

## Day 335 - FRIDAY: January 5th

### Psalms 21, 22 & 23

#### Psalms 21:1-13 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD; And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart's desire, And have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah For You meet him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked life from You, and You gave it to him—Length of days forever and ever. His glory is great in Your salvation; Honor and majesty You have placed upon him. For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence. For the king trusts in the LORD, And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, And the fire shall devour them. Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, And their descendants from among the sons of men. For they intended evil against You; They devised a plot which they are not able to perform. Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready Your arrows on Your string toward their faces. Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise Your power.

#### Psalms 22:1-31 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." a Psalm of David. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed. But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the

people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God. Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots. But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me. I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard. My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD's, And He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this.

### Psalms 23:1-6 NKJV

A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

Psalm 21:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 21, as *The Nelson Study Bible* notes, "is another of the royal psalms of David. Psalm 20 is a prayer of the king for God's blessing on his army. Psalm 21 is an assurance of God's blessing on the king [himself]. Both psalms, as is the case with all the royal psalms, speak ultimately of the great King to come, the Lord Jesus." Some see this psalm as one of thanksgiving after the victory in the battle referred to in the previous psalm.

David praises God for the blessings given to him as king. The king depended on God's strength: "How great is his joy in the victories You give!" (verse 1b, NIV). Here the NKJV has, "And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!" "One meaning of the Hebrew word *salvation* is 'room to breathe.' God had given King David a release from the pressures and constraints that bound him" (note on verse 1). Besides the joy of temporary deliverance from physical conditions, the verse also looks forward to ultimate spiritual salvation.

David enumerates the good acts of God on his behalf: kingship (a crown of pure gold), victory, desire of his heart, long life (forever and ever through salvation), deliverance, honor and majesty, blessings, God's presence and unfailing love (verses 2-7). David asserts that his enemies are also God's enemies because "they intended evil against You," (verse 11) and they "hate You" (verse 8). David trusts God to deal with them (verse 9) "in the time of Your anger." Looking beyond David's own lifetime, God's anger will be evidenced to all during the Day of the Lord, a time of punishment prophesied throughout the Scriptures." [END]

Psalm 22:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 22, David laments his life-threatening circumstances—danger from enemies (see verses 20-21), perhaps in the midst of severe illness (see verse 17) wherein his enemies are jostling around him in anticipation of his death, possibly to be equated with other psalms where David languishes in bodily affliction. Yet here he uses words that directly foreshadow the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. "The language David uses to describe his own predicament is prompted by the Holy Spirit. Thus it could span a thousand years to describe precisely the experiences of the Savior Jesus—both His excruciating death and victorious resurrection" (*Nelson Study Bible*, introductory note on Psalm 22).

During His crucifixion ordeal, Jesus cried out with the words that begin this psalm, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (verse 1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)—as at this point, Jesus bore the sins of all humanity and God sternly rejects sin. It does not seem that Jesus just said these words only to fulfill prophecy. No doubt He really felt them for the moment. And remarkably, He and the Father foresaw a thousand years beforehand that He

would feel this way—and inspired David to record these words and thoughts accordingly.

David suffers intensely through his dire circumstances, but he still trusts in God to deliver him (verses 3-5). At present, he is humiliated: "I am a worm, and no man" (verse 6). The phrase "they shoot out the lip" (verse 7) is also translated "they hurl insults" (NIV) and "they make mouths at me" (NRSV). Christ's tormentors mocked and taunted just as David's words portend, even in the specific manner of verse 8 (Matthew 27:27-31, Matthew 27:39-44).

David describes his encroaching enemies as "strong bulls of Bashan" (Psalm 22:12)—Bashan being the northeastern region of Israel "noted for its fine breed of cattle" (Deuteronomy 32:14; Ezekiel 39:18)" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, "Ba'shan"). Yet they are not only strong and powerful, but are fierce and raging like lions (Psalm 22:13). Jesus faced the hatred of the Jewish religious leadership and the brutality of the Romans.

Where David says, "My tongue clings to My jaws" (verse 15), we should recall Jesus' anguished words on the cross, "I thirst" (John 19:28).

In a surprising statement in the next verse, "They pierced My hands and My feet," David "explicitly predicts the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The words are merely a figure of speech for the terrifying experiences of David; but as a prophet (Acts 2:30), David spoke accurately of the sufferings of Jesus" (*Nelson Study Bible* note on verse 16). It should be noted, however, that instead of "They pierced," the Masoretic vowel pointing gives this as "Like a lion," which is the preferred Jewish translation. Yet this rendering leaves out a verb. The Jewish Publication Society Tanakh fills in with the word *maul*: "like lions {they maul} my

hands and feet." *The Expositor's Bible*

*Commentary* says: "*ka'ari* (...lit[erally], 'like the lion') has occasioned much discussion. The [Greek Septuagint translation] reads a verb—'they pierced,' as does the NIV, from *karah*...or from... *k-w-r'* pierce'.... Some suggest a homonym of the root *k-r-h* ('bind') and read 'they have bound my hands and my feet'.... The text remains an exegetical problem" (footnote on verse 16). Yet even apart from knowingly or unknowingly prophesying Christ's form of execution, it should not be hard to imagine David thinking of his own body being figuratively nailed up in a shaming display. For penal suspension was known to that era. As an example, the Philistines literally fastened the dead bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall of Beth Shan as a public disgrace (1 Samuel 31:8-10).

"I can count all my bones" in verse 17 would seem to refer to David being able to see his bones through his skin, being gaunt from lack of nourishment because of illness or being on the run. Yet in Jesus' case it may refer to the actual exposure of His bones from the severe, flaying scourging He endures.

David's statement at the end of verse 17, "They look and stare at Me," finds its New Testament counterpart in Luke 23:35, "And the people stood looking on." Indeed, this follows right after the end of Luke 23:34, "And they divided His garments and cast lots." This was specifically prophesied in the next verse of Psalm 22, verse 18. Matthew 27:35 actually quotes from this verse and notes its fulfillment.

Of course, we should recognize that all of Christ's followers become partakers of His sufferings (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 1:29; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:3). Therefore, just as David prayed this prayer for himself, so

can all of us pray in the words of this prayer when we are faced with severe circumstances.

We should note that the psalm does not end with a focus on suffering. Rather, verses 19-21 call on God to intervene and the end of verse 21 assures us that He has (for David and for Christ), just as He will for us. The verses to follow speak of the ultimate deliverance and triumph that is found in God.

In response to his deliverance, David speaks of declaring the name of God in the congregation of the faithful—publicly to his "brethren...in the midst of the assembly" (verse 22), "in the great assembly" at the temple (verse 25). The book of Hebrews notes this as the confession of Christ, who is not ashamed to call us His followers His "brethren" (Hebrews 2:12). The assembly of brethren represents the called-out assembly of God today—His Church. And the great assembly would seem to denote what we find in Hebrews 12:22: "Mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...an innumerable company of angels...the general assembly and church of the firstborn."

Verses 27-28 of Psalm 22 picture the worship of God in the Kingdom. "All the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the Kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations."

Then, everyone will declare the wonderful works of God and teach the good news from one generation to the next.

As *Expositor's* notes on verses 30-31, "The praise of God will extend from generation to generation. The story of redemption will not only include the nations but also generations yet unborn...each generation will join in with the telling of the story of redemption and of His kingship (cf. vv.3-5) and will, in the process of transmitting it, add what God has done for them." [END]

Verse 1 – As I mentioned when we read Psalm 13, notice the way David conveys his feelings initially in the Psalm. They are David’s true feelings, yet, he knows that feelings are not always accurate. Just as in Psalm 13, here too David will align his feelings with the truth when he states in verse 24 “For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard.” The truth is that God never leaves or forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5).

As part of the Jewish educational system, boys and girls memorized scripture. Likely any Jewish listener hearing Christ’s words when he quoted this first verse would have quickly recalled the words and themes contained within Psalm 22. As they recalled the words of this Psalm and stared up at Jesus to whom all these events/words had just taken place in His life, I imagine it would have had a great impact on them.

Verse 2 – Again, David pours out his feelings, but certainly this is not the truth as God hears David’s, Christ’s, and our prayers.

Verse 6 – The NKJV states “I am a worm and no man”. The Hebrew for “worm” is from the “crimson/scarlet worm”. It is most often not translated as “worm” in the Bible but instead as a color “crimson/scarlet” (approx. 81% of the time). An alternative translation would be “I am crimson and no man”. Jesus Christ would have been covered in blood, making this seem like an accurate translation.

Verse 8 – Compare the words of Luke 23:35.



Verse 11 – Notice while David felt forsaken (verse 1), he continued to pray to God because God had not truly forsaken him and was there with him hearing his prayer.

Verse 24 – What a verse! God was with David in his terrible moment of difficulty!

Verses 27 – 31 – The greatest fulfillment of this is yet to come when the whole world will come to understand what Jesus Christ did for each of them as their personal Savior and they will come to worship Him and know absolutely that “He has done this”!

Psalm 23:

The UCG reading program states: “Psalm 23 is the "Shepherd Psalm"—the most famous, beloved, quoted and memorized psalm of all. It is short and simple but packed with great meaning. "One of the most common descriptions of kingship in the ancient world was that of shepherd" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 23)—wherein the king metaphorically serves as the shepherd of his "flock," that is, of his people. Consider, for example, the crook or shepherd staff as one of the symbols of the Egyptian pharaoh. The rod was another important symbol of ancient kingship. Yet unlike the other national rulers of his day, David came to the job of king from the background of first actually having served as a literal shepherd of sheep. (It is interesting to recall that Moses too, though having previously been trained in the pharaonic court, tended flocks for 40 years before God used him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness.)

Besides political leaders, the "shepherd" metaphor in the Bible is also used for religious leaders, with some ministers in the New

Testament being referred to as shepherds. (The word "pastor" means shepherd.) Yet we should recognize that *all* of God's people are called to be humble, dedicated servants—leading by example today and preparing to rule with Christ in His Kingdom tomorrow.

The ultimate Leader, King and therefore Shepherd is, of course, God (see also Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:11-31; Micah 5:4). God in the person of Jesus Christ is later referred to as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-30). In Psalm 23, David considers God in His role of Shepherd from the perspective of one who had taken care of his own literal flock. Yet the perspective within the psalm is not of a human shepherd but of a sheep within the flock of God, at least in the first four verses.

From his own shepherding work, David well understood the needs, wants and concerns of sheep and drew parallels with his personal needs, wants and concerns. Likewise, a leader should always be trying to understand everything from the point of view of those being led, and try to do what is best for them, not what is beneficial for himself.

With God as his shepherd, David said his life would never be characterized by lack (verse 1). He trusted that all his needs would be met. He would not be left alone to struggle for the necessities of physical and spiritual life because God would provide them—He knows what and where is best for us (verse 2). God would always refresh and revive him, leading Him down *the right paths* (verse 3)—the literal concept here meaning the right paths for sheep to travel (e.g., so that they don't fall off cliff edges and kill themselves or wander into other danger) but, metaphorically, denoting the proper paths of life (that is, people walking in God's moral laws of *righteousness*).

Under the care of a competent shepherd, sheep proceed to good pastures without fear. "The valley of the shadow of death" in verse 4 is literally "the valley of death-darkness." It gets very dark in the Judean ravines in late afternoon when the sun sinks below the hilltops. For us, the presence of the Shepherd's rod and staff through any dark valley in life, when it is hard to see where we are going and can be rather frightening, is a reminder that "God's comfort and strength are 'with' us in all kinds of darkness, in times of depression, serious illness, rejection by one's friends, horror at discovering the disloyalty of one's own heart, and so on, as well as the experience of death itself" (Knight, *Psalms*, comments on Psalm 23:1-6).

Why would the shepherd's rod and staff provide comfort? A rod or club was used to defend against wild predators—just as God defends His people against natural or spiritual forces that seek their harm. It was also used as a disciplinary tool, perhaps even thrown at or near sheep to startle them away from danger (which was ultimately for its welfare and, thus, long-term comfort). A shepherd's staff was used to guide the sheep and to rescue them, lifting them up out of dangerous situations when necessary. Even so does God lead and deliver His people.

With the rod and staff imagery, the metaphor appears to shift in focus from that of a shepherd of sheep to that of a Middle Eastern king or sheik—as ancient rulers of that region used both emblems. The next verse speaks of preparing a table in the presence of enemies (verse 5), as in the tent of a great patriarch or sheik in the midst of roving bands of pursuers. Sheep being protected from animal predators has become people being protected from human aggressors. And this security is found through the hospitality of a gracious host—accompanied by a

banquet meal, perfumed oil and an overflowing cup of drink or blessings (same verse). Hospitality was and remains a major focus for such patriarchs and sheiks—as it is even more so for God.

It should be noted, however, that some view the imagery of verse 5 as still consistent with caring for sheep. The "table" is viewed as the highland plateaus, where pasturage is good in the summer. And anointment with oil is seen as a remedy against flies, insects and parasitic infection.

David describes his manifold blessings as goodness and mercy (*hesed*, "unfailing love") following him—or, as he seems to mean, *pursuing* him (verse 6). That is, in God's tent or God's green pastures he is safe from enemies and totally secure in every way. The only thing pursuing him is goodness and mercy all the days of his life. The fact that blessings follow obedient people rather than precede them is significant. We must step out on faith and obey God even when we don't see any rewards for a long time. They will come eventually. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," we are told (James 4:8). Once God calls us, He wants to see us take initiative.

David anticipates eternal life as he speaks of "dwelling in the house of the Lord forever" (verse 6). *The Nelson's Study Bible* comments on verse 6, "God's promise for the Israelites was not just for the enjoyment of life in the land of promise...it was also for the full enjoyment of the life to come in His blessed presence (Psalm 16:9-11; Psalm 17:15; Psalm 49:15)." "What an awesome privilege it is to be a sheep in God's fold—to have the lavish invitation to dwell forever in the house of the omnipotent Shepherd-King.

To learn more about being a "good shepherd", read John 10:1-30.

A classic work on Psalm 23 well worth reading is *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* by Phillip Keller, who examines the psalm from the perspective of one who has actually raised and tended sheep.” [END]

Verse 2 – The word used for “green” does not mean a color. This word is specific to “new grass, tender shoots, a sprout”. Each night the warm moisture blows in from the Mediterranean Sea and on the cool nights collects on the rocks on the ground and rolls off onto the fertile soil. Tender new shoots of grass spring up on the hillsides. A shepherd had the responsibility of knowing the terrain and leading the sheep from a bite of food to a bite of food. The needs and the sheep were met moment by moment due to the competent shepherd.

Additionally, a sheep will not lie down unless several conditions are met. For anyone desiring a deeper dive into this topic, I gave a sermon diving into the depth of these verses that can be viewed here:

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/following-god-in-green-pastures>