

The Lord Is My Shepherd – 23rd Psalm

By Mike Lorence

PSALM 23

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known sections of scripture around the world, both to Christians and non-Christians alike. Yet today this Psalm has been relegated to being read at funeral services to provide comfort to the families. This is a song about life and living in God's care and abundance, not about death. We will look at this Psalm in detail to see what God intended when He inspired David.

The Twenty-third Psalm commends itself to the heart of the believer by its own internal excellence. Natural in its structure, simple and perspicuous [*clearly expressed and easily understood*] in its language, and elegant and attractive in its imagery, it breathes forth sentiments of confidence towards God, of gratitude and joy. There is a depth of meaning in every sentence—a rich variety of experience in every verse—and a fullness of joy from its commencement to its conclusion, which comprehends all that is needed in life and in death, in time and throughout eternity.

—John Stevenson, *The Lord Our Shepherd: An Exposition of the Twenty-third Psalm*

Remember Psalm 23 is as much scripture as any other section of scripture in the Bible.

- “All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable...that the man of God may be perfect [*artios* (ar'-tee-os) – fully and perfectly equipped] for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV)
- “No prophecy came because a man wanted it to: men of God spoke because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Peter 1:21 J.B. Phillips)

Psalm 23:

- Has 118 English words in the KJV
- Has 55 Hebrew words
- Is one of the most well-known and beloved sections of scripture
- Starts with “The Lord” and ends with “forever”

“The world could afford to spare many a magnificent library better than it could dispense with this little Psalm of six verses.”

—William Evans, *The Shepherd Psalm – A Meditation*

Psalm 23:1-6 (KJV)

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

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

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

JEHOVAH TITLES

God revealed Himself to His people through many names. Each name illustrates the various attributes of His nature. Psalm 23 is a psalm of David which describes the attributes of the Lord (*Jehovah*) as the shepherd from the perspective of one of the sheep in the flock. In this Psalm David references eight of the ten “*Jehovah* Titles” or attributes of God in the Bible. *Jehovah* signifies the covenant relationship of God with His creation versus *Elohim* which is God the creator. Seven of these titles are used to illustrate the attributes of a true shepherd as stated in the title of the Psalm—*Jehovah-Rohi*—The Lord my Shepherd

THE EIGHT JEHOVAH TITLES IN PSALM 23 (KJV)

- 1) v.1 – “The Lord is my Shepherd” is *Jehovah-Rohi* (juh-HO-vah RO-hee) meaning “The Lord my shepherd.”

Psalm 23:1 (KJV)

¹ **The Lord is my shepherd**; I shall not want.

- 2) v.1 – “I shall not want” is *Jehovah-Jireh* (juh-HO-vah Ji-rah) meaning “ The Lord will see or provide.”

Genesis 22:13-14 (NASB)

¹³ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

¹⁴ Abraham called the name of that place **The Lord Will Provide**, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the Lord it will be provided.”

- 3) v.2 – “He leadeth me beside the still waters” is *Jehovah-Shalom* (juh-HO-vah shah-LOME) meaning “The Lord send peace.”

Judges 6:21-24 (NASB)

²¹ Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.”

²³ The Lord said to him, “Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.”

²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it **The Lord is Peace**. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

- 4) v.3 – “He restoreth my soul” is *Jehovah-Rapha* (juh-HO-vah RAH-fah) meaning “The Lord who heals.”

Exodus 15:26 (NASB)

²⁶ And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for **I, the Lord, am your healer.**"

- 5) v.3 – "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness" is *Jehovah-Tzidkenu* (juh-HO-vah tsid-KAY-noo) meaning "The Lord our righteousness."

Jeremiah 23:5-6 (NASB)

²⁶ "Behold, *the* days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.

⁶ "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, '**The Lord our righteousness.**'"

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (NASB)

²⁶ 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.

¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she will be called: **the Lord is our righteousness.**'

- 6) v.4 – "Thou art with me" is *Jehovah-Shammah* (juh-HO-vah SHAHM-mah) meaning "The Lord is there or present." (the restoration of Israel)

Ezekiel 48:35 (NASB)

³⁵ The city shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, **The Lord is there.**'"

- 7) v.5 – "Thou preparest a table before me" is *Jehovah-Nissi* (juh-HO-vah NESS-see) meaning "The Lord is my banner or canopy."

Exodus 17:9-15 (NASB)

³⁵ So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

¹¹ So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

¹² But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.

¹³ So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

¹⁵ Moses built an altar and named it **The Lord is My Banner**;

8) v.5 – “Thou anointest my head with oil” is Jehovah-Mekaddeschem (juh-HO-vah mek-KAH-dish-KIM) meaning “The Lord that sanctifies you.”

Exodus 31:12-18 (NASB)

¹² The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

¹³ “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am **the Lord who sanctifies you**.

¹⁴ Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

¹⁵ For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death.

¹⁶ So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’

¹⁷ It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed.”

¹⁸ When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

Those are the eight *Jehovah* Titles in Psalm 23. However the word *Jehovah* is used one more time in the final verse and is worth looking at in our study.

v.6 – “The Lord forever” is *Jehovah* (not a *Jehovah* title but adds emphasis that He will keep his promises forever). It shows God in His covenant relationship with His people, the everlasting God.

Genesis 21:32-33 (NASB)

³² So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.

³³ *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, **the Everlasting God**.

³⁴ And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.

Psalm 23 illustrates the underlying foundation for everything that the shepherd does for his sheep—love. God is love. Each one of the *Jehovah* Titles signifies a different demonstration of that love for His people. “For God so loved the world that He gave...” (John 3:16)

AN EXPANDED VERSION OF PSALM 23

The Lord who has a personal relationship with me, He is my shepherd. I shall not lack or have any want because the Lord will see and provide for all that I need.

He continually causes me to lie down, to stretch out and to feed in the choice and pleasant pastures of tender grass and I feel at home. He gently leads and guides me to the waters of rest and quietness and refreshes me because the Lord is my peace.

He brings back to me my life and restores and refreshes me because it's the Lord who heals me. He guides me and leads me on the righteous path or track because He is the Lord our righteousness.

Moreover when I come through death's dark valley, the narrow gorge with deep shadows of extreme danger, I will not be terrified of any evil, distress, misery, injury or calamity because the Lord is there and is always present. Your club you use to defend me from predators and your crook you use to assist me and I recognize it as the symbol of your authority, they gently lead and console me and make me feel at ease.

You take the time to properly arrange and set in order a place just for me so that I may feast in the very sight of my adversaries because you are the Lord that is my banner and you cover me as a canopy. You have chosen me and set me apart by anointing my head with fragrant oil that cleanses and heals me because the Lord has sanctified me. Your shepherd's cup overflows with an abundance of water that completely satisfies my thirst.

Certainly all that is good, your loving-kindness and grace, they will absolutely follow closely in hot pursuit of me every day of my life and I will absolutely sit down with the intent of remaining and make my dwelling for a length of days in the habitation of the Lord my shepherd who always keeps his promises to me forever.

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We have a God who loves us so much that He cares for our each and every need and want. What a wonderful Shepherd we have.