

Psalm 23 – Study 1

What precious pieces of Hebrew poetry we see in the book of Psalms. It's all through there, and especially, I've noticed recently... and I've been looking at particular psalms... Psalm 22 through 24. And in Psalm 22 we have a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. That psalm is a clear prophecy of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And Psalm 24 portrays the Lord Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. He's pictured as a King coming in glory and honor.

Sandwiched between these two great psalms is Psalm 23, and this psalm is one of the most well-known and best-loved of all the passages in the Bible. Here we see Jesus. Jesus is pictured as the Great Shepherd. You see, Psalm 22 pictures the death of Jesus for sinners. His death is the event which made it possible for us to be saved. Psalm 24 pictures the end of the age when the King Himself will reign in perfect righteousness, and on that day, those who have been washed in His blood and saved by His grace will reign with Him. But between the time we get saved and the day we go home to Heaven, there is a life to live and that is where Psalm 23 comes into play.

In these six precious verses, we're allowed to listen in as one of the Lord's children lifts his heart in song to honor the Lord he loves. In these verses, David tells us that there is plenty to get excited about when it comes to our Lord and His goodness in our lives. Folks, it isn't all doom and gloom today. If you know the Great Shepherd, you have plenty to be excited about.

David has a song in Psalm 23 and as we read Psalm 23 as one of God's sheep David sings out for the glory of the Lord. If you know

Jesus as Savior, you, too, are one of God's little sheep. You, too, as David, can sing out the praises of the Great Shepherd. Let's rejoice together as we are permitted to sing about our Great Shepherd.

I want you to notice first of all who the sheep exalt... the Shepherd. Psalm 23:1 says, *The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.* Notice this first about the Shepherd... His name.

David identifies the object of his love as the Lord. This is the great I AM. This is the God of creation, the God of salvation, the God of eternity, the one and only God. David calls Him Lord. Some people call Him God. Some people call Him Friend, and some people call Him Father. Some people know Him as Jesus, and that is who David is talking about. All of this, all of these names mean One. This great God has placed His name all over this psalm, and notice with me how He has written His name in bold letters across the very fabric of this psalm.

Verse 1, *The LORD is my shepherd.* This is David saying Jehovah-Raah. This is a name for God that means "my Shepherd." And then we see in verse 1 also the Lord will provide. This is Jehovah-Jireh. *I shall not want,* David says.

And then in verse 2 we read the Lord, my peace. This is Jehovah-Shalom. Then we see in verse 3, the Lord, my healer, Jehovah-Rapha. *He restoreth my soul.* And then also in verse 3, the Lord, my righteousness, Jehovah-Tsidkenu. *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

And then we see in verse 4 Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there. David says in Psalm 23:4, *Thou art with me*. The Lord never left him; the Lord never will, and the Lord never has left us and the Lord never will.

And then we see Jehovah-Nissi in verse 5, the Lord, our banner. Psalm 23:5 says, *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies*. The Lord supplies. The Lord takes care of us. And you've heard that song, I'm sure, "His banner over me is love."

David goes on to say in verse 5 that "the Lord is my sanctifier." *Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over*. This is Jehovah-M'kaddesh. *My cup runneth over. He anointest my head with oil*. "He has set me apart," David says, "for His specific purpose. I'm different from many people in this world," he's saying, "because I know whom I have trusted. I've trusted in the Great Shepherd."

And then we see the word Jehovah-Elyon in verse 6. This means the Lord Most High. *Surely goodness and mercy, David says, shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD... that's El-Elyon... forever*.

These names mean that God is God. God is our provider. God is our sustenance. God takes care of us. God is our Savior and many other things that I've already mentioned in these names that we find in these verses.

We've looked briefly at the Shepherd's name. Now consider with me if you would His nature. Of all the many names of the Lord that David could have magnified, he was led of the Spirit to sing about Jehovah-Roi, the Lord my Shepherd. Why? Because the image of a Shepherd tenderly leading, feeding, and caring for His sheep is a perfect picture of our

precious Savior's relationship to His sheep. In fact, the image of Himself as a Shepherd was a favorite of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen in John 10 and in John 10:11, Jesus Himself said, *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*.

I praise the Lord that, when I got saved, I got more than a Savior. I also got a Shepherd. I got one who loves me, tends to me, cares about me, leads me, feeds me, protects me, and guides me through this life. When you and I got saved, we met One who had made us His top priority.

If you know Him like David did, then you know that He is worthy of our exaltation. Therefore, may the Lord's sheep never be ashamed to exalt, praise, and worship the One who sought them and brought them in from the wild mountains of sin. Luke 15:4-7 say this: *⁴What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. ⁷I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd. "Jesus Christ," David says, "my Shepherd." And I wonder today, can you say that Jesus Christ is your Shepherd?

We've seen that the Shepherd is the One whom the sheep exalts, and then we see what the sheep experiences by this, by the Great Shepherd. I notice first of all that the sheep experiences a personal relationship, and let

me speak specifically about David here. When this psalm begins, David is writing in the first person. He says, "My shepherd." It seems as though he is talking to us about the Shepherd. In doing so, he uses the possessive pronoun "my" to talk about his relationship to the Shepherd. He did not say, "The Lord is a shepherd." He did not say, "The Lord is *our* shepherd." He did not say, "The Lord is *your* shepherd." Instead, David tells us that he has a personal relationship with the Shepherd. He says, "The Lord is *my* shepherd." Can you say that today? You need to be able to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Next, we see that David experiences a precious relationship, not only a personal relationship, but a precious relationship. Psalm 23:1 says, *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.* Now, David tells us that, as a result of this personal relationship he has with the Shepherd, he is confident that the Shepherd will take care of all his needs. He says in verse 1, *I shall not want.* In fact, the rest of the psalm is the development of that thought. David, the Lord's little sheep, tells us all the things the Great Shepherd provides for him.

And I see first of all that the Lord provides the tenderness, that there is the tenderness of the Shepherd. David tells us in verse 2 of his Shepherd. He makes him to lie down in green pastures. The Shepherd knows that, unlike goats which will eat weeds and the other trash of this world, the sheep prefer the tender, green grasses. The Shepherd leads them to the places where he knows they will be fed. He makes them lie down because He knows that they cannot properly digest their food unless they lie down. He also knows that sheep will not lie down unless they feel perfectly safe from enemy attack. He knows they need to lie down because their wool grows in thickness and richness in direct proportion to the time

they spend resting and chewing on the green grasses again that they have eaten.

What I mean by that is... think of the old cow. Think of that cow. And we've heard this term. I've heard this term, how that the cow is chewing her cud. Well, this is also what a sheep needs to do for digesting partially digested food. The shepherd knows this and the sheep lies down.

With all of this in mind, the Shepherd tenderly leads His sheep to the places of greatest safety and nutrition. Psalm 23:2 says, *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.* Are you being led by the Shepherd today? Do you know Him as your Savior? The Bible says that, in Romans 3:10, *There is none righteous, no not one.* Why is that? Romans 3:23 says, *For all have sinned.* Romans 6:23 says, *For the wages of sin is death.* But thank God, in the rest of that verse in Romans 6:23, *the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.* And while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us,* Romans 5:8.

Have you asked Him to come into your heart? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Shepherd? You need to bow where you're at right now. You can bow without even closing your eyes. Just be serious with God and say, "God, forgive me. I'm a sinner. I can't save myself. I'm sorry. Please save me. I want You as my Shepherd and my Savior." If you'll pray a prayer like that, God says He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Next time, we'll pick up with Psalm 23. May the Lord bless you.

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