The Pilgrim's Quest

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and ***confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims*** *on the earth. For they that say such things* ***declare plainly that they seek a country.***" (Heb. 11:13,14)

Pilgrim's Quest Bible Church
Pastor Garry E. Huff

The Song Concerning the Shepherd

Psalm 23
Introduction

Psalm 23 has been called the *Pearl of the Psalms.* It is no doubt the most beloved of the 150 Psalms in Christendom, and a favorite of all the chapters in the Old Testament. If the record could be fully known, Psalm 23 would probably be the most read, studied, written about, commented upon, spoken of more than all the other Psalms put together. Next to the Lord's prayer, and John 3:16, it is the most memorized and quoted of all the other passages of Scripture. It is a Psalm that never seems to be out of place or out of date. It comforts the soul, instructs the mind, and the heart finds rest in the embrace of its heavenly inspired language.

Psalm 23 has been rightfully dubbed "The Shepherd Psalm" It may even be called the "Song Concerning the Shepherd" since it is a song that constantly points to the diligent thoughtfulness the Shepherd gives to his sheep. But, there is also the responsibility of the sheep to follow the Shepherd. Thus, the Psalm presents two ideas of purpose. First, the leading of a good caring Shepherd. Second, the submissive following of obedient sheep.

The writer was no doubt David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, who in his youth was a shepherd over his father's sheep. He, therefore, knew the responsibility that a good shepherd bears being one

who vigilantly guards as well as provides for the nourishment of the sheep. It was, also, an occupation of such solitude that David could develop his musical talent along with his ability to defend the sheep. Sheep need to hear the song of the harp. Sheep also need the protective comfort of the sling. In the moments of great solitude and stillness, the music of the harp is heard. In moments of great danger and trouble, the sling would be present for defense.

It will be in this hidden life of a shepherd boy that the Holy Spirit would anoint David to pen the song concerning the Shepherd. He would present the prospective of that of the sheep who sees his kind and benevolent Shepherd. The sheep observes the labor of love, constant care, and the ever nearness of the Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep.

David was also writing to convey by the anointing of the Holy Spirit ***the*** Shepherd of the Psalm. He was not writing just to render words that would only sooth, calm, or be comforting. He wanted to present to others ***the*** Shepherd that he personally knew.

My father use to tell the story of two speakers who were to render before a large audience Psalm 23. The first speaker was known for his ability to speak eloquently with perfect diction accompanied with perfect speech inflection. As he began to recite the 23rd Psalm his voice was so soothing, assuring, comforting, precise in form and speech. As he ended the Psalm, the audience enthusiastically rose to their feet and applauded at such a moving recitation. The second speaker somewhat humble in appearance as well a humble manner began his presentation of the Shepherd's Psalm. His speaking was crystal clear that sounded like music from his heart. When he finished the audience remained seated, their heads bowed. Tears had filled their eyes. They were moved in their heart in great reverence to the words that they had just heard. An inquiry was made why with the same words was their such a difference of responses by the same audience? The reply was - the eloquent speaker knew the ***Psalm*** of the Shepherd, but the second humble man knew the ***Shepherd*** of the Psalm.

While to some this Psalm may be an eloquent rendering of words that seem to inspire self assurance, others will reverently weep for such a condescending Shepherd of whom they personally know.

Psalm 23 is not just a Psalm concerning ***the*** Shepherd , but a Psalm concerning ***the condescending*** Shepherd. The Shepherd who is ***with*** me and who is ***my*** Shepherd.

The Psalmist portrays this great Shepherd as one who is leading his sheep on a journey that is known only to Him. It is a journey that requires a lifetime to travel. It includes many resting places of green pastures. There are watering places perfect for sheep. Well entrenched paths are along the way. There is a valley that awaits the sheep. Also a table land that stretches out before them with plenty. Place after place is traveled with the guiding presence of the Shepherd. Never has the Shepherd left them, neither has He ever forsaken them. Dangerous difficulties will be successfully traversed. Lands of plenty will be crossed and left behind. Only at the end of the journey the sheep realize that the Shepherd is bringing them to His very home!

"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."

What a surprise to the sheep that the Shepherd desired for the sheep to dwell where He dwells! A stable will not do for His sheep. The barnyard is unacceptable. The green fields of His pasture are not adequate enough for His sheep. Only His own home, His own place of residence will do.

For the Shepherd, His sheep are near to his own heart and verily like Him, and the Shepherd is in reality the darling Lamb of God who was slain and poured out His blood to redeem the sheep who had wandered astray. He has come as the ***Great Shepherd*** to where the sheep are in order to lead them to his home in heaven.

The heart of love is fully revealed in this condescending Shepherd. He comes to live with His sheep every hour of every day, watching, guarding, guiding, leading, helping with this one motive - that the sheep may dwell with Him forever and ever!

Oh wonder of wonders that we who were lost and estranged from God, should have such a Shepherd that loves us so much to come, be with us, and to lead us to be with Him in His heavenly home throughout all the eternal ages!

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack since I am His
And He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me.
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me.
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thyself before to guide me.

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever.

Henry W. Baker
Psalm 23