we have this animal. It is a doe or a hind or a deer. And the word is Ayalet.

And this is A-Y-Y-E-L-E-T-H. A-Y-Y-E-L-E-T-H. It is translated as a doe, a deer, a female deer, a

hind.

It is transliterated sometimes as A-I-J-E-L-E-T-H, Aijaleth, as in Aijalon, the Valley of Aijalon. But it is Ayalet or Ayala. And it's a feminine, you can tell by the A-H ending.

But why do we care about this? Why does it matter what kind of an animal it is? Well, there is another closely similar word, closely similar, it's similar and closely so, called Ya'aleth, which is from Yael. And this has to do with mountain goats. And the female mountain goat is a Ya'aleth.

And so the Ayalet and the Ya'aleth, in fact, there's passages where they are both mentioned together. In fact, Song of Solomon is one. And if I'm brave enough, we'll turn there tonight.

But the Ayal, or the hind or the deer, is named and sort of a wordplay with Allah, which means to go up, to rise up. And if you've seen deer, we have them around here. They're notable for their vertical leaping ability.

And so when you talk about an Ayalet and Allah means to go up, it reminds you of their springing, their bounding, their rising up ability. And so as we look at this animal, it is not just talking about the deer. And deer do not have a lot of defensive ability other than their ability to leap and their ability to run.

They are like antelope or other animals that have to rely on their agility to escape predators. So a doe in the dawn, you would think, well, this is a time of hope. This is the sun rising.

This is the time when visibility improves and they can see things coming. Many times we see deer early in the morning hours out feeding and crossing the pastures. But that is not what this says.

This is the Ayalet Ha-Shakar. And Ha is the definite article and it helps in position-wise make this a genitive. So this is the doe of, or the deer of, and because it's a feminine, we say the doe of.

But Shakar is blackness, darkness, not dawn. Now, how do I know this? Well, we get the best clue as to what words mean by seeing how they're used in scripture and letting context tell us their meaning. One of the first places that we find this word, and we want to not only see where it is used, but the grammar that it is used with.

Sometimes we import meaning into a word that is actually supplied by the context and it makes it wrong to supply it when you find that word elsewhere without that context. But if you look at this, Genesis 19.15, turn back to Genesis 19, you will remember this context pretty well. Anytime you say Genesis 19, you think about Sodom and Gomorrah.

You think about Lot and the whole pillar of salt story. But this is Genesis 19 and we're heading for verse 15. If you look just one verse previous, Lot went out and spoke to his son-in-law who had married his daughters.

At least they were betrothed evidently. They have no offspring and they say, get up, get out of

this place for the Lord will destroy this city. But to his son's-in-law, he seemed to be joking.

Now verse 15, Genesis 19.15, when the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry saying, arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city. So this is, it says when the morning dawned. But if you look at this in Hebrew, it says, well, this is the word we're looking at, but Allah means to lift, to lift up, to rise up.

Allah means to go up. There's a sense in which the name Allah for God is he is the lifted up one. He is above all.

So what is it that lifts? Well, the reason for a long time, everybody has thought that Shakar means dawn is they say, well, this is the sun rising. This is the dawn rising. But in the Hebrew mind and going all the way back to Genesis, this is the darkness lifting.

And if you think about the ancient world and even the world, if you're out in the, in the early morning hours and it's pitch black. And then as in the, in the Eastern sky, the, it begins to lighten. Well, the darkness is lifting away.

You look to the West, it's still there, but in the, in the East, you can say the sun is rising, but you can also say the darkness is lifting. One sort of is the concomitant of the other. And so anytime you see Allah with Shakar, you're going to find them translating when morning came, which is perfectly valid when, when dawn came.

But what does the Hebrew phrase mean? It's, it's not the dawn rising. It's the darkness lifting, darkness lifted. It's like a fog lifting.

It, it, it rises up and the, the light comes up from underneath it and pushes the darkness away. So to speak, well, you find this over and over again in Genesis 32, 24, you don't have to turn there, but this is Jacob wrestling with the, the angel wrestling with a man until, until daybreak. Genesis 32, 24, he wrestled with him until Ad, A-D in Hebrew means until, Alot HaShakar, until the rising of the darkness, wrestled with him in the darkness until the darkness lifted.

Right? And you have Allah with Shakar. So the darkness lifted. If Shakar meant dawn, why doesn't it just say Ad HaShakar until the dawn, but it has to have Allah with it so that that goes away.

Two verses later, the, the man with whom he is wrestling says, let me go because Allah HaShakar, the darkness is lifting. The darkness is going up. Let me go.

Joshua chapter six, verse 15. You remember Joshua six, this is getting ready for the walls of Jericho to come a tumbling down. And in that verse, it says it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early at, or according to Alot HaShakar at the rising of the darkness.

That's when they got up and got ready to do the seventh day, uh, march and attack on Jericho.

Judges 19, 25. Remember, uh, judges 19, this is the, the Benjamites and the, it begins with the man whose concubine is left outside.

Remember that story? Uh, judges 19 is the corresponding perversity chapter to Genesis 19. You've got perversity in Sodom and you've got perversity in Benjamin. So it says, uh, the men would not heed him.

So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them outside. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning, until HaBoker. And when they let her go at the Alot HaShakar, they let her go when the darkness started lifting.

Men love darkness rather than light. When their deeds are evil, they're doing an evil thing. But when the darkness starts lifting, they let her go.

But of course she dies as a result of this abuse. That's judges 19, 25. Now there's a reason why we're belaboring this point because there are some other passages that are helpfully better understood.

Once this sort of knee jerk translation took hold, it just permeates the whole Old Testament. And there are places where it's much better to understand. And the verse makes more sense when it is given its proper meaning.

So, uh, you can put with this, we don't have to look there, but first Samuel 9, 26, uh, they rose early and at daybreak, Samuel, et cetera, et cetera. Well, this is, uh, Ka Alot HaShakar at the lifting of the darkness. It's in Nehemiah chapter four, verse 21.

And he talks about from the rising of the morning until the stars appear well from the rising of the blackness. And, uh, same thing. It's, it's Ma Alot HaShakar there.

Ma means from, from the rising of the darkness until Job chapter three, verse nine. Remember it takes a couple of chapters in Job before the friends have sat there for seven days and they see that his grief is very great. And then Job talks about the day of his birth.

And in Job three, nine, he says, may the stars of its morning be dark. May it look for light. This is or let there be light.

Yahi or Genesis one, may it look for light, but have none and let it not see. And then you have the dawning of the day, but this is but off, off and off, off. Those are your blinkers.

That's your, uh, it's like your, your fluttering wings, you know, off it has to do with a bird. Well, off, off are your, your bird wings. It's eyelids.

It's your eyes. And so may the stars of that morning be dark. May it look for light, but have none and not see the blinking darkness.

This is the dark eyelids. They never, the dark eyelids never open. They never opened to see the

light.

They, the eyelids are closed and it's dark is the idea. Let me just give you one or two more because, uh, Job 38, 12, here's a case where it makes a difference in understanding. It's different to have eyelids of the morning or eyelids of blackness.

And here you have, um, since your days began, you have commanded the darkness, actually the morning here, Boker, you commanded the morning and you have caused to know the darkness it's place. You see the difference there? You don't tell the dawn it's place. You tell the morning it's place and you tell the darkness it has to go.

There's a time for morning and there's a time for night. There's a time for light and there's a time for blackness or darkness. And so Job 38, 12, uh, you cause the blackness to know its place.

And this is God's sovereignty over the amount and extent of evil in the world. It has its place, but it's an assigned place. And God is in control of that.

Perhaps the most famous and the one where I think I first suggested this to you is Isaiah chapter 14, verse, uh, 12, Isaiah 14, 12, how you have fallen from heaven. Oh, shining one, son of Shakar, son of darkness. And it is a powerful rebuke.

It is a powerful condemnation. How you are fallen from heaven. Oh, day star, son of blackness.

You know what a day star is, right? Or the day star, it's Venus. And many times of the year and in many parts of the world, before the sun rises and before dawn fully breaks, you see Venus, which has a closer orbit to the sun than we do. And therefore, when you look toward the sun in right conditions, you will see Venus as a bright star, quote unquote, but it will be a harbinger of the dawn because as the sun approaches the horizon, but it's still below the horizon, that day star is the harbinger.

It's the bright star that you see just before you begin to see the lightning sky and the dawn and the sunrise itself. So it is a harbinger. Well, what happens to the day star once the sun rises and is in view? John said, he must increase.

I must decrease. John the Baptist, right? He was the forerunner. And he said, you know, there's one coming after me who's, shoo, I'm not worthy to unloose.

What's he saying? Essentially, he was the day star sent to proclaim the coming of the son of righteousness, the son of God. But as that appears, he dims and ceases to be in view. Well, Satan was having none of that.

Before the glory of the Lord Jesus was fully revealed in his incarnation and his work on the cross and his elevation to God's right hand, Satan, Lucifer, was the highest of the cherubim. He was in the throne room of God. He was the guardian of that room and brokered the comings and goings, and he had a great deal of glory.

But his glory is about to be eclipsed, so to speak, by the revelation of the son of God in his glory. Well, he, in essence, is the bright star shining in blackness, and so he is the day star, son of darkness. Because he loves the darkness, he doesn't want to see the sunrise.

He wants to continue to have his glory shine, and he's not willing to be set aside and overcome by the brightness of the sun. So, how you are fallen from heaven, day star, son of darkness. It's very fulsome in its communication of what went on in prehistory.

Well, there are plenty of other passages. Let me just give you one other, because you might think that it's a difficulty, and this is Isaiah 58, 8. Isaiah 58, 8. And we covered this in Isaiah a few years ago, looking at the kind of fast that God honors. And he says, you know, right now you're fasting and it isn't for the right reasons.

Verse 3, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, you exploit your laborers, you fast for strife and debate, to strike with fists of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day to make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul and so on? Well, look at verse 6. Is this not the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out? When you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh, then your light shall break forth like, and then where you see morning, that's shakar.

Your healing shall spring forth speedily and your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. And you say, well, surely shakar here should mean morning or dawn.

Your light is going to break forth like, it doesn't make any sense that your light would break forth like the dawn. Well, I'm not going into great detail here. It says, then your light, and where it says break forth, the root meaning of that verb is to cleave or split.

And you remember before, several times when we had at the lifting of darkness, and it was k'alot, shakar, k'alot. Well, k'alot, the k'alot there means like or as, and so that's how they translated it here. It's k'alot, shakar, like, but it's also at.

And so what this is really saying is, then your light will cleave at darkness. When darkness comes, your light cleaves it. Your light splits it.

At darkness, your light splits it, drives it away. That's what your righteousness is going to be like when you hold the kind of fast that God is talking about. It's really a more powerful metaphor than your light will break forth like the morning.

I mean, that's nice, but your light splitting the darkness, you know, God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And when God sends his light, darkness cannot survive. And your righteousness is going to be a light that cleaves darkness, splits it.

And if it's split, it's like, it's like the Red Sea, the Reed Sea, the Yom Suf. There is a way through, there is a way beyond, there is a way past whatever it is. And your righteousness, I'm not going to use any modern movie motifs about, you know, what light or light sabers or anything else can do, but you get the idea here.

This is a powerful picture of the righteousness that God assigns us when we are faithful and when we are obedient and the power that it has in a time of darkness. Now, why do I bring that up? Back to Psalm 22. Many other passages we could go to where Shakar occurs, but I've gone to all of them and all of them make more sense when you properly translate Shakar.

Shakar is blackness. There are places in the Song of Solomon where it talks about the darkness of the eyelids and Shakar is used as a metaphor for youth because what happens when you get old? Hair turns gray, beard turns gray, eyelids and eyelashes and eyebrows, everything turns gray. And so blackness, swarthy darkness is put for youth and vigor and virility and femininity in, you know, your prime.

You've got this blackness and fulsome, you know, potential. But most of the time, of course, darkness and blackness, when it is contrasted with light and with day, is referencing the kingdom of darkness versus the kingdom of light. But back to Psalm 22 now because why are we belaboring this as the superscription for the Psalm? Set to the deer of the darkness.

Now, what's the problem with being a deer in darkness? What are your tools for escape and survival? Leaping and swiftness. But in the dark, you can't see. I was, some of you know that for a time, I had a very tenuous link to the internet across 750 feet of coaxial cable that I just strung on the ground and up through the woods and stuck under my house and popped up through a wall and brought it all the way down to the house by the road.

And that ethernet over coax was my link. Well, there's all kinds of animal life around here and I tried to run it in a way that would keep it close to the ground. But I was looking at it today.

I was out there gathering kindling and I noticed that it has suffered a substantial amount of damage in a place that I had not realized it was damaged. It's almost broken all the way through. But the outer black insulation is gone.

The silver is showing through. The silver has been either cut or chewed or split off and the bare coaxial wire in the middle is showing and it's a good thing I don't need it now. Here's my point.

How did it get beat up? Well, I looked, it's only in one place and it is a place where there's a break in the brambles and there's a break in the brush and this is where the deer come through. Well, if they're coming through at night and they can't see my black wire and they can't see obstacles and impediments, what happens? Their sharp little hooves, they trip and they hit that and they bash it against logs and thorns and all kinds of things and in this deer traverse, they can see it in the daylight, especially now that all the shiny stuff is showing, but at night they can't. You can't see to flee.

You can't see to preserve your life. You can't run at top speed. You can't leap things where you can't see where you are.

You're just as likely to leap to your death and so your God-given defenses as a deer are useless when? Not at dawn. They're useless in the dark. Deer in the dark typically, if you've heard the old thing, you know, deer in the headlights, they're mesmerized if there is a light, but they're also blinded and it's difficult to flee when you've looked in the headlights and now you can't see.

Deer in the dark and David puts the ascription of this Psalm in those terms. Why now read the Psalm? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me? Why are you so far from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear and in the night season and am not silent day and night. I'm crying, but it's all night for me.

I have no more recourse in the day than I do at night. There is no more help or aid coming. You are holy enthroned in the praises of Israel.

Our fathers trusted in you. They trusted in you, delivered them. They cried to you and were delivered.

They trusted you and were not ashamed. What is the most signal piece of deliverance that the fathers ever received? Trusting in God and being delivered by him. Do you remember the night that they crossed the Red Sea? God was a light.

God made a way. God cleaved the waters and in the night they had a way across. They had a way of escape.

The presence of God stood between them and the enemies who would crush them and slay them and re-enslave any of the survivors. God was present. They cried out.

Moses says, stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord. It's the most famous deliverance in their history. And David refers, I think, back to that.

Our fathers trusted in you and you delivered them. They cried to you and were delivered. They trusted in you and were not put to shame.

There's been a lot of speculation about how much of this psalm is prophetic and refers only to the Lord Jesus Christ versus how much of it would be reflecting David's own experience. When you read 1 and 2 Samuel, you don't find a time in David's life that seems to match these very extreme conditions. He says, I'm a worm and no man.

I'm a reproach despised by the people. All who see me ridicule me. They shoot out the lip.

They shake the head saying he trusted in the Lord. Let the Lord rescue him. Let the Lord deliver him since he, David, delights in him, the Lord.

If the Lord is his delight and that's who he trusts, well, let this Lord deliver him. And they don't see it happening. You skip down to verse 12.

Many bowls have surrounded me. Strong bowls of Bashan have encircled me. They gape at me with their mouths like a raging and roaring lion.

I'm poured out like water. My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax melted within me.

My strength is dried up like a broken piece of pottery. My tongue clings to my jaws. You've brought me to the dust of death.

Can you think of any time in David's career where these things would be true? I was talking with my daughter, Elizabeth, because we were looking together at an article that defends a position I was taught in seminary and that I also disagree with, which says that there is only one meaning for an Old Testament passage, and that's the meaning that would have been understood by the people who first heard it and first received it, unless that passage is updated and enhanced with a new prophecy fulfillment meaning explicitly in the New Testament. Psalm 22 would be a bit of a conundrum, wouldn't it? It's hard not to see the fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. They pierced my hands and my feet.

They cast lots for my clothes. And yet, according to this idea, there should be a meaning and it should be a part of the experience of David. It should apply to David at first blush and not be purely prophetic.

Why would he say these things? Why would he write it down if it wasn't a part of his own experience? So I was curious. When you think about it, you don't immediately think of a time when David might have been in this position. I can think of times when he was deeply distressed.

I can think of times when he was in the extremes of sorrow, such as when he lost his first-born son with Bathsheba. But turn with me to 1 Samuel chapter 21. I'm going to propose to you a time that I think does correspond to this psalm and it is also illuminating.

You remember David was the king's son-in-law. He was a general. He rose in the ranks.

The women start singing, Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. That's in 1 Samuel chapters 18 and 19. David meets with Jonathan in chapter 20.

You have the arrows flying in the field back and forth. We went through that when we did 1 Samuel. But when you get to 1 Samuel 21, David has fled because he knows that Saul is going to kill him.

He is on the run. He's got no friends other than Jonathan left in Israel. He goes to the priests at Nob and he partakes of the bread.

The Lord Jesus mentions this, of course. He grabs in verse 8 of chapter 21 the sword of Goliath.

Verse 9, it's wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod.

If you will take that, take it. There's no other except that one here. David said there's none like it.

Give it to me. Then verse 10, 1 Samuel 21 10, David arose and fled that day from before Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath. Remind me now, what has David got in his hand that he just picked up from the ephod? What did the priest give him? What did the High Priest give him for a weapon? The sword of who? Goliath.

Where's Goliath from? Gath. So he takes the trophy, there's no sword like it. This is only a few years after he slew Goliath.

Everybody remembers this sword. Goliath used to parade around with it on his hip or in his hand. And now David takes that sword and goes to Gath.

I would submit that maybe he's not really thinking things through all that well. It's the only weapon he can find. He wants to be armed and for the moment he doesn't seem to be trusting in the Lord's deliverance.

He hasn't. He's talking to the priest, but he doesn't say, can you inquire of the Lord for me what I should do? He says, give me Goliath's sword and I'm gone. Give me the holy bread and the sword and I'm out of here.

He's at the place where you inquire of the Lord. That's where the ephod is. What's the ephod got? What's the breastplate of the high priest got in the ephod? What's in there? The Urim and the Thummim, right? If you want answers from God, he's in the place to ask and he doesn't.

Instead, you know, the arm of flesh will fail you. You dare not trust your own, but he takes that sword and then he goes to the one place in the whole area that would be most likely to recognize that sword. And this is the key to our psalm, I think.

So David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and he goes out of the frying pan and into the fire. The servants of Achish said to him, is this not David, the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances saying, Saul is slain his thousands and David is ten thousands? So David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath. He thought he was afraid of Saul, the king of Israel.

He's really afraid of Achish, the king of Gath, because the people are talking about his history and about who he is. But this is a mocking tone. They're not saying David is the king of the land.

They're saying the people think of him as their champion. He's the champion of Israel. He's slain ten thousands, where their own king has only slain thousands.

So he is now the subject of inquiry. What's going to happen when they see that sword? It's wrapped in a cloth right now. But if he has to defend himself, what's going to happen? The

entire city is going to descend on him and they'll be scraping him up with a putty knife.

So David is rightly very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath. So what does he do? Oh Lord, defend your servant on this day from these people of Gath, just as you defended me on the day when I stood before their champion. He changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down his beard.

So Achish says to his servants, look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Notice, why have you brought him to me? He has been brought before the king. And you can bet he's not holding a cloth-wrapped sword at that point.

He's babbling and incoherent and is letting his appearance look like that of a madman. Have I need of madmen that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this thing come into my house? David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. This, I would submit, is perhaps the lowest point.

I can't think of any lower point in David's pre-throne career than this. And once he's on the throne, his problems are different. They may be a lot of things, but he's not threatened with death the way he is here.

He has a lot of problems inside his house. He's driven out of Jerusalem by his son. But in terms of abject fear of his life and being surrounded everywhere by those who want to kill him, I would submit this is a fair case.

So when you go back now to Psalm 22, you think about that time in Gath. You know how scripture can give you a light touch on details. I suspect there was a lot more that went on in Gath than what is given.

That's sort of the summary of the highlights. Now read verse 6. I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people. He is a reproach and despised in Israel.

He is certainly a reproach and despised in Gath. He's not worth killing. They had superstitions about madmen.

All those who see me ridicule me. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head, saying, you know, he's one of these God-fearers.

If they did figure out that he's the one that faced Goliath, they'd say, well, see, he was crazy. He just got away with it because he was crazy and Verse 9. You are he who took me out of the womb. You made me trust on my mother's breasts.

And this actually, it sounds like some sort of Calvinistic predestination to faith. You made me trust when I was a baby, essentially. But this really means you are the one who laid me at my mother's breast.

God is the one who placed him in his family, gave him a godly mother, a godly father, a godly heritage. You think of Boaz and Ruth and Rahab and Salmon and all of those in his lineage. When it says God laid him on his mother's breast, it's a little bit of a reinterpretation of the Hebrew text, but it makes more sense.

Babies don't trust God on their mother's breast. Scripture itself says you got to wait until they know their right hand from their left and until they have some sense of moral right and wrong. But you laid me on my mother's breast.

I was cast upon you from birth from my mother's womb. You are my God. And this is family heritage.

God planted him in a family where he could be nurtured and brought up the way Israel was commanded to bring up their children in the rising up and the setting down and the going out and the coming in. So be not far from me for trouble is near and there is none to help. David has no one to help.

He can't go back to Israel. The Philistines are just as likely to kill him as laugh at him. Many bulls have surrounded me.

Strong ones of Bashan have encircled me. What is Bashan? You see this phrase multiple times in the Old Testament. Bulls of Bashan.

Bashan is a very fertile region, pasture ridge, east of Galilee, north of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Galilee. There was this very fertile foothills and plains there that had a lot of rainfall, something about the way the air moved off the Mediterranean and hit those mountains. And so there was lush vegetation and some of the best livestock anywhere in the Middle East came from that region.

And so the bulls of Bashan grew stronger and fatter and more desirable and were worth more and were more to be feared if they got loose because they were the Clydesdale horses of cattle. They were just bigger and stronger. Bulls of Bashan, well fed, well tended.

They've encircled me. They gape at me with their mouths like a raging and roaring lion. Raging and roaring.

Jesus said the devil, it was after Peter, to sift him like wheat. And later on in the epistles it says he roams about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.

I am poured out like water. My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax and has melted within me.

This is lack of strength amplified. We've all felt this way. Sometimes you get a glycemic shock or whatever.

You get the shakes. You just have no strength. You can barely stand.

In this case it is fear. It is the threat. He doesn't seem to be physically ill.

This is what he is surrounded by. And his normal courage, the courage that enabled him to stand before Goliath, is not there. And God does not seem to be there.

My strength is dried up. You have brought me to the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me.

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. Now who are the dogs and the wicked in David's experience? The Israelites may be a lot of things, but they're not dogs. Who are constantly characterized as dogs by Israel? Gentiles.

When is it that David is helplessly surrounded by Gentiles? It's in Gath. And he has to play one with no strength and no intellect and no wits to escape. But he still flees.

He can't stay there. And he's got to go to the cave. He's got no friends.

The Gentiles are after him and the Jews are after him, the Israelites at that time. The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. It says they pierced my hands and my feet.

And you see that there's a text note there for piercing. And it says Ka-Ari. Ari is lion in Hebrew.

You have one of the lion of God. I think there was a Disney character named Ariel, not like a radio antenna, but Ariel, A-R-I-E-L, but that means lion of God, A-R-I-E-L. Well, this is Ka, like or as, Ari, like a lion, my hands and my feet.

And so everybody thinks there's some sort of a text problem there because it makes no sense. My hands and feet are like a lion. He says the lions are surrounding him and gaping mouths are around him like lions.

So how could it be like a lion, my hands and my feet? Well, various proposals have been offered. I believe Robert Alter in his translation says they bound, they bind my hands and my feet. They have bound my hands and my feet.

Um, pierced is appealing because of the forward reference to the Lord Jesus, but even that requires a textual emendation, um, to, uh, make it work because the text as it stands says Ka-Ari. And, uh, so if the dogs have surrounded him and the congregation has enclosed him, it still appears that he's not yet touched. And so, uh, the text as it stands, if I was going to take it as it stands, like a lion, my hands and my feet, these people surround him and roar and have gaping mouths like lions that are free, but they trafficked in lions all the time.

You know, the Queen of Sheba brought all kinds of animals up to Solomon and so on. Well, how do you subdue a lion? If David is the lion of the tribe of Judah and in prospect, his greater son is the lion of the tribe of Judah. Well, how do you disable a lion? Well, a captive lion, what would they do? They bind its legs.

They bind its hands and its feet. So if you were going to take the text unamended, uh, it says, uh, dogs have surrounded me. The congregation of the lion, my hands and feet are, are, are bound.

I'm a, I'm a captive lion. I'm one that is harmless. Now dogs will come up and yap at a, at a helpless, uh, predator.

Once they realize it can't get them, they're very brave. You know, you remember all those that were brave mocking the Lord Jesus on the cross? Uh, you know, that's easy when you've got a helpless, uh, target, but there is coming a day when people are going to severely regret that attitude in those words. I can count all my bones.

They look and stare at me. They divide my garments among them. And for my clothing, they cast lots.

And again, you think, how do you explain this in David's time? Well, I take you back to Gath. If David winds up feigning madness, what did he come to Gath with? He came with that sword wrapped in cloth, which he probably stashed and the clothes on his back. What clothes is he wearing? Where has he come from directly? Where was he living a couple of earlier? Before he stopped at Nob, where was he living? He's with the king.

He's a prince. He's got fine clothes. He's got wonderful garments and he didn't change into his traveling jeans before he left.

And so he arrives there and they look at him. They say, this is a madman. He doesn't deserve those fine clothes.

And because he's a madman, he's not going to defend himself. And so they take his clothes and gamble to see who gets them. And he has to flee, kind of like, they think it was John Mark that fled the night that Jesus was arrested.

They grab his garment and he flees without any garment. And you get the idea that this is such a low point for David when he is trying to hide in the stronghold of his enemies and they won't even accept him. He's not even acceptable to the enemies.

They rob him. They mock him. They want to bind him.

They probably bound him when they took him in front of Achish. And he says, I don't want this madman in my house. Get him out of here.

So they just took him out, took his clothes and turned him loose. And then he goes to Adullam. They divide my garments from my clothing.

They cast lots. You can see David's anguish of soul. And he says, this is my lowest point.

And you notice in the story in First Samuel 21, God is nowhere in it. There's no word from the

Lord. David doesn't appeal to the Lord.

He's running all in his own strength. So what do we take away from this? As we look at this Psalm and David's appeal fleshed out and amplified in the suffering of the Jesus on the cross, when he quotes this Psalm, you see it first with David. David's low point is really his own fault.

When Saul turns against him, David flees. Elijah, when Ahab turns against him and Jezebel turns against him, Elijah flees and God has to revive him from his lowest point. Elijah's lowest point is right after he flees from Ahab and Jezebel.

Remember that? God has to give him two or three meals and prop him up and get him going. This is Elijah the prophet. He's going to be the model for John the Baptist.

But he has this incredible low point. David is the coming king of Israel. He's going to be the namesake of the Lord Jesus himself, who will be called the son of David.

But this is absolutely his lowest point. And you get the idea that the narrative in 1 Samuel is really merciful by not going into too many details of this time in Gath. But I think David may be detailing it here.

Do not be far from me, O my strength. And when David hits this low point, he does finally remember to turn to the Lord. You, O Lord, do not be far from me.

O my strength, hasten to help me. Deliver me from the sword. And you wonder if he's looking at that sword that he just took of Goliath's.

Deliver me from my belief that the sword was ever going to save me in the first place. But deliver me from the sword of enemies, certainly. My precious life from the power of the dog and the dogs are the Philistines, clearly.

What does Goliath say? Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks and stones? Am I a dog? Well, this is flinging the Israelite epithet back in their face. Philistines knew that the Israelites called them dogs. And he says, Do I look like a dog to you? You're out here with a stick.

Look at me. What do you think? This is very pregnant with harking back to David's greatest day, which is against the champion of Gath and his worst day when he is the madman of Gath. He just boxes the compass of achievement and failure.

I will declare your name to my brethren. In the midst of the assembly, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him.

All you descendants of Jacob glorify him and fear him, all you offspring of Israel. For he has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor has he hidden his face from them. But when he cried to him, he heard.

And David's mistake in 1 Samuel chapter 18 and 19 and 20 and 21 was waiting too long to cry

out to the Lord. He goes from the place where he is closest and most able to cry out to the Lord, which is at Nob, to the place where he's the furthest and in the deepest hole. I heard somebody say, they were talking about the fact that they had hit rock bottom, but they were telling their correspondent there, well, I didn't know rock bottom had a basement.

And this Gath is David's rock bottom with a basement. And it is, you know, we have the word abasement. He is abased.

Paul says, I know both how to be abased and how to abound. Well, in the time of abasement, in the time when we seem to be surrounded by nothing but enemies, even our friends are against us. It is the time to turn to the Lord.

You who fear the Lord, praise him. Descendants of Jacob glorify him and fear him, you offspring of Israel. He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

He has not hidden his face from him. When he cried to him, he heard. My praise of you will be in the great assembly.

I will pay my vows before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him will praise the Lord.

Let your heart live forever. And that's really the turning point in the Psalm. So this is when HaShakar does the Allah.

The darkness lifts, the light dawns, the day breaks. And what does the Lord Jesus do? And by the way, this deer in the darkness, what happened between 12 o'clock and 3 o'clock on crucifixion day? What was that? Darkness. Three hours of darkness.

By the way, just as homework or a little personal personal quest you might want to go on. I was reading about possible locations. I was actually looking up, I got to wondering, why do we call the place of crucifixion Calvary? How did it become Calvary? I get Golgotha, the place of a skull.

But actually, when you look that up, it comes from a word that means the place of the cranium or the place of the dome on top of your head. And this has given rise to several alternate proposals, where there is a dome like the top of a head, rather than seeing the skull with the eyes and the Gordon's Calvary and so on. Anyway, I was looking up all of that, but it had to do with the Latin and with Calvary actually coming from the Latin term for Golgotha and where these different things might be.

But one of the proposed places that makes a lot of sense, and they said the reason this makes sense, one reason makes sense. What happened at the point that Jesus expired to do with the temple? It says the curtain of the temple was rent entwined from top to bottom. Well, there is a place that is shaped like the top of a cranium.

And it's the only one that is within direct eyesight of the temple. And it is due east of the

temple. And so you could see the temple from there.

What's interesting to me is, I always thought it was the veil of the temple. But the word means curtain, and they also had an exterior curtain on the outside. And from this particular proposed location of the crucifixion, an eyewitness standing at the cross could hear a noise and turn and see that outside curtain tear.

And it wouldn't have anything to do with exposing the empty Holy of Holies or whatever. Who would know that the curtain and the Holy of Holies had torn except for the priests. And they would have to come out and tell somebody, hey, you know, with the cherubim and all the rest of it has torn in half.

But the curtain on the outside, if it tore, that was visible to everyone. And it would have been visible even just outside the city wall, due east, on this dome-shaped rock. And anyway, just for free, no charge, I found that interesting that it may have been the external curtain that was torn.

But this occurred during the time that the Lord Jesus was on the cross. And at the point that he dismissed his spirit, the curtain tore. And that was the curtain that prevented access to anybody but the priest from going even into the holy place, much less the Holy of Holies.

And so the symbolism would be the same, but it would be visible to everyone. And they would immediately know. And they would immediately tie it to the moment that the Lord Jesus dies is the moment the curtain tears.

How would you correlate that later on if a priest happened to be in there and said, oh, you know, I noticed the thing rip. Well, what time was it? Well, I couldn't see my sundial. What time was it? But to be able to see both things at once, the death of the Lord Jesus and the tearing of the curtain.

But that is as the darkness lifts. The three hours of darkness are over. The deer of the darkness.

Where do we turn in the darkness? The Lord Jesus cries out the first verse of this psalm. My God, my God, why are you far from helping me? Why have you forsaken me? Well, in David's life, it was the presence of his own sin and lack of faith for the Lord Jesus. It was bearing our sin and our lack of faith.

But David experiences God's faithfulness, his return at the point that he called. And when the Lord Jesus says, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. God's not gone anymore, is he? The Lord Jesus is talking right to him.

And he is committing his spirit into his father's hands because he is present. It's sort of a direct placing of the spirit from his hands into his father's hands. He is no longer far from helping him.

He is no longer forsaken. And David has that same experience when he remembers in the darkness to call out. And we've seen those darkness and morning psalms in previous studies in the single digits of these psalms.

So it's a wonderful reminder. Well, we'll have to stop here and we'll pick up and conclude our study of Psalm 22 next week. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the powerful way that it communicates to us, reminds us in a vivid way of the privileges that we have through the Lord Jesus Christ to call upon you in the day of trouble. You deliver us and we have the opportunity to glorify you.

And just as David says here, and as he did through his psalms and through his commitments and his policies as king, he truly did honor you and lift you up and make the provision for Solomon to build the temple that your glory filled in those subsequent days. And we pray that our lives also can be built up into that which will reflect your glory and honor the Lord Jesus Christ. We represent him on this earth as his body and we pray that you will help us to see clearly how we can do that effectively individually as couples, as families, as a church, as citizens in our nation so that people will look at us and glorify you and come to you through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.