

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

The Psalms

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Psalm 23

This, without a doubt, is one of the most popular psalms in the Bible. One that has been memorized, recited and sung by millions of believers through the ages. In this sermon we will examine the psalm's '**keywords**' which provide answers to the five basic questions analysts love to ask: **who, where, why, when** and **how?** We will then end our study by **rejoicing** with the psalmist in **verse 6** as we examine and even share his conclusions.

Before we go any further let me remind you all of a great spiritual fact, which some of you will already know. It is this. In order to teach mankind the deep spiritual realities about Himself, the Kingdom of Heaven and man's place in the universe, the Creator ordained that mankind be employed in certain occupations: such as **agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, wine-making, pottery etc.** Each of these basic occupations, which can still be found in every country, is a '**living object lesson**' of a great spiritual reality which you must recognize if you want to live a fulfilling life. In **Psalm 23** we see one of these '**living object lessons**' where the psalmist compares himself to a sheep and the Almighty God to a shepherd.

1. Who?

Who is the Psalmist writing and singing about? Who is involved in this song?

Psalm 23: 1: "***The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.***"

Two persons are involved here: the **Lord** (Yahweh is His name) and I. Note that Yahweh is not merely referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But He is '**my shepherd**' and all that the word '**my**' implies. He looks after me. I am His. I belong to Him. I may not be as good as other sheep who belong to other shepherds. That is not the point being made here. The point being made is: the Lord is '**my**' shepherd.

This verse tells us who the key characters are in the psalm: Yahweh and I. Of course that can mean Yahweh and you.

2. Where?

Where does my shepherd take me? The answer is plain to see.

Psalm 23: 2: ***“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.”***

Notice where my shepherd leads me. He leads me to places of nourishment, refreshment and peace described as ***“green pastures and still waters.”*** To be sure I would often love to run off and imagine that I could find better pastures. But from experience I have found that the pastures He leads to are always ‘**green.**’ The waters He leads to are ‘**still.**’ Also notice that little word ‘**the**’ still waters. This implies that there is only **one place** where the waters are still. There are not many places of still waters - but only one place; hence the singular ‘**the.**’

3. Why?

The good Shepherd does not lead me for no apparent reason. He has a very good reason in mind. It is, for His Name's sake.

Psalm 23: 3: ***“He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness (Why?) for His Name's sake.”***

Yahweh's Name

His reputation, His character, His love, kindness, mercy and law have been ignored, slandered, blasphemed and set aside for generations. The Most High intends to put the record straight. He leads each believer - as far as we will allow Him - with the prime purpose of accomplishing that goal: **to clear His holy name.** But He does not do this for personal gain; but that the universe might understand the Truth about His perfect character: because failure to recognize the Truth will most certainly lead to death. Therefore to clear His name will result in people believing in Him: and that will result in life- everlasting for them! That is why the Good Shepherd leads each one of us in the pathway of righteousness - to help clear His Name, His Character, His Reputation. He does this so that others will believe Him and be saved. That is His ultimate goal, His sacred objective.

The rewards we believers will receive for walking in the path of obedience are beyond the reckoning of the present human mind.

4. When?

The Good Shepherd does not promise an easy walk. Hard times will often come to every sheep in the flock. But through it all we have the greatest assurance ever to be granted a believer - ***“thou art with me.”***

Psalm 23: 4: ***“Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.”***

This is not simply a testimony of a bygone experience. Not the nostalgic ramblings about the good old days. This verse is written in the present tense - thou ‘**art**’ with me. Yahweh is with me right now - at this very moment. The Lord ‘**is**’ my shepherd. He ‘**is**’ with me this very

moment. See sermon **Our Greatest Asset**.

5. How?

Psalm 23: 5: ***“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”***

Yahweh has plans for all His sheep which no believer can remotely imagine. This verse tells of how the sheep/shepherd relationship is dramatically changed. The psalmist is no longer a humble sheep eating grass in the pasture. He now finds himself sitting at the table of honour with a brimming cup in his hand. Yes, life in the Kingdom of Heaven at Yahweh's table will be glorious beyond imagination: as different as eating grass is to dining at a king's banquet.

Here, again in the present tense, we see Yahweh **‘preparest a table,’** catering for His people. That little phrase **‘my cup runneth over’** describes the generosity of the Most High. He not only meets our spiritual needs; but His supplies come in great abundance - over and above all our requirements. **‘My cup runneth over.’** Let Me explain this verse further.

A believer may suffer physical hardship and deprivation. He or she may often wonder where the Shepherd is, especially as life's problems get worse. But we must not despair: because Yahweh is near, *"He is with us."* If He does not immediately remove a believer's burden, He always has a very good reason for not doing so. But He does supply the spiritual support that is necessary to bear that burden. This spiritual support is metaphorically described as *"feasting in the presence of mine enemies"* or having one's head *"anointed with oil."* It is ever present. It is the kind of spiritual nourishment which abounds in the midst of trouble, much to the wonder and frustration of one's enemies. In other words Yahweh may allow *hardship, persecution, sickness, starvation, loneliness* etc., to come a believer's way. But He will always provide a counter-supply of spiritual resources to sustain the believer's soul. He may not remove the enemy; but you can be sure that if **He is with you**, you will feast before the enemy's eyes. What's more your cup of blessing will overflow. Can you say: My cup runneth over?

6. Confidence

Verse 6

“Surely”

Here is **faith** at its shining best, inspiring, setting a good example to others and gladdening the heart of God. What a **beautiful** word is that word ***“surely”***

goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

This tells of Yahweh's **true character**. He is **good** and He is **merciful**. These beautiful qualities are everlasting: and they ensure our **forgiveness** and **survival**. The Most High radiates **goodness** and **mercy**, more than any in the entire universe.

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

This is the **heritage** of all who **believe**. This promise encompasses **eternity!**

Notice how the Psalmist starts as a sheep being led in green pastures; but finishes at the

shepherd's table - in His house. In other words, in the hereafter believers will live in the house of the good shepherd. (Jesus, Yeshua the Messiah) Our journey from the sheepfold to the palace will then be over. Unimaginable and eternal delights await each and every believer in the Most high.

7. Lost Sheep

Sad to say not everyone can sing this psalm and mean it: for many are '**lost sheep.**' They have wandered away from the good Shepherd and are shivering, hungry and frightened on the cliffs of life. Perhaps you are one of them - a lost sheep. Did you know that the good Shepherd is looking for you? It will help a great deal if you were to cry out for help and make your needs known. Cry to Him for help: for forgiveness, for direction, for assistance: cry today. My dear friend the good Shepherd is looking for you. Call for help today. He will surely answer your call.

Luke 15: 4: *“What 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?”*

5: *And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*

6: *And 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.**”*

John 10: 11: ***“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”***

Yes, the **good shepherd** died to win eternal life for you. **Do not spurn him.** Instead, be like the psalmist and say:

The **LORD** is **MY Shepherd** and **I am one** of His **sheep**.

And one day I will feast at His table and dwell in His house - ***forever!***

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.

Elder: Max W. Mader

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