

PSALM TWENTY-ONE AND TWENTY TWO

While abiding by the dominant view of authorship appended to the preceding psalm, hearty consent may be accorded to the following judgment:—"When, in after times, the prosperity of Hezekiah was celebrated in the Temple worship, this psalm was singularly appropriate. Whether by adaptation or not, ver. 4 had a special meaning when spoken of him; and vers. 11, 12 tell of the Assyrian army and its destruction"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 314-15.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is referred to as a Coronation hymn—why?
2. What is meant by the expression—"Long live the King"? i.e. in context.
3. There are three applications to each of these psalms:
 - (1) apply it to David or the writer;
 - (2) apply it to the Messiah;
 - (3) apply it to ourselves.What personal encouragement is found in this psalm?
4. Notice the possible Messianic application of verses 3 through 6. Cf. II Sam. 7.
5. Anticipation of victory instead of defeat is a great source of encouragement—Read verses 8 through 13 with personal applications.

PSALM 22

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Voice of a Forsaken Sufferer—Loudly Lamenting his Lot, Minutely Describing his Pain and Shame, without Reproaching God or Accusing Himself—is Suddenly Silenced (in Death); and then as Suddenly is Heard in a Strain of Triumph, in which Other Voices join, all Celebrating the Praises of Jehovah as Sovereign Lord.

ANALYSIS

This psalm naturally falls into two parts: the *first* part, spoken by One Voice, consisting of six decastich stanzas, One of them Broken Short; and the *second* part, spoken by Other Voices, consisting of four tristich stanzas, each of these including an Appropriate Refrain.

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PART I.—Stanza I, vers. 1-5, a Sufferer, Loudly Complaining of being Forsaken by God, is yet careful to Acknowledge Jehovah's Delivering Faithfulness to his People in the Past. Stanza II., vers. 6-10, He owns himself Disesteemed Abroad and at Home, and Openly Derided by Spiteful Enemies; yet Claims that he has been Divinely Sustained from his Birth. Stanza III., vers. 11-14, He asks God to be Near Him in his Distress, caused by Enemies acting like Wild Beasts (Bulls and Lions), and by his Own Deplorable Bodily Condition. Stanza IV., vers. 15-18, Suffering from Thirst and in Prospect of Death, his enemies like Fierce Dogs gather round and ill-treat him; His Person being exposed to his Own and to the Vulgar Eye, and His Garments being Distributed. Stanza V., vers. 19-21, He Renews his Petitions for Help, Rescue and Salvation . . . Stanza VI., vers. 22-25, Strains of Triumph break forth from the Same Voice, in Praise of Jehovah's Name, before a Large Assembly.

PART II.—Stanza VII., ver. 26, Humble Seekers of Jehovah Felicitated. Stanza VIII., vers. 27, 28, Distant Nations render homage to earth's king. Stanza IX., vers. 29, 30, Both the Vigorous and those who are raised from Imminent Death, Alike Worship. Stanza X., vers. 30, 31, Perpetuation of Testimony to Jehovah's Deeds.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

(Part I. Spoken by One Voice.)

- 1 My GOD my GOD! why hast thou failed¹ me?
"Far from my salvation" are the words of my loud
lamentation.
- 2 My God! I keep crying—by day and thou dost not answer
me
and by night and there is no respite for me.
- 3 But thou O Jehovah the Holy One,—
enthroned upon the praises of Israel:—²
- 4 In thee trusted our fathers,
they trusted—and thou didst deliver them:
- 5 Unto thee made they outcry—and escaped,
in thee they trusted—and were not put to shame.
- 6 But I am a worm—and No-one,
a reproach of mankind—and despised of a people:

1. Cp. Job 19:14 and Ps. 27:10.

2. "The songs of praise, which resound in Israel as monuments of His saving deeds, are like Cherubs' wings, upon which His presence in Israel hovers"—Del.

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- 7 All that see me deride me,
they open with the lip—they shake the head saying:—
- 8 “Roll thy cause on Jehovah—let him deliver him!
let him rescue him—since he hath found pleasure in him!”
- 9 Yea thou art he that caused me to be born,¹
my trust on the breasts of my mother:
- 10 Upon thee was I cast from birth,
from the lap² of my mother my GOD wast thou
- 11 Be not far from me—for there is distress,
be near—for there is no one to help:
- 12 There have surrounded me many bulls,
mighty ones of Bashan have encircled me:
- 13 They have opened against me their mouth,—
a lion rending and roaring.
- 14 Like water am I poured out,
and parted from each other are all my bones:
My heart hath become like wax,
it is melted in the midst of my body.³
- 15 Dried as a potsherd is my palate,⁴
and my tongue is made to cleave to my gums;
and in the dust of death will they⁵ lay me.
- 16 For there have surrounded me dogs,
a pack of maltreaters⁶ have closed in about me;
they have bored through⁷ my hands and my feet.⁷
- 17 I may count all my bones,
they look about⁸—they gaze⁹ upon me.
- 18 They part my garments among them,
and for my garments they cast lots.
- 19 But thou Jehovah! be not far off,
oh my help! to aid me make haste!
- 20 Rescue from the sword my soul,
from the power of the dog my solitary self:

1. *Ml.* “severed me from the womb.” So it shd. be (*w. Syr.*); cp. 71:6
—*Gn.* *M.T.*: “drew me forth.”

2. *Ml.*: “womb.”

3. *Ml.*: “mine inwards.”

4. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

5. *Br.* reads “3rd pers. plu.”

6. So *Maclaren.* “A crew of miscreants”—*Del.*

7. “They dig into”—*Br.* “They have digged into” (so *Sep., Vul., Syr.*)

—*Dr.*

8. For the difference between *nabat* and *r'aah*, see 1 Sam. 17:42,

9. “Feast their eyes”—*Del.*

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- 21 Save me from the mouth of the lion,
yea from the horns of wild oxen mine afflicted one.¹
* * * * *
- 22 I will tell of thy name unto my brethren,
in the midst of an assembly will I praise thee:—
- 23 “Ye that revere Jehovah praise him,
all ye seed of Jacob glorify him,
and stand in awe of him all ye seed of Israel:
- 24 Because he hath not detested to answer the humbled one,
neither hath he hid his face from him;
but when he cried for help unto him he heard.”
- 25 From thee will come my praise in a large assembly,
my vows will I perform before thee.

(Part II. Spoken by Other Voices.)

- 26 Humble ones will eat and be satisfied,
they will praise Jehovah who are seekers after him:—
“May your heart live evermore!”³
- 27 All the ends of the earth will remember and return to
Jehovah,
and all the families of the nations will bow down before
him:—
- 28 Surely to Jehovah belongeth the kingdom—and one to rule
over the nations.
- 29 Yea to him⁴ will bow down all the vigorous of the earth,
before him will kneel all who were descending to dust:—
- 30 “Yea mine own soul⁵ to him doth live—my⁶ seed shall serve
him.”
- 31 It shall be told of my Sovereign to a generation to come.⁷

1. That is: “my poor soul.” M.T.: “thou hast answered me.” (The psalmist, by a sudden impulse of faith, pictures his deliverance as accomplished—Dr.) The difference consists of one letter and of a change of vocalisation.

2. These asterisks are to suggest an abruptly broken and unfinished stanza.

3. “Owing to the change of person this can only be the words of those who seek Yahweh, addressed to the afflicted”—Br.

4. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* Merely a different grouping of the letters.

5. “Pathetic circumlocution for personal pronoun.” See Dr. quoted *Intro.*, Chap. III., “Soul.”

6. So it shd. be (w. *Sep.* and *Vul.*)—*Gn.*

7. So it shd. be (w. *Sep.* and *Vul.*). Cp. 48:13, 102:18—*Gn.*

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that they may declare his righteousness to a people to be born:—

“That he hath done it! That he hath done it!”¹

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 22

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why do You refuse to help me or even to listen to my groans?

2 Day and night I keep on weeping, crying for Your help, but there is no reply—

3, 4 For You are holy.

* * * * *

The praises of our fathers surrounded Your throne; they trusted You and You delivered them.

5 You heard their cries for help and saved them; they were never disappointed when they sought Your aid.

6 But I am a worm, not a man, scorned and despised by my own people and by all mankind.

7 Everyone who sees me mocks and sneers and shrugs;

8 “Is this the one who rolled his burden on the Lord?” they laugh. “Is this the one who claims the Lord delights in him? We’ll believe it when we see God rescue him!”

9, 10, 11 Lord, how You have helped me before!² You took me safely from my mother’s womb and brought me through the years of infancy. I have depended upon You since birth; You have always been my God. Don’t leave me now, for trouble is near and no one else can possibly help.

12 I am surrounded by fearful enemies, strong as the giant bulls of Bashan.

13 They come at me with open jaws, like roaring lions attacking their prey.

14 My strength has drained away like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart melts like wax;

15 My strength has dried up like sun-baked clay; my tongue sticks to my mouth, for You have laid me in the dust of death.

1. For this repetition (to fill the line) cp. 150:6.

2. Implied.

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16 The enemy, this gang of evil men, circles me like a pack of dogs; they have pierced my hands and feet.

17 I can count every bone in my body. See these men of evil gloat and stare;

18 They divide my clothes among themselves by a toss of the dice.

19 O Lord, don't stay away. O God my Strength, hurry to my aid.

20 Rescue me from death; spare my precious life from all these evil men.¹

21 Save me from these lions' jaws and from the horns of these wild oxen; yes, God will answer me and rescue me.

22 I will praise You to all my brothers; I will stand up before the congregation and testify of the wonderful things You have done.

23 "Praise the Lord, each one of you who fears Him," I will say. "Each of you² must fear and reverence His name. Let all Israel sing His praises,

24 For He has not despised my cries of deep despair; He has not turned and walked away. When I cried to Him, He heard and came."

25 Yes, I will stand and praise You³ before all the people. I will publicly fulfill my vows in the presence of all who reverence Your name.

26 The poor⁴ shall eat and be satisfied; all who seek the Lord shall find Him and shall praise His name. Their hearts shall rejoice with everlasting joy.

27 The whole earth shall see it and return to the Lord; the people of every nation shall worship Him.

28 For the Lord is King and rules the nations.

29 Both proud and humble together, all who are mortal—born to die—shall worship Him.

30 Our children too shall serve Him, for they shall hear from us about the wonders of the Lord;

31 Generations yet unborn shall hear of all the miracles He did for us.

1. Literally, "Deliver my soul from the sword, my only one from the power of the dog!"

2. Literally, "all you sons of Jacob."

3. Literally, "praise from you."

4. Literally, "the afflicted."

PSALM TWENTY-TWO EXPOSITION

The Mysterious Forsaken Sufferer of this psalm appears to be AN INDIVIDUAL: seeing that, in the course of his loud lamentation, he distinctly alludes to his *mouth, palate, tongue, gums, heart, bones, and clothing*; looks back to his *childhood* and forward to his *death*.

HIS SITUATION is indicated with circumstantial minuteness. He is exposed to public view; for he refers to *all who see* him. He is fixed to one spot; for his enemies *gather round* him. He has been deprived of his clothing; for he can *count* his own *bones*, shrinks from the vulgar gaze as men *look for* and *behold* him, and sees his *garments* distributed to others. He has, moreover, been subjected to at least one form of bodily violence; for his enemies have *bored through his hands and his feet*. And finally, inasmuch as such as would see him, both *look for* and *gaze upon* him, it may not unnaturally be surmised that either he has companions in suffering from whom visitors to the spot would desire to distinguish him, or else darkness has gathered, making it difficult to descry him.

He is either absolutely FRIENDLESS, or his friends are so few and feeble that they do not count, being powerless to help him: hence his repeated cries for Divine pity and succor. Nevertheless, strange to say, he has *brethren* somewhere in the background, numbering *a large assembly*; but these come not into view until his sufferings are ended.

His ENEMIES are many. MANKIND in general *reproach* him: his own *people despise* him: beholders *deride* him with scornful gestures and taunting words. The gathered throng of his foes appears large and threatening, formidable and fierce: he compares them to *bulls*, wild and gigantic—each *as a lion rending and roaring*; and either the same or others he likens to *dogs*, fierce, foul and mean, united into a *pack* large enough to *close in about* him. Moreover, the *sword* of authority appears in their midst. His life is threatened on every hand.

Meanwhile his SUFFERINGS are intense and prolonged. His body is so distended that his *bones* are *dislocated*; his mouth is parched with *thirst*, his strength flows away *like water*, his physical courage fails like *melting wax*. His mind, sensitive to the shame of his exposure and to the cruel taunts of his enemies, struggles bravely to maintain its confidence in God: the deepest

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distress of all being that HE seems to be *far away*, and to be *slow to rescue*,—incessant *crying to Him day and night* bringing *no answer*.

The PRIMARY CAUSE of suffering is implied rather than expressed. Reverently keeping to what is actually before us, in our search for what is implied,—the answer appears to be at once simple and sufficient. The mental anguish so strongly indicated is due to the Divine permission that he, the Sufferer, should thus fall into the hands of his enemies; and that his God should be so long in coming to his rescue. The Sufferer feels himself to be *forsaken*, or, rather, that his God *has failed* him—THAT is in evidence. His enemies have got him into their power—THAT too is in evidence. Ver. 11 suggests a connection between the two; and vers. 19-21 confirm it. The Divine forsaking consists in leaving him thus to fall into his enemies' hands. The converse, prayed for, shows this. These verses (11, 19-21) say, in effect: "Return, come near; and rescue me from the sword, from the dog, from the lion, from the wild-ox"; thereby implying that it was God's withdrawing and holding aloof, that delivered him into the power of these his enemies. The Divine withdrawing, the Divine holding aloof,—THIS was the Divine *faillure*. So much is in evidence. And this is sufficient. We have no need, no right, to seek for more. It is sufficient. Are we to say, it is not sufficiently *mysterious*? As surely as we do say this, we show how completely we fail to enter into the position of the Sufferer. It is painfully mysterious to him, to be at all allowed to fall into his enemies' hands. The fathers had trusted, and always been delivered: HE has trusted, and NOT been delivered: herein lies the mystery—herein the chief pain—the agony—continued—oh! so long!

The SUDDEN CLOSE of the suffering is very remarkable. It is that in any case: whether, strictly adhering to the M.T., we get the break in the form and by the force of a single word, in a new strain, at the end of line 6 in stanza V (lit., *thou hast answered me*); or whether, by a slight modification of the M.T., helped out by the Sep., we become aware of the change, not by a single word, but by the dramatic force of a sudden breaking off of the one stanza and the commencement of another in a new key. In either case, the fact remains, that all at once the strain of sorrow ceases; and, when it ceases, it ceases altogether: there is absolutely no recurrence of pain, no trace further of a single sob. It cannot be doubted that it is the same voice which

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thus suddenly breaks out in praise; for the metre is the same, the direct address to Jehovah is the same, and—allowing for the change of tone—the theme is the same: the lament has been, “He hath not heard”; the joy now is, “He hath heard.” Moreover, as if to make this point clear, the very terms of the announcement which the late Sufferer now makes to his *brethren*, bear upon them vivid reminiscences of the shame and pain through which he has passed: by man he had been *detested*, and deeply *humbled*. God had *hid his face*, and he the Sufferer had *cried for help*. Now all is changed; and by every sign of continuity of speech we are warranted to rest in the conclusion, that it is the same voice that tells us the joyful news.

A mystery at present hangs over the *assembly* in or from which the triumph shall be sounded forth; but no ambiguity rests on the language then and there to be employed. According to a classification with which we have become familiar in our study of Hebrew Poetry, we can detect Gentile worshippers in the phrase—*Ye that revere Jehovah*, and the parallel phrases *seed of Jacob*, *seed of Israel* are too plain in their application to the Hebrew nation to leave room for a moment’s doubt. So that we are here met with the rousing prospect that the Delivered Sufferer will announce his deliverance as a fact of deep interest to the world at large as thus represented. It looks, indeed, as though, to his own nation, the announcement would be more profoundly moving than even to the Gentile world; seeing that, while Gentile worshippers are simply called upon to *praise* Jehovah for this his interposition in behalf of the Sufferer, the seed of Jacob are called upon not only to *glorify* him, but to *stand in awe* of his holy majesty, for this story of his doings.

As the sixth stanza completes the first part of the psalm, and to all appearance other voices now carry on the psalm to its conclusion, the present seems a convenient point at which to raise the broad question of FULFILMENT: Who is this Mysterious Sufferer?

We took care to remark, at the beginning of our exposition, that the Sufferer appears to be an INDIVIDUAL; and no doubt this impression ought to be left undisturbed until something more likely can be suggested; until it can be shown that, though he so appears, yet this is but the allegorical dress in which the prediction is adorned; and that the seeming individual is, after all, a larger or a smaller group of individuals—a nation or a remnant of a nation. Now it may be frankly allowed, that there

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is no *prima-facie* impossibility in this. Nevertheless, every psalm, every representation in the psalms, must be considered on its own merits. *This* sufferer cannot be the nation, because he is distinguished from the nation—*despised* of a people. But may he not be a Suffering Remnant of the nation? At first sight, this appears possible; but then what sort of remnant would this be? If not a sinless remnant, at all events it is one that here makes no confession of sin. Besides, if it is a remnant that suffers, it must also be a remnant that is delivered, and declare Jehovah's name *in an assembly*: all of which goes to show how unnatural it is to see in this individual a number of individuals. A remnant may indeed be delivered from further suffering; but to represent a remnant as declaring Jehovah's name in an assembly is so incongruous as to suggest how much more simple and natural it is to adhere to literal individuality throughout this part of the psalm.

It is notorious that Christians see in this psalm a wonderfully vivid and realistic picture of the Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In order to account for this, it is not necessary to hazard the opinion that anyone could have said before the event: "This sufferer in the psalm is evidently undergoing the horrors of crucifixion." All that is necessary is to take the psalm as it is written, and the story of the crucifixion of Jesus as it is told in the four Gospels, to lay them side by side, and then to look first on the one picture and then on the other. Detail by detail, the striking similarity comes into view. There are—the outcry on the cross from the opening of the psalm, the mocking of the by-standers in the very words that follow later on in the psalm, and the source of which those mockers must surely have forgotten; the parching thirst; the outstretched body; the cruel gaze of the assembled throng; the wounded hands and feet; the parted garments. As Dr. Briggs well says: "It seems to the Christian that the psalmist indeed gives a more vivid description of the sufferings of Christ on the cross than the authors of the Gospels." Myriads of readers can attest that this is no exaggeration. It may be added, that there are less obvious harmonies, which, when perceived, deepen the impression of fulfillment. That suddenly interrupted stanza (like a broken column in a cemetery) eloquently suggests the hushing of the voice of Jesus in death. The sudden resumption of speech in tones of triumph: it may not even yet have been fulfilled in its full and ultimate intent for the *assembly*—that *large assembly*

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may not yet have been gathered; and yet, for all that, the Resurrection of Jesus, together with his renewed intercourse with his disciples; his promise, on parting, to return; the gradual formation of his assembly, his ecclesia; his own undying love for the seed of Israel:—all these serve to give a sense of spaciousness for complete and more than complete fulfillment, which leaves nothing to be desired.

It is little to confess, that we can only with the greatest difficulty begin to imagine, how an alphabet of thought for conceiving such a psalm as this, could have been communicated to any psalmist's mind. That the suffering prophets of old were types of the coming suffering Messiah, we can well believe; that every phase of suffering here portrayed may have been already experienced in rudimentary forms, a little by one sufferer and a little by another, and then passed into a common stock of conceptions made ready for the actual writer of this part of the psalm, is also not impossible. Those conceptions may even have been vivified and intensified by an actual experience which converted the writer into a not unworthy type of the Suffering One; and yet after all have amounted to nothing more than a dim outline of the Reality. From this point of view, we can well believe that David wrote the earlier part of this psalm; if, at least, we admit with Delitzsch that "David descends with his complaints to a depth that lies beyond the depth of his suffering, and rises with his hopes to a height which lies beyond the height of the reward of his suffering," so that "the hyperbolical element is thereby changed into the prophetic." The ultimate product remains, in this Divinely illumined fore-sketch, offering a Spectacle of Jesus of Nazareth, suffering on the Cross, as a proof of Divine Foresight and Divine Skill,—which nothing that we can conceive can ever surpass for satisfying the judgment and moving the soul.

In advancing to Part II. of this psalm, attention is called to the circumstance that careful regard to expert critical judgment on a few nice points, some obvious difficulties have been removed and the whole presented with a striking measure of symmetry and brightness. Of difficulties, may be mentioned this: That however suitable it may appear that *the humble* should now *eat and be satisfied* (ver. 26), it is by no means so acceptable to be told (ver. 29) that the already "fat" shall eat as well as worship. This incongruity is at once removed, simply by a different grouping of letters, as advised by Ginsburg. Then if

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we render *vigorous* instead of "fat" as suggested by O.G. we get a fine strong line, forming a good contrast with that which follows it:—

Yea to him will bow down all the vigorous of the earth,
Before him will kneel all who were descending to dust.

Not who "go down," with A.V. and R.V.; but, as the participle may just as well be rendered, *who were going down or descending*; which makes all the difference, since their progress downwards to the dust is suddenly arrested. These emendations prepare the way for another. For how is any helpful sense discovered by the next clause thrown in by the A.V.; "And none can keep alive his own soul"? Whether left just so, or even slightly altered by the R.V.: "Even he that cannot keep his soul alive," it sounds quite as much like a burlesque as any advance of thought in the main line of the psalm: inasmuch as it seems to say, "They may worship, but still they have to die all the same." Whereas, by accepting a hint from the Septuagint; and another from ver. 26, which is crowned by a quotation; and yet another which Dr. Ginsburg had already given us, *My seed*;—we obtain a splendid refrain to this little stanza also.

Yea, my own soul to him doth live—my seed shall serve him. Why! it is both literally and metaphorically, "life from the dead"! Thus, in getting rid of difficulties, a second quotation, serving as a refrain, appears, and puts us on scent for a third (ver. 28) and a fourth (ver. 31). For we have only to bear in mind that the Hebrew has no quotation marks, and is reluctant even to employ the word "saying"; and then to reflect that when men *bow down* they are apt to have words of worship on their lips, to become satisfied that ver. 28 is composed of quoted words; and a magnificent refrain it makes for *the families of the nations unto the ends of the earth* to utter. In like manner, when generation after generation tells and declares something to posterity of which it is glad, it can generally find words, however simple, in which to express it; and so, once more, we hear herald voices exclaiming in honour of earth's King:—

He hath done it! He hath done it!

Those who, with a view to the thorough understanding of Part II. of this psalm, have thus minutely observed its peculiar structure—in contrast with all that had gone before,—will be prepared for our acquiescing in the judgment of Thirtle (O.T.P.),

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that the chief part of the present conclusion of the psalm was penned by Hezekiah. Recalling the almost certain fact, that the bitterest ingredient in Hezekiah's cup was the reflection that by his death his race would be extinguished, and the Royal Line of David would be buried with him, we feel that a new and thrilling interest invests the joyful exclamation which now crowns the last stanza but one of the psalm,—

Yea my own soul to him doth live—my seed shall serve him.
This from the man who just before was rapidly *descending to dust*; whose *own soul*, instead of *living*, was on the point of dying; and who had no *seed* to succeed him!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham does a beautiful job of relating this psalm to the crucifixion without at first mentioning the crucifixion—notice the several minute circumstances. List the details of the crucifixion here either stated or implied;—do this to get the impact of fulfilled prophecy.
2. What is the *primary cause* of the suffering?
3. Why refer to the one suffering as mysterious?
4. List the characteristics of the enemies of the mysterious sufferer as they also describe the enemies at the cross.
5. There is a sudden break in thought in this psalm—Where is it? What does it mean? Discuss.

PSALM 23

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The All-Sufficiency of Jehovah.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3a, As Shepherd; Stanza II., vers. 3b, 4, as Guide; Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, As Host.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah is my shepherd—I have no want:
- 2 in pastures of tender grass he maketh me lie down,
unto waters of quietness he leadeth me;