

Jesus In Psalm 91

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[0 : 0 0] this morning we have a wee bit of a challenge because as you'll all know on the Emmaus road after Jesus rose from the dead he met a couple of disconsolate souls who knew nothing about the resurrection hadn't understood that Jesus would keep his promise by the way somebody said that if a man says that he's going to be killed and then rise from the dead on the third day and does exactly what he said he would do you really don't have any excuse for disbelieving the rest of his promises ok so let's bear that in mind and let's think about this because Jesus said to his critics on one occasion you search the scriptures because you think that by them you have eternal life but you will not come to me to have life and these are the scriptures that speak of me ok now just ask yourself what scriptures was Jesus referring to when he said that wasn't the New Testament ok

Psalm 91 let's look for Jesus he who dwells in the shelter of the most high will abide in the shadow of the almighty I will say to the Lord my refuge and my fortress my God in whom I trust for he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence he will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge his faithfulness is a shield and a buckler you will not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness nor the destruction that wastes at noonday a thousand may fall at your side ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you you will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked because you have made the Lord your dwelling place the most high who is my refuge no evil shall be allowed to befall you no plague come near your tent for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways on their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone you will tread on the lion and the adder the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot and now God speaks at this point in the psalm and he says because he holds fast to me in love

I will deliver him I will protect him because he knows my name when he calls to me I will answer him I will be with him in trouble I will rescue him and honor him with long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation God be praised for his word to us Father help us in all reverence and holiness to take it for granted that you are here you have promised you would never leave us or forsake us there is no basis for us doubting that Lord your track record is well known it's established throughout the ages there is no possibility that you would be unfaithful to a single promise we bless you that all your promises are yes and amen in Jesus so Lord as we as we come reverently to your word we pray

Lord God that you would open it to us you feed your people only on the finest of wheat and honey from the rock you don't do junk food so nourish us this morning oh Lord enable us by your grace give us ears that can hear eyes that can see and open the eyes of our heart and enlighten us oh Lord that we may in this place this morning make much of Jesus and rejoice in your goodness and grace in Jesus name let us then go from here Lord with all the bounty that you pour upon us and pour it straight back out again into the lives of everyone we meet it might just be in a handshake or it might just be a reassuring smile when somebody thinks they've got on our wrong side but Lord let the light of the gospel pour from our lives into everyone we meet let them have an encounter with Jesus in us in his name we pray amen so God has written his word in the new covenant not on tablets of stone but on human hearts you said Paul are a letter from Christ which means that not only can we meet

Jesus in Psalm 91 but we can meet Jesus in each other it's okay to shout hallelujah okay this is our God this is what he does we can't diminish our God in any way so he who dwells in the shelter of the most high will abide in the shadow of the almighty these words you know we've all known them for so many years it's so easy to overlook the riches that are here I know we studied Psalm 91 last week but let's not make the mistake that happened in the university many years ago when one of my friends who was not noted for turning up at time for seminars would only turn up now and again when he felt the urge suddenly turned up for one of the classes and answered a question totally wrongly because his answer was related to a question that had been finished the previous week we'd been studying it for weeks but the previous week we'd finished it and one of our lecturers who was leading the seminar said to him now listen here

[7:17] Mac she said the Trinity is finished so she wasn't allowed to forget that and it ended up in the magazine of the faculty at the time the Trinity is finished Psalm 91 is not finished Pastor John Robinson when he was a Puritan pastor one of the leaders of the people who went to the New World on the Mayflower before they embarked on the ship they had a time of worship on the beach and his sermon was turned into a hymn that's been in many of our books for years the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word not new truth not contradictory truth but just more because we live here in the presence of an eternal God whose word is established and fixed in the heavens he has exalted his word and his name above all things so we cannot exhaust the beauties of the scriptures and if you have a mind to we could just study

Psalm 91 for the next 10 years and we wouldn't exhaust it but today we're going to have a look at it from another angle Jesus said to his critics you search the scriptures because you think that by them you have eternal life but you will not come to me that you may have life and these are the scriptures that speak of me so where is Jesus in Psalm 91 is it reasonable I mean someone might say now hold on this is the Old Testament you're talking about here how do we expect to find Jesus in the Old Testament I mean is it even compatible with him I mean he's a man who's known for his love his kindness his miracles that brought so much healing to broken lives how can you say that we'll find Jesus anywhere in the Old Testament surely the Old

Testament is full of blood it's full of bloodletting and it's full of harshness and legal things and my goodness and what about Leviticus I mean how on earth where would you find Jesus in Leviticus you know Psalm 91 is it reasonable to expect Jesus here I mean I've had I've had professors who have been unhappy with the Old Testament happy in the New Testament they feel it's almost as though they would never say it in so many words but their whole demeanor says that the God of the New Testament is a completely different person from the God of the Old Testament that's the attitude I've had people even dear Christian friends who've come up to me and said you know David I have so much trouble with the

Old Testament the invasion of Canaan you know I really struggle with the Old Testament and I said I said you think Jesus should have had nothing to do with it and they said to me what do you mean I said well the only Bible Jesus had was the Old Testament the New Testament wasn't written until after he had died and risen and then I get a quizzical look you see how can this be I mean this is like something shattering to consider that Jesus would have used the Old Testament that Jesus actually taught on the basis of the Old Testament and Jesus challenged his critics to find him in the Old Testament he said you're searching the scriptures meaning the Old Testament meaning the Hebrew scriptures he said you're searching but you're not finding you're seeing but you're not seeing you're listening you're hearing but you're not listening you know in Psalm 40 our

Bibles generally say you've given me an open ear oh Lord and that sounds very nice and poetic but in the Hebrew it literally means Lord you have dug ears for me now I'm not pretending to be a Hebrew scholar here this morning I'm just telling you what I've read from other scholars but this is it Lord you have dug ears for me now that's a strange picture it's a picture of basically a block head that doesn't have any ears okay and there's this solid lump here and God has to get his chisel out and literally dig into the cavity and make something through which his word can penetrate I mean it's almost as silly as that but God has had to dig ears for us or we would never hear him sin is such a blockage between us and the creator that if God didn't help us we would never hear him and it's possible and I've met many people over the years who've read the Bible for years and years some of them have even taught the

[12 : 57] Bible for years and years but they've never heard God in it they've never met Jesus how sad is that so let's try and straighten out something here that frequently gets twisted turn with me for a moment to John chapter 17 this is the prayer of Jesus the great high priestly prayer he's facing the cross he's only hours away from unspeakable horrors but he's praying he's praying for all believers and at verse 17 this is his prayer to the father John 17 verse 17 sanctify them in the truth your word is truth sanctify them in the truth your word is truth now what on earth does he mean by that

I mean we're we're asking is the old testament even compatible with Jesus but here Jesus is actually saying that the old testament is not only compatible with him it's compatible with your development as a disciple of Jesus he's asking the father to use the old testament which was the only word that was available at the time they are not of the world he said just as I am not of the world sanctify them in the truth your word is truth he wasn't talking about the new testament your word is truth sanctify them in the word now what does it mean to sanctify it means to make holy and holy in the sense that the person completely and utterly belongs to god it's a separation you're separated out from the world for the sake of the world because if we're not separate from the world there's no light to shine in the darkness there's no hope to give to a lost world so we need to be separated out and

Jesus is saying to the father father I want you to separate them out and use your word lord use your word father to separate these people from the world to make them holy to make them different to make them stand apart so there's a clear light shining into the darkness and so not only does Jesus consider that the old testament is compatible with him he considers that it's compatible with you and me and with our development as disciples if we're going to become like Jesus the father is going to use the old testament in that process wow isn't that amazing there is no such thing as redundant scripture you see if God has put it on his page we need to do something with it so don't let's think for a moment that

Psalms 91 couldn't possibly be a meeting place with Jesus we need to establish that right at the beginning so we're going to start looking at the Psalm from that perspective now now remember what we said last week just to recap slightly that the word he at the beginning is not actually in the original text he who dwells it just means the sitting one the person who's just sitting he's just sitting in the secret place of the most high he's relaxed he's doing what he would do in his own home he's just sitting and he's relaxed and he's abiding in the shadow of the almighty why is he doing that why is he abiding the word actually implies some kind of obstinacy or stubbornness there's no way he's going to move out of that secret place he's stubborn his heels are dug in he's sitting and he's at ease but in his heart he's stubborn he's not going to move and why is he not going to move because he will not take his own security into his own hands you see when I take my security into my own hands when I start worrying myself to death because

I've got nothing to worry about when I start worrying myself about my finances I start worrying about my children I start worrying about the direction the country is going which frankly seems that way when I start worrying about all these things and I take my security into my own hands what have I become I have become like the fool who says in his heart there is no God I have become like someone who's saying well Lord I don't know if you've read the headlines today Lord but oh Lord I've got a headache could you just move over a bit Lord I'm going to clamber up on this throne here because frankly Lord I hate to admit it but I think we've just hit some things that even you can't handle so I'm going to try and navigate myself through this rough patch okay

[19:07] I'm going to try so here's what we could do let's just put this to the test I could ask any one of you if you like just to come down to the front here and explain to us what your strategy is for dealing with the country's economy right now how are you going to help people pay their bills okay how are you going to help sort the national health service from the state that it's in how are you going to stop illegal immigration pouring across the English Channel how are you going to deal with these things any of you I mean if you like just come down the front and tell us what your strategy is to deal with these things would you okay no taker I'm surprised that Willie Scullin didn't volunteer but that's okay now you see folks this is this is where it's at our security is not in our own hands is it but that doesn't stop us worrying and behaving as though our security is in our own hands you see when

I worry it's a very very subtle form of idolatry it's basically saying I need to clamber up on the throne and steer myself through this troubled water because we've just hit something that even God can't handle that's worry that's worry it's a very very subtle form of idolatry it puts me in the place that belongs to the living God don't let's do that so right at the outset here he's saying he who dwells in the shelter of the most high will abide in the shadow of the almighty and that's a wonderful possibility that's for anybody that's whosoever that's anybody who dwells in the shelter of the most high that applies to anybody who decides to do that you don't take your security into your own hands but you say no

I'm just going to take the security of God around myself that's all I need but there's a downside to that that verse is saying something negative as well it's also saying if you don't dwell in the shelter of the most high if you don't abide in the shadow of the almighty then the things I'm about to say to you here do not apply to you you don't have these securities and you should be afraid this is quite awesome isn't it how a single verse of the Bible can split the entire population of the world into two camps and that's what God's word does A.W.

Tozer said let's have no more of this nonsense about the brotherhood of man he said we need to speak openly and honestly about the existence of two parallel human races in this world there is one human race that is destined for glory there is another human race that is destined for eternal loss and perdition he says and there is no possibility that we can look at it any other way God has sent his son to make sure that we can be in the right group but God does not control people and if people are shaking their fist in rebellion against God then they make their own choice but this is the shelter of the most high this is the secret place of the most high and the question then is who is the most high let's just let's just quieten our hearts for a moment and consider that the most high is the greatest possible security if there's nothing higher then there's no greater security you cannot think of a danger or a threat that is greater or more powerful than the one who is most high so you're never going to encounter anything in your life no matter how terrifying it is you're never going to encounter anything that is higher than the most high or more powerful than the most powerful the living

God is greater the devil will come along because he loves to exaggerate and boast about his power but the only way he can talk about his power is by exaggeration because in reality he's a defeated foe his power was broken at the cross so you can exaggerate the dangers you can exaggerate the threats but I promise you brothers and sisters you can never exaggerate your security that's not possible because the most high has you in the palm of his hand and we'll come back to that in a moment think of this think of something that the Lord says about the end times he talks in Zechariah I can't remember the chapter but he talks in Zechariah about the time coming when

[25 : 19] Jerusalem and the people of Israel will be in villages without walls the population will be so great and their livestock will be so numerous and their prosperity will be so great that it can't be walled in it can't be contained in boundaries and in the context in Zechariah there's a man with a measuring rod in his hand and an angel says to him there's no point why would you go measure something that is being immeasurably blessed you can't do that and God promises at that time he says they will be dwelling in unwalled villages but he said I will be a wall of fire around them I will be a wall of fire around them my brothers and sisters that's what it is to dwell in the secret place of the most high he's a wall of fire around you right now

I don't know what you're facing in your life I don't know what trials and worries what temptations you've got right now but I do know this that you could not exaggerate the nearness of the living God to your life right now and it's still okay to shout hallelujah what a God we serve you see if God is saying about a people who have historically been completely rebellious Israel's Israel's track record with God is in peaks and troughs and the peaks are glorious and the troughs are absolutely hideous but if he's saying that to people who have never really known their Messiah and never come to faith in their Savior and he's saying there'll be a wall of fire to them then let's pick up the how much more principle that

Jesus uses you see again you know consider the lilies how they grow even Solomon in all his glory was not a red light one of these but if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven how much more will he clothe you for you of little faith how much more and so we need to take Psalm 91 and apply that how much more principle to it if God is saying this in Old Testament times before the grace of God is revealed before life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel before any of those wonderful things happen and he's saying that in Psalm 91 how much more can you bank on the security of the secret place of the most high today you realize that we haven't left verse one yet you know that's how rich this Psalm is that's why we could study it for another ten years and not exhaust it and if we do so we will abide in the shadow of the almighty the shadow of the almighty how's that for a phrase the almighty is the name that the lord gave to

Abraham when he began to unfold his promises for Abraham's life the almighty in Hebrew El Shaddai it means a god for whom nothing is impossible and so god proves that by promising something impossible and saying that a man who's nearly a hundred and a wife who's ninety is going to have a baby as you do what a promise and so the god of the impossible promises the impossible and shows it to be possible and Isaac is born and they call him laughter what else would you call him really so what I want to say what I want to ask here is here's a question for us to consider at this point what's the alternative to the secret place of the most high if we don't dwell in the place the secret place of the most high what's the alternative to that secret place well I think the answer is like this it's how

Paul described the Ephesians before they came to Christ without hope and without God in the world and the world is a troubled place would you say it's Adam and Eve's exile from the garden from God's garden that's the alternative to the secret place of the most high it's the prodigal son's far country where he was exiled by his own rebellion to the point where he made such a mess of his life that he was reduced to the lowest and you know when he finally came to his senses and decided this prodigal that he would go back to his father he started rehearsing how he would do that because he imagined that he had blown it as far as being received as a son was concerned so he thought well here's the possibility then

[31 : 40] I could just be taken on as one of the staff I could be an employee and as he's thinking this way he's proving with every word he says that he never knew his father he never knew his father to think that way is to say well okay we can't be father and son anymore so we'll just be employer and an employee now that might be possible for the son but it's not a possibility for the father because as far as the father is concerned he has never stopped being a father and never will and therefore his son will never stop being a son son the bar is set at son ship it's not set at employee status the bar is not down here this is that's that's the way rebels think we think let's just bring God down and we'll make him fit you know once

God's a comfortable fit we can live with him you ever thought that let's just make God a comfortable fit so God can be an employee an employer and I'll just anything I get I've earned that's the way the world wants to see God that's the way religious people want to see God as someone from whom they earn something but a Christian is not an employee not a steward but a son or a daughter and a co-heir with Christ and we have nothing from God that we have earned and we will never have anything from God that we have earned because what we earned was paid to Jesus on the cross that's what we earned the wages of sin is what we earned and it brought death to our saviour we will never receive from

God what we earned but we will receive if we trust him an abundance of good things that we have never earned and security is one of those things that we have not earned and we never will earn it what a God do do do we begin to see that the secret place of the most high is actually our true home it's our true dwelling place it's what God has always desired for each of us it's the reason he gave his son to bring us to our true home there was a meeting a big meeting chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury way back in 1910 in Edinburgh Archbishop William Temple chaired that gathering and at the end he was leading the closing devotions and someone writing up about it afterwards said this this is how he described

Archbishop William Temple and what he said he said there was no mistaking the fact that in heart and soul we were being lifted up into the realm where he habitually dwelt we were being lifted up into the realm where he habitually dwelt this man of God habitually dwelt in the secret place of the most high so when he led the devotions he lifted everybody up into the same place with him brothers and sisters I want that to be said about me I want it to be said about you that when folk are really up against it they turn up on your door step and you lift them up into the place where you habitually dwell is that not what it's about let's let's consider this there's another little word further down in

Psalms 91 which I want us to look at again there are three words used for refuge in this Psalm and this particular one is at verse 9 because you have made the Lord your dwelling place the most high who is my refuge my refuge no evil shall befall you that refuge is a fascinating word it's used of an animal's lair a den if you like or let's put it another way the animal's natural habitat now I don't think there would be a higher form of worship in the eyes of our God than for us to see our God as our natural habitat to dwell in God to dwell in the presence of God all the great saints of old have testified to the fact that they became the people they became because they lived habitually in the presence of

[37 : 24] God and I think we live in a world of such powerful distractions how much time have you spent this week with the headlines in the newspaper or browsing websites or whatever compared to the time that you've spent with this how much does how much of your attention does God have in the course of a week do we meditate on the word of God what's the first word of the book of Psalms can anybody tell me shout it out if you know very first word blessed is the man I grew up on the paraphrases of the

Psalms that man hath perfect blessedness who walketh north of three and counsel of ungodly men nor stands in sinners way but it says there this is a man who meditates on the law of God day and night day and night he's meditating on what he's meditating he's not even got a whole Old Testament he's meditating probably on the five books of Moses and he's meditating on them day and night oh brothers and sisters what are we missing when we allow ourselves to be preoccupied by the headlines to be caught up by the powerful media and the television and Facebook and all the rest of it why do we allow that to happen we need to pick this book up and meditate on God's word and we could do worse than go home and just meditate on Psalm 91 when

Augustine the bishop of Hippo was translating that Psalm 1 and he got to the verse that says on his law he meditates day and night he translates it this way he says and on his law he chatters day and night he chatters day and night because Augustine understood something about Hebrew and the Hebrew word for meditate means to mutter or to chatter so you're vocalizing the word of God all the time we need to do that because faith comes by the hearing of the word we're far too cerebral in the way that we do things we need to take God's word onto our lips do not let this book of the law depart from your eyes ears mouth yes do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth we're supposed to speak it out brothers and sisters and meditate on it until we begin to see what's happening here so now here's where I want to finish what happens to Psalm 91 when we hear Jesus say

I and the Father are one what happens to Psalm 91 when we hear Jesus say all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me who is the most high right let's just come at that again okay because this is big this is really big we need to get it right what happens to Psalm 91 when we hear Jesus say I and the Father are one let's turn back to John 10 which is where he says that he's talking about himself as a good shepherd and he says none shall snatch them from my hand none shall snatch them from my father's hand

I and the father are one what's he talking about he's talking about the security of the flock he's saying you can only perish brothers and sisters if there is a power greater than the most high who can snatch you from his hand blessed assurance I should think so you can only perish if there is a power greater than the most high who can snatch you from his hand and when Jesus says that he says I and the father are one Jesus is the most high so let's read the psalm again but this time we're going to put Jesus name in where it's appropriate he who dwells in the shelter of Jesus will abide in the shadow of the almighty

[43 : 14] I will say to Jesus my refuge my fortress in whom I trust and notice by the way that it's trust not only believe we don't only believe in Jesus we trust in Jesus and when we trust in Jesus trust is faith acting on the facts trust is faith acting on the facts once you've got the facts established then you trust those as if you don't trust the facts once you've established them then what you've got is hypocrisy your faith if it's real will act upon the facts and where do you get the facts from from research not from education not from people's well intended reassurances not where do you get the facts from answer the facts our faith stands on are revealed facts hello they are revealed facts we don't stand on merely earthly knowledge we don't stand on merely earthly data we stand on facts that heaven has opened to give to us and the father in previous times spoke through the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us through his son he has spoken through his son and we have all the revelation we could possibly need so once you know that your facts are revealed facts they're not up for negotiation anymore are they you didn't get them from some university faculty you didn't get your facts from some almanac or from some television personality you got the facts from the most high and so

God uses trust if you like as his form of transport to take us to a different place Jesus said if you hold to my words you have already crossed over from death to life and will not come under judgment why are you not going to come under judgment brothers and sisters because your judgment took place at Calvary that's where it took place I will say to Jesus my refuge my fortress my God in whom I trust for Jesus will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence Jesus will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge Jesus faithfulness is a shield and buckler you will not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness nor the destruction that wastes at noonday a thousand may fall at your side ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you you will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked because you have made

Jesus your dwelling place Jesus who is my refuge my natural habitat no evil shall befall you no plague shall come near your tent for Jesus will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways isn't that amazing the angels whose help he refused at Calvary he commands to take care of you well I'll say it hallelujah he will command Jesus will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways on their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone you will tread on the lion and the adder the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot Jesus then begins to speak at this point in the psalm and Jesus says to you and to me because he or she holds fast to me in love

I will deliver him I will deliver her I will protect him I will protect her because she knows my name because he knows my name when they call to me I will answer them I will be with them in trouble I will rescue them and honor them with long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation my salvation Jesus is able to say that salvation belongs to our God and to the lamb who sits upon the throne salvation is his to show us and to give us you see once you realize that Jesus is the most high you find him all over the place in this psalm don't you that just opens everything out what a God we serve what a saviour we have let's pray living God our father we marvel at your goodness and your provision for us it is completely off the scale we have no units of measurement by which to grasp all that you have done for us we thank you that your gift is inexpressible but we bless you also Lord that your gift is not so immeasurable not so inexpressible that we cannot grasp it and enjoy it because you have spoken to us through your son and you have revealed facts to us that enable us to not only believe in you but to trust you and to allow those facts those revealed facts to shape the way that we behave and so father we pray in Jesus name that in this frightened and increasingly frightening world you will enable us to be among those who dwell in the secret place of the most high not cowering there because it's not a place to cower but going out with you into this world so that we are always in your presence we are always enjoying your presence we are confident of your presence with us in the office or in the supermarket we are confident of your presence with us wherever we go whatever is happening

Lord we bless you for that and we pray in Jesus name that in this frightened and frightening world we will not be among those who give way to fear but that we will challenge the ungodly fear that seeks to rule our hearts and control our minds and we will be like that little lady in Clyde Bank during the blitz who worked on the assumption that since you would neither slumber nor sleep there was no reason for her to stay awake and she would go to bed rather than the bomb shelter we bless you Lord for such saints who take you at your word may we be among them father for your glory and to shed the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ into these dark and frightened streets these days let us not be part of the problem father but let us be heaven's answer to the fear that everyone feels in Jesus precious name and for your glory

[51 : 25] Lord we pray Amen