

# Keys of the Psalms: Prayer, Praise and Prophecy ~ Part 4

## Psalm 23 – The Template of Salvation

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” (Luke 24:44)

I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know me . . . My sheep hear My voice, *I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.*

(John 10:14, 27-28, emphasis added)

I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown. *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore;*

(Revelation 3:11-12, emphasis added)

“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and *they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the waters of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.*”

(Revelation 8:14-17, emphasis added)

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In 1961 a show opened in London, and the next year appeared on Broadway – “Stop the World, I want to get off.” Running for 555 performances in New York, it addressed the challenges of modern life and the life story of a man saddled with responsibilities and continually finding dissatisfaction with life. Periodically, he turns to the audience and exclaims, “Stop the world!” At the end of his life he comes to the realization that his wife, the love of his life, was really enough to sustain him. He had all the good things life could offer in his own family.

How often do Christians exclaim “Stop the world”? The Lord told them to do this weekly and the world could be overcome, that they would “ride upon the high places of the earth” if they would keep His Sabbath holy and delight in it (Isa. 58:13-14). But do

Christians believe the Lord? They cry out for the world to be stopped, all the while perpetuating it. They cannot quit Babylon; cannot miss the Saturday specials, the garage sales, the concerts, the soccer matches, and all of the other great benefits the Adversary gives to his subjects, *especially on the Sabbath*. This cry to stop the world thus becomes a hollow gasp of tired exasperation, masking the unwillingness to be a sheep of His pasturage. They would rather contend with “The Great City” pretending to be a player, someone of import, living like a noble with the comforts of life, worshiping the works of their hands than to surrender to their Maker, and by obedience enter into life.

As the world spins wildly seeming more out of control each day, and humanity cries out to some higher power for help, one wonders just what will it take for Christians who should know better to hear the voice of their Shepherd and follow? Could they really prefer to spin wider and wilder themselves, than to listen and be conducted up to the waters of rest?

The twenty-third psalm confronts us with the starkest contrast to the world. It is a strange new world, written by a man after the Lord’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14). And according to tradition, it is believed David wrote this as he was fleeing from Saul and wandering from place to place. And there is not a hint of disturbance even as he walks “through the valley of the shadow of death,” a walk that is the *sine qua non* of human life – *we dwell in the shadow of death*. It stalks us all the days of our life, and yet here is David who speaks of it as the assumed condition that underlies our existence, but is not to be feared. It is a psalm written for *all* Israel, all those circumcised of heart.

Here is the Shepherd-King writing in the Spirit from the perspective of someone who knows what it is to be a shepherd but more importantly what it is to be a sheep. This perspective has been lost in modernity, and especially now in the post-modern era when those who rebel against the oppressiveness of the corporate estate use the term “sheeple” as a pejorative epithet to describe the great sleeping masses that just go along with whatever the government dictates. This has created further rebellion in all hearts under the dominion of the adversary, including all the ‘patriots’ in the church. We have no sheep; the rebels are truly ‘sheeple’ for the adversary. Few actually follow the voice of ‘the Good Shepherd,’ preferring to build their own ‘shining city on a hill.’ But David understands. He knows that the route to the Heavenly city demands we be led and put down our self-willed opposition to God’s way of Righteousness. **After all, there are NO things which we just know better than He does.**

For all of its simplicity, underscored by the fact that almost anyone in western culture can quote some or all of it, it is a masterpiece of music and poetry extraordinarily complex. And opened up using the “Key of David” – the structure of Hebraic poetry that unveils an idea in couplets that exhibit a movement from the physical to the spiritual – it grants a prophetic vision into this strange new world; it is a world that is not of this world, but can inhabit this world. So profound is this writing, that it can serve the seeker of God as a “key to the Key;” not only to understand how David used this key of knowledge of God, but to see behind the door that is opened up, and to be able to enter therein, to grasp the very flow of God’s plan and purpose that shall lead to Life in His house: *Eternal Life!* This key within a key discloses the entire flow plan from darkness

to Light, giving readers the fundamentals of life and the only way to get off the world. It brings to life the words of Christ Jesus to His disciples to walk in this world but to not be a part of it (John 17:15-17). God *will* stop the world. And there is only one way to get off: be led by the voice of the Shepherd, and follow. That is the fundamental reality of this psalm; what makes it the epitome of salvation – *the most concise and therefore elegant fractal for deliverance from the shadow of death!*

As prophecy, psalm 23 shows the restorative guidance from death to Life that shall be vouchsafed to the saints upon their victory over the world. This note is sounded loud and clear in John's Revelation [cited above] as God spreads His tabernacle over them and the Lamb who is the Shepherd, guides them to springs of living water (cf. Ps 23:2).

The first three verses establish David's relationship with YHWH, and ours. He is the shepherd, and we are His sheep. More than that, it lays out the incomparable benefits of living out of that relationship, and not seeking to remake it according to our own thoughts and presumptions, to refashion it as the adversary might do. And these verses are laid out in perfect couplet fashion, disclosing knowledge of the Lord and His Way.

- 1 YHWH is my shepherd,  
I do not want.
  
- 2 In green pastures he lays me down,  
*Up to <al> waters of rest <menuhot> he guides me.*
  
- 3 My soul He restores;  
He leads me in the tracks <magelei> of righteousness, *for the sake of His name.*

(Ps. 23:1-3, emphasis added)

In the opening words of the first verse are contained the kernel of humanity's fundamental relationship with YHWH, both Father and Son. It is as the sheep to the shepherd. David makes this compelling ontological claim and confession of absolute dependency which echoes throughout the psalm.

The absence of past and future tenses in the Hebrew language, along with the inattention to prepositional essences, coupled with the failure to perceive the position of a phrase within a couplet, all conspire together to make virtually all translations of this masterpiece sorely deficient. For this reason, I have re-translated the psalm with careful attention to the rendering of the verbs in either perfect or imperfect form to communicate more accurately whether the action is completed or ongoing and incomplete. This makes all the difference in comprehending the journey.

But before we dive into the couplets, it seems we are dealing with an incomprehensible contrast, that of human life and the Word of God. We are confronted with a riddle, an impossible possibility. It is as the great Swiss theologian and minister Karl Barth wrote:

“As a minister I wanted to speak to the *people* in the infinite contradiction of their life, but to speak the no less infinite message of the *Bible*, which was as much of a riddle as life.” (*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 100, emphasis by author)

Who can utter the words of verse one and speak truth? It would require the perfect submission of a sheep, and the total peace and security of never knowing a lack; of wanting nothing; *ever*. This *Word* could only have been fulfilled by Christ Jesus, and yet here is David, the future king, <*Melek Israel*>, speaking what is the perfect way of being – I do not want; I *never* lack. With the verb in the Qal perfect absolute form, it is at once true for all time *and* eternity – it is an *absolute*. This is for Christians today an immense contradiction. For what Christian holds this attitude *at all times* that they are cared for like a sheep, guided, and nurtured so that nothing is ever lacking, and thus they desire nothing. What did Jesus say about this: desire nothing of this world. Thus, David’s words stand, for as we are living, so we lack nothing. Failure to live out of this first insight in the psalm derails the Christian’s journey to the House of the Lord, the temple in Heavenly Jerusalem.

So the question you need to ask yourself, Christian, when you say the Lord is my Shepherd, are *you*, in fact, a sheep? Do you follow the shepherd and listen for His voice? Or are you a goat, climbing up any place you have a mind to, getting into all kinds of mischief? And what Christendom refuses to humbly acknowledge is Paul’s words.

*He will render to each one according to his works:* to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but *for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil*, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For, it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them *on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.* (Romans 2:6-16, emphasis and double emphasis added)

So what is the way embodied in David’s attitude of being a sheep led by the Shepherd-King, our Lord? Is it self-seeking, not obeying truth, but obeying unrighteousness? No it is not. Therefore, no one ought read any further and appropriate to their self the blessings spoken of in this psalm unless they first become humble and follow the Lord as a sheep follows its shepherd. If you want to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, namely eternal Life in an eternal Heavenly kingdom, then you must live by the economy of the House [Gk. *oikonomia*], namely, the Law of the House. And if you cannot live by

the Law which is to be written upon our hearts, what will qualify you to enter Heaven, and guarantee that you will not re-import lawlessness into the realm of Spirit?

The rest of the psalm flows from this first revelation. It is a profound realization of the nature of God, who cares for us as a shepherd does for his sheep, and of the nature of one who can be led to Living Waters and dwell in God's House. Jesus waxes eloquent in John 10 on what this means in detail, such as laying down His life for His flock, keeping wolves away and such. Unless you embrace this attitude that was in David, how will you be a man after the Lord's heart? You must be led, and you *must not* want; no sense of lack in your life. Then you will find both the physical and spiritual corollaries of such a life, as we see in verses 2 and 3. The Lord lays down His sheep in vital and beautiful settings, seen as green pastures, where their physical needs are provided.

But the spiritual portion of the second verse literally goes above and beyond all that as it should. The preposition <al>, pronounced 'hul', is connected with the word 'aliyah' which means 'ascent.' So there needs a sense of upward or transcendent movement, and thus the waters must be above and the faithful sheep is led up to this waters that are NOT 'still,' but rather waters of refreshment, waters that bring life; as John sees them in Revelation 8 [cited as a heading quote] they are *living* waters, full of movement. But the rest comes in because it is Heaven, and as the eternal Sabbath, it is a place of rest, just as the Hebrew word here connotes a resting place. The place of rest has moving waters, energetic, vital waters teeming with life. We should remember that John heard a voice in Heaven that was like the sound of many waters. Does that sound like *still* waters? But they are waters above.

Returning to David, he is saying that God leads him physically in ways that nurture him, but spiritually the Lord guides him to Heaven where he will drink of living waters and thirst no more. Thus, he has complete satisfaction being led by the Lord, experiencing no lack, with all physical and spiritual needs completely addressed. This is life dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. 91:1).

The third verse now addresses the inner spiritual reality of the soul, and thus it is in spiritual relation to the couplet in verse two. His soul <nephesh> which is the reality of his inner life is refreshed, and restored; indeed, the waters of rest make it new. In this couplet the Lord physically restores David's soul, but spiritually, there is a greater purpose; it is for David to walk in the paths of righteousness, what Jeremiah and the other prophets called <*Derek Kedoshah*>, 'the way of righteousness.' But something more is at work here, because that word <*magelei*>, often translated as paths, is <tracks>, often used of wagon tracks, signifying something entrenched. So, when the Lord leads us, as David experienced being led, it is into well-worn, fixed and entrenched tracks or pathways. Jeremiah captured it using the word <*olahm*> for ancient or eternal.

Thus says the Lord,  
"Stand by the ways and ask for the ancient <olahm> paths,  
Where the good way is, and walk in it;  
And you shall find rest for your souls.  
But they said, "We will not walk in it." (Jer. 6:16)



Jeremiah attests to the proclamation of David, Yes, walk in these tracks and you will find rest for your souls, you will be led to the waters of rest.

However, *it is the Lord's purpose*, for His glory, <for the sake of His Name> that He leads David in this way. It is not that David does not receive lasting benefits, he does; but it is for God's glory. Looked at in another way, when Jesus prayed (John 17:3) telling the Father that He had manifested His Name, this verse can be interpreted also to mean for Christ's sake, the sake of God's Name, which is embodied in Christ Jesus. The righteousness of God is part of the glory of God. And Christ, as the glory of God, reveals the righteousness of God.

But for mankind, something different is breaking into our world. It is alien; it does not arise from the world of men. It is God's <Righteousness> and completely other to our way of thinking and being. We must be led in it, into its <tracks> that it may uptake us into a new being. Our life in Christ is new being. And so the door that David opens before us is a door into a new world where we are being conducted as new beings. Our righteousness is not at issue in this writing. In fact, our tower of Babel which we erect to preserve our righteousness is swept away as God leads us in paths of *His* righteousness, for the sake of *His* glory. And the glory of man is left in the dust. It is no more.

The *wholly Other* quality of God's righteousness is thus also wholly beyond description. As trusting sheep we must be led. All that we do to resolve what is right in our own mind, our social, political, economic, and yes, even our religious structures are merely more strongholds to keep out God's righteousness. Here again, Barth captures this deftly, as he illustrates humanity's penchant for erecting towers that put up an alternative to God's righteousness, one which is *better* in some sense, our righteousness. For indeed, humanity does continually call into question the righteousness of God, and nowhere can that be seen more readily today than in the sweeping replacement of God's morals when it comes to sexuality – a set of issues which humanity has refined, *as if God had somehow got it wrong*. And Karl Barth captures the deeper problem like no one else.

We are fixed firmly, very firmly, in human righteousness. We are alarmed by the cry of conscience, but we have gone no further than to play sleepily with shadow pictures of the divine righteousness. It, itself, is too great and too high for us. . . . In the question, Is God righteous? Our whole tower of Babel falls to pieces. In this now burning question it becomes evident that *we are looking for a righteousness without God, that we are looking, in truth, for a **god without God and against God***. It is clear that such a god is not God. He is not even righteous. . . . We have prayed, Thy will be done! and meant by it, Thy will be done not just now! We have believed in an eternal life, but what we took for an eternal life and satisfied ourselves upon was really only temporary. And for this reason we have remained the same as we were. *And unrighteousness has remained*. And the righteousness of God has disappeared from our eyes. . . . There is a fundamentally different way to come into relation with the righteousness of God. This *other* way we enter not by speech nor reflection nor reason,

but by being still, by listening to and not silencing the conscience when we have hardly begun to hear its voice. When we let our conscience speak to the end, it tells us not only that there is something else, a righteousness above righteousness, but also – and more important – that this something else for which we long and which we need is God. ***He is right and not we! His righteousness is an eternal righteousness.*** . . . here one must give himself up in order to give himself over to God, that God's will may be done. To do his will, however, means to begin with him anew. His will is *not* a corrected continuation of our own. It approaches ours as Wholly Other. There is nothing for our will except a basic re-creation. Not a reformation but a re-creation and re-growth. For the will toward which the conscience points, is purity, goodness, truth, and brotherhood as the perfect will of God. It is a will which knows no subterfuges, reservations, nor preliminary compromises. It is a will with character, a will blessed and holy through and through. *It is the righteousness of God. (The Word of God and the Word of Man, pp. 20-24, some emphasis added)*

This “being still, by listening to and not silencing the conscience” is what permits us to “hear” the voice of the Logos, and to walk in paths of righteousness, as He leads us. And these paths are literally <tracks> such that we are caught up, so to speak, in the ‘tractor beam’ of the Lord, and *we can do no other!!!* The tracks are well worn grooves that allow no deviation from the path. Just as sure as the righteousness is His and is an eternal righteousness, so are the pathways *fixed and eternal*. They are the ‘ancient pathways’ or ‘eternal pathways of Jeremiah 6:16. Above all, as the righteousness is His, and likewise the pathways He fixes, so it is that He accomplishes this for His sake <l'mahun>, for His purpose and intent, for the glory of His Name. All is for the glory of God.

So concludes the first half of David's most famous psalm, and without doubt one of the most beautiful poems ever written. It may be simply too beautiful for most of humanity to see it as such. It may be too complete in its simplicity. Yet there it is, and the first portion exists apart from any existential conditions that we might see in this garden of earth; it is full of goodness and truth, the goodness and truth that is YHWH; He is our Shepherd.

As the first three verses of this psalm lead us into <tracks> of righteousness, *His* righteousness, so the final section [vv. 4-6] shows us that the ‘birth from above,’ occurs within a womb of death, a glorified death chamber, as Homer Kizer likes to call it, journeys through this valley of deep shadow all of our days, and that in the end our fuller re-birth is consequent on our death. Our destination in the House of Lord, <Beth YHWH>, to dwell therein forever, requires nothing less than our death. It is a vale through which we pass, and pass we must. We live always under the shadow of death. It is the ultimate limiter of all things physical – it is the one thing agreed by physicists and biblical scholars alike, all the cosmos will one day dissolve into the sea, one way or another. In this way, we ought ever acknowledge that the completion and perfection of our life is in death. And it is precisely the surrender to this awareness, this truth that all of our castles made of sand will tumble into the sea, all of our towers of Babel will be

taken down brick by brick, this will make for the emergence of that reality from above that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:26-29). For, indeed, our God *is* a consuming fire, and all of the vanity of vanities will be consumed. But on the other side of the ‘No’ to our present life, lies God’s ‘Yes,’ the Resurrection. Barth waxes eloquent on this subject.

The work of Christ, according to the synoptic, Pauline, and Johannine witness, is a type of obedience to the will of the Father that leads straight toward death. The kingdom of God comes in violently, and after a short application and trial reaches the last question, the last doubt, the last uncertainty, the last boundary, where all things cease, and where there is only one thing to say of the future of the Son of Man: heaven and earth shall pass away! . . . At that point even the question, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? is possible and necessary; at that point only *one* possibility remains, but that lies *beyond* all thinking and all things – the possibility: *Behold, I make all things new! The affirmation of God, man, and the world given in the New Testament is based exclusively upon the possibility of a new order absolutely beyond human thought; and therefore, as prerequisite to that order, there must come a crisis that denies all human thought.*

To understand the New Testament Yes as anything but the Yes contained in the No, is not to understand it at all. Life comes from *death!* Death is the source of all. (*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 80, emphasis by author)

Resurrection means *eternity*. Since it is the sovereignty of God which gives significance to time, it is for that very reason not in time. It is not one temporal thing among others. What is in time has not yet reached the boundary of death, has not yet been taken under the government of God. It must die to enter into life. (*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 89)

But the death of the old, like the kernel of wheat placed in the ground, is attended by another birth, the *birth from above*. The birth from above <ανωθεν> leads to an anointing, what the early church called the ‘chrism’ which in this case is a spiritual anointing of light from above. It is widely known that ‘Christos’ means anointed in Greek, but Christendom is largely ignorant of what it really is in the deepest spiritual sense. With the anointing power given by the Holy Spirit, one overflows. As Jesus said, “He who believes into Me, as the scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:38) We will see this come to life in the prophetic words of David whose cup of joy and gratitude to the Lord simply overflowed (Ps. 23:5).

Let’s lay out the schema of the final verses to see into their meaning using the key of David. Again, I will make some critical small changes in the translation to refine the treasure of ore in this poetic masterpiece.

- 4 Moreover, although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil; for you are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff utterly console me.



- 5 You arrange in order before me a table in the presence of my enemies;  
 You have *utterly* anointed my head with oil;  
 My cup overflows.
- 6 Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life,  
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord <Beth-YHWH> to length of days.

Unmistakable is the movement from darkness to light, from physical to spiritual, from perishable life in time to eternal life in the house of YHWH. This is God's creative plan, and Yes, it includes a passage through death. Also evident by inspection is the increased complexity of the verses which now show the possibility of doubled couplets where each portion has a physical and spiritual component, and this we see in vv. 4-5 which deepens the meaning we derive from each verse. Additionally, the structure illuminates expansion of the basic movement from physical to spiritual and exhibits how the key of David has expanded usages.

Delving into the poem now, we see something dark enter the serenity of the previous scene; there is "a disturbance in the force." For, in spite of the movement to eternal life, we are stricken by the realization of the shadow that clouds all we do, the harsh reality underlying our situation on this beautiful blue and green orb whirling through space. For all the magnificence of the vault of heaven with our milky way and billions of galaxies and billions of stars, it all lies beneath the shadow of death. And everything we do and all we create is likewise born and dwelling under that same shadow which is the limit of our life and work. We live in a singularity from which there is no escape – a reality to which even atheist astrophysicists will assent. And though it may be some 15 billion light years across, there is no escape without the breath [read 'Spirit'] of Heaven, without the life that lies beyond the veil over this abyss. But if our physical terminus is the shadow of a spiritual reality, then the underlying truth is a complete annihilation. This is the starkness of the message Karl Barth delivers, quoted above.

This gift of understanding the movement from physical to spiritual, which makes the key of David so important to seeing what God is doing, is the spiritual treasure that comes from hearing the voice of the Logos, who speaks through the text and through the hyper-textuality we may discover in our lives. Let him who hath ears, Hear!

Over against this awesome confrontation of our mortality is faith and the Spirit. Where the Spirit is, there is no fear. Here in David's faith sphere, fear vanishes in the presence of God; His ubiquitous Spirit. It is the physical Presence which dispels the impermanent, illusory nature of evil that is the physical presentation of the couplet, while the spiritual portion of the same couplet addresses the purely spiritual realities of 'rod' and 'staff.' In these similar yet distinct realities, <shibtekaw> and <mishantekaw>, we find complementary aspects of God's spiritual sovereignty and care. The first is like a shepherd's implement or rod used for counting sheep. The second much more uncommon a word, indicates a shepherd's staff, such as Moses carried and with which he struck the rock. The former is also used for scepter and in this way conveys a certain dominion or sovereignty which is comforting, especially when life exists under the

shadow of death. The sovereignty of Life in Christ Jesus will overcome the power of death which in the end is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14).

Moving more deeply into our own existential *crisis* [Greek NT word for ‘judgment’, which we are under in the shadow of death] what is it that comforts or consoles us about a scepter or rod and a shepherd’s staff? If our fears abate with the presence of the Lord, why do we need consoling? What is this consolation? How can a rod and staff utterly console us?

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for *the consolation of Israel*; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

“Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace,  
According to Thy word;

For my eyes have seen *Thy salvation* [Heb. *Yeshua-teycha*],  
Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,

A Light for Revelation to the Gentiles,

And the glory of Thy people Israel.”

(Luke 2:25-32, emphasis added)

Behold! The scepter of Judah, *the consolation of Israel!* Who can utterly console us but the Lord Himself? David knew this, He knew of the Lord who is his Lord and would have all enemies placed at His feet (Ps. 110). David beheld, in Spirit, the true consolation of Israel, who is the right arm, the guiding hand, the Good Shepherd. Jesus is the rod and the staff of the Father, and this confirms the headline quote of this series, namely, “all that is written about Me . . . in the psalms.” It is Him.

And now we journey to that enigmatic place that is multi-dimensional, where we are confronted by our enemies, in spirit and in flesh. The next verse treats of this, but posits that there is a new order coming, and it is God who is arranging this in order.

Another favorite indoor sport of atheists and Christians alike is constant comment upon the “incoming” New World Order. The words of Bush I as president still resound in the ears of a cowering public. George Herbert Walker *Bush*: September 11, 1990: “Out of these troubled times, our objective—a *new world order*—can emerge.” Oooh, how spooky! Something that can bind believers and non-believers together in an impossible possibility; they can unite around the new form of the global system of Babylon, the single kingdom of the adversary that will have a new political ‘form’, and economic ‘form’, and a new world religion. So: what we are seeing in the so-called New World Order, is merely the ***global consolidation*** of the single kingdom of the adversary.

But it is neither ‘new,’ nor in ‘order.’ It is an old form of chaos. “All the nations are as nothing before him— they are reckoned by him as nothing and chaos.” (Isaiah 40:17)

Thus, all the nations together are as chaos, and it is the great load of the adversary that he is stuck trying to cobble together a band of rebels, all of whom would rebel against him, as it is their nature, imprinted from him. The New World Order is simply Babylon, but now it has a face lift, and all the toys one could want or imagine; but the old mental slavery remains. One *must* come out from it, if one wants life.

It is as Bob Marley wrote in *Redemption Song*, “Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind.” And that happens only by God’s Grace through the power of His Holy Spirit.

So, in the midst of this great chaos, under Lucifer’s domain, comes little David, who in type is representing Christ and His Kingdom, and this Shepherd, soon-to-be Shepherd-King is saying, in the midst of the “Wars of YHWH,” and thought-form battles in Heaven, and physical battles on earth, a new table is being set. “You arrange in order before me a table in the presence of my enemies.” Wow! The fractal settings of this are endless.

From our daily circumstance in the world of death, to the days under Christ in the endurance, the Lord Himself will *arrange in order* a new table. If people are worried about food in the endurance, listen to the King! There is a table at which we eat, both physically and spiritually, that God orders and He shall feed us with the food of Heaven, the true manna, the Living Word from Heaven.

Bearing in mind the spiritual position of verse 5 in relation to verse 4, we ought to see this as a spiritual table. So as the enemy tries to stuff our minds with ‘unclean foods,’ just like Balaam tried to trip up the physical Israel with physical foods that were unclean (Numbers 22:12, 20), the adversary corrupts the inner man with ‘teachings of demons,’ the food from the table of demons (1 Cor. 10:21). We cannot eat from both tables as Paul writes to the church at Corinth. So it is in the midst of this spiritual battle of divine vs. demonic thought-forms, foods as it were, that God breaks into for those who are the sheep of His pasturage.

In the midst of this old order of the adversary, and in his presence, God arranges a table, a “True New Order.” The Kingdom of Heaven breaks in, even before the old passes away. Thus, John’s revelation portrays the kingdom handed over to Christ in the presence of the enemies of God, and the new table is set in order – just as David was consecrated as king to be while Samuel was yet King. The Ark of the Covenant appears in the temple in Heaven (Rev. 11:19) and the table from which David and his men ate the showbread (1 Samuel 21:6) reveals the shadow of a future spiritual reality. In the physical, David as the physical king of Israel ate the physical ‘bread of the Presence.’ This bread in itself was a shadow of the bread to come, the bread of Heaven, the Presence of God in His Messiah. David understood this higher spiritual reality, at least in part, and for that reason, made it the physical part of the spiritual couplet.

Spiritually, those in company with David will eat the spiritual Bread of the Presence in the wilderness, as Saul – a type of the Adversary – hunts down the disciples of Christ. They will eat corn in the country with the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-4) while the

Pharisees complain that they can't buy corn because they lack the mark of the Beast. The remnant that has fled Babylon to wait on the Lord in the Wilderness and to do battle from there in the spiritual realm, will be fed at the Lord's table. As Lady Marion Loxley said in the 2010 Ridley Scott classic version of *Robin Hood* "There's room for all at Nature's table." We can adapt Cate Blanchett's momentous pronouncement by saying, "There's room for all His Sheep at the Lord's Table."

Now what about the spiritual portion of the spiritual couplet? He utterly anoints my head with oil. As I mentioned above, the chrism of the early church depicted this spiritual outpouring of the light of God, or spiritual unction upon the disciple, the one who follows like a sheep. Indeed, the disciples lived as sheep, following the Good Shepherd wherever He went, and in that way foreshadowed the 144,000 who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev. 14:4).

In David's case, he was physically anointed by Samuel, and so his testimony hearkens back to the physical experience which was a shadow of the spiritual reality of the anointing by God's Spirit. But with verse 5 in the spiritual position of a doubled couplet with verse 4, the reader is to take this as the spiritual portion of the spiritual reality, and so the spiritual presence of the spiritual food of God is the light upon the head; it is a reality far beyond what Samuel depicted with his horn of oil.

The spiritual reality of anointing is something essential to higher forms of service and life, whether it is rulership, priesthood, or even marriage. The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 uses oil in its teaching on the importance of light in the vessel. And David used the motif of the Aaronic priesthood to present the eternal image of a priesthood in the Light of Heaven, dwelling together in unity (Ps. 133).

And the spiritual response is that the inner chalice overflows with joy in the knowledge and wisdom of God; and in the intimate contact with the Lord. Yet the mystery of the oil runs deeper as Canticles illumines within the imagery of love.

May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!  
For, your love is better than wine.  
Your oils have a pleasing fragrance,  
*Your name is purified oil* <oil that is poured out>.  
(Song 1:2-3, emphasis added)

Solomon discerned this deepest truth, that the kiss of the Spirit is linked with the oil, which physically has a sweet aroma, but spiritually is the reality of the Name, which is the oil poured out.

And John further illuminates it within the apostolic experience and understanding.

*But you have an anointing from the Holy One*, and you know that. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him

abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but *as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.* (1 John 2:20,24,27, emphasis added)

Have we seen such a thing? Acts chapter two claims to witness such an outpouring of oil or light, which is the Glory of the Lord, which is the Name of the Lord, like tongues of fire upon the head, and it caused the disciples to be filled with spirit, and to have their cups overflow.

Such is the anointing from the Lord which teaches “about all things,” and this kind of anointing has again been witnessed in these latter days, being again re-written in the lives of disciples of the last days, upon whose head the Lord’s signature, the glory of His Name may be seen. It is a priestly function for a royal priesthood and holy nation. This we have seen with our own eyes, recorded as a witness to Spirit and to scripture.

And now the incomparable promise is given in the finality of verse 6 as a surety. It follows inexorably, for it is a covenant, indeed it is the New Covenant, and for those sheep who follow the Lord as their Shepherd, who eat at the table he sets in order before them, who eat the bread that comes down out of Heaven, and comes from the Father, they will have blessing and Life. In the physical, goodness and mercy shall follow them, and in the spiritual, they shall dwell in the House of the Lord <dwell in the House of the Lord <YHWH> forever.

To recap – for the pedagogical purposes – the spiritual flow of this most succinct of gospels in the entire Bible, this paragon of divine truth that captures the essence of God’s plan, we behold a fractal expression of the movement from Genesis to Revelation, which is a movement from the darkness hovering over the face of the deep (Gen. 1:2), to the limitless light – “And there shall no longer be night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God shall illumine them;” (Rev. 22:5). This movement from darkness to light represents the underlying reality of the movement from physical to spiritual, from death to life.

And this is precisely how the key of David functions in Hebraic style, and what it reveals in psalm 23. David walks through this world of darkness, “the valley of the shadow of death,” to having his head “utterly anointed with oil,” which is the physical symbolic substance for spiritual light. At the same time this passage through the physical domain with its overarching covering of death, is a requirement for entry into eternal life, viz. to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” How exquisite.

This is our offer and our promise from God, the eternal life reserved for those who are truly His sheep, who follow in obedience (John 10:27-28). And the pathway leads through death. It is only by the death of all of our cherished plans, our attempts to build “a shining city on a hill,” our efforts to acclaim the work of our hands, all of our philosophies and isms, everything which supplants (Jacob = ‘the supplanter’) God’s righteousness by our own ‘pseudo-righteousness.’ It all must pass; it will die in the ground like the seed that must die so the new life can come forth as the sprout <tsemach>. In the words of Christ Jesus



Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. (John 12:24-25)

It is clear from the mouth of the Logos Himself, the way to life must pass through death; there is no other way. Isn't this just what Karl Barth elucidated, that out of death comes Life!

So, we return to our point of departure: Yes, the world will stop (Rev. 20:11), no place will be found for it. But it will not stop at our command, but on God's command, and on His timing. Shakespeare's Hotspur delivers this imminent end in Henry IV pt. 1

But thought's the slave of life, and life's time's  
fool,  
And *time that takes survey of all the world*  
*Must have a stop.*

And if time should stop, then change would cease, and all that is temporal that could not pass the veil of Heaven, would come to its finish. Time, as Einstein wrote it, is a function of gravity would have a stop; its demise would spell the end of mass, and so would the world surcease. More importantly as Aldous Huxley commented on Hotspur's theology, "By merely elapsing, time makes nonsense of all that life consciously schemes for in the temporal order." What happens in the vain imagining of Man will perish in the valley of deep shadow and be heard no more.

Life as time's fool will be writ large in a timeless octave, and no more a slavish fool. And here Huxley's comment on Hotspur expands into a stinging judgment of Man's vanity.

But Hotspur's summary has a final clause: time *must* have a stop. And not only must, as a prophecy or an ethical imperative, but also *does* have a stop, in the present indicative tense and as a matter of brute empirical experience, here and now, for all who so desire. *It is only by taking the fact of eternity into account that we can deliver thought from its slavery to life. And it is only by deliberately paying our attention and our primary allegiance to eternity that we can prevent time from turning our lives into a pointless or diabolic foolery.* ("A Sentence from Shakespeare, in *Time must have a stop*, Aldous Huxley, emphasis added)

So much for the world, but what of getting *off* the world before it disappears from before the face of God? That is for disciples, the sheep who follow their Lord and enter into the sheep gate – one of the gates that must be built in the rebuilding of the Holy City (Neh. 3:1) – which is an entry to Jerusalem. There is no other way but to enter the city by its gates (Rev. 22:14). To dwell in the house of the Lord forever, is to be like Philadelphia (Rev. 3:12), a pillar in the temple of God, "and he will not go out from it anymore."

Then shall the journey of faith be complete for disciples. Keeping the commandments of God, they receive the authority to the tree of life and to enter the city – but for the lawless, for those who are fornicators, murderers, idolaters, liars, sorcerers, they remain outside the city.

And the faithful must realize that all they do in the physical world is a shadow of reality, their life, and all they think and do are shadows of life, and the one comforting and consoling reality is the Savior, the scepter in the Lord's hand, the right arm of YHWH. This is the one who sets in order our table and feeds us the bread of Heaven, pours His light upon our head, anointing us for the ministry as oil flowing down Aaron's beard (Ps. 133:2).

These are the surety for blessing, both physical and spiritual. Goodness and loving kindness to follow us in this world of darkness for all of our days here, is coupled to the eternal spiritual blessing in the Spirit House of the Lord "to length of days." This is the Lord's imperative, and His prerogative, to give Life to whom He will.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life*, and I will raise him up on the last day. For, my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. *This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*" (John 6:53-58, emphasis added)

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish*, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (John 10:27-30, emphasis added)

So shall the fulfillment of this 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm of David be the fulfillment of the Lord's plan of salvation, that His little flock will enter the gates of eternity with thanksgiving. As we walk through this valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil, but losing our life in the Lord, giving up our own shadow illusions, then out of that necessity, indeed its necessary place in the divine scheme of things, and into its presence comes the Bread of Heaven that brings the True Life that alone can come from the death of the old. This is the abundant life He came down from Heaven to give, and to lead His flock through the sheep gate into the Heavenly Jerusalem.

This is, indeed, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, sung through the mouth of David, His servant, the Shepherd-King.