

Portrait of Our Shepherd-King

Psalm 23

Intro. 1) Holy Scripture is filled with metaphors, pictures and images of our great and awesome God. He is compared to a lion, an eagle, a lamb, the sun, a light, a fire, a fountain, a rock, a hiding place, a tower and a shield.

2) There are also more personal and humanly images to help us comprehend the incomprehensible God. He is called the Creator, a bridegroom, a husband, a judge, a king, a man of war, a builder and maker, a physician, and of course a Father. And yet there is another image found in the Bible: the image of a shepherd, better, a shepherd-king. Psalm 23 is part of a glorious trilogy. In Psalm 22 we met our Suffering-King, in Psalm 24 our Sovereign King, and in Psalm 23 our Shepherd-King. I believe in each of these Psalms it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is in view.

3) Three times in the Bible the Lord Jesus is directly described as a shepherd:

- In John 10:11 He is the good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep.
- In Heb. 13:20 He is the great Shepherd of the sheep who shed His blood.
- In 1 Peter 5:4 He is the chief Shepherd who provides for His faithful servants the crown of glory that does not fade away.

J.P. McBeth said, “The 23rd Psalm is the greatest poem ever written.”

4) Much of the imagery in the Psalm is not only related to that of a shepherd, it also echoes the Exodus as Jehovah shepherded his people through the wilderness.

I. Our Shepherd-King Provides For Us What We Need 23:1-3

A sheep has only one shepherd, and Jesus is a shepherd who knows His sheep by name and they follow Him, as John 10:27-28 teaches.

1) He gives us nourishment. 23:1-2

- The Lord (*Yahweh*), first and emphatic in the text is my shepherd; I shall not want (*NIV*, “I shall not be in want”). The *NLT* says, “I have everything I need,” *The Message*, “I don’t need a thing.” “I lack nothing,” a praise found only one other time in scripture, that being Deut 2:7 in the context of the Exodus.
 - He will feed me and quench my hunger. After all He is the “Bread of Life” (John 6:35).
 - He will be my water and quench my thirst. After all, He is the living water (John 4:14; 7:38).

2) He gives us rest. 23:3

- The Lord revives me when I need strength. It is the Lord who restores me and gets back on my feet and back into the fight when I stumble and fall. It is the Lord who puts life in proper perspective and helps me see things with a Godward, eternal perspective (Psalm 19:7).

3) He gives guidance. 23:3

- God’s care is constant and it is compassionate. He leads (*NIV*, “guides”) me.
- Paths of righteousness. His leading is always in the right and proper direction. He leads me by His Spirit and through His Word to do the right

thing, to think the right thing, to say the right thing, to live the right way (Psalm 119:105).

For His name's sake. He meets my needs, renews my life, leads me in the right paths putting His reputation on the line! His name! His glory! (Psalm 106:8).

II. Our Shepherd-King Protects Us Where We Are 23:4-5

1) He is with us when we face death. 23:4

- Here we are walking in the very valley of the shadow of death, a very deep shadow, deep darkness, the darkest valley. David can say, "I will fear no evil." Why?
- For you are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. The reason we are going through the deep, dark valleys is because our Good Shepherd is leading us! The valley is part of the path of righteousness (Ps. 84:11).
The rod is an instrument to protect and provide safety. It guards.
The staff is an instrument to comfort and provide support. It guides.

2) He is with us when we face the enemy. 23:5

- A number of Bible students note a change in the imagery in vs. 5 from that of a shepherd to the host of a great banquet. I see an extension and development of the Shepherd-King picture.
- The Shepherd-King is here serving His sheep. Enemies may be all around us and yet right in the midst God is serving me and sustaining me. This says something both to me and to them.
- You anoint my head with oil. He publicly acknowledges us as honored guest with an ancient ritual of hospitality.
- My cup runs over. He gives me more than I need in a gracious and lavish display that all can see.

III. Our Shepherd-King Promises Us What We Have 23:6

Psalm 23 is not about death, it is about life. It is life more abundant as described by the Good Shepherd Jesus in John 10:10.

1) We will always have His gracious love.

- Instead of being pursued by your enemies who watch you feast at a great banquet prepared in your honor (v.5), it is the goodness (*tob*) and mercy (*hesed*), the loving-kindness of our Shepherd-King that is constantly running after you and running you down.

2) We will someday enjoy His gracious acceptance.

- Notice the Psalm begins (vs. 1) and ends (v.6) with "the Lord" (inclusio).
- The Good Shepherd will feed you and lead you, protect you and provide for you, and when He is through using you, He will bring you into His house as His child forever! What greater privilege could be imaginable than to dwell in the house of the Lord, our Shepherd-King, forever! (Rom 8:35-39).

Conclusion

1) (Ezk. 34:23; Micah 5:2-4; 1 Peter 2:25)

2) Note the precious promise found in the last book of the Bible, Rev. 7:16-17.

3) This is the Shepherd-King who will receive and lead and love and care for all who will say: the Lord (Jesus) is my Shepherd, I have everything I need.