

STUDY NOTES

# Psalm

- 1. *"His Delight is the Law of the LORD" - - - The Power*
- 15. *"A Citizen of Zion" - - - - - The Life*
- 23. *"The LORD is my Shepherd" - - - - - The Guidance*
- 72. *"Give the King Thy Judgements, O God" - - The Reward*

## F O R E W O R D

The Psalms of David have been a source of rich spiritual encouragement for many thousands throughout the almost 3,000 years of their existence. David is described as a "man after God's own heart" and it is in his Psalms that this understanding of the Divine mind is so beautifully illustrated. It is through his mouth and pen that many of the most renowned expressions of Divine revelation have been given by the Spirit.

"My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready Writer" Psa. 45:1

"The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" 11 Sam. 23:2

Most of the preparation of these notes was done in 1966 for a young folk's study weekend held at Victor Harbour. Psalms 1 and 23 were prepared by bro. Brian Luke, Psalm 72 by bro. Jim Luke and to these have been added the notes on Psalm 15 by bro. Paul Cresswell. Together they represent a meaningful series. Psalm 1 sets before us the two alternative courses in life, the way of the godly and the way of the wicked. Psalm 15 depicts the manner of life of the godly man whose hope is set in Zion's holy hill. Psalm 23 comforts the man of God in the knowledge that Yahweh is his guiding Shepherd in all the varied experiences of his sojourn. The glories and blessings of the Kingdom age are pictured in Psalm 72 and present a fitting climax to the series.

In these last days of spiralling ungodliness, it is good that the saints of God reflect upon the straight and narrow way that alone will penetrate the darkness of the present to the glorious light of the Kingdom.

May these notes help to that end.

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Bible is the most wonderful book of all time in all the world, if for no other reason than this, that it is the word of God.

Of its sixty-six books, the particular one we shall study this weekend, is itself a collection of writings, written by different people, but each obviously bearing the imprint of Divine authority.

The name given in the Hebrew to this collection of writings is "Tehillim". However the name we use, "Psalms" is a transliteration of the Greek title taken from the Septuagint version, "Psalmoi" which means songs. This is very similar to the Greek "Psalterion" meaning a harp, or other stringed instrument.

The word "Tehillim" comes from the root "Halal" which means to make a jubilant sound, it has been generally translated "praises," and is taken to mean all that is worthy of praise or celebration. Hence in the Hebrew it is really called "The Book of Praises."

Let the spirit of praise dominate our hearts and minds as we study from the storehouse of divine treasure.

The symbolism and imagery of this collection of writings has a transcending beauty and aptness. Its poetry uses natural objects to suggest a field of human experience or emotion. In the Book of Revelation certain objects are introduced and have specific meanings. Their field is limited. In the Psalms there is a finer, more delicate touch in the association of ideas, so that we find David describing the conflict of his emotions, of his very secret thoughts. His words imply so much more than they state, they are surrounded with a wealth of meaning.

Just as the figure of the Apostle Paul dominates the New Testament writings so that of David overshadows all others who wrote in the Psalms.

### THE GENTILES BENEFIT

Because the Psalms were originally compiled either as songs or poetry, they have been suitably accepted and set to music, and sung in almost all lands of the Gentiles through many centuries. The thought and culture of nations far beyond Israel's borders has been immeasurably enriched. The lives of men and women have been en-nobled and more useful even if the full message of the Father has not been always understood.

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE BOOK

The number of Psalms totals in all one hundred and fifty. Commentators generally agree that there are five distinct sections, the last Psalm in each section being one of praise.

This arrangement appears to reflect the influence of the Pentateuch. Some people see in the opening Psalm of each section, or book, a correspondence with the opening chapter of each book of the Pentateuch.

As an instance Psalm 1 with its comparison of the righteous to a tree planted by the rivers of waters, is taken to be a reminder of the Garden of Eden of Genesis Chapter 1. Like-wise Psalm 42 with which the second section opens mirrors the cry of a man in distress, who believes God has forsaken him, but who nevertheless somehow believes that God will deliver him. This is likened to the Book of Exodus, and affliction in Egypt, and subsequent deliverance.

Psalm 73 which opens section three, shows that although the Psalmist as a natural man might doubt the justice of God's dealing with men, nevertheless these doubts vanish when the end of the wicked is considered.

This Psalm is therefore considered to reflect gratitude for God's goodness in giving the Law as in Leviticus.

Psalm 90 which opens section four is taken to correspond with the Book of Numbers and Psalm 107 opening the fifth section is compared with the Book of Deuteronomy which mentions God's loving kindness to Israel.

As against these thoughts it has been pointed out that Psalm 8 would much better have corresponded with Genesis Chapter 1.

Psalm 66 in the second book describing the Israelite's crossing of the Red Sea, God's trial of His people, and their great burdens, and their arrival in a wealthy place is thought to be a better reflection of the record of Exodus than Psalm 42.

It is felt that either Psalm 76 or 78 in the third section would form a more appropriate opening to Leviticus.

However, whatever we may conclude in regard to these matters it is certainly obvious that the Psalms have the five divisions, a summary of the structure of the books is as follows -

BOOK 1 - Psalms 1 - 41

All of these attributed to David except 1-2-10 and 33, these are anonymous. (Note the Septuagint version ascribes all except numbers 1 and 2 to David and joins numbers 9 and 10 together.)

BOOK 2 - Psalms 42 - 72

Eight designated Songs of the Sons of Korah.  
One attributed to Asuph.  
Twenty credited to David.  
(Slight alteration in Septuagint version).

BOOK 3 - Psalms 73 - 89

Writers - 11 by Asaph  
4 by Sons of Korah  
1 by David  
1 by Eltham (Note Psalm 74)

BOOK 4 - Psalms 90 - 106

Writers - 1 by Moses (Psalm 90)  
2 by David  
14 Anonymous  
(Note Septuagint version ascribes 11 to David)

BOOK 5 - Psalms 107 - 150

Writers - 28 Anonymous  
15 by David  
1 by Solomon  
(This collection was very late and has refer-  
ences to the exile - Nos. 126 and 137.  
Ascription to writers differs considerably  
from the above in the Septuagint. It is  
thought Nos. 120-134 were compiled by  
Hezekiah - 15 Psalms corresponding to 15  
actual years).

THE DIVERGING DESTINIES OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNGODLY

There are two ways to study the Bible - the "vertical" and the "horizontal". The "vertical" is to follow the sense of the chapter or book from the first verse to the last verse. The "horizontal" is to take out a word or phrase from the record and to follow this through the Bible, collating it with other similar passages, and with its direct opposites, so that more breadth of meaning gathers about the particular subject. We may call this latter practice "theme study". These studies from the Psalms are going to involve both.

Prologue to the Book of Psalms

Psalm One, unlike the majority of those of the first book, has no inscription. For this, and other technical reasons, it has often been regarded as a prologue or introduction to the rest of the psalms. The suitability of this arrangement is persuasive for "the law of Yahweh", of which it speaks, was reckoned by Israel to be God's chief and most excellent gift to them, to which Paul heartily agrees .....

"What advantage then hath the Jew?

Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the Oracles of God" Rom. 3:1-2

Thus it is fitting that this opening to the psalms is given over to extolling the manifold blessing of he who delights in the Law of God.

Other psalms make special reference to the Word of God. The nineteenth depicts its refreshing and directing effects, whilst the 176 verses of Psalm 119 are one sustained song of overflowing praise and love for the Law of God.

General Theme

The blessed lot of him who meditates in the Law of Yahweh (verses 1-3) is contrasted with the calamity of the ungodly (verses 4-6). For the former there is happiness, fruitfulness and success in every endeavour and this blessed portion is starkly contrasted with the consummate end of him who will not put his trust in God.

It is possible that the psalmist, who was very probably David, had in mind the words spoken by the Lord unto Joshua when upon the death of the aged and venerable leader, Moses, the great task of settling Israel into the Promised Land fell upon his comparatively young and inexperienced shoulders - refer Josh. 1:6-8. Many of the thoughts in these encouraging words find their echo in this first psalm, as though they may have provided a mental touch-stone for David as he wrote this poem by the Spirit of God.

This theme of the psalm is an exhortation which God considered most apt to speak unto his zealous yet relatively inexperienced servant Joshua. How much more would he have us heed this message, and especially those of younger years, as we now walk continually amidst evil, upon 'our right hand and upon our left!'

## Character of the Psalm

Sweet and simple in style, thought and diction, the psalm provides no real obscurities in regard to its basic meaning; however, there are many metaphors and figures of speech used in its six short verses. This provides an excellent opportunity therefore for all to expand the thoughts of the psalm to their highest plane, to search out these metaphors where they are used similarly in other portions of the Word of God and by comparing Scripture with Scripture (in this way) come to make this small psalm really live, together with the many other passages to which it leads you.

The value of marking these cross-quotations and thoughts in the margins of our Bibles is quite obvious - a future store of spiritual interest to embellish the daily intake of the Bread of Life, making it sweet to our taste.

### PSALM 1:1-3 THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE GODLY MAN

#### Verse One - That from Which the Godly Man Refrains

This verse presents the behaviour of the godly man from the negative aspect; i.e. the things he will not do.

#### "Blessed is the man"

The basic idea of the word "blessed" is happiness (Heb. "ashere") and here it is, properly, in the plural. The idea is thus "blessednesses to the man .." expressive of the multiple causes for happiness that come the way of the man of God. This verse is not invoking a blessing upon its subject, but expressing his joyful position in separating himself from iniquity.

Note also that whereas the ungodly are in the plural (verses 1, 4, 5) the godly class is described as "the man" or strictly "that man", indicating that whereas there are 'many who traverse the broad way of destruction', there are but 'few who find the narrow way which leads to life' (Matt. 7:14-15). Happiness in its truest sense belongs only to them Deut. 33:29; Psa. 144:15.

#### "That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful"

These three phrases present a double climax. Firstly, the three characters described exceed each other in sinfulness:-

1. "Ungodly" = Heb. "reshaim" from "rasha" = unrest; signifies those who have no definite stay, who walk by no fixed rule, whose ethics are loose and therefore are victims of ungoverned passion as defines in Isa. 57:20.

2. "Sinners" - Heb. "chattaim" from "chata" = to miss the mark, go beyond the prohibited limits. This man adds to sheer ungodliness by directly transgressing; he not only does no good but he does evil. (This is the usual word for "sin" in the Old Testament).

3. "Scornful" - from root signifying "to mock, deride". This class represents those who brandish their iniquity openly; they defy God, despise His ways, hate His knowledge, scorn His servants and will not be turned from their iniquity; see Prov. 1:22, 25, 29-30; Psa. 123:4; Prov. 9:7-8, 13:1, 15:12. This is contemptuous iniquity and exceeds that of the ungodly and the sinner. This proud and learned world of our day is full of this class - atheist, agnostic, evolutionist, higher critic etc.

The second climax is found in the words - "walketh", "standeth", "sitteth" which describe increasing degrees of complacency with iniquity.

These three phrases are thus a progression of thought. The man who makes the first mistake and walks in the disposition cherished by the ungodly will soon be associated in the course of sinners and, "partaking of their evil deeds" and being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" will find themselves in the seated company of those whose chief delight is to mock the holy things of God.

There is a great lesson here! Sin is deceitful and the constant practice of it hardens the mind against its very existence. Heb. 3:13. Thus it is quite possible to imagine we are "doing enough for the Truth" and yet to be found in a completely negative frame of mind. David is teaching us this in this simple way. If we linger with sin in any of its forms, if we hearken unto its advice and adopt its way of thinking promulgated through its many dangerous mediums of propaganda, we shall soon find ourselves reclining in the company of those who despise the Father.

This truly happens, young people. Take an example from the Old Testament - King Ahaziah was the son of Queen Athaliah who was in turn the daughter of that debauched couple, Ahab and Jezebel. Athaliah was as evilly disposed as her contemptuous parents. Upon the death of her husband, Jehoram, their son, Ahaziah, came to the throne at a young age. In such a position his mother and her Yahweh-hating confederates "were his counsellors ... to his destruction" 11 Chron. 22:3-4. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" 1 Cor. 15:33, and in this case the corruption continued for many years, hastening the desolation of the whole kingdom of Judah. For in the reign of Hezekiah many years later, the prophet Micah declared "all the works of Ahab are kept and ye walk in their counsels: that I should make thee a desolation" Mic. 6:16.

David's sterling examples to the contrary come to mind, 1 Sam. 24:4-7; 26:8-9; 11 Sam. 16:5-12. With what remarkable spontaneity did he put down the evil counsel! David gave practical example to his advice here in Psalm One. Refer to his beautiful words in Psa. 26:1-6 and also to Solomon's in Prov. 4:14-15. The example of all others is that of Jesus in the pitch of his temptation in the wilderness. Matt. 4:1-16. There is a spontaneity in their actions! Sin and all its counsels are instantaneously contemned. They heed the advice of the Spirit, "Awake to righteousness and sin not"!



Verse Two - That in which he delights

The man of God is not only negative, in refusing evil company, but this outward character is responsible to an overwhelming, living, positive force in his life - the indwelling of the Word of his God, in his heart and in his mind.

"But his delight is in the Law of Yahweh"

This is the company that the righteous seek out! What a marked contrast with the associations of verse one. The law of Yahweh is his established "counsel" and shall be when "the counsel of the froward is carried headlong" (Psa. 33:10-11; Prov. 19:21; 1:24-33; xIsa. 25:1; x28:29; Job. 5:13; - follow out the theme with your concordance, discover the grand contrast depicted in the Word between the counsels of the wicked and the counsel of the Lord). This is his good "way" wherein he "stands" and which shall "stand forever" Jer. 6:16; 23:18,22; xIsa. 40:8; xPsa. 128:1 cf Psa. 36:4; Prov. 2:12-13; 14:12. And this is his place of recline, even if it means loneliness and quietness, for in this company alone is he at rest.

But the psalmist says that his "delight" is in the oracles of God. How much this exceeds mere formalism, it being dependent upon neither crowd nor occasion. The power of this expression can be more appreciated when we realise that the Hebrew word, "shephets" stems from the idea "to incline or stoop". His disposition is TOWARDS the commandments of God. The daily readings are no problem to this man of God - he is simply bursting to entwine his mind with the thoughts of God. Compare the expressions of Psa. 119:20, 97. Do not such glorious words vibrate our sluggish selves into great fervency in our attention to the Word of God? Nothing formal, conservative, "in-its-place" but an overwhelming, glowing, intractable delight! This is the mind of the righteous - Link with Psa. 119:24, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174 - let us all meditate upon these.

The law of Yahweh is a comprehensive term involving more than the Pentateuch, that is the first five books, but rather the whole of the Scriptures. This becomes apparent from John 10:34 where Christ quotes from Psalm 82 and refers to it as "your law". The Hebrew word here is actually "Torah" which has become the name of the Jews' massive volume of religious writings much of which, however, is not the Law of God; cp. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:2, 3; Col. 2:8, 22.

David often speaks of the Law of God and does so in the most appreciative and sensitive ways. Your concordance to hand you will open up a stream of refreshing thoughts as you follow this phrase in the psalms, e.g. Psa. 119:72, 113, 163, 165.

"And in His Law doth he meditate day and night"

This was the Divine advice to Joshua, Josh. 1:8, for which cause a whole nation exhibited faithfulness unto Yahweh their God for two generations Josh. 24:31. The young king David likewise mused upon this life-giving food that he might have withal to feed the people of God; Psa. 78:70-72. He speaks of this very thing several times in the 119th Psalm (e.g. verses ..... please fill in!) Note the wonder of

verses 23 and 78. There is possibly nothing more difficult than to maintain one's thoughts upon good and wholesome things when you are aware that others are whispering your defame. Selah!

The advice to meditate upon the Word of God is found from one end of Scripture to the other; e.g. Deut. 6:6-9; James 1:21. There can be no spiritual growth without it; we should remain forever as "babes", unable to guide ourselves aright and causing dismay to those who may follow our course Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2. The conscientious study and meditation of the Word of God is a vital need for all young people and more than ever as all about us in the world of ungodliness would tend to extinguish the flame of the Spirit. We need to add fuel to the fire! cp. Jer. 20:9; 23:29; 1 Thess. 5:19. And, young men, Paul has a special word for you - 1 Tim. 4:12-16

Yet we must not leave the matter here, but follow David's further example and allow this Law, this Word, to find practical expression in our daily life. David besought the Father to "make him go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight" 119:34-35. He kept the Law, verse 44, sang of it, verse 54, spoke it before kings, verse 46, and hid it in his heart, as treasure, that he might not sin, verse 11.

Paul also found that this second stage was a real one to him, for though he also "delighted in the law of God after the inward man" (i.e. in his mind) yet he found that there was ever present another law, "the law of sin", dwelling in his fleshly body and maintaining constant warfare against the law of the Spirit, Rom. 7. It is thus critically necessary that there be evidence that the law of God is upward in the battle, that we show God that it is His law which is truly espoused. This evidence is the test of obedience; "for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

"Day and night" are the hours David gives for the godly man's meditation. And this without the aid of a pocket Bible! Wandering through hill and valley, narrow gorge and open plains of the wilderness, amidst the company of his men, he meditated, pressing on despite wind and dust and the anxieties of the day's events as he fled for his life, as a hunted partridge upon the hills of Judea! At night the ever-present fear of sudden ambush ... tired out, exhausted from both physical exertion and mental strain, David would lay him down for the sweet peace of sleep. Yet even now, whilst upon his makeshift bed, the powerful trains of thought developed during the day roused his consciousness -

"Mine eyes prevent the night watches that I might  
Meditate in Thy Word" Psa. 119:148.

The dawn had not yet broken upon the new day before David was again awake, praying unto His God, hoping in the surety of His Word -

"I prevented the dawning, and cried: I hoped in  
Thy Word" Psa. 119:147.

These thoughts were constantly in David's mind. The 63rd Psalm depicts him in a thirsting state of mind. He is thirsting for El, his God, the One Who had been his help. His thoughts run on through night and day and in the place of thirst there came satisfaction and peace, "as with marrow and fatness" and joyful lips displaced dismay, and confidence cast out fear.

Such are the wonderful blessings of one who rests his mind in the Law of Yahweh.

Verse Three - His ultimate prosperity

"He shall be like a tree"

This is a common metaphor of Scripture; e.g. Psa. 96:12-13; 148:9; Hos. 14:5-7. Different trees are used to indicate varying types of people. From Song of Sol. 2:3 we gather that those trees bearing sweet fruit are those of the highest standing (also refer Judges 9:7-17 - Jotham's parable in which the truest sons of Israel are connotated as the vine, the fig and the olive). Next to these are the stately, picturesque trees, such as the cedar, box fir, pine and myrtle - Isa. 55:12-13, 60:13. There is a feast of beautiful thoughts in the prophecy of Isaiah in connection with these things. Yahweh is seen as the Master Gardener restoring the spiritual paradise of a world-wide "garden of Eden" as He brings resplendent fertility to the spiritually wasted and howling wilderness of the nations. These quotes will open the theme - Isa. 41:18-20; 35:1-2; 51:3; 55:12-13; 60:13; 61:3, 11.

There seems little doubt that Jeremiah was developing these earlier writing of the psalmist when in ch. 17:5-8 he draws a stark contrast between a tree, verses 7-8, and an heath, R.S.V. "shrub", verses 5-6 and uses these as emblems of the one who trusts in God and the one who makes man his trust.

Did the psalmist have a particular tree in mind in verse 3? It is possible he did, for Psa. 92:12-14 speaks of the righteous as a palm tree, which is known for its love of water, stately appearance, evergreen foliage and health-giving fruit, all qualities fitting the description of Psalm One.

"Planted by the rivers (R.V. 'streams') of waters"

A little carefulness, a little "meditation", and we see that even in the first word there is a contrast with the "shrub of the desert". Yes! this tree is planted. But Who planted it? These are the trees of righteousness which the LORD has planted - Isa. 61:3, cp. Jn. 6:44. They are "full of sap" for they are "His husbandry" and are "taught of Him", Psa. 104:16; 1 Cor. 3:9; John 6:45. This elevated and beautiful theme is further enriched when we consider the spiritual "allotment" in which these trees are planted Psa. 92:13; Psa. 52:8.

Water is absolutely essential to a tree cp. Isa. 1:30-31. That man who by day and by night muses upon the Word of God, is as a tree whose roots spread out along the courses of waters Jer. 17:8. Due to his great "thirsting" for Yahweh, the thoughts of his mind penetrate the parched earth of everyday life until they find, through the provision of the Husbandman, the pure "water of life" coursing its way "softly" through the earth, Psa. 63:1; John 4:10, 14; Isa. 8:6; Isa 22:11. "Sent" by God these waters are streams of everlasting life from the "wells of salvation" John 9:4, 7; Isa. 12:3. In their meaning they speak of Christ to whom everyone who is athirst should come, "that out of his belly should flow rivers of living water", "without money and without price" John 7:37-38; Isa. 55:1-3. This is the point of Jesus' words concerning the True Vine. Those in him have been once cleansed from sin by the washing and regeneration of his Word within them. John 15:1, 3; Eph. 5:26. But if we stray from this source of life-giving sap, then we become unfruitful, wither and die, fit only "to be cast into the fire" verses 5-6.

"That bringeth forth his fruit in his season"

The tree of the righteous man is a fruitful one; when fruit is expected, fruit is borne. Just as surely as water shall cause a tree to bring forth, so will a consistent reading of the Law of the Lord, coupled with prayer and meditation, cause the fruits of the Spirit to spring forth from us. Ponder these as found in Gal. 5:22-23 and what a beautiful "tree", full of sweetness and loveliness, is seen.

Jesus was adamant on this exhortation. John prepared the way for him, Matt. 3:7-10, and Jesus maintained this stress upon this need for fruitfulness in his disciples, e.g. Matt. 7:15-20; 12:33; 13:8, 26. The complaint with the wicked husbandmen was that they failed to "render Him the fruits in their season" 21:33-41, 43. The season is the time of the Kingdom of God, when the Bridegroom is returned from heaven and brings before him all those invited to the feast. In that day we shall be longing to become the "firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" James 1:18; Rev. 14:4. But we shall never be heirs to this exceeding honour unless the Husbandman can find the precious fruit of good works in our leaves and branches.

But disciples of Christ must beware that this profession of godliness be not unaccompanied with the fruit of its practice, lest he do unto them as he did to the emblematic fig tree! Mark 11:11-14, 21.

"His leaf also shall not wither"

His profession of godliness shall be always regular and unsullied. Leaves are the food producing part of the tree. We may liken them to our regular meetings, study classes and conferences because these produce food for the growth of our "tree". But these leaves do not wither because they are continually, day and night, replenished with living waters; there is no interruption in the flow and thus, despite the hot winds of trial which sweep upon this tree, its leaves are eternally fresh and green; Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:22-25.

"And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"

God is truly close to them who call unto Him, hearkening to His voice, heeding His commandments and eventually, in the day of His glory, He shall come forth with blessings and honour for His people. There is exceeding comfort in this. See how David reclines in the hope of this promise Psa. 37:1-7. Though in this present life, as we pursue our goal of receiving favour in the eyes of our Lord in His day, we may be the least among men, yet Paul says "all things are yours"! In that day, when he "crowns us with glory and honour", we shall know that whatsoever we have done has truly prospered. The strength of the Word and the blessing of God will have been in all.

PSALM 1:4-6 THE CONSUMMATE END OF THE UNGODLY

Verse Four - Their frivolous existence

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away"

What a remarkable contrast is here! The righteous - a flourishing

tree of fruitfulness, full of life, beauty and reward for its Maker. The wicked - dry, inanimate chaff, beaten small by the judgements of God so that the blowing wind whisks away the useless husks. There is no Divine planting, no waters, without root below or fruit above, they are without any vital force. They are not good grain, but chaff and "what is the chaff to the grain" Jer. 23:28, when the fan or shovel of God's power throws them up to the wind of His judgements? The figure is that of winning on the threshing floors, the process by which the wheat was separated from the chaff and was common-place in the life of Eastern peoples. Your Bible Dictionary will provide a good description of it. It is used many times by the prophets; e.g. Isa. 41:15-16; Jer. 51:33; Dan. 2:35; Joel 3:14; Matt. 3:12.

The opposites presented here are even more stark than Jeremiah's contrast of the tree of righteousness and the parched heath of the desert. But the lesson is just the same! The righteous are precious in the eyes of Yahweh Psa. 33:18; 34:15; 11 Chr. 16:9; Matt. 3:16-17, but the wicked, though they may seem to flourish, Psa. 37:35-36, are of no value at all! These are the two classes of the psalm. They represent those "of the Spirit" and those "of the flesh" - and this brings the matter home to our own back door! Jesus said, "it is the Spirit which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing!" The meaning of this is clear - there is simply no middle ground, no category for "doubleminds" and "lukewarmness" that want part of this world and that which is to come.

Let us weigh this matter for soon he shall return and discern between the righteous and the ungodly, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. Mal. 3:18.

#### Verse Five - Their instability before God

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous"

This verse contrasts meaningfully with verse one. Those who deliberately stood in the way of sinners and sat in the assembly of the scornful will fall before the judgements of God and find no place in the company of His Redeemed.

However, the Hebrew word for "stand" in this verse has also the idea of "to rise". In its fullest import we can see its fitness of description as applying to the worthy before the judgement seat of Christ. They arise from the earth in the day of resurrection (1 Cor. 15 - "anastasis" = "a standing again" Isa. 26:19) bow before the Lord Jesus, Phil. 2:10, and having received his approbation, they stand erect before his presence; cp. Dan. 10:11, 13; 12:13.

Thus to stand in the presence of God or His Son is suggestive of peace and reconciliation with Him; to be in His favour and have that joyful confidence which is the most esteemed intimacy for which a mortal can hope. Refer for example to Psa. 5:5; 24:3; 130:3-4; Mal. 3:2; Luke 21:36; Rom. 5:2; Eph. 6:13.

The congregation of the righteous is the glorious throng of the Redeemed to be gathered before the throne of the Lamb in the day of glory. David sung often of this company when he penned words for the daily

services of praise offered by the sons of Levi in Israel. Using this lowly congregation as his foreshadowment he focused the full power of his Spirit Word upon the grand congregation of the Israel of God of the Future Age - Psa. 22:22; 40:9, 10. Just as praise and thanksgiving ascended from the beautiful psalms in the mouths of the priests and Levites Psa. 22:25; 35:18; 149:1, so in much greater power and joy shall the voices of thanksgiving be heard in the company of those in White Robes before the Lamb upon Mount Zion - Rev. 5:9-12; 15:1-4; 19:6-7.

But the ungodly, who seemed to entrench themselves in security, Psa. 73:3-8, shall be found in slippery paths of darkness; they shall fall and not arise (verses 18-20; 35:5-6 - contrast Psa. 26:1; 18:35-38).

#### Verse Six - Their consummation

"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish"

The sense of this first phrase is that God acknowledges or approves the way of the righteous. All things are known to him, but the way of the righteous, the course of their life from birth to death, is known to Him in this special sense because He plotted it out and it leads to Him. He set it out from the beginning and faithful men and women have forever walked therein Gen. 3:24; 5:9, 12. When the Son of God was manifested there was revealed that one who was himself the way to the Father, by whose death the veil to the Most Holy was rent and a "new and living way" made open, Jn. 14:4-6; Heb. 10:19-22.

It is a simple step to refer to the gospel and all associated with it as "THE WAY". This was in fact the name given to the Truth in Christ in the early days of Christianity - see Acts 9:2; 16:7; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

However the ungodly of all ages have plotted their various ways according as it seems right in their own eyes, Prov. 14:12. Cain was the first when he devised his own path of justification before God, Jude 11. Millions followed in his stead until the true way became corrupted upon the earth, Gen. 5. The judgement of this generation, when they were swept away by the flood in the days of faithful Noah, prefigures the Divine intention with all such evil paths. "The way of the wicked He turneth upside down" declares the psalmist, Psa. 146:9.

We need to bear these things close to our minds when we look out upon our generation. They seem to prosper in their ways. They have a confidence and a surety which are apt to beguile the remnant of God who endeavour to stand clear of their broad way, Psa. 73. Sometimes it even seems happier, with more gaiety and laughter. We need to bear close to our minds that these things are as illusionary as a dream. Psa. 37, and thus, turn aside from their doings, excluding them from our young people's ranks and positively set forth to sanctify ourselves in our most holy faith.

Thus the first Psalm closes with the depiction of two WAYS. We stand now at the CROSSROADS studying the signpost which reads, "THE NARROW WAY to Life" and "THE BROADWAY to Destruction".

PSALM 15 "DAVID DESCRIBETH A CITIZEN OF ZION"

The superscription of the psalm is "A psalm of David", but the summary of the psalm given by the translators of the Authorised Version is singularly appropriate.

The record of the bringing of the ark to Zion, found in 2 Sam. 6: 12-19, forms the background to this psalm. The ark was the symbol of Yahweh dwelling in the midst of His people. The hill of Zion, now the home of the ark, therefore became "Thy holy hill".

For any to approach to the God of Israel they too must be ceremonially and morally holy, for it is written "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me", Lev. 10:3. The psalm explains that holiness (or righteousness) consists of two things, what a man does and what he does not - a point appreciated by John when he wrote, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous", 1 John 3:7.

If Psalm 14 speaks of the natural man (see heading) then Psalm 15 speaks of the spiritual man by way of contrast, cf. 1 Cor. 2:14-16.

There is no doubt that we tend to see in this psalm a reflection of our own righteousness. We refer to such as Psalm 87:5-6, "And of Zion it shall be said ... Yahweh shall count when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there", and we take pride in being born there by being baptised into the hope of Israel. We take pride in the fact that our standards are the standards of the "citizen of Zion". But the psalm commences with "Yahweh". The psalm throws His light (for "God is light" 1 John 1:5) upon the believer that the hypocrite and the proud might be revealed. The psalm gives eleven tests of genuine discipleship which to some extent parallel the six tests of 1 John 1 and 2. The psalm does not leave room for personal pride such as is common to man.

Verse 1: "Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"

In verse 1 the question is personal. It must not be seen as a general question of principle, perhaps in self-justification, but as an earnest enquiry concerning one's own life and motives in self-examination. This point might be better appreciated if we remember David's failure to bring the ark into Zion at the first attempt when Uzzah died. Three months of intensive heart-searching followed before the initial mistakes were corrected. The second attempt was then successful, 2 Sam. 6:9-11.

"Abide" - The word "abide" or better "sojourn" mg. relates to temporary residence. Rotherham translates as "who shall be a guest". The temporary nature of the sojourn is heightened by the use of the word "tabernacle" or "tent". cf. Psalm 24:3-4.

"Dwell" - Signifies a permanent abode.

Our sojourn in the present ecclesia of God is temporary; that which is permanent is yet to come when, on God's holy hill of Zion, there is established His temple "where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever", Ezekiel 43:5-7. The question of v.1 is therefore of

searching significance to us for, "many be called, but few chosen," Matt. 20:16. We have all experienced sadness even now at those who have fallen away; how much greater the future distress of those who wail over their own exclusion.

Isaiah expresses this psalm in a very personal way when he says, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously" etc. Is. 33:13-17. Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, picks up the spirit of the psalm when he says, "What doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to humble thyself to walk with thy God", 6:8.

Verse 2: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart."

These three positive aspects of the citizen of Zion can be related to the ceremony of the sanctification of the priest, Lev. 1:22-24, where the blood on the right ear, thumb and great toe speaks of sanctified and dedicated hearing, working and walking in divine service. Hearing and speaking the truth are, of course, closely related; for what a man hears, that he will speak.

To walk uprightly is to be sealed by the Word, its instruction ever before the eyes. The literal translation of the first phrase is "one who walks perfectness", i.e. makes perfectness his way.

To "work righteousness" (and "faith without works is dead" James 2:20) is to manifest our belief in the written word. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?" Luke 18:8.

To "speak the truth in our hearts" is to have an imprint of that word on our heart, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh", Matt. 12:34. To speak from the heart does not allow hypocrisy in the presentation of our words, but rather to "speak the truth in love", not giving a corrupt communication but "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers", Eph. 4:15, 29. Knowing that, "If I regard iniquity in my heart Yahweh will not hear me", Psalm 66:18, Psalm 119:9-11, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God", Matt. 5:8.

Verse 3: "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour."

The positive virtues of v.2 are now counter-balanced by the negative virtues of v.3 so that

"walketh uprightly"	becomes	"nor taketh up a reproach".
"worketh righteousness"	becomes	"nor doeth evil".
"speaketh the truth"	becomes	"backbiteth not with his tongue".

"Backbiteth" -- "Keep thy heart with all diligence, ... put away from thee a froward mouth ..." Prov. 4:23-24. Backbiting is such a common habit it is now socially acceptable in the world, but Christ said, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not



the beam that is in thine own eye ... for with what judgment ye judge shall ye be judged", Matt. 7:1-5. "Let all bitterness ... and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you", Eph. 4:31-32.

"Taketh up a reproach" - Heb. implies one stooping to pick up dirt to cast at the neighbour - we are guilty of stooping to such actions at times! "Reproach" is a word used of stripping trees of Autumn fruit. Thus the gossip lays bare a man's weaknesses, real or imaginary, and reduces him to shame. Straightly the law commanded, "though shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people", Lev. 19:16, because of the dismay and pain caused by such thoughtlessness. The margin says, "receiveth or endureth". Perowne says "listening to and propagating slander". See Psalm 12:2, Prov. 17:9 "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends", and 1 Tim. 5:13 "wandering about from house to house ... speaking things which they ought not."

Yahweh is concerned with our motives, "for as he thinketh in his heart so is he", Prov. 23:7, "Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?" Prov. 24:12, "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause and deceive not with thy lips", v.28.

Verse 4: "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."

A distinction must be drawn between the seed of the serpent and the woman's seed. "Friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be friend of the world is the enemy of God", James 4:4. It is He Who set enmity between the seeds, Gen. 3:15, and therefore the distinction must be preserved. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, ... Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean things; and I will receive you and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. 6:17.

David considered the prosperity of the wicked and was envious, "until he went into the sanctuary of God: then understood he their end" Ps. 73.

The light cast upon us by this psalm does not veil or excuse dishonesty be it small or great. The citizen of Zion loves his brother, 1 John 3:14. As brethren and sisters grow older they become more loveable for the virtue that is the fruit of the Word embraced over so many years by them. "He honoureth them that fear Yahweh" (v.4).

The second part of the verse has been translated as "He hath sworn to his neighbour", Rotherham; "friend" in R.V., but the A.V. "hurt" may well be the correct meaning. A true brother or sister in Christ does not take the Covenant lightly, nor even his promises to his companions. "Let your communication be Yea, Yea, Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil", Matt. 5:37. If our word results in our own hurt or loss rather than advantage, this may not be taken as sufficient reason to change. A person whose promises change with the changing circumstances

of life is not to be trusted. He is no reflection of the changeless nature of the one he claims is his Father in heaven. Let us therefore be pleased at another's success not jealous - and change not!

Our attitude to the truth may follow a similar pattern. Initially embracing the truth for its promises and benefits we may later consider the loss of present advantages too great and turn back. The law said, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto Yahweh thy God, though shall not slack to pay it: for Yahweh thy God will surely require it of thee", Deut. 23: 21-23, "for he hath no pleasure in fools", Ecc. 5:4-6.

Verse 5: "He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

Yahweh is a God who loves justice and mercy. Hence usury of the poor was forbidden in Israel, Ex. 22:25. The Hebrew word translated usury has the idea of a "bite", as of a serpent. Lev. 25:35-38 clearly shows that usury is taking advantage of the distress of the poor further increasing his poverty. On the other hand a loan under reasonable and sympathetic terms may well be of considerable assistance and is not forbidden, Luke 19:23.

Usury therefore is taking advantage of one's brother, be it in financial or in other matters. Christ said to his disciples, "freely ye have received, freely give", Matt. 10:8, for it is Yahweh who gives us our substance. What if He should exact usury of us? Be warned, "for the love of money is the root of all evil", 1 Tim. 6:10. Then let us "give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away", Matt. 5:42.

"Nor taketh a reward" i.e. a bribe, "for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous", Ex. 23:8. The spirit of the psalm is one of justice and willing service to others and a denial of self such as is required of true brethren in Christ, 1 Pet. 5:1-5, each submitting to the other in humility.

"He that doeth" - cf. Matt. 7:24 "He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock". "The doers of the law shall be justified", Rom. 2:13.

"Never be moved" or Heb. "shaken", Psalm 16:8. Though He will shake all nations the righteous citizen of Zion "shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed (same word), but abideth for ever", Psalm 125:1-2. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever", 1 John 2:17. Such are even now, "the temple of the living God", 2 Cor. 6:16. They shall dwell in His holy hill for the olahm.

The psalm reveals eleven facets of the character of a citizen of Zion. Our Lord had twelve disciples but only eleven will dwell in his holy hill. Judas was the opposite of every particular in this psalm, even to taking a reward or bribe against the innocent. The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect embodiment of all its principles, and the example for us to follow. It is he who has promised, "He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out", Rev. 3:12.

P S A L M   T W E N T Y - T H R E EPRAISES TO THE LORD THE GOOD SHEPHERDGeneral Theme

There is possibly no Psalm so well known by the general population as the twenty-third. It is a poetical gem in which David expresses his tranquility and happiness in the gracious protection of the Lord, his Shepherd. All fears and anxieties are overcome in the surety of His watchful Hand. Provision for him is abundant - as though he were the guest at a royal banquet - despite the presence of his oppressors; he is anointed with the oil of gladness and his blessings run over. The Psalm closes upon the note of David's conviction of an eternal abiding place in the house of the Lord.

This Psalm, then, fits well into our sequence. The two pathways were delineated for us in the first Psalm. We made our choice as those only can who desire "life" rather than "destruction". But the way of the righteous is a tortuous one to the unaided pilgrim. It requires the guidance and protection of one skilled in its unforeseen dangers. We commend ourselves to the Hand of Yahweh and He as our Shepherd, leads us gently forward, we fearing no evil (cp. Psa. 31:5; 37:24; 109:31).

Character of the Psalm

This is, like the first, a short Psalm of vernal character. It is fervent and yet tender. Again we note the use of a number of metaphors which are particularly vivid and direct and seem to point to actual experiences: as though this is an allegorical hymn based on real events in David's life.

Background

The freshness and beauty of this short lyric seem to place it in the early days of David's shepherd life. The first four verses verily breathe the atmosphere of the shepherd; there is a deep awareness of the fortunes and anxieties of the shepherd. Verse five mentions the anointing of his head with oil, which specifically took place in his own boyhood when Samuel visited the family of Jesse at Bethlehem-Judah, 1 Sam. 16:1-13. But if this be the background incident, then what of the previous phrase, "though preparedst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies?" It seems that David was somewhat of a discard among his own family. He was the youngest among eight sons and devoutly-minded from his earliest days, 1 Sam. 13:14. Being such a follower of spiritual things, it is almost certain that he would have come into conflict with his brethren, who though strapping in physical stature, were not possessed of that spiritual strength of their young brother. That there was feeling between David and his brothers is made plain by the rapid and angry reaction of Eliab to David's faithful words when Goliath defied the armies of Israel, 1 Sam. 17:26-28. We have therefore a family situation similar to that of Joseph's - the youngest despised because of his prodigious spiritual growth. (See also David's Psalm 69:7-8).

When David, the after-thought, the forgotten and youngest son was brought into the company of his elder brethren and then anointed before them, there is an apt situation to fulfil the sense of verse five. The sacrifice that Samuel made on that occasion was a peace offering (the Heb. word "zebach" signifies this) which would have necessitated the sitting of all the family whilst they partook of their portion of the meat. Thus by the provision of God, David, now the pre-eminent member, was furnished with a table in the midst of his oppressors; cp. Jesus, Jn. 7:3-4; Acts 1:14.

Returning from this most significant occasion, David continued his tending of the few sheep and his mind reflected upon them and his guidance and love for them; we can feel his thoughts rise onto higher planes as he mused in quiet exultation over recent events. Stirred by the Spirit, he cries, "The Lord is MY Shepherd ....."

As we ponder the beauty of this Psalm surely we are also stirred by the godliness of this young person, David. Were he among us he would shame us with his overflowing godliness and gracious presence. Here is one of few years who has so completely saturated his mind with the Spirit that God declares him "a man after His own heart." The pathway to this elevated standing in the sight of the Father was in his day and night meditation upon the Law of the Lord.

What a delightful example we have here!

#### PSALM 23:1-4 THE LORD AS A GOOD SHEPHERD

##### Verse One - The Lord is my Shepherd

A magnificent thought! The Lord, the great and terrible one, the Creator of heaven and earth, glorious in power and excelling in strength is yet a Shepherd, One of tender watchfulness and loving anxiety for his dependent flock. How often the prophets desired to depict their great and mighty God as the Shepherd of Israel; e.g. Psa. 77:20; 78:52-53; 80:1, 3; Jer. 31:10; Mic. 7:14. Isaiah adds touching details to the image -

"He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd:  
He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and  
carry them in His bosom, and shall gently  
Lead those that are with young" (41:11)

The young boy, David, born to be a shepherd-king over the flock of Yahweh, learnt the first principles of the shepherd's life and character when minding his natural father's few sheep. His name signifies, "the beloved": it was the endearing qualities of David that made him so suitable as a shepherd of both sheep and men. His life was oft beset with perils, for the hills of Judea, which was the home of the shepherds, and in which Bethlehem was set, were rough and tortuous and inhabited by lion and bear and other beasts. The principle of faith in God, in His constant guidance and protection, had to be learnt. So did the principle of self-sacrifice on behalf of the sheep. How gloriously David exhibited this in his slaying of the lion and the bear; 1 Sam. 17:34-37. Dwell upon this incident and catch its pover. It was only a lamb, of a small and insignificant flock! Why did he do so? Surely not only for the value of

that tiny lamb! He did it because David's mind was acting upon higher levels than the natural man's. Into his care had been placed the souls of these few sheep and as he fed them and guided them with the skilfulness of his hands, as he carefully disentangled them from net and briar, rescued them from isolated ledge and inaccessible crag, as they faithfully and trustingly followed him to green pastures and quiet streams, David not only came to love those sheep, he also came to think of them as the people of Israel, the flock of God. David knew that Israel stood as the chosen and peculiar people of the Father. They were His people, His sanctified and holy nation, Exo. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; Lev. 20:22-26. What then were the beasts, the fierce bear and the kingly lion, that they should encroach upon the safety of the people of Yahweh! So David, who had no qualms in the slaying of 10,000 of the uncircumcised Philistines, went forth to retrieve this single, tiny lamb from the mouth of the lion. Did David care for the lamb? Yes, but far more so because it spoke of a member of the flock of God's people; and this particular lamb in "the mouth of the lion" (representing the powerful clutches of sin, Psa. 91:10-13), spoke of the Lamb of God that should be delivered from the grip of the "devil", Psa. 22:21; Heb. 2:14.

So David delivered - without a fear in his young body! His mind was saturated in the Divine principles involved in his daily, menial tasks and thus he was able to interpret these incidents into the language of the Spirit. It was Yahweh Who was the Shepherd and he the 'restored' lamb. It was Yahweh Who led him into 'Pastures green' and gave him to drink of the water of life. And it was Yahweh Who would lead him through the dark hour of death - and once more show him the light of "the Day", with its goodness and mercy overflowing.

For us, living under the dispensation of Christ, it is necessary to develop the theme of The Lord as the Shepherd.

Though God has in the ultimate sense always been the Shepherd, yet He has in times past designated the authority to His faithful servants. Thus Moses and Aaron led the flock - Psa. 77:20; Isa. 63:11 (margin). After Israel's settlement in the land, David became the Shepherd, Psa. 78:20-22. These leaders manifested to Israel the qualities of the Divine Shepherd: they stood in God's place.

In our times it is Christ, Immanuel himself, who fulfils in brilliant perfection the duties and qualities of God's Shepherd over His people. Jesus himself made this explicitly clear, "I am the good Shepherd"; compared to whom, all that came before "were thieves and robbers" Jn. 10:11,8. The prophets had long foretold of the coming of a "David"-like, cp. Mat. 3:17, Shepherd, one who would stand in the room of the Father and, without falter, tend for His flock. There is a particular chapter in Scripture which speaks of these things. This is the 34th chapter of Ezekiel, one which we must all consider carefully in connection with Psalm 23. There are a number of passages in the gospel records which find a former echo in this chapter;

- e.g. Mat. 9:36 - cp. verse 5  
 10:6; 15:24 - cp. verses 11, 12, 16  
 15:29-30 - cp. verse 16  
 18:10-14 - cp. verses 11, 12, 16  
 Mark 6:34 - cp. verse 5 ("sheep without shepherd") and  
 verse 14 ("I will feed them").

You will find numerous, exciting links between John 10 and Ezek. 34 - make a list of them.

Then consider the words of the apostles - Heb. 13:20 and 1 Pet. 2:25 (and link with Isa. 53).

In the light of these considerations, we must approach Psalm 23 with the especial understanding, that for us, these Shepherd qualities of Yahweh, are to be found through the hand of the One whom "He has become", even Christ.

It is obligatory and self-obvious that these Psalms, which were written for "our patience and comfort", must be more to us than a study of David's feelings. David said "the Lord is MY Shepherd" and each one of us must make these words our own! - and when we mouth them we think not only of the Father, but of the Son at His right hand, Who, working as One, are together our Shepherd. The uplifting thoughts that come from this utterance are yours, dear reader, for your meditation!

### "I shall not want"

How can we 'want', when "all power in heaven and earth" is given into his hand? Gen. 14:22; Mat. 28:18; 1Cor. 3:21-23. Travelling through the wilderness, Israel experienced this to be so, Neh. 9:21; even when the lion fails in his search for food, those "that seek Yahweh shall not want any good thing" Psa. 34:10.

### Verse Two - He maketh me to lie down in green pastures

The Heb. word here translated "green" ("deshe") is more properly rendered "grass", as the margin suggests. The word "naath", here translated "pastures" signifies a comely place or habitation: not the open country of the wilderness, but the quiet, sheltered patches of fresh, tender, soft grass where the sheep would lie at ease and rest - a place of settlement at the end of their wanderings (see Psa. 65:12 - different word in verse 12 - Jer. 25:37 - here translated "habitations", as elsewhere). In the language of Jesus, it is the sheepfold; Jn. 10:1, 16.

To what may we liken this in our days of wilderness wandering? It refers without doubt to our final rest in the Kingdom of God, when we shall enjoy a peaceful dwelling in the spiritual Temple of our Father with our fellow, the Lamb of God; Jn. 10:9-10 ("pasture" - "abundant life"); Heb. 4:9-11; Rev. 7:15-17. In this last quotation, there is an obvious illusion to the next phrase of Psalm 23 and upon this basis we can project the scene of Psalm 23 into these verses in Revelation. (The Greek word "poimaino", translated "feed" in verse 17, is the word used for a shepherd's tending of his flock. The words of verse 16, though cited from Isa. 49:19, answer to the "notwant" of Psalm 23:1.)

### "He leadeth me beside the still waters"

The ultimate application of these words to the Kingdom of God has been given above - Rev. 7. The Heb. word for "still" is a beautiful one ("menuchah"): see such passages as Isa. 11:10; 32:17-18; Psa. 132:8, 14, all speaking of the final rest for the children of God. What a striking contrast is here made with Isa. 57:20-21!

As we consider the serene and lovely scene of David's few sheep, lying contentedly by some quiet pool we are led to consider the application to us in our present sojourn. We experience these peaceful rests when we seek out the waters of Siloam; cp. Isa. 8:6 (see also notes on Psa. 1:3) and laying our mundane burdens aside, draw nigh to the counsel and guidance of the Heavenly Shepherd. In such an atmosphere we mentally transpose ourselves from the pettiness of this provisional life, and see the end of our Hope, even the peace of the Lamb's eternal sheepfold.

There are many thought-provoking passages you could refer to in connection to these thoughts; e.g. Isa. 28:12; 30:15; Jer. 6:16 (cf. Jer. 2:37) Mat. 11:28-29; Luke 10:39, 42; Rom. 15:4; Col. 2:2.

Notice that the shepherd leads: he does not drive! How appropriately descriptive this is of the Great Shepherd - refer to Isa. 40:11; 49:10; Jn. 10:3-4, 27; 14:3, 6, 31 ("Arise, let us go hence"); Phil. 3:13-14; Heb. 2:10; 12:2.

### Verse Three - He restoreth my soul

Our principles of interpretation of the Psalm should now be clear. Firstly, we conjure a mental picture of the natural scene, what they meant to David as shepherd of Jesse's few sheep. Secondly, we consider the phrases in the light of the Father and the Son being our Shepherds and the application of this to these mortal days and then to its fulfilment in the Kingdom. There is a third interpretation in which the Psalm becomes a song of Christ in the days of his flesh, when he was but the Lamb and entirely dependent on the guidance of his Father. This meaning is considered in "Questions".

With these principles in mind, compound your own notes on this phrase. The following quotations may help you:-

1. cp. 1 Sam. 17:35; Ezek. 34:16; Mat. 18:12 (the Heb. word translated "soul" - "nepesh" and simply means life with all its associations - see "Elpis Israel", part one).
2. Link with 1 Sam. 30:6; Psa. 51:12; Acts 2:38, 46; Rom. 6:11; Eph. 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:8-9; Acts 14:22; 15:32, 41.  
Finally 1 Cor. 15:52-58.

### "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's Sake"

Our minds think of the winding paths leading through the jagged hills, along which the trusting sheep, seeing only 'dimly' their destination, follow in faith the careful guidance of the shepherd.

Are not the 'paths of righteousness' those ways which are just and holy and which lead eventually to the garments of pure white - righteousness before God, Rev. 7:13-14; 19:8 - are they not often like the tortuous obscure paths of the sheep upon the mountains? It is Yahweh through His Son Who leads us in and unto righteousness; cp. Eph. 1:4 ("chosen us"), verse 5 ("predestinated us"), verse 6 ("made us accepted"), verse 10 ("gathered" us), Phil. 2:13 etc.

Note also that this calling is for "His Name's sake". This is both for the upholding of His character of graciousness, mercy and truth (Exo. 34:6; Psa. 103:8; cp. sense of Num. 14:17-19) and for the eventual, immortal righteousness of His saints in order that His glory, which is implicit in His Name of "Yahweh", may shine forth to His honour and praise. How often is this latter point emphasised in the Scriptures; God's glory is the cause of all His action; Ezek. 36:22; Isa. 63:12; Psa. 31:3; Rev. 4:10-11 (the final picture).

Verse Four - Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me

The natural picture upon which these lofty thoughts are based, is of a shepherd leading his flock through the most dismal valley, where light is completely obscured and the sheep are exposed to hidden pitfalls, abrupt precipices and to whatever devouring beast may lurk in his gloomy den. The flock needed great confidence before they would accept the lead through this unknown defile; some of the more stubborn may have refused.

David's response to the lead of Yahweh, his Shepherd is positive and hearty, "I will fear no evil for Thou art with me"! There are times when all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must pass through the gloomy valley of tribulation. There is no exception, 'for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and courgeth every son whom He receiveth' II Tim. 3:12; Heb. 12:6. David remembered this exhortation and recognised it when it came his way; e.g., II Sam. 16:11-12. So also did Paul and he likewise was comforted to fear not this evil 'by the resting of the power of Christ upon him' - II Cor. 12:9. But the example which stands out above all others is that of the Lord Jesus, who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, was heard in that he feared, Heb. 5:8.

The term used here by the Psalmist is speaking in its fullness of the darkness of death (as also in Job. 9:21, 22) and the Spirit which here moved David to vow, 'I shall fear no evil: for Thou art with me' is the very quintessence of the Master's as he faced the hour of his death. This Spirit is only slightly revealed in the gospel records; e.g. Luke 9:51; 22:42, but it is copiously illustrated in the Psalms of David by which we are blessed to see the workings of his mind in this time of excruciating agony. One passage especially akin to Psalm 23 is Psalm 18:1-6. Make a list of similar passages, all showing the sterling trust of Christ as he faced the pangs of crucifixion.

The lesson to us, enjoying all the moddly-coddling benefits of twentieth-century affluence, is to develop this Spirit within us, an indomitable Spirit which lives by the power of the Spirit Word and by which we are prepared to face the hardships of the gospel and even death itself. Selah! (Consider II Tim. 2:1-4; 4:5-8)

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me"

The rod (Heb. "shebet") was a weapon, used for correction or punishment e.g. Psa. 2:9; 89:32; Pro. 10:13; 22:15; and in the shepherd's hand it would be an instrument for the defence of the flock.



It must have had the capacity to deal a very heavy blow, for it was surely this which David yielded when he smote the lion and the bear, I Sam. 17:35.

The defence of Yahweh which shall protect His flock, is the "Rod of Iron" which shall go forth from Zion in the hand of His Son, by which the ungodly shall be forever banished, Psalm 2, Rev. 2:26-27. This event is a necessity in God's purpose and without which His glory can never shine forth with un-mingled brilliance, Pro. 28:28. This day is therefore prayed for by those of God's mind; Psa. 104:35; 37:9, 15; Jude 14-15.

The "Staff" was the shepherd's stay or support, the picture of its use being similar to the walking stick of today; cp. Exo. 21:19; II Kings 18:21. It was used with much value in the ascending and descending of cliffs and rocks and as a prop for the shepherd as he overseered the flock. Sometimes one of the ends was curved to form the crook, by which the sheep were retrieved from pits, bogs and thorny bushes.

Thus the rod and the staff are symbols of power and love, of defence and deliverance.

#### PSALM 23:5-6 THE LORD THE BOUNTIFUL KING

The scene changes from this point. There is here the elements of a royal banquet, to follow the anxieties of the wanderings along the paths of righteousness.

With regard to the natural meaning, a suggestion has been made in the "background" referring to Samuel's anointing of the young shepherd boy in the presence of his brethren.

#### Verse Five - Thou preparedst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies

Job also depicts God as a benevolent host, 36:16. Yet this is no ordinary feast, for in the sequence of thought of the Psalm we have (in the metaphorical application to ourselves) passed through the vicissitudes of daily life, which led to the shadow of death, our trust in the Shepherd being such that He could bring us through even this, that once more we should see the light of day. Verse 5 and 6 are therefore, in type and shadow, more aptly descriptive of the blessings of the Kingdom Age when, following the resurrection, we shall in His good pleasure, rejoice with Him forevermore.

This does not mean that in the use of these words for us there is no application to our present life - there is a table furnished for us each week, our countenance is continually refreshed by the oil of His Word and our cup overflows even in this life with the blessings God has bestowed upon us, I Tim. 4:8. Yet the diction here more suitably, and most eloquently, befits the application to the Age to come.

The furnished table is thus illustrated by such passages as Isa. 25:6; Rev. 19:7-9; Luke 14:15-24; 22:30; 12:35-38. The Lord has not only bounty to feed, but power to protect and thus the enemies of his beloved guests look on in harmless spite; refer Psa. 110:2; Rev. 3:9.

"Thou anointedest my head with oil"

It was common practice in Israel for a distinguished guest to be favoured or honoured by anointing his head with perfumed oil; cp. Mat. 26: 6-7; see also Jud. 9:9.

To the chosen of God it speaks of the day for which he longs when the Spirit of God shall be poured forth abundantly and 'this mortal shall put on immortality': Joel 2:28; Isa. 61:3; Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:8; Phil. 3:21; I Jn. 3:2; I Cor. 15:49; Psa. 17:15.

"My cup runneth over"

The cup is used as a figure of the portion or lot of God's benevolence bestowed upon a man; it may be good or evil, of blessings or of judgement, Psa. 16:5; 73:10 - contrast 11:6; 75:8. In this case super-abundance is indicated as the gracious goodness, the overflowing magnanimity of the Lord, our King and Host. This portion shall not be ours unless we manifest an equal largeness of heart to our fellow travellers, Luke 6:38.

Verse Six - Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life

No longer do the enemies pursue, but rather the graciousness of the Father; as David proceeds, so follows the mercy and goodness of the Father. This may well be a retrospective summary of the days when the comfort of the Shepherd accompanied him in all walks of life.

How truly, though, will this exclamation arise from the company of the Redeemed, when upon the other side of mortal life within the promised land, their voices will be loosed in expressions of praise for their exalted blessings, Rev. 5:8-10. Other words of David also seem touched with the spirit of those rejoicings; Psa. 30:10-12.

Notice in passing the great confidence in these words. Do we feel such unimpaired confidence of our eventual salvation?

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"

This was a particularly fond expression of David's; e.g. Psa. 27: 4, 13; 84:1-4, and no doubt this was because of the great promise of an everlasting House made especially to him which he expresses as 'all his hope and desire' II Sam. 7; II Sam. 23:5. The unspoken satisfaction enfolded within these words and their context make a delightful comparison with Psa. 36:7-10.

Upon this sweet note the Psalmist lays down his pen. He rests in the salvation on which God has promised, in the company of all true men of God, who together shall compile the glorious company of the Temple of the living God.

The thought is sublime, so removed from the unsatisfying ambitions of this present provisional life. If we want David's mind, if these thoughts are to become our own, then we must make time and opportunity to

prepare our minds in the solitude of private meditation. We shall need to tear ourselves away from wordly ambitions and the cares of this life and seek out our God both day and night. If we will do this then His comfort, guidance and love shall overshadow us. "The Lord is MY Shepherd" will be as tangible and real a conviction to each one of us as it was in the mouth of our fellow-disciple, David.

Our studies to this point lead us suitably to a closer examination of the glories of the Kingdom Age. We have been led, as it were, along the way of the righteous to the green pastures and still waters of the Kingdom of God, where there is rest for His sheep in an abundance of righteousness and peace - Psalm 72.

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P S A L M   S E V E N T Y - T W OTHE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD AND HIS SONINTRODUCTION1. Writer

Is indisputably David (v20). See note 2.

2. Time of writing

The Psalm was written by David in old age after his son Solomon had been set upon the throne and prior to his death a short time later. The last verse says, "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," and this vision which represents the fulfilment of the covenant made with him, dominated his closing thoughts. In the last recorded words of the king he says, "Although my house be not so with God (Ail), yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow" (II Sam. 23:1, 5).

3. Title

In the Authorised Version the title reads, "A Psalm for Solomon," but in the original it reads simply "For Solomon," as indicated by the words: "A Psalm" being in italics. The margin reads "of Solomon." Though having a primary and limited application to Solomon, the Psalm has its complete fulfilment in David's greatest son, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30-33), as the following note will show.

4. Solomon's reign prefigures Messiah's

In many ways Solomon's reign foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ's, and we shall consider these as we discuss the Psalm. Some have said therefore that Solomon is the king referred to in the promise made with David (II Sam. 7:12-16). While it is true that the promise had an incipient fulfilment in Solomon and that he himself saw himself as such, the Scripture precludes the notion (cp. I Kings 1:48; 5:5; 8:20; 9:4-6). The following facts demonstrate that the promise in its ultimate refers to Christ and not to Solomon.

- (1) The promise was conditional to individuals upon their obedience (v12), and Solomon was disobedient and consequently chastened, and his throne ruined and divided (I Kings 12:1, 14; Psa. 89:28-33).
- (2) If the Covenant was fulfilled in Solomon, then we would not expect further divine mention of a coming fulfilment years after Solomon's death. But the prophets teem with references to a future king as David's heir. 250 years later: Amos 9:11; 450 years later: Jer. 33:14-15; 20:1; 500 years: Zech. 12:6-7; 1,000 years: Luke 1:32-33 - where Jesus is plainly identified.
- (3) David himself saw the fulfilment a long way off (II Sam. 7:19; II Sam. 23:5).
- (4) Verse 14 of the promise is quoted OF JESUS in Heb. 1:5.

- (5) Jesus applies David's words in Psalm 110 to himself (Mat. 22:41), and in the book of Revelation he claims to have "the key of the house of David," and to be "the root and offspring of David," (3:7, 22:16).

5. The Psalm's basic teaching

"The things concerning the Kingdom of God"

- v 1-7 Christ's righteous reign will refresh the earth with peace.
- v 8-11 Christ's dominion will extend to all lands and involve all peoples.
- v 12-14 Prosperity and peace will yield prayer and praise.
- v 17 Eternal blessings for those IN Christ.
- v 18-20 Praise to God - for His glory shall fill the earth.

DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS OF PSALM 72

Verses 1-7 - Christ's righteous reign will refresh the earth with peace

"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son"

The same prayer was offered by David when Solomon was vested with the Kingdom; "Give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart to keep thy commandments ..." (I Chron. 29:19). God had told David that the continuance of his Throne would depend on obedience, and accordingly Solomon wisely asked wisdom of God, and thus "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand which is on the sea-shore" (I Chron. 28:7, I Kings 3:9, 4:29).

Christ has been given the Spirit "not by measure," and thus has wisdom in excess of all. He "was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," and is thus of quick understanding in the fear of God, and capable of taking the role of "King of kings" (John 3:34, Psa. 45:7, Isa. 11:2-4).

"He shall judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor (ANI - wretched, oppressed) with judgment"

Relief of the poor will alone come when God "is king over all the earth." (Psa. 12:5)

In verses 1-7 there is an outstanding principle of God taught. Note the recurrence of the words "righteous," "righteousness," and "peace." These two conditions are related in the economy of God as cause and effect. A righteous reign will produce peace, and throughout the Word of God we find this principle taught. Melchizedek was "FIRST king of RIGHTEOUSNESS, THEN king of PEACE." Isaiah shows this clearly when he says of Christ's kingdom, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." (32:1, 17, 18). Compare the following Scriptures: Jer. 23:5-6, 33:15-16, Psa. 85:10-11, James 3:17.

On the personal scale, to be at peace with God we must partake of the righteousness of God which is in Jesus Christ. Thus Paul says, "Therefore being justified (i.e. MADE RIGHTEOUS) by faith, we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:12-17).

The opposite principle is Sin and Evil. Sin is the cause of evil (wars, famines, oppression, disease, etc.), and so we read "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isa. 57:19-20.

"The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness"

"Peace" is the Heb. word "Shalom," the usual Jewish greeting. It comes from the root "shalem," meaning "to be safe," and hence figuratively the noun can mean "rest, safety, prosperity, health, welfare, and peace."

"Hills and Mountains": These are used to indicate ruling powers of varying authority because they are above the valleys (subjects). This is a common figure in the Scripture, cp. Isa. 40:4, Ez. 36:1, 4, 6, 8, Jer. 51:25, Zech. 4:7. The righteous rulership of Christ and the saints - the mountains and hills of the age to come - sitting upon thrones as kings and priests will bring peace to the earth by righteousness (Rev. 20:4-6, 5:9-10, Isa. 32:1, 16-17, Psa. 37:11).

"He shall judge the poor (Heb. 'ani') of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor"

The coming of Christ will bring salvation to his people - "the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which he hath promised," (Jas. 2:5). "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5:3).

"They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations"

The righteous and peaceful administration of Christ and his immortalised brethren will endure for 1,000 years, being a glorious Sabbath of Rest after six days (of 1,000 years) of labour and contention (Rev. 20:2-6, Heb. 4:9m).

At the conclusion, when he shall have put down all enemies, (the last and greatest being death itself after the final resurrection), he will give the Kingdom to God, even to Him by whose power and authority he will have subdued all things. Then shall God be all things in all men (K Cor. 15:24-28, Rev. 20:1-5).

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth"

When Christ comes, the Word tells us that the earth will be in unprecedented oppression and strife. "There shall be a time of trouble such as NEVER was." "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" - distress of nations with no way out, "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard." (Dan. 12:2, Luke 21:25-26, Isa. 24:20 etc.) Such a description befits

the frightful dilemmas which resist solution facing the world we know. Jesus Christ can alone bring the solution. Following Armageddon, and the wars of the saints, the "slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth to the other." (Jer. 25:33, Isa. 66:16). Then shall come the welcome task of reconstruction which shall refresh the "mown grass", as showers that water the earth (Isa. 40:6).

"In his days shall the righteous flourish (Roth. 'blossomforth'); and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth"

Christ's rule, "like rain," will favour the righteous who will blossom forth, but repress the wicked (Isa. 65:17-25). His reign will be successful, whereas all attempts by man have failed miserably. Just as white paint to white spots is no cure for measles, so any compromise with sin as a basis for peace is useless.

N.B. Bro. Thomas' wise words in "Elpis Israel."

'Yea, verily, the Lord Jesus is the "Prince of Peace;" and therefore, no peace society can give peace to the world. It is he alone, who can establish peace on earth and good will among men; for he only is morally fit, and potentially competent to do it. The peace of the arbitrationists is peace based upon transgression of divine law; and the hostility of the covenanters to the gospel of the kingdom. It is an impure peace; peace with the serpent power reigning over the blood-stained earth. Such a peace as this avaunt! Eternal was is better for the world than such a compromise with sin. The peace Messiah brings is "first pure." It is a peace the result of conquest; the tranquility which succeeds the bruising of the Serpent's head. It is consequent upon the establishment of God's sovereignty over the nations, by the hand of him whom he hath prepared to "break in pieces the oppressor," and let the oppressed go free. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace ..." .'

Verses 8-11 - Christ's dominion will extend to all lands and involve all peoples

"He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"

In the vocabulary of David the expression from "sea to sea" meant from the Mediterranean Sea on the west of Israel to the Persian Gulf on the east. The "river" is the "great river, the River Euphrates," which is often thus designated. In Gen. 13:14-17, Abraham and his seed (Christ) were promised the Holy Land, and he was told to walk through the length and breadth of it. The borders of the Covenant land were delineated when the promise was ratified by God - The northern border being the "great river, the river Euphrates" and the southern border the "River of Egypt." (Gen. 15:18).

When Israel entered the Covenant land, their reluctance to conquer it resulted in them having less territory than that which Moses had marked out (Ex. 23:31, Judges 1:27-36, Joshua 18:1-2). Also in the days of Solomon when the Kingdom was its greatest owing to David's wars, the borders were still short of that covenanted to Abraham and Christ (I Kings 4:21).

In the future age Israel is to become the "first dominion," the "head and no longer the tail of the nations." The twelve tribes will be divided again, and, Ezekiel shows that they shall inherit 12 horizontal strips of the land (or cantons), the sum of which will equal that promised (Micah 4:7-8, Deut. 28:13, Ezek. 47:13-48).

"He shall have DOMINION"

The use of the word "dominion," in this context is an echo of the words used by the angels when God's purpose with man and the earth were first known. "Let us make man in our image ... and let them HAVE DOMINION over the fish of the sea ... AND OVER ALL THE EARTH." David took up these same words and applied them by the Spirit, to himself after he had slain "The enemies of the army of Israel," Goliath and the Philistines. But Paul quotes Psalm 8 on numerous occasions and applies the words to Christ: "Thou has put ALL things in subjection under his feet ..." (Heb. 2:6-9, I Cor. 15:25-26, Eph. 1:22 etc.) When Jesus Christ and those "in him," reign with him, "The Lord shall be king over ALL THE EARTH," (Zech. 14:9, 9:10, Psa. 2:6-9).

"They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust"

Following the Judgment Seat and marriage feast of the Lamb, the earth will be brought under Christ's sway. The saints will be assisted by a humbled and purged Israel, and from Zion they shall extend his Kingdom to the uttermost parts of the earth (Psa. 149:4-9, Rev. 17:14, 18:6, 19:10-16, Psa. 2:12, Jer. 50:20-23, Zech. 9:13-14, Zech. 12:10).

Christ will proclaim an ultimatum of peace to all nations and some will humbly submit to him (Psa. 2:12, Rev. 14:6, Psa. 45:12, Isa. 60:9). However others, especially Catholic Europe will resist his will, and "they shall lick the dust." "The nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12, Rev. 14:8, 18:8, 19:19-20, Dan. 7:26, Psa. 2:1-7, 9).

"Those that dwell in the wilderness" (the Arabs, the United Arab Republic of today) - the age-long opponents of Israel, "will have their faces filled with shame," "that they may know that Thou, whose name alone is Yahweh, art the Most High over all the earth" (Psa. 83, Hab. 3:1-7).

"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts"

Some nations will humble themselves willingly before the throne of Christ as the Queen of Sheba did before Solomon (I Kings 9:1, 6-10). Also Solomon's ships returned from the Kings of Tarshish with rich cargoes (II Chron. 9:21).

The Word indicates that the Western Alliance, the merchant sea power, is the latter-day Tarshish, Sheba and Dedan. They shall oppose the Russian confederacy which aspires to invade the Holy Land, and shall be first to acknowledge Divine power in Zion (Ezek. 38:13, Psa. 45:12, Isa. 60:9). They are not represented as opponents to Christ by Ezekiel.



"Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him"

As in the limited sphere of the then known world, all people came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, so when great David's greater Son is enthroned in Zion, shall the whole world concourse to Jerusalem, (I Kings 4:34, Isa. 2:1-4, 49:23, Zech. 14:16). "Every one that is left of all the nations shall even go up from year to year to worship the king."

Verses 12-16 - Prosperity and peace will yield prayer and praise

"For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor (ANI) also and him that hath no helper"

"Needy" - Heb. "Ebyon" = "helpless and deficient in will and wealth."

"FOR he shall deliver ..." It is for this that Christ has been empowered by God. David says, "He that rules over men must be just ruling in the fear of God", (II Sam. 23:3). There is a lesson here for us if we would "reign with him." There is no respect of persons with God, and so we must esteem all men alike, not having "men's persons in admiration because of advantage." (James 2:1-5, Jude 16, Ex. 22:25-27). "It is foolishness for a king to use wickedness, for the throne is established by righteousness" (Prov. 16:12).

"For he shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls (nephesh) of the needy (ebyon)"

While Christ will cause the loftiness of man to be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men to be made low, "he will exalt the weak and spare those oppressed. "The valleys will be exalted and the mountains and hills made low" (Isa. 2:17, 40:4).

Christ's judgment will be as impeccable as it was in the days of his flesh. Then "he knew what was in man and needed not that ANY should TESTIFY unto him" (John 2:25). The Spirit of God upon him has made him of "quick understanding in the fear of God," so that he has no need of the usual criteria of judgment that mere men use - "the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isa. 11:1-4).

"He shall redeem their soul from deceit (Roth. 'extortion') and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight"

Christ will first judge his household and then the world (I Pet. 4:17). He will answer the cries of all those who have been "persecuted for righteousness' sake;" he will "avenge their blood on them that dwell upon the earth" and will clothe every one of them with white robes, (Mat. 5:10, Rev. 6:10-11). It has been calculated that the Roman Catholic Apostacy has slain or persecuted 50 million over the centuries.

In Isaiah 53:9 we are told that Jesus did "no VIOLENCE, neither was DECEIT in his mouth," and because of this he will divide the spoil with the strong. We must be like him if we would be redeemed by him.

"(a) And he shall live, and (b) to him shall be given the gold of Sheba:"

- (a) Solomon was promised "length of days," if he obeyed (I Kings 3:14). Jesus is the "resurrection and the life," having conquered sin and death. "As the Father hath life in Himself, even so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). He declared to John, "I am he that liveth and have the keys of hell and death," thus ensuring that we, if worthy, shall also "live" in due time. "Because I live, ye shall live also," (John 14:19, 6, I John 1:2, Psa. 21:4, Rev. 1:18).
- (b) Solomon received a great gift of the Queen of Sheba (I Kings 10:2, II Chron. 9:1). When Christ reigns, the wealth of the Gentiles shall be his - a fact which was typically foreshadowed at his birth (Isa. 60:6, 11, Mat. 2:11).

"(c) Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and (d) daily shall he be praised"

- (c) Jesus has now been exalted to "heaven itself," having passed through the veil of the flesh, and there appears in the presence of God for us. Through Christ we have access to the Father, and he has invited his brethren to make their requests known to him, (Heb. 10:19, 22, 6:19-20, John 16:23-24).
- (d) Solomon was acclaimed by the Queen of Sheba and Hiram, King of Tyre, for his wisdom and glory. In like fashion the saints and mortal nations shall sing praises to him for his salvation, (cp. II Chron. 2:11-12, 9:5-8, Rev. 5:8-9, 12-14, 1:5-6).

"There shall be a handful (ABUNDANCE, RSV, RV, Roth.), of corn upon the earth, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon"

In beautiful imagery we are told that the reign of David's greatest son shall be one of great productivity and fruitfulness. It is not customary to find crops growing on the "tops of mountains," and even rare to expect the fruit thereof to be as lush and plentiful as Lebanon. But as food was plentiful so that "they lacked nothing" under Solomon, even so shall Divine blessings yet yield abundance (I Kings 4:27). Amos in spirit spoke of the time when the tabernacle of David would be restored and said it would be characterised by the plowman overtaking the reaper, the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains dropping sweet wine, (Amos 9:11, 13, Isa. 35:2-3, 29:17).

"And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth"

Solomon had rest on every side and Israel were privileged people - "as sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry," "dwelling safely every man under his own vine and fig tree" (I Kings 4:20, 25). The Gentiles in contrast became Israel's servants and succoured them (cp. I Kings 9:20-23).

Even so shall the saints flourish in Messiah's day and natural Israel will be the head of a universal empire of subject nations. "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers:" "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls" (Isa. 49:23, 60:11, Jer. 33:13-22, Mic. 4:7-8).

Verse 17 - Eternal blessings for those in Christ

"His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun"

Following his glorification by the Father, Jesus has been "made both Lord and Christ," so that the Name of God, who is supremely the Saviour, has been memorialised in His Son. "I, even I, am Yahweh; and beside me NO Saviour." "I will give thee (Jesus) that thou mayest be MY Salvation ..." "In YAHWEH shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory" (Acts 2:36, Isa. 43:10, 49:6, 45:25). Thus, as the literal Hebrew says, "He shall be as a son to continue the Father's name forever" (see margin). The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is plainly identified with the Father's own name, and is "the historical development of it."

"Men shall be blessed ("Barak") in him. All nations shall call him happy" ("Asher" - cp. RV, RSV, Roth.).

The promise made to Abraham, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," is here expounded by the Spirit. Abraham's "seed of promise" is also David's covenanted son: both covenants converge in one man, the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 1:1, Luke 1:31-33, 54-55, Gal. 3:16). "IN HIM" blessings would come upon all nations.

Primarily the blessings of the promises relate to justification from sin for those "IN HIM." "The Scripture foreseeing that God would JUSTIFY the nations through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying in thee shall all nations be BLESSED." (Gal. 3:8 cp. Acts 4:25-26.)

But this justification is only for those "IN HIM." These are constitutional terms. We are either constituted "in Adam" or constituted "in Christ." The only way to change is by faith in the promises followed by baptism. "As in Adam all die, even so IN CHRIST shall all be made alive." "For ye are all (Jew and Gentile) the children of God BY FAITH IN CHRIST. For as many of you as have been BAPTISED INTO CHRIST, have put on Christ ... and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29, I Cor. 15:22, cp. Mat. 28:19, I Thess. 1:1).

When the justified seed of Abraham inherit the Covenant land under the beneficent rule of God's vice regent, the contentment of the people will evidence itself in spontaneous praise, "All nations shall call him happy." "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11).

Verses 18-20 - Praise to God - for His glory shall fill the earth

"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel who only doeth wondrous things"

David, as he contemplates the realities of God's consummated purpose, is constrained by that ardent zeal so characteristic of him, to break forth in unrestrained adoration of "Him who ONLY doeth wondrous things" (cp. Psa. 41:13, 68:35, 106:48).

"And blessed be His glorious name forever ('Olahm'): and let the whole earth be filled with his glory: Amen and Amen"

God gave Moses His Name as a memorial forever even unto all generations. The redeemed upon Mount Zion will have "The Father's Name written on their foreheads." Yahweh, "He who will be," will have become a multitude. Then indeed shall praise be unto God as revealed, "Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Ex. 3:15, Rev. 14:1, 4:11).

When Messiah reigns, the purpose of God will prosper and his oath to Moses be fulfilled, "As I live, saith YAHWEH, all the earth shall be filled with MY GLORY" (Num. 14:21).

"And YAHWEH shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one YAHWEH and his name one." (Zech. 14:9). Amen and Amen.

"The Prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended."

Among the last words of David are these. The Psalm is an echo of his prayer when he set Solomon on his throne (I Chron. 29), and of the words recorded in II Sam. 23:3-7, which are entitled his "last words." What a fitting conclusion they are to a man so thoroughly devoted to trust in the Rock of Jacob! That the same vision, hope and trust of this "man after God's own heart," may be yours in these degenerate days, is the object of our meditations.

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