

## PSALM 23

### *The Lord, the Psalmist's Shepherd*

#### INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (1-19-94).
- B. A Psalm of David. "The Shepherd Psalm."
- C. This is not only the most popular psalm, but probably the most popular chapter of the OT. Although the authorship of David has not been successfully challenged, it is not certain when he wrote it. It recalls his early life as a shepherd, but the mature reflections seem to indicate the maturity and contemplation of advanced age. We would conclude that David was inspired to write it as an old man: In the time of reflection and remembrance. It sometimes takes a great deal of maturity and reflection to give credit for our good fortune to someone else.
- D. Coffman agrees with other writers that there seems to be two metaphors developed in this psalm: Verses 1-4 describe God as a good shepherd, and verses 5-6 describe him as a gracious host who prepares a banquet. It is difficult to see how much of the imagery of the last two verses would apply to a shepherd caring for the sheep.

#### THE TEXT.

- 23:1** The LORD is my shepherd,  
I shall not want.
- 2** He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside quiet waters.
- 3** He restores my soul;  
He guides me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.
- 4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil, for You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
- 5** You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You have anointed my head with oil;  
My cup overflows.
- 6** Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

#### COMMENTS.

- A. The Good Shepherd (23:1-4).  
**[v1]** "The Lord is my shepherd..." The word translated "Lord" is usually translated Jehovah in the OT and "Lord" in the NT. "I shall not want." The shepherd provides for the sheep.  
**[v2]** "...green pastures... still waters..." These represent the basic needs of the sheep for sustenance. Some have pointed out that "still waters" could be rendered "waters of rest" and speak of tranquility and peace.  
**[v3]** "He restores my soul;" The shepherd not only sustains, but restores or revives. Jesus pictured any Shepherd as seeking the sheep which wandered away and bringing them back (Lk. 15:4-7). "He leads..." Sometimes restoration is the first part of leadership.  
**[v4]** "...the valley of the shadow of death..." The valleys were sometimes more dangerous than the plains or mountain sides, as in the valleys there was more moisture and therefore thickets where lions and other wild animals could hide. "You are with me..." this confidence shows the faith the sheep should have in the shepherd and our faith in God. "Perfect love casts out fear" (1Jn. 4:18).  
The Good Host.
- B. **[v5]** "You prepare a table before me" does not seem appropriate for the description of a shepherd feeding the sheep. It is more suitable as the description of a gracious and generous host who prepares a banquet for honored guests.

“You anoint my head with oil” hardly describes a shepherd feeding the sheep, but would describe a host greeting a guest. “My cup runs over” would better describe a banquet than sheep being fed.  
**[v6]** “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” could describe a contented guest better than sheep.