

Psalm 23: Provision in Threatening Times

Read Psalm 23:4-6; 78:17-29

Psalm 23:4-6 draws a beautiful picture of God shepherding His people even through the most difficult times, in the valley of deepest shadows, with enemies all around. When the need is the greatest, God is not just a shepherd, providing for basic necessities. He is also a banquet host. We are His guests at His feast and thus are under His protection.

Psalm 78 draws a similar picture as it retells the story of the Exodus. Verse 52 says that for forty years God shepherded His people through the wilderness.

*He led forth His own people like sheep
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock. (Psalm 78:52, NASB)*

But in that harsh and ungiving place, God was more than a shepherd. With His people engulfed in need, with no other source of supply, God hosted them at a rich banquet.

*“Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?”
Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out...
He rained down manna upon them to eat
And gave them food from heaven.
Man did eat the bread of angels;
He sent them food in abundance...
He rained meat upon them...
So they ate and were well filled. (Psalm 78:19-20, 24-25, 27, 29a, NASB)*

Psalm 23:5 then goes beyond the provision of abundant food. At such banquets, the host would often anoint the head of his guests with oil, as an indication of prosperity and rejoicing. In Luke 7:46, Jesus refers to this kind of anointing as standard practice.

Here at the end of Psalm 23, the whole picture is one of God's favor, prosperity, abundance, and joy, even while deepest darkness is all around.

Life will have its valleys...its darkness...its death...its enemies...its difficulties. But God's care for His sheep does not change. Light or darkness, pleasure or pain, His *goodness* and His *unfailing love* will follow us every day of our lives, and the end will be an eternity with Him.

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