

## Notes on Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34: 1-6,11-16

God castigates the shepherds(leaders) in Israel pointing out how they failed to take care of his people, and made a promise to take on the role of the Good shepherd himself. He did this by taking on the human form in Christ Jesus. So, when Jesus told the people, "I am the Good Shepherd" in John 10:11, He was making a Messianic claim – that He was the Shepherd promised by God in Ezekiel 34:11-16.

It is instructive to take note of Psalm 22, which by divine arrangement comes before Psalm 23. Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm, prophesying the suffering and death of Jesus the Messiah. It was here Jesus earned the right to be referred to as the good Shepherd.

How do we describe sheep generally? Sheep are DIRTY! They would not be welcomed in your home! They provide a great picture of us before God. We are dirty and stained by sin. On the Cross, Jesus died and shed his blood to wash us (his sheep) clean. The good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Let us thank God for His gift of making filthy sinners clean!

Psalm 23 is a Psalm for the living, though many people read it at funerals. It is most appropriate for believers, though many unbelievers are in love with it. Psalm 23 is David's testimony, his personal experience with and of God. **The Lord cannot be your Shepherd until Jesus has become your Lord and Saviour. Jesus clearly said in John 10:14, I know my sheep and my sheep know me.**

In the first three verses, David refers to God in the third person: "The Lord is my Shepherd. **He** makes me lie down . . . **He** leads me . . . **He** restores my soul." Then, in v. 4-5, He shifts focus, referring to God in second person: "I will fear no evil, for **You** are with me; **Your** rod and **Your** staff, they comfort me. **You** prepare a table before me . . . **You** anoint my head with oil."

Why the switch from talking about God using '**He**' to addressing God with '**You**,' and why does it happen in v. 4? Verse 4 describes the crisis points in David's life. And in those times, something deep happened between him and God. We're prone to talk about God when we are in the green pastures and more prone to talk **to** God when we're in the dangerous ravine that is, when we are in serious trouble, or facing serious life challenges.

**Other Lessons from the Psalm:** We can see how it is God in Jesus Christ who is our Shepherd. We must have godly contentment because God provides our needs and strengthens us. (*He restores my soul*). God teaches us how to live this life (*He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake...*). God protects his sheep from danger and is always with them(v4). (Compare with Matthew 28:20). Goodness and mercy will accompany us on our life's journey. God rewards those who follow him and make him their shepherd.

**Challenge.** Is Jesus your Shepherd? Make a conscious habit to think about him as you go through the activities of each day. Choose to stay in the sheepfold of God and live under His care. That would be the best decision you'll ever make!

If you see yourself as a lost sheep who does not know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, consider his death on the cross for your sake in order to forgive your sins and give you the assurance of Sonship, and qualify you as a sheep in his flock. Just come to him as you are and run into his ready and warm embrace.

God bless you as you follow the leading of Jesus the great and good Shepherd.