

Message Five

**Cooperating with the Pneumatic Christ in
His Organic Shepherding in Five Stages**

Scripture Reading: Psa. 23:1-6; John 21:15-17; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:25; 3:1-4

- I. **In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people; this is the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry—John 21:15-17; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:1-4:1**
 - A. Our cooperation with Christ in His heavenly ministry of shepherding will build up His Body, prepare His bride, for His second coming to be the King in the next age.
 - B. To shepherd people is to cherish and nourish them, as illustrated by the entire New Testament: Christ as the Son of Man came to redeem us from sin (1 Tim. 1:15)—cherishing; Christ as the Son of God came to impart the divine life into us abundantly (John 10:10b)—nourishing (see lesson 14).
- II. **The all-inclusive Christ is our inward, pneumatic Shepherd, taking care of our inner being; under His all-inclusive, tender care “I will lack nothing”—Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:25; Psa. 23:1.**
- III. **According to Psalm 23, Christ shepherds us in the following five stages—*Hymns*, #1170:**
 - A. The initial stage is the enjoyment of Christ as the green pastures and of the Spirit as the waters of rest—v. 2.
 - B. The second stage is the revival and transformation on the paths of righteousness—v. 3.
 - C. The third stage is the experience of the resurrected pneumatic Christ while walking through the valley of the shadow of death—v. 4.
 - D. The fourth stage is the deeper and higher enjoyment of the resurrected Christ in fighting against the adversaries—v.5.
 - E. The fifth stage is the lifelong enjoyment of the divine goodness and lovingkindness in the house of Jehovah—v. 6.
- IV. **In His organic shepherding, the pneumatic Christ “makes me lie down in green pastures”—v. 2a:**
 - A. Green signifies the riches of life; the green pastures are Christ Himself as our nourishment (John 10:9); Christ can be our green pasture, our feeding place, through His incarnation, death, and resurrection—cf. John 6:33, 51, 53, 56-57, 63.
 - B. The base of the Greek word for *economy* in 1 Timothy 1:4 is of the same origin as that for *pasture* in John 10:9, implying a distribution of pasture to the flock; this reveals that Psalm 23 is a psalm on God's economy, His household administration, to dispense Himself as the green pastures into His people and build them up to be the house of Jehovah—v. 6.
- V. **In His organic shepherding, the pneumatic Christ “leads me beside waters of rest”—v. 2b:**
 - A. The waters of rest signify the Spirit, the consummated Spirit after Christ's resurrection—John 7:37-39.
 - B. Both the green pastures and the restful waters are the resurrected, pneumatic Christ as the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 14:16-18.
- VI. **In His organic shepherding, the pneumatic Christ “restores my soul”—Psa. 23:3a:**

- A. For our soul to be restored means that we are revived; restoring also includes renewing and transforming—Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- B. Our Lord, as the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our real person—1 Pet. 2:25.

VII. In His organic shepherding, the pneumatic Christ “guides me on the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake”—Psa. 23:3b; Rom. 8:4:

- A. Christ guides us (to walk according to the spirit) on the paths of righteousness (to fulfill the requirement of righteousness—Rom. 8:4).
- B. The paths of righteousness indicate our walk—v. 4; Gal. 5:16, 25.
- C. For His name's sake means for the sake of His person, His living person as the pneumatic Christ—Matt. 28:19; 18:20; Col. 3:17.
- D. Christ restores our soul so that we may take His way and walk on the paths of righteousness.
- E. Righteousness is being right with persons, things, and matters before God according to His righteous and strict requirements—Matt. 5:20.
- F. Righteousness is a matter of God's kingdom; thus, righteousness issues from God for His administration and is related to His government and rule—6:33; Psa. 89:14a; 97:6; Isa. 32:1.
- G. Righteousness is the living out and genuine expression of Christ, who as the life-giving Spirit lives in us—Rev. 19:8; 2 Cor. 3:9.

VIII. Under the organic shepherding of the pneumatic Christ, “even though I walk / Through the valley of the shadow of death, / I do not fear evil, / For You are with me; / Your rod and Your staff, / They comfort me”—Psa. 23:4:

- A. For the pneumatic Christ to be with us means that we enjoy His invisible presence, which is special, personal, and intimate—Matt. 28:20b; 2 Tim. 4:22a.
- B. The presence of the pneumatic Christ is a comfort, a rescue, and a sustaining power to us when we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death.
- C. When we are in the valley, we should simply remain there and rest in the Lord; our resting in the Lord will shorten the valley, reduce the shadow, and remove the death.
- D. The Lord's rod, a symbol of His authority, is for our protection.
- E. The Lord's staff is for guidance, instruction, training, direction, and sustenance.
- F. Under the organic shepherding of the pneumatic Christ in the valley of the shadow of death, we experience God as the God of resurrection and may attain to the out-resurrection—John 11:25; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:10-11.

IX. Under the organic shepherding of the pneumatic Christ, He spreads “a table before me / In the presence of my adversaries; / You anoint my head with oil; / My cup runs over”—Psa. 23:5:

- A. The Lord spreads a table before us in the presence of our adversaries—v. 5a; cf. 2 Sam. 4:4; 9:7, 13; Gen. 14:18-20; Neh. 4:17.
- B. The Lord anoints our head with oil (as at a festal banquet), and our cup (the cup of blessing) runs over—Psa. 23:5b; Heb. 1:9; 1 Cor. 10:16a, 21.
- C. In Psalm 23:5 we have the Triune God—the Son as the table, the feast (1 Cor. 11:23-26), the Spirit as the anointing oil (Luke 4:18), and the Father as the source of the blessing (Eph. 1:3).

X. Under the organic shepherding of the pneumatic Christ, “surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me / All the days of my life, / And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah / For the length of my days”—v. 6:

- A. *Goodness* refers to the grace of Christ, *lovingkindness* refers to the love of the Father, and *follow* refers to the fellowship of the Spirit; thus, the grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit are with us—2 Cor. 13:14.
- B. The enjoyment of the processed and consummated Triune God ushers us into the enjoyment of God in the house of God (Christ, the church, and the New Jerusalem—John 1:14; 2:21; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Eph. 2:22; Rev. 21:2-3, 22) for the length of our days (in the present age, in the coming age, and in eternity); we need to seek to dwell in the house of God all the days of our life—Psa. 27:4-8.

XII. Psalm 23 is the link between Psalms 22 and 24; it is by Christ's wonderful shepherding and by our entering into this shepherding (the intrinsic significance of the vital groups) that the Body of Christ will be built up with His redeemed and regenerated ones and that the bride will be prepared for Him to return as the King in the next age in the manifestation of His kingdom.