

Where are You, God?

- Where? I need you; but you're not here. I'm alone; and you're nowhere found. Need your help, guidance, presence; need you be with me. But you're not, and don't know why. Where?
- I won't ask if you've ever felt that way, bec I know you have; we all have. And J felt way too – but in way profoundly deeper, darker than you can imagine. J felt alone, forsaken, abandoned by God as suff/died on cross. Today, GF, as commem that suff/death, we have window into heart of J, thru which we can look, see his emotional anguish, his internal turmoil – bec he recorded it in Ps 22. These are words of J, in Ps 22, written 1k yrs before nailed cross; and they're a window into darkest moments of his life, when J felt abandoned by Father, and when his painful prayer was: where?
- Where? **Vs. 1-2a**. It's noon; darkness covers land; from cross: *Eli, lama*. Listen: calling Elijah. No I'm not – Father, but don't know why not listening. God, please help me; all alone; need you. Where? Where right now?! Need now! Know where been, in past. **Vs. 4**. Delivered: Hebs from slavery in Egypt; Israelites at Red Sea; people from exile in Babylon. **Vs. 5**. You helped your people in past; helped me in past! **Vs. 9-10**. Father, you protected me: when Herod killed all baby boys; when my parents took me Egypt; my childhood, trips to Jerusalem, ministry – you've been with me in past. But why not now? **Vs. 1a**. Where?
- Window, Ps 22 window into heart of J. Thru this window we see terrible loneliness, agonizing solitude. This was worst suff J endured: when abandoned by God, forsaken by Father. That's not to minimize awful phys suff he endured. No, Ps 22 also filled w/ specfc prophecies, written in extrdnry detail, of his phys suff. In fact, besides Isa 53, there is no other portion of OT that describes suffs of J in greater detail & precision than Ps 22. Just look thru window; what you see? All kinds of things:
 - **Vs. 6-7**. Everyone mocking J. Here's this dying man; they're making fun him. Sadistic, pointless. But Mt tells us: **“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads... In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders mocked him... ‘He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now’”** (Mt 27:39, 41, 43). Sound famil? **Vs. 8**. And thru all, where?
 - What else see? Angry, hateful people. Got Rom soldiers, whipping skin off back, crowing with thorns. Got Jewish leaders, making false accs, spitting in face. And got bloodthirsty crowd, shouting “Crucify!” Know what J calls these angry, hateful people in Ps 22? Wild animals. **Vs. 12-13, 16a, 20b-21**. Vicious, beastly people surrounded J w/ hate, cruelty. And thru all, where?
 - You can see J thirsting here. **Vs. 15ab**. But when J, **“I am thirsty”** (Jn 19:28), only drink given to moisten same tongue that prayed for its tormentors was vinegar.
 - Looking thru window of Ps 22, you can even see crux itself. **Vs. 16b**. 1k yrs before hap, J: **vs. 16b**. Disturbing to think re, really. Prob here/wrist, not here/palm (less chance tearing). And thru arches of feet. And you hang there; this is crux. And thru all, where?
 - **Vs. 17**, bec didn't get crucf with loin cloth. You were naked, with your full humil on display for everyone to see.
 - Finally, thru this window of Ps 22 can even see this: **vs. 18**. How more specific can you get? Jn 19: **“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining... ‘Let's not tear it,’ they said to one another. ‘Let's decide by lot who will get it’”** (19:23-24). Those soldiers didn't know fulfilling Scpt. But you can see it, bec you're looking thru window of Ps 22, as these remarkably specific prophecies find precise fulfillment on cross.
- But remem: all this suff (mockery, hatred, even cross itself) – this was not his worst suff. No, the worst suff J endured was being abandoned by God. *Eli lama*. **Vs. 1a**. Where? This when I need you the most; but not here. I know we've all felt that way before; but not way J felt – bec when J said those words, in that moment, J was actually suffering hell. Essence of hell: absolute separation from God. There on cross, J was separated from love, gracious presence of heavenly Father. God had turned back on Son; and in that moment, in his heart, J was enduring agony of hell.
- And you might ask: where? Why putting your innocent Son thru this? He doesn't deserve this! Know what: right. J doesn't deserve this. You do; so do I. Together, you/I/whole world have amassed enormous guilt for all our wickedness; and that guilt must be punished by a God of perfect justice. But instead of punishing us, God Father transferred that collective guilt of every sinner, every lived, off us, onto his Son.

Which means two things: 1) that terrible loneliness & gruesome death you see on GF thru window of Ps 22 should've been ours. This is our fault; we caused this! And 2) on cross, our guilt completely covered; our sin fully forgiven; our punishment was paid in full, by J. When God turned back on J, also turned back on our sins; they died with J; and God counts them vs us no more. All that collective guilt of entire world (your guilt & mine) has now been fully & freely forgiven, by J's death on cross.

- Here J says, **vs. 15c**. But that's not where he stays; and not where Ps 22 ends, either. At end of the Ps, J: **vs. 22**. Why? **Vs. 24**. God didn't aband J forever; didn't leave J to rot in some tomb. Ps 16:10 says, "**You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay**" (NIV84). After a Sabb rest in grave, God raised J from dead! This Cruc Savior came back to life; and now he's in heaven, where he lives/rules forever! And because we are connected to J thru baptism by faith, God will never **vs. 24** us.
- So: where? That was painful prayer of J on cross. And when we feel lonely, that may be our painful prayer, as well. But because of GF, we will never be all alone; never be forsk by God (in life or death), bec J was forsk for us. J's last words from cross were: "**It is finished!**" (Jn 19:30); and his last words in Ps 22 are: "**He has done it!**" Yes, he has! Thank you, J!

Psalm 22

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? ² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.

³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. ⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. ⁵ To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

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

⁹ Yet 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 on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. 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 that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. ¹⁹ But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. ²⁰ Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. ²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

²² I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows. ²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise him— may your hearts live forever! 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, ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. ³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!