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Lesson 13: Psalm 23-24

Psalm 23

Author: David

Background: Unknown

Theme: God is seen as a caring Shepherd and a dependable Guide. We must follow God and obey His commands. He is our only hope for eternal life and security. –from the Life Application Bible

Outline (The outline comes from Wilmington's Outline Bible with additional notes from other resources as noted.)

The psalm expresses confidence in God's goodness—in this life and in the life to come. The personal way in which the psalmist speaks of God, the imagery of God's soothing guidance, and the ensuing confidence in God have all been factors in making this one of the most charming and beloved of the Psalms. ¹

The teaching of our Lord that he is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) who has come for both Jews and Gentiles (John 10:16) gives the Christian a sound reason to apply the benefits of God's goodness to the ancient covenant people and to himself, as a child of Abraham and

¹ Gaebelein, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (214). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

fellow-heir of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:29; 4:7). Moreover, it causes us to hope in the glory God has prepared for His own (Rev 7:17).²

There are two principle metaphors of the Lord's goodness: he is like a "shepherd" who is interested in each sheep (vv. 1–4), and he is like a host who has prepared a lavish banquet (vv. 5–6).³

I. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP (23:1–4): The Lord takes care of his people like a shepherd cares for his sheep.

"The LORD" (Yahweh)= the Sovereign who bestows blessing and inflicts judgment as the Covenant-maker⁴; He who is; the Self-Existent One

He promised to take care of his people and revealed himself to be full of love, compassion, patience, fidelity, and forgiveness (Exod 34:6–7). The psalmist exclaims, "Yahweh is *my* shepherd," with emphasis on "my." The temptation in ancient Israel was to speak only about "our" God (cf. Deut 6:4), forgetting that the God of Israel is also the God of individuals.⁵

The Shepherd to sheep metaphor speaks of God's relationship with His people (cf. 74:1–4; 77:20; 78:52, 70–72; 79:13; 80:1; Isa 40:11; 49:9, 10; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:6–19; Mic 7:14; John 10:11–19, 26–28; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Rev. 7:17)

A. **He provides for them** (23:1).

B. **He renews their strength** (23:3).

Proverbs 25:13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, *so is* a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

"Righteousness" (*ṣedeq*) here signifies in the most basic sense "right," namely, the paths that bring the sheep most directly to their destination (in contrast to "crooked paths"; cf. 125:5; Prov 2:15; 5:6; 10:9).⁶

² Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (214). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

³ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (214). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁴ Zuck, R. B. (1991). *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (65). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁵ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (215). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁶ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (216). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

II. THE GUIDE AND THE TRAVELER (23:3–4): The Lord guides his people.

A. **He guides them along right paths** (23:3).

B. **He protects and comforts them** (23:4).

A shepherd carried a “rod” to club down wild animals (cf. 1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 23:21) and a “staff” to keep the sheep in control. The rod and staff represent God’s *constant* vigilance over His own and bring “comfort” because of his personal presence and involvement with his sheep. ⁷

III. THE HOST AND HIS GUESTS (23:5): The Lord takes care of his people like a host cares for his guests.

The Lord is the host at a banquet (cf. Isa 25:6–8) prepared for his child. The “table” is laden with food and drink. Before entering into the banquet hall, the host would anoint the honored guest with oil (45:7; 92:10; 133:2; Amos 6:6; Luke 7:46). ⁸

IV. THE PHYSICIAN AND THE PATIENT (23:5): He anoints his head with oil.

V. THE PROPHET AND THE PROMISED (23:6): He shows them goodness and unfailing love (23:6).⁹

His “goodness and love” reflect the attributes of Yahweh, the covenant-faithful God.¹⁰ In the words of 4:7, it gives greater joy than the abundance of “grain and new wine.” ¹¹



Psalm 24

Author: David

Background: Not certain, but probably during the time when the Ark of the Covenant was brought from the house of Obed-edom to Mt. Zion (II Sam. 6).

⁷ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (216). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁸ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (218). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁹ Willmington, H. L. (1999). *The Outline Bible* (Ps 23). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

¹⁰ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (218). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹¹ Gaebelien, F. E., VanGemern, W., Ross, A. P., Wright, J. S., & Kinlaw, D. F. (1991). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (218). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Theme: David describes the Lord as the glorious King who dwells in his Temple. Many think this psalm refers to Jesus the Messiah.

I. THE GLORIOUS KINGDOM (24:1-6)

- A. **What it embraces** (24:1-2): This kingdom includes the entire earth and everything in it. Compare with Ps. 104:6-9.
- B. **Whom it embraces** (24:3-6): The Lord allows those with pure hands and hearts into his presence. Compare with Ps. 15:2-5, and not only so, but he who hath also a **pure heart**, since the heart is the source of all evil (Matt. 15:19, 20)¹²

We now read of the “heart” whereas in Psa. 23 we read of the “soul”. Are they synonymous?

The psalmist means to say that a man is not fit to draw near to God unless he is righteous in act, in thought, and in word.¹³ Compare w/Jas. 4:8

All they are not Israel who are of Israel (Rom. 9:6). The true Jacob consisted of those Israelites who answered to the character described in ver. 4.¹⁴

II. THE GLORIOUS KING (24:7-10): David calls for the gates to open so the Lord, the invincible King of glory, can enter.¹⁵

The epithet, “Lord of hosts” well known at the time (1 Sam. 1:11; 2 Sam. 5:10; 6:2; 7:18, 26, 27, etc.), made all clear, and, the gates being thrown open, the ark was brought in, and set in its place in the midst of the tabernacle (2 Sam. 6:17).¹⁶

¹² *The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms Vol. I.* 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (173). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹³ *The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms Vol. I.* 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (173). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms Vol. I.* 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (173-174). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹⁵ Willmington, H. L. (1999). *The Outline Bible* (Ps 24). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

¹⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms Vol. I.* 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (174). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.