

Psalm 23 - Notes

Background:

1. The author is David.
2. Many scholars believe it to have been written while a young man serving as a shepherd. Others, like Coffman, believe it to have been written later in life. Then, perhaps as a warrior fleeing Saul, as a king fleeing Absalom, or in a variety of other situations, recalled the days of his youth as a shepherd.
3. It is a strophe psalm. It is a trust psalm. It is a praise psalm.
4. Key words in this Psalm: I/me (ni) 13x; Lord (Yahweh) 2x; Restore (swb) 2x.
 1. Personal pronouns in NASB (includes understood personal pronouns) = 17.
 2. References to God = 12.
 3. "The Lord Restores Me!"
 4. This psalm is about my relationship with the Lord.
5. Some believe the metaphor of shepherd & sheep continues throughout the Psalm. Others believe it to be two metaphors: a shepherd, and a host at a feast. Either way, the point is the same.
6. This is likely the most well-known, and most beloved psalm.

VV. 1-3 - THE LORD SHEPHERDS & LEADS

1. The Lord - personal name of God
 1. This is a personal & intimate relationship described
 2. The Lord as a shepherd: Many times in Psalms 28, 77, 78, Isaiah 40, Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah, John 10, I Peter 2:25.
2. My Shepherd - The shepherd is EVERYTHING to the sheep!
3. Shall not want - There were probably times where David could not provide all his sheep needed, but he knew God did not fail!
 1. Verb means to lack, to be without, not to have (see 8:5 - "be less")
 2. English word WANT may make us think all our desires are filled. The idea is kind of like a rhetorical question - With this Shepherd, how could I lack anything I need?
 3. This is, perhaps, the main point of the psalm - the thesis statement, so to speak
 4. Note it is shall not
4. LIST: He would not want because notice what all his Shepherd does:
 1. He makes me lie down in green pastures
 1. They only lie down when they are full
 2. So, the shepherd has taken care of all their needs
 3. Does not mean he forces me to lie down. He has provided enough that he allows me to lie down
 2. He leads me beside quiet waters
 1. Sheep won't drink from rushing water
 3. He restores my soul
 1. See Mt. 18 - sheep getting lost and needing to be restored was common
 2. Perhaps also when fainting and about to perish?
 4. He guides me in the paths of righteousness
 1. A shepherd is concerned with providing direction for his sheep and a safe journey.
 2. There is NOTHING to indicate it is an EASY path (see. v.4)
 1. We follow the shepherd where he leads, knowing it may not be easy (Mt.7:13; Psa. 119:105; Jer. 10:23)

3. For His name's sake - The sheep are not dumb animals he does not care about. They are His and he wants to keep them as His.

VV. 4-6 - THE LORD PROTECTS & PROVIDES

1. Even...death
 1. The good shepherd can lead through the most treacherous paths
 2. In Psa. 138 says even in Sheol, God is there. Acts 2 says Jesus was not abandoned to Sheol.
 3. Why would a shepherd lead his sheep through a deep dark valley? Because he knows something is better on the other side. So many times when the going gets tough, we want to abandon God!
2. I will...with me
 1. Evil is RA = Think of it in this context as harm
 2. See Matthew 6:13
3. Thy rod ... comfort me
 1. Rod was a pointed weapon soldiers carried into battle - used to defend against those who would attack the sheep.
 2. Staff was the tall pole with the hook on the top used to pull a sheep up that had fallen in a crevice, etc. - used for discipline and direction
4. Prepares...enemies
 1. two interpretations:
 1. security in the midst of trouble or predators
 2. a victory celebration with enemies as captives
5. Anointed...oil
 1. If talking about sheep, then this is medicine used on injuries to keep bugs out (and this prevent infections)
 2. If talking about what God has done for man, could be talking about his selection as king
6. Cup overflows
 1. Blessings in Abundance
 2. See poem "drinking from the saucer because my cup is overflowing"
7. Surely...life
 1. Two concepts are going to belong to those of God.
 1. Goodness carries the idea of good things - such as material blessings and prosperity.
 2. Lovingkindness which is a key word in the Psalms
 1. It is a broad word. Often translated mercy or grace.
 2. These two things will follow me - I don't have to worry about being shepherd-less
8. I will...forever
 1. Forever = means go on and on and on and on.