

The Messianic Shepherd in 3D

Psalm 22, 23 & 24

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HOLLYWOOD producers tell us that 3D films are making a comeback!

After the initial surge of popularity in the 60's, the popularity of 3D movies waned. Was it because of those fold up, ill-fitting, box-shaped, cardboard glasses that tended to fall off when you tilted your head, or looked down to grab a few more Jaffas or a handful of Popcorn? Who knows? Yet for decades following, film buffs seemed to prefer the classical two dimensional, 'length' and 'height' movie format. Now, things have changed: the cry is increasingly for the 3D once again, along with those "cool", space-age, special glasses giving depth to digitized images!

... instead of donning a pair of groovy 3D glasses, get ready to read these three inter related psalms with the spiritual eyes afforded believers through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

But what have 3D movies got to do with the Psalms? In answer, consider this: There's a trilogy of Psalms in Book One of the Psalter that, ostensibly, present the Messiah in 3D. Take your Bible and turn to Psalms 22, 23 and 24 and see for yourself. But first, a quick word of warning: instead of donning a pair of groovy 3D glasses, get ready to read these three inter related psalms with the spiritual eyes afforded believers through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The black and white print of the two dimensional text will be transformed into the variegated colour images that have



the awesome depth of 3D! How? Simply through the Holy Spirit's illuminating power that enables believers' eyes to see the promised Messiah in the third dimension!

The aforementioned psalms inherently present Israel's Messiah as being foreshadowed in the personal experiences of David and his people, Israel. Such testimonies and experiences point inexorably to their several fulfilments in the Person and work of "great David's Greater Son", Jesus! Each one emphasized a different aspect of His Person and work, as follows:

Psalm 22 The Good Shepherd

This psalm pictured the "Good Shepherd" as the One who died for His sheep and who rose again on their behalf. The passage clearly divided into two separate, but inter-related, sections: vs 1-21 and vs 22-31.

Look carefully at the first section, and you will see the foreshadowing of Messiah's

crucifixion at the end of His incarnate days on earth. These verses spoke of His *suffering* (vs 1-2, 6-8, 14-16), His *sacrifice* (vs 9-15) and His ultimate *separation* from God (vs 1; Cf. Mt 27:46). In passing, we note that in Matthew 27:46, Jesus was quoting this Psalm, not questioning God as He was being crucified! (Cf. Jn 8:29; Heb 10:7, 9; Lk 22:42). Moreover, recall that Jesus Himself had claimed to be the "Good Shepherd" in John 10:18, "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep".

Observe also that He was "*in the midst*" of His enemies as He was crucified on Golgotha (Cf. Jn 19:18). His being "in the midst" is consistently recorded in the New Testament. This is significant, too, for in spiritual terms, it denoted Messiah's rightful "place of authority" (Cf. Mt 2:11 and Luke 2:16; 2:44, 46 and 30; Jn 19:18; 20:19; Heb 2:9-13, esp. verse 12b; Rev 4:6 and 5:6; 21-22).

That Jesus is the fulfilment of the Messiah in Psalm 22 can be seen when one collates the relevant passages from the New Testament. This clarifies the issue once for all, for “the ‘new’ is in the ‘old’ concealed; the ‘old’ is by the ‘new’ revealed”:

But there is something more to see in this psalm. The second section (vs 22-31) spoke unmistakably of Messiah’s **resurrection**. Jesus’ “pain and prayer” in verses 1-21 gave way to “praise and promise”. Having been “*in the midst*” of his enemies on the Cross, He was now seen to be “*in the midst*” of the Church in glory and power just as the writer to the Hebrews said (Heb 2:9-13):

v9. *But we see Jesus , who was made a little lower than the angels (Hebrew: elohim), for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*

v10. *For is was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

v11. *For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying:*

v12. *“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”*

v13. *And again, “I will put My trust in Him.”* And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”

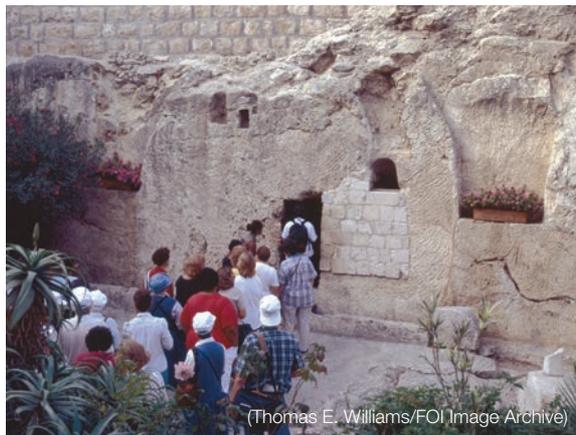
Do you see it? This second section of Psalm 22 was filled with praise and three aspects were specifically mentioned. First, in verse 22 (quoted in Heb 2:12), Jesus was singing praise to God *in the midst of the Church*, “His brethren” – the assembly of His people! Yes, verse 24 again reflected on His sorrowful crucifixion, yet the “Cross” (Cf. Heb 5:7; 12:2-3) led to the “Crown” in His exaltation to the Father’s right hand (Heb 1:1-4). Hence, the “coronation Gift of the Holy Spirit” was bestowed to the Church (Cf. Jn 14:17; Acts 2; 1 Cor 12:13; Heb 12:25-28f; 1 Pet 1:1-3ff). No wonder there was heavenly praise for God’s wonderful salvation through the “Good Shepherd” Messiah!

Second, the Messiah’s salvific praise was also given *in relation to Israel*, as verses 23-26 indicated. He sovereignly declared that “you who fear the LORD, (are to) praise Him!”. All the “descendants of Jacob (are to) glorify Him” and “all the offspring of Israel (are to) fear Him!”.

Psalm 22	Description of Occasion	New Testament References
Verse 1	<i>Jesus quoted these words</i>	Mt 27:46; Mark 15:34
Verse 2	<i>Light & Darkness - Alternate</i>	Mt 27:45; Mark 15:33-41
Verses 6-8	<i>People reproached Jesus</i>	Mt 27:39-44; Mark 15:29
Verses 11-12	<i>No one offered to help Jesus</i>	Mt 26:56; Mark 14:50
Verse 16	<i>Jesus’ hands & feet pierced</i>	Mt 27:35; Luke 23:33
Verse 17	<i>People stared at Jesus</i>	Luke 23:35; Mt 27:36, 39ff
Verse 18	<i>Gambling for His garments</i>	John 19:23-24

His praise will become their praise, too, as Israel comes to see and experience Messiah’s salvation, *in that day!*

Third, the Messiah’s praise also incorporated “the nations” – *the Gentiles*, as the final verses of Psalm 22 stated. Don’t miss the crescendo of praise here. Indeed, “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD and all the families of the world shall worship before You, **(for) the kingdom is the LORD’s,**



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and He rules over the nations!” (vs 27-28, *emphases added*). Just as Israel will ultimately turn to the LORD and enjoy Messiah’s salvation both spiritually (blessings) and materially (the Land), so also will those of the gentile nations who repent and turn in faith to the only “Good Shepherd” Saviour! (Cf. Ezek. 34:11-31). David’s convictions about this are sure as he concluded Psalm 22:

v29. *All ... shall eat and worship...*

All that go down to the dust shall bow before Him ...

v30. *A posterity shall serve Him...*

v31. *They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born.* Then the signature, telling phrase adds: **THAT HE HAS DONE THIS!** (*emphases added*).

This final phrase evokes further comment for it parallels three similar verses in the New Testament. First, recall Jesus’ sixth cry from the Cross: “*(It is) finished!*” in John 19:30. The Greek word **tetelestai** means “completed”, or “accomplished”, or “(purposefully) fulfilled”, “paid in full” (relative to an Account, Invoice). The connotation is clear: the means of the sinful soul’s redemption has been “completely and irrevocably paid-in-full” in Messiah’s once-for-all death on the Cross as God’s atoning sacrifice!

All who come to Him in faith – be they Jew or Gentile – will be saved for all eternity!

Second, John stated a similar, parallel principle in Revelation 16:17. The eschatological context is a vital one to note. At the end of a yet future, worldwide, seven year tribulation period, God will culminate that period with “the seventh angel pouring out his bowl of wrath into the air”, with a “loud voice coming from the temple of heaven, from the throne”, crying: “*(It is) done!*” With this cataclysmic pouring out of God’s wrathful judgment on earth, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7 – the Tribulation period, Rev 6-18)

will have ended. Israel’s “passing under the rod” (Cf. Ezek 20:37) and her “refinement” (Mal 3:2-3), together with divine judgement over the whole earth, will give way to Messiah Jesus coming back to planet earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of Lords from David’s throne in Jerusalem (Cf. Rev 19:11-16; Lk 1:31-33; Is 2:1-4). Israel will have been saved “in a day” (Is 66:8).

Third, the apostle Paul testified at the end of his ministry to the Gentiles, “I have fought the good fight, I have **finished** the race, I have kept the faith ...” (2 Tim 4:7, *emphasis added*). Notice the link here. Jesus accomplished God’s salvation plan in His substitutionary death on the Cross, thereby making salvation possible to all Jews and Gentiles who believe. As the “Good Shepherd” Messiah, His atoning death and subsequent

victorious resurrection qualified Him to “judge the world” of unbelievers (Cf. Rev 21:8) and rule sovereignly over the world for a thousand years (Rev 20:2-7). Paul had dramatically come to faith in Him on the Damascus road (read Acts 9; 22; 26 for the three accounts of his testimony), and subsequently his whole life and ministry had been motivated to serve His LORD for His glory alone! Now in prison, facing death, the Apostle to the gentiles encapsulated his personal testimony in these telling words. His work is **“finished”**, yet the legacy of his life and testimony will go on and be rewarded “... *at that day*” (2 Tim 4:8b – *emphases added*).

What a challenge for everyone today: Do you know Jesus, the Messiah, the “Good Shepherd” who died and rose again for you, and are you faithfully serving Him? The 3D messianic trilogy continues:

Psalm 23 The Great Shepherd

This, the best known of all Psalms, pictured an Oriental shepherd and his flock. The picture is still familiar in the Middle East today. One never sees a flock without a shepherd. He knows each one by name (cf. Jn 10:3); He goes before them (cf. Jn 10:4) guiding, protecting and feeding them. At day’s end, He brings them home to the fold, anoints any cuts or bruises with oil (and stands as the “door” for their security (Cf. Jn 10:7ff; Ps 23:3-6). Indeed, as Jesus claimed, “(He) is the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11), yet there is something even more wonderful depicted in Psalm 23. By His resurrection, He rose again and *lives for us as our “Great Shepherd”*, just as Hebrews 13:20-21 revealed:

v 20. Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

v 21. Make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen

The “Great Shepherd” in resurrection power and might, provides for His sheep for He is also their High Priest who lives forever (Heb 7:1-16ff). This linked indissolubly with the theme of Psalm 23 found in verse 1b, *“I shall not want”* – literally, “nothing shall I lack” in the Hebrew text. In other words, through Him the believer has *all* He ever *needs*; He is all-sufficient for He gives rest and refreshment (vs 2); restoration and righteousness (vs 3); refuge in trouble (vs 4); revitalizing, renewed provisions

in the desert place (vs 5) and eternal respite and rest with Him when life’s day is done (vs 6). Put simply, *Jesus, the “Great Shepherd”, is all anyone will ever need!*

How does one know this? Think of this claim in terms of some of God’s names in Scripture: “The LORD my Shepherd” (*Jehovah-Roi* – vs. 1) is “the LORD who is there” (*Jehovah-Shammah* – cf. Ezek 48:35), who will always “provide” (*Jehovah-Jireh* – Gen 22:13-14) and give His “righteousness” (*Jehovah-Tsidkenu* – Jer 23:6) and “peace” (*Jehovah-Shalom* – Judges 6:24; cf. Is 26:3). What a gracious Saviour and LORD this “Great shepherd” is to all who have received Him!

Someone, somewhere expressed it this way:

*The LORD is my Shepherd. –
That’s **relationship!**
I shall not want. – That’s **supply!**
He makes me to lie down in green pastures. –
That’s **rest!**
He leads me beside the still waters. –
That’s **refreshment!**
He restores my soul – That’s **healing!**
He leads me in the paths of righteousness –
That’s **guidance!**
For His name’s sake. – That’s **purpose!**
Yes, though I walk through the valley of death,
– That’s **testing!**
I will fear no evil – That’s **protection!**
For You are with me – That’s **faithfulness!**
Your rod and staff they comfort me. –
That’s **discipline!**
You prepare a table before me in the presence
of my enemies. – That’s **hope!**
You anoint my head with oil –
That’s **consecration!**
My cup runs over – That’s **abundance!**
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all
the days of my life, – That’s **blessing!**
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD –
That’s **security!**
Forever. – That’s **eternity!***

Jewish or Gentile reader, is the “Good Shepherd” LORD all that to you, right now?

Psalm 24 The Chief Shepherd

To appreciate the background context of the third psalm in this 3D trilogy, one must read 1 Chronicles 13-15 (Cf. 2 Sam 6), where the account is given of David’s returning the ark



to Jerusalem. The psalm presents the return of the King to Zion’s famous hills encompassing the city of David.

From traditional Jewish sources we learn that there would have been a series of choir groups and soloists each responding to the other’s sung questions. Imagine the scene: one choir would have sung verses 1-2, another chorister would then sing or speak the question: “who may ascend onto the hill of the LORD, or who may stand in His holy place?” (vs 3). The response would come from another singer (vs 4) and perhaps the whole chorus would combine with the words of verses 5-6. As the whole group entered the gates of Jerusalem (or even the entrance to the Temple area), the combined chorus would have sung the exalting words about “(lifting) up” the “everlasting doors” that “the King of glory may come in” (vs 7). Another soloist would then sing: “who is this King of glory?” (vs 8, 9) to which the excited choristers would combine in rapturous song: “The LORD of hosts (Hebrew: sabaoth), He is the King of glory!” The atmosphere would have been electric in anticipation as the joyous celebration unfolded!

Marvellously, that historic occasion foreshadowed the arrival of “Another King”, Jesus the “Chief Shepherd”, when He returns at His Second Advent to sit on David’s throne in God’s city, Jerusalem. This is explained in 1 Peter 5:4 where Peter, in addressing the pastoral undershepherds, overseers and elders, said that they “(would) receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” for faithful, non-dictatorial ministries (cf. vs 3). Messiah’s return to Jerusalem was recorded in Revelation 19:11-16ff and significant aspects of that great event are found in embryonic, prophetic form in Psalm 24.



(Thomas E. Williams/FOI Image Archive)

These are:

- The questions in verse 3 are vital: “who may ascend ... who may stand ...?” They relate to the only One who may rule over the earth from David’s throne. Revelation 5:1-2 tells us that there was only One worthy to “open the scroll and break the seals” and that Person is Jesus, the Messiah, the Perfect Man and the Perfect King! (Contrast three of Israel’s Kings: (1) David – a murderer and adulterer, though forgiven (2 Sam 11f; Ps 51); (2) Solomon had many wives and through that, became an idolater (1 Kings 11:1-3); (3) Hezekiah didn’t qualify either because of pride in latter years (2 Kings 18-20). The “Chief Shepherd” King came the first time and finally wore a crown of thorns at Calvary. In God’s economy, His redeeming death became the foundation for His coming again to rule the world by establishing His Kingdom.
- Today, the world is still in bondage under the sway of Satan, the god of this world. It awaits its final day of redemption, when the “Chief Shepherd” comes again (2 Cor 4:4; Rom 8:18-31; Rev 19, 20-22).
- At His Second Coming, our Lord Jesus Christ will claim His inheritance (Ps 2:5-12; 1 Cor 15:22-24; Heb 1:5-9ff; 12:25-28f and cf. Mt 6:10). His millennial reign will manifest His sovereignty and glory that will “cover the earth as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14; Is 6: 8; 11:1-9).
- He will have returned and defeated all anti-God forces in the campaigns of

Armageddon (cf. Ps 24:8; Rev 16:16; 19:19-21) and proceeded to sit on David’s throne (Cf. Luke 1:30-33) to effect judgement and glory over the earth.

- Prior to this, the first phase of His return will be for His church to take Church Age saints to be with Him (1 Thess 4:13-18) to escape His judgemental “wrath” (1 Thess 5:9) on the ungodly on earth. This will usher in the 7 year “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7), as the coming “Mr Suave” (Antichrist) takes control.
- The Messiah’s Return at the end of this Tribulation will see the surviving remnant of Israel restored (Zech 13:9-10; Rom:

11:25-26a); the righteous Kingdom established on earth for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-5ff; cf. Is 2:1-4) and the renewal of the heavens and the earth (Rev 21-22) which all of His redeemed will share!

Will you be ready when the “The Chief Shepherd”, the Lord Jesus Christ comes? Are you watching and waiting for Him? If not, repent and open up the gates of your heart today and let the King of glory in!

Conclusion

Thank you, David, for sharing your personal experiences and pointing us to the One who saved you by His grace! In your trilogy of Psalms, you have given us an eternal record of Jesus in 3D: “*The Good Shepherd; The Great Shepherd and The Chief Shepherd*”. No Hollywood producer could ever come close to matching that awesome presentation. The LORD has given through your experiences, the prophetic realities of which continue to be played out in history, today! In these “last days”:

- The stage has been set: (Israel is back in “the Land”)!
- The “players” are in place: (Israel and the nations are locked in battle over “the Land”; Corruption, violence and godlessness abounds)!
- The Church must be ready! But sadly, many believers are “asleep” as to Israel’s “last days” significance and the gathering of the nations against her! Awake! The curtain is soon to rise... **THE KING IS COMING!**

Jewish or Gentile friend, what should you do in light of what God has revealed in this 3D trilogy? First, ensure you know Him as your “Good Shepherd” by receiving Him as Messiah and Saviour into your heart. Second, thank Him for being your “Great Shepherd” in resurrection power, guiding you and providing for you in your everyday Christian life; He’s all you will ever need! Finally, realize that when the “Chief Shepherd” returns for you, you will be ready to meet Him “in the air” and then ultimately enjoy being His “companion” in His eternal Kingdom inheritance on earth and in the Eternal State, forever! (Cf. Heb 1:9; 2:10; 3:1, 14; 10:27-28; 12:25-28f; Rev 21-22). He awaits your decision!



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