# 26-1115a - Detailed Summary

**26-1115a - *Some Thoughts on Psalm 23, Part 1, Jim Lokenbauer***

**Bible Readers**: John Kessler and Roger Raines

See the transcript: Transcript HTML - Transcript PDF

# Some Thoughts on Psalm 23, Part 1

### Scripture Readings

**1st Reading** (0:04 - 0:33): John Kessler

**Exodus 15:11–13**: John opened the service by reading from Exodus 15:11–13. The passage declares that no other god compares to the Lord, who is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, and works wonders. The Lord stretches out His right hand so that the earth swallows His enemies. In unfailing love He leads the people He has redeemed, and in His strength He guides them to His holy dwelling. John concluded by affirming that this is the word of the Lord.

**2nd Reading** (0:38 - 2:11): Roger Raines

**John 10:11-18**: Roger then read from the Gospel of John 10:11–18. Jesus declares that He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. A hired hand, who is not the owner, sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep, and flees,

***Continued***

so that the wolf snatches and scatters them. The hired hand flees because he does not care about the sheep. Jesus continues that He is the good shepherd who knows His own and is known by them, just as the Father knows Him and He knows the Father, and He lays down His life for the sheep. He has other sheep that are not of this fold; He must bring them also, and they will hear His voice so that there will be one flock with one shepherd. The Father loves Him because He lays down His life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from Him; He lays it down of His own initiative. He has authority both to lay it down and to take it up again, and this command He received from His Father. Roger noted that this concluded the reading.

## Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 31:54), Preacher: Jim Lokenbauer

### (2:15 – 5:32) Introduction and the Comfort of Psalm 23

Jim began by observing that it was his turn in the rotation of men who preach, adding with humor that the congregation gets what it pays for. He noted that many of the congregation's songs depict Jesus as a shepherd and that throughout Scripture God is seen leading His people in various forms, a theme he would develop later. He then turned to Psalm 23 and the comfort it has long brought to people. He recalled one of the church's former elders, Julius Zavodny, who on one of the rare occasions when he rose to give the invitation spoke on Psalm 23 and said it was his favorite psalm. Jim acknowledged that the psalm may be a favorite of many present and stated that it is one of his own favorites as well.

He expressed the hope that the thoughts and Scriptures he would share would deepen love, understanding, and appreciation for the twenty-third psalm. He described it as far and above the most beloved passage of Scripture in the Bible, one that has given readers comfort, strength, and encouragement ever since David recorded its verses some three thousand years ago. Next to John 3:16, which he called a microcosm of the gospel itself, it is the most recognized passage of Scripture. For Jim personally the psalm assures him of the love and care of the invisible God during the earthly journey. Although God cannot be seen, the psalm declares that He is the good shepherd who

is always near, ever watchful, always providing, continually leading and guiding, and protecting His people even at the worst points of life when circumstances seem as bad as they can get. The psalm therefore assures believers that God is with them.

Jim observed that both believers and non-believers facing the valley of the shadow of death near the end of life have requested that Psalm 23 be read at their funerals. He noted that the psalm had been read at the funeral of his Aunt Ruth only a couple of weeks earlier; although she was not a church-going person, she had chosen that reading, and it gave comfort.

## (5:33 – 7:33) Authorship of the Psalms

Before reading Psalm 23 itself, Jim paused to share what he called some nerdy statistics, remarking that he enjoys consulting research books for information that might seem useless but that he wished to share. He recalled that David began as a shepherd boy and later became king of Israel, and that he became one of the most prolific writers in the Bible. Of the 150 psalms in the Book of Psalms, David is attributed with having written 73. Another 50 psalms lack any signature, so their human authors remain uncertain. In the New Testament, however, inspired writers (Luke in Acts, and possibly Paul or whoever wrote Hebrews) cite David as the author of two psalms that had not previously been recognized as Davidic. Thus David actually wrote half of all the psalms.

Jim then listed the other named authors: Asaph, the director of music, wrote 12; the sons of Korah, who were also involved in temple worship, wrote 11; King Solomon wrote 2; Moses wrote 1 (Psalm 90); Heman, one of the seers of the king, wrote 1; and Ethan, also a Levite priest, wrote 1. He then asked what makes Psalm 23 so special. It is only six verses long and, depending on the translation, approximately 114 words. Yet those few words carry enormous impact.

## (7:34 – 8:31) Reading of Psalm 23

Jim invited the congregation to read through the entire psalm before examining it verse by verse and exploring related Scriptures for deeper understanding. He reminded listeners that the psalm was written by a young Jewish man, David the son of Jesse, who was himself a humble shepherd and later became king of Israel; through his psalms he revealed the true good shepherd to all mankind. He then read the full text of Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

## (8:32 – 20:40) The Name of the Lord: Yahweh, Not Jehovah or LORD

Turning to verse 1 (“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”), Jim observed that the main character of the psalm is “the Lord,” printed in all capital letters. He explained that “Lord” is the name the translators assigned to this character; it is not the character’s actual name. In his view the translators, despite their degrees and academic credentials, condescendingly and arrogantly assumed that ordinary readers could not keep the actual names of God in order, so they decided that whenever they encountered this particular name they would simply render it “Lord.” Jim

stated that this practice is wrong. While believers have come to love and revere the capitalized "LORD" in the Old Testament and recognize who is meant, the word is only a title. When "LORD" appears in capital letters it actually represents "I Am," which is Yahweh, the most holy name.

Jim acknowledged that God is indeed Lord—the Lord of lords—a title that indicates supreme eminence. Nevertheless, the capitalized form is not a substitute for God's personal name, Yahweh. God's name is neither "Lord" nor "Jehovah." Jehovah, he insisted, is entirely a man-made name; God never said, "My name is Jehovah." The name was invented by a Spanish Catholic monk named Raymundus Martini for a book titled **Pugio Fidei**, written in 1270 A.D. The work was an apologetic aimed at Jews in an attempt to bring them under the Catholic umbrella. Martini took the vowels from the title Adonai (which means "Lord")—the term the Masoretic Jews substituted whenever they saw Yahweh because they felt unworthy to pronounce the holy name—and interwove those vowels into the four consonants of YHWH, producing "Jehovah." The resulting name is therefore unauthorized. Jim illustrated the absurdity by imagining that he were to rename a brother named Steve "Stavros" simply to appeal to a Greek audience; he has no authority to change another man's name. Likewise, he asked why Yahweh would wish to be addressed by a nickname at best.

In his own practice Jim therefore declines to call God "Jehovah" willingly, though he does not insist that others refrain. The name has been revered for centuries even though it originated in error. Call God what one will, he said, for God is God. Yet he questioned whether it pleases God when people assign titles or names He did not authorize. Anticipating the objection that the discussion is beside the point when the subject is David and Psalm 23, Jim replied that God's own explicit instructions to Moses and Israel demonstrate that the matter is important to Yahweh. The translators likewise lacked authority to replace other names with generic titles. Every time the English word "God" appears in the Old Testament it stands for the Hebrew Elohim, a plural masculine name for the Godhead—the three holy ones. Thus "God" refers to the Trinity (Elohim), while "Lord" refers to Yahweh.

Jim then directed attention to Exodus 3, where Moses, himself a shepherd, sees the burning bush and investigates. A holy being commands him to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. In the conversation that follows, the angel of the Lord reveals that He is both Yahweh and Elohim, and also the God of the patriarchs whom they knew as El Shaddai. Jim concluded that the being in the bush is essentially the Godhead speaking to Moses. Later in the same chapter (Exodus 3:13–15) Moses asks what name he should give when the Israelites inquire who has sent him. God answers, "I am that I am"—that is, Yahweh—and instructs Moses to say, "I am has sent me to you." God further commands that the Israelites be told, "Yahweh, the Elohim of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and this is my remembrance from generation to generation." Jim therefore judged that translators or Masoretic Jews who assign any other name are at fault; God wants to be known as Yahweh, the most holy name.

He acknowledged that it is difficult to break the habit of saying "the Lord," and that there is nothing wrong with the title itself; Jesus sometimes referred to God as Lord. Nevertheless, to substitute a title for the personal name of the most holy being shows disrespect, for God commanded otherwise. Yahweh means "I am." When God told Moses that Yahweh is the Elohim of the ancestors, the statement makes God the Father Yahweh, the Son Yahweh, and the Holy Spirit Yahweh. This confession is known among the Hebrews as the Shema, Israel's creed, which Jesus also quoted. It comes from Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is one, Yahweh." Jesus cited it as the greatest commandment, so it is something believers must know, understand, and obey. In Mark

12:30 Jesus quotes the fuller form: “You shall love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. The Shema was so important to the Jews that they wrote it and placed it in phylacteries worn on the forehead or wrist so that they would thoroughly internalize it.

## (20:41 – 24:30) Yahweh as Shepherd and the Angel of the Lord

In verse 1 of Psalm 23, therefore, David is saying “Yahweh is my shepherd.” In Hebrew that is Yahweh Ra‘ah—God the shepherd. Jesus employs the allegory of Yahweh as shepherd to illustrate the close relationship between Yahweh and His people. With God as shepherd, the sheep have all their needs met. Yahweh shepherded Israel through the wilderness. When the people left Egypt, the angel of the Lord appeared as a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night and led them. That angel of Yahweh, Jim stated, is the second person of the Godhead—the pre-incarnate Christ. Throughout history it is always this second person who engages in personal encounters with human beings; He is the interface between Elohim and mankind. He is the one who walked in the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden conversing with Adam and Eve, and He is the one who appeared at different stages to guide His people.

Jim cited another conversation between Moses and the angel of the Lord in Exodus 33:13–14. Moses asks that if he has found favor he might be shown the way so that he may know God and that the nation may be considered God’s people. Yahweh replies, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” The Hebrew word for presence is panim, which means faces (plural). His faces would therefore go with them. Yet the word faces is always written in the singular in Hebrew, which is why the text says “my presence.” This indicates that Yahweh would accompany them in one of His many faces or forms—the pillar of fire, the cloud of smoke, or the cloud of glory on Mount Sinai. Paul revealed that Christ was the rock that followed them and supplied water when Moses struck it; thus Moses was striking Christ, which is why God was upset with him. The same being appeared as the captain of the heavenly host to Joshua and again commanded him to remove his sandals because the ground was holy—familiar words because it was the same being in a different form, a different panim, a different presence, a different face.

## (24:31 – 27:21) Verse 2: Green Pastures and Quiet Waters – Peace and Rest

Jim turned to verse 2: “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.” Although he is not a farmer, he has heard that sheep are skittish and must be in a state of total peace before they will lie down; they must be calm and feel secure. It is the shepherd’s responsibility to produce that condition. The shepherd must know his flock and the things that unnerve them—inclement weather, the scent of a predator, stress from travel, improper nutrition or hydration, and so on. God likewise knows how much His people can bear and will not push them beyond their limits. Jesus, who is Yahweh Shalom and who is called the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6, is able to give that rest.

As a side note, Jim observed that Isaiah 9:6 shows that the child to be born of the virgin bears all the titles of the Godhead: Wonderful, Counselor (Holy Spirit), Everlasting Father, Mighty God (El Shaddai), Prince of Peace. Thus it has always been Jesus who deals with His sheep and His people, guiding and leading them from the Garden of Eden down to the present. In Philippians 4 Paul teaches that when believers follow God’s remedy for anxiety—the instructions of that chapter—anxiety, which is the absence of peace, is replaced. They will possess not only the peace of

God that surpasses understanding but also the God of that peace Himself, and then they will be able to lie down and take rest.

## (27:22 – 31:54) Verse 3: Restoration of the Soul and Paths of Righteousness

Verse 3 states that He restores the soul and guides in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Jesus is Yahweh-Rapha, the healer and restorer. David writes in Psalm 119:50 that God's word is his comfort in affliction because it revives him. God is a comforter, and simply reading Psalm 23 allows one to feel those words comforting the soul; they are the words of God Himself. Paul also experienced God's comforting hand. In 2 Corinthians 1:3–5 he blesses the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts believers in every affliction so that they may comfort others with the same comfort they have received. As the sufferings of Christ abound to believers, so their comfort also abounds through Christ. Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28—"Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—echoes what the angel of the Lord told Moses in Exodus 33:14: "My presence will go with you, and you will find rest." God has always cared for those who take Him as their God and their all-in-all and become His people, and He has always given them rest.

A further example of this peace and rest appears when the angel of Yahweh commissioned Gideon to lead Israel during the period of the judges (when men, and on occasion a woman, were selected to lead the people). In Judges 6:22–24 Gideon perceived that the visitor was the angel of Yahweh and cried, "Ahah, O Yahweh, Elohim, for I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face." Yahweh answered, "Peace be with you; do not fear; you shall not die." Gideon then built an altar and named it "Yahweh is peace"—Yahweh Shalom. God therefore gives peace, restoration, comfort, and healing. He is also Yahweh Tsedeq, which means righteousness—the Lord of righteousness—and He guides in paths of righteousness. When sheep follow the Good Shepherd's path they follow the way of righteousness. When they follow His teachings, conform to His will, and are transformed into His image, they become little Christs, Christians. The King of righteousness shares His own righteousness with those who have none of their own, and He is always with them.

Jim noted that the congregation was now halfway through the psalm and invited everyone to return that evening to hear the last three verses. He then offered the invitation, urging anyone who needed Yahweh Shalom to restore them to respond while there was still time.