

## The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.2

Last week we began a series where we are considering two central questions.

“Who is God?” and “Who is God to me?”

And our base text or foundational text in this series is Psalm 23 (open there with me.) (I want to first read the text then we will get to work on the text.)

Again, the two central questions we are asking and answering are “who is God” and “who is God to me?”

Pop and I were talking and he reminded me of something that is an important point to make.

And that is the ordering of the questions are hugely important.

It's important to ask first, “Who is God” before we seek to understand “who He is to us?” because if we seek to try answer “Who God is to us?” without first knowing who He is, then we will be like so many people who have in mind a god of their own imagination.

If we don't understand this God before we seek to understand who He is to us, we will not only believe things that are not true about God, but we will begin to believe promises that he has NEVER made!

There are untold millions who believe things about God that simply are not true!

And as a result of that they are all blown out when their “make believe god” does not show up the way they think he should.

It is because they do not know Him.

So, this is what we started doing last week.  
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We started to unpack and answer the question of “who is God?”

Because David begins by saying, “The Lord is my shepherd”

I remind you that this Psalm (or song) is one of boasting or confidence in God.

It is one where David is extolling the greatness and goodness of God as his shepherd!

We ask, "David, who is this God that make him worthy of such a boast!?"

David, what is it about this God that you desire for him to be your shepherd? Who is this Lord?"

And as we looked at the greatness of God. Why is this God great?  
He is great simply because He is God.

And what we saw last week, by way of reminder, is that He is a **sovereign God**.

That is to say, God has complete, total, absolute and comprehensive control over everything whatsoever.

To say it any other way, there is nothing that happens apart from His say so.

Everything from the tide of the ocean, to the flight pattern of butterflies, to the birth and death of people happens under the sovereign prerogative of God!

**Ps 115:3**

“Our God is in the heavens;  
He does **all** that he pleases.”

**Ps 135:6**

**Whatever** the Lord pleases, he does,  
in heaven and on earth,  
in the seas and all deeps.

(And when the text says “heaven and earth” this is a phrase which is all inclusive!  
There is nothing that is not included in “heaven and earth.”

Whatever the Lord pleases, he does it!

And Nebuchadnezzar learned this the hard way didn't he!

After the Lord humbled him, he declared, in Dan 4:35,

“he does according to his will among the host of heaven  
and among the inhabitants of the earth;

So, God is one of comprehensive sovereignty.

His sovereignty would also include the fact no one can stop him from accomplishing  
that which he set out to do.

No one can say to God, stop, and he obey them!

Ultimately, God's sovereignty reveals that He is the Kings of kings and the Lord of lord.

And that all creatures bow before his majestic rule and reign!

Another truth about God that we didn't get to last time is that He is a **transcendent God**.

That He is far above and altogether surpasses all limits and boundaries.

That there is not such as God being hinder or bound.

He is altogether untethered from creation.

This transcendence can be divided under two headings.

- 1) His self-sufficiency.
- 2) His holiness.

His self-sufficiency is God's ability to exist completely within Himself.

That is to say God has no dependence on anyone or anything.

Another way to say it is that God has no need, or lack.

It has been said, "that need or lack is a creature word."

**Need** is a word that belongs to the creature realm.

With God words like **help** and **assistance** do not apply.

One passage that brings this out is Acts 17:24-25

24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

This is one aspect of God's transcendence.

Another way to express this transcendence is to talk about God's otherness, which could also be looked at as His holiness (or His separateness.)

And if there is a primary attribute that identifies God as God it is his holiness.

Isaiah 6:1-3

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train<sup>[a]</sup> of his robe filled the temple. **2** Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **3** And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Or

Revelation 4:8

**8** And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,

who was and is and is to come!”

Even though God is His attributes, there does seem to be an emphasis placed upon this attribute of holiness.

This attribute reveals that God is altogether uncommon and separate.

He should be viewed and seen as **unfamiliar** to us!

He is in a class all by Himself, that he is not like us.

***Ps 50:19–21***

**19** “You give your mouth free rein for evil,

and your tongue frames deceit.

**20** You sit and speak against your brother;

you slander your own mother’s son.

**21** **These things you have done, and I have been silent;**

**you thought that I was one like yourself.**

But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.

What God’s holiness reveals is that He is not like us!

He is different...

He is separate...

He is other...

He is holy!!

And this, beloved, we must always bear in mind. Our God is holy!

And because our God is a transcendent and holy God, He is also a God of redemption/salvation and terrifying judgment.

Concerning salvation Jonah says, **Jonah 2:9**  
“Salvation belongs to the Lord!”

And you can read literally hundreds of passages that refer to God and the God of “salvation.”

**Ephesians 1:3:4**, tells us of some of the salvation God has wrought through Christ.

**3** Blessed be the **God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as **he** chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us<sup>[b]</sup> for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, **according to the purpose of his will**, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

He is the God of salvation, conversely He is the God of terrifying judgements.

And we see this salvation and judgment reality plainly,  
Exodus 34:6

**6** The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, **7** keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin [that is salvation, but here comes the judgment], but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Catch this, it is the holiness of God that is behind both salvation and judgment!

So, who is this God?

- He is the God of sovereignty (all power) and holiness (pure and not like us.)
- He is the God who self-sufficiency (has no lack) and transcendence (far beyond us)
- He is the God of forgiveness, mercy and grace
- He is the God salvation and judgment

Why is this significant?

This is significant because this is the God who David proclaims is his shepherd.

Now, this leads us to the second question:

**“Who is God to me?”**

Another way to ask it is: How does God’s being/person (who is God is) apply to us?

How does God, this transcendent God, relate to us?

The text tells us, he is *our Shepherd.*

Now, we have to explore this shepherd motif (or theme.)

The covenant keeping God, YHWH has always been a shepherd to His people!

And this reality can be seen as early as *Gen 49*

**22**

“Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
a fruitful bough by a spring;  
his branches run over the wall.<sup>[e]</sup>

**23**

The archers bitterly attacked him,  
shot at him, and harassed him severely,

**24**

yet his bow remained unmoved;  
his arms<sup>[f]</sup> were made agile  
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob  
(from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

**25**

by the God of your father who will help you,

Not entirely sure if this is an explicit reference to God, but it does seem that it is. Plus, Jesus is seen as the “rock” or stone of Israel (.

So, God could very well be seen as the Shepherd here in Gen 49.

But even if Gen 49 is not about God being the Shepherd, certainly,

Isaiah 40:9-11

**9** Go on up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good news;<sup>[e]</sup>  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;<sup>[f]</sup>  
lift it up, fear not;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Behold your God!”  
**10** Behold, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
**11 He will tend his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms;  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with young.**

The most clear passage that reveals this reality about God being a shepherd is Ezekiel 34

And as you listen to the text, note the characteristics of the shepherd, this will be helpful for us to see how God shepherds us!

This text is also prophetic.

34 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep **[notice my sheep]** were scattered; 6 they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep **[notice my sheep]** were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. **[Question: If they are his sheep, what does it make him?]**



7 “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep **[notice my sheep]** have become a prey, and my sheep **[notice my sheep]** have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep **[notice my sheep]** at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep **[notice my sheep]** from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

### The Lord God Will Seek Them Out

11 “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep **[notice my sheep]** and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep **[notice my sheep]**, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. **15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.<sup>[a]</sup> I will feed them in justice.**

17 “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

20 “Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, 22 I will rescue<sup>[b]</sup> my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

This God, the creator of heaven and earth, who is the transcendent God, condescends and becomes to His people a shepherd.

And the consummate expression of this reality is in our Lord Jesus, who says, John 10:11.

Now, from these passages we gather a several characteristics about this shepherd (and we will examine this more closer as we walk through the Ps 23:

God, as a shepherd:

- Takes initiative to seeks and find his sheep (his is not a lazy or reactive shepherd)
- He guides and guards (he defends his sheep)
- He feeds them (providing them that which they need to be well nourished)
- (This is one we do not like) He disciplines his sheep (he corrects them.)
- He knows His sheep.
- Knowing the character and temperament of his sheep, he doesnt treat them as cattle, but as sheep.
  - This means that He is
    - Loving
    - Patient
    - Merciful
    - Gracious
    - Enduring
    - Forgiving
    - Long Suffering

(Rejoice and be glad that this is the character and nature of your shepherd!)

And this is who He is to you...He is your shepherd!

Now, all of this means that all of who God is, is turned toward you favorably!

Now, we have to unpack something that the Lord has pressed upon me that we need to give consideration to.

And that is the difference between this statement being true and its practical application to all of life.

Let me set up this way:

This is a way to declare “The Lord is my shepherd” without it being a daily truth by which we live.

For David, this statement was just him passing some theological test, but a daily reality that governed his life.

So, when he was up the Lord was His shepherd!

When he was down the Lord was His shepherd!

At all times the Lord was His shepherd.

Because here is the reality:

**WE WILL HAVE A SHEPHERD AT ALL TIME!**

The way God has wired us, we will have a shepherd at ALL TIMES!

The question is are we going to daily, turn to the Lord and live before Him as the Shepherd that He is!

It becomes far too easy, especially when things are tough to turn to false shepherds!

And what’s worst, those false shepherds cannot and will not satisfy you!

I think it would help to illustrate this point with a equation

One of the points to the equation is that **your content is connected to who your shepherd is!**

One of the problems with Israel was that they constantly turned to other shepherds who could not satisfy them!

And this is the same with us. When we turn from the true shepherd you will never be satisfied.

But if you keep the Lord as your shepherd, you shall be satisfied, even if your circumstance is not what you want them to be.

**Conclusion:**

**Beloved, let us be ever so mindful to know God...and know that God is to us our shepherd!**

**And that because he is our shepherd, we have no want!**