



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Sovereign Shepherd

11 December 2012

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CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY 152nd General Assembly (weekly schedule)

* first 2013 Bible study is Tuesday, 15 January *

- TUESDAYS @ 7:30 AM in 123 CAP
- TUESDAYS @ 12 NOON in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission (*Interim*) Bible Study
is
Tuesday, 11 December 2012
Psalm 23—24 – “The Sovereign Shepherd”

One of the greatest fears of humanity is death. However, death cannot harm the child of God. When his wife died to cancer, Donald Grey Barnhouse (who was one of America’s leading Bible teachers in the first half of the 20th century) had to explain the death to his three young children. Seeking to comfort his children who were mourning the loss of their mother, Barnhouse saw a large truck on the highway and an analogy was brought to mind. Barnhouse asked his children, “Would you rather be run over by that truck or its shadow?” His oldest daughter replied, “By the shadow, I guess. It cannot hurt you.” Barnhouse told his children, “Your mother has not been overridden by death, but by the shadow of death. That is nothing to fear.”

One of the comforting messages of Psalm 23 is that death is nothing for the believer to fear. The reason is that the Lord God will take His people “through the valley of the shadow of death.”

1 Corinthians 15:54, 57 – But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory . . . but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord is faithful to His people. Psalm 23 contains the imagery of a shepherd with his flock to express the relationship of a believer with God. Most of you know the experience of being a weary traveler, and how wonderful it is to enjoy the care of a loving host. Psalm 23 depicts God in that very relationship to His people, and also conveys the abundant grace of God for all believers who need His provision.

Psalm 22 was preparatory for the two subsequent psalms. Christ first suffered and died as the Messiah so He would then perform the

work of Shepherd (Ps 23) and Sovereign (Ps 24). As the last in this trilogy of psalms, it is appropriate that Psalm 24 is a hymn of praise. The emphasis of Psalm 24 is to worship God in a manner that recognizes His sovereign glory.

The true heart of worship is a humble recognition that God is sovereign, and thus to respond appropriately with praise and devotion. Authentic worship involves recognizing the glory of God and responding to His splendor; it demands loyalty to Him, as characterized by yielding all that we are to all that He is.

CHRIST THE SHEPHERD

(Ps 23:1-6) Psalm 23 begins with an analogy of a shepherd and his flock, which describes the relationship between the Lord and His people. The psalm is based upon this familiar relationship of a shepherd to his sheep, which King David knew from experience. Moreover, he was accustomed to the many responsibilities of the shepherd as a consequence of the undependable character of sheep. The relationship described is personal: “The LORD is my shepherd.” The grace and love of God allow His flock to say, “I shall not want.”

The remaining verses of this psalm emphasize the context of the very personal relationship of the believer with the Lord. The shepherd has an essential relationship and responsibility in relation to the lives of the sheep. The imagery of God as Shepherd emphasizes His role in relation to His people: (1) He supplies their needs; (2) He subdues their fears; and, (3) He satisfies their longings.

The Lord supplies the needs of His people. God provides rest, restoration, and guidance (23:2-3). God bestows true peace and satisfaction. He alone provides calm assurance (23:2). Moreover, it is the Lord—the good Shepherd—who restores the soul (cf. Isa 49:5; Ps 19:7; 60:1; Hos 14:1-3; Joel 2:12), both physically and spiritually (Ps 23:3). Whereas people may lack a sense of direction, the one who trusts in the God of Scripture will be guided “in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (23:3).

The Lord subdues the fears of His people (23:4). Even the fear of death is banished by His presence (“You are with me”) and His protection (“Your rod and Your staff”). The Lord is always present to guard and guide His flock by dispelling all fear, as He leads them in the best and most effective direction. Even when evil is surrounding the believer, the Word of God and His loving care are most effective to guard and guide His faithful servants.

The Lord satisfies the longings of His people (24:5-6). God is a shepherd to His people by serving as a gracious host who provides bountifully for His people (23:5). His goodness and lovingkindness

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This Bible Study is the Last for 2012 – Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Georgia

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are provisions to those who belong to Him and they endure for all their days (23:6). God does not merely satisfy temporal longings. He cares for those who belong to Him for all their days, and then provides for them “in the house of the LORD forever” (cf. Rom 8:38-39).

CHRIST THE SOVEREIGN

(Ps 24:1-10) Psalm 24 begins with a dramatic declaration that the earth and everything in it belongs to God. The reason is that God created the earth itself and all that it contains (24:1-2). God’s universal ownership includes all “those who dwell” upon the earth. The sovereign dominion of God includes all people (Exod 19:5; Deut 10:14; Ps 50:12; 89:11).

The next stanza (24:3-6) provides a revelation of God’s purity, and thus the conditions regulating the appearance of one before this great Creator. Only those with “clean hands and a pure heart . . . may stand in His holy place.” The phrase “clean hands” indicates the purity of one’s outward actions. “A pure heart” refers to one’s inner being (soul), which is sanctified by God’s grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. Both the outer life (one’s conduct) and the inner life (one’s character) are represented by the metaphors. One’s life must be clean and pure to approach God in fellowship and worship.

Exodus 20:3 – “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Moreover, one must not lift his/her “soul to falsehood” (24:4; cf. Exod 20:3). An idol is not merely a graven image; rather, idolatry is anyone who (or anything that) a person fears, loves, serves, or trusts more than God. Similarly, the mandate adds, “and has not sworn deceitfully,” which means not having allegiance to a false god. The emphasis is upon integrity in one’s life, both inwardly and outwardly.

The one who approaches God in holiness and humility will “receive a blessing from the LORD” (24:5). The promised blessing is God’s favor and goodness extended to His loyal worshippers. Similarly, one will receive “righteousness from the God of his salvation,” which refers to God’s vindication of His faithful servants. The expression of justification by faith indicates that the one who approaches God on the basis of faith and repentance will indeed be declared righteous. As verse 4 prescribed, those who genuinely seek God approach Him with humble faith and true repentance.

The final stanza depicts the Lord returning to His city as the “King of glory.” The final verses may have originated with the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. The Ark represented the King of glory or the manifestation of God’s presence. During the time of King David, when the Ark was brought into the sanctuary in triumphant procession, it was a visible representation of God’s glory. Similarly, the King of glory—the Lord Jesus Christ—will return in person in a coming day.

George Frederick Handel is regarded as one of the greatest composers in church history. His oratorio *Messiah* is the most popular of his works, as it has captivated and inspired many with its biblical lyrics and musical score. King George II of England was present during the first performance in London on 23 March 1743. When the famous “Hallelujah Chorus” was sung, which contains the words “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” the King stood unexpectedly. His act of homage prompted the entire audience to also stand, and everyone remained standing throughout the entire chorus because they sought to glorify the greatness of the true King who reigns over all. From that time in 1743 until the present, it is customary to stand during the “Hallelujah Chorus.”

According to the late A. W. Tozer (1897-1963) one of the most important things about you is what enters your mind when you think about God. In his *The Knowledge of the Holy*, he wrote, “The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. . . . For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. . . . Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.”

The majority of our difficulties in life are not circumstantial; rather, they are perceptual. Our greatest problems are the result of an inadequate understanding of who God. Tozer believed correctly that a faulty concept of God “is the cause of a hundred lesser evils.” However, the one who believes in God as He is will be “relieved of ten thousand temporary problems.” For this reason, Psalm 24 (and others like it) is crucial to your faith. As is our knowledge of God, so is the direction of our lives. May you understand God anew from this study of Psalms 23—24, and let me serve you in that capacity, if I can.

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact us by email or phone (912.659.4212).

We are praying for you personally throughout the day and week (1 Tim 2:1-4).

ABOUT CAPITOL COMMISSION

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for the entire Capitol community. State directors also meet personally with many government leaders to proclaim God’s grace in salvation, to encourage our leaders, pray with them, and provide biblical counsel. The mission of Capitol Commission is to reach Capitol communities for Christ—one person at a time, to disciple them, and to prepare them for a lifetime of ministry, wherever God chooses to place them.

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TUESDAY, 15 JANUARY @ 7:30AM in 123 CAP
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