

The Good Shepherd

[Part 1]

King David made a simple yet profound statement recorded in **Psalms 23** in the Christian Bible “*The Lord is my Shepherd.*”

To most Christians this is a very well known psalm and perhaps because it is so well known we have overlooked the very important lesson that our Creator God is giving to us in this psalm.

In this article I wish to share with you my own study and meditation on this psalm and what it has taught me about the relationship I should have with the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

The early years of King David’s life were fully occupied with the life of a shepherd, so he was well qualified to express in this psalm the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep.

King David knew very well the needs of his sheep, in the same way Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd knows our needs as His sheep.

What I’m going to do in this study article is to apply what we find as an instruction found in the Christian Bible to be guided into spiritual truth.

Romans 1:20 [NIV] “*For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*”

The physical creation, when we meditate on it can become a guide to spiritual principles and a deeper understanding of the very mind of the Creator God.

Let us first study the qualifications of our Spiritual Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

John 10:14 [NIV] “*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me,*”

Jesus Christ states that He is the Good Shepherd so by implication there must be other shepherds who are bad.

Colossians 1:15-17 [NIV] “*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*”

Jesus Christ is the creator of all things and the sustainer of all things.

King David as a shepherd himself lived close to God’s creation must have appreciated the greatness and the vastness of this creation. [Psalms 139:14]

Perhaps we should understand this creation even more than David, as we have the ability to see it in more detail with microscopes and telescopes.

Look up –

At night we see a star studded sky filled with at least 250,000,000 galaxies each with a possible 250,000,000 stars and accompanying planets. This earth is but a speck in one of these galaxies.

Look down –

Take a handful of soil and you are grasping millions of micro-organisms, each of them a complex structure of perfect functional design and purpose.

Look inside –

Each of us is a mobile complete chemical factory, full of micro-electrical engineering that puts to shame the best of human devised computers. Add to this a spiritual component [**Job 32:8**] that cannot be duplicated by any human.

These are the credentials of our Good Shepherd.

I feel it was with great pride that King David cries out *“the Lord is my Shepherd.”*

King David also knew that with such a statement comes an acknowledgement that we belong to the Good Shepherd.

We all belong to our Heavenly Shepherd simply because He purchased us to become an object of His love and affection. [Acts 20:28; John 3:16-17; John 15:16]

By their lifestyle it is clear that most human beings refuse to acknowledge this ownership by Jesus Christ.

God anticipated such a reaction in a free-thinking human being.

Isaiah 53:6 [NIV] *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

“Him” is Jesus Christ the human Son of Man.

John 10:11 [NIV] *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

The sacrifice of His perfect life is the purchase price of our lives, when we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour. [Acts 20:28]

Jesus Christ is well within His rights to lay claim on our lives.

Sheep do **not** take care of themselves as some might suppose. They require, more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.

It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep, the behaviour of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways.

- a) **Our mass mind** – or mob instincts to follow the actions of the crowd.
- b) **Our fears and timidity.**
- c) **Our stubbornness and stupidity.**
- d) **Our perverse habits.**

All these are parallels of profound example from which we can all learn.

Another reason for our obligation to acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Owner is that He literally continues to lay down His life for us in day-by-day care, as human shepherds do.

Hebrews 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Jesus Christ intercedes for us on a daily basis as our High Priest before the throne of God the Father.

John 16:12-15 [NIV] *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”*

Jesus Christ continues to guide us on a day-to-day basis through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 13:5-6 [NIV] *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Jesus Christ has promised to never leave us as long as we draw near to Him as our Good Shepherd.

As we study **Psalms 23** we will find it is a hymn of praise to divine diligence.

We are as human beings all sheep. [**Isaiah 53:6**]

In this world there are two shepherds:

- 1) Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd.
- 2) Satan the bad shepherd.

We all belong to one or the other.

Each flock of sheep have their distinguishing mark.

Revelation 13:11-18 [NIV] *“Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.”*

In these verses we find the mark of Satan our enemy the bad shepherd.

John 13:35 [NIV] *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

This love is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit who is working in and through our lives. This is the distinguishing mark of those who are in the flock of the Good Shepherd.

We all need to ask the question, can we now join King David in saying “*the Lord is my Shepherd*”?

- a) **Do I really belong to Jesus Christ, body, mind and spirit? [Romans 12:1]**
- b) **Do I recognise Jesus Christ’s right to own me? [Acts 20:28]**
- c) **Do I respond to Jesus Christ’s authority over me because of His ownership? [Philippians 1:1; James 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1]**
- d) **Do I find freedom and complete fulfilment being owned by Jesus Christ? [John 8:32]**
- e) **Do I sense a purpose and deep contentment because I am under the direction of Jesus Christ, by the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit? [John 15:14-16; John 7:38-39]**