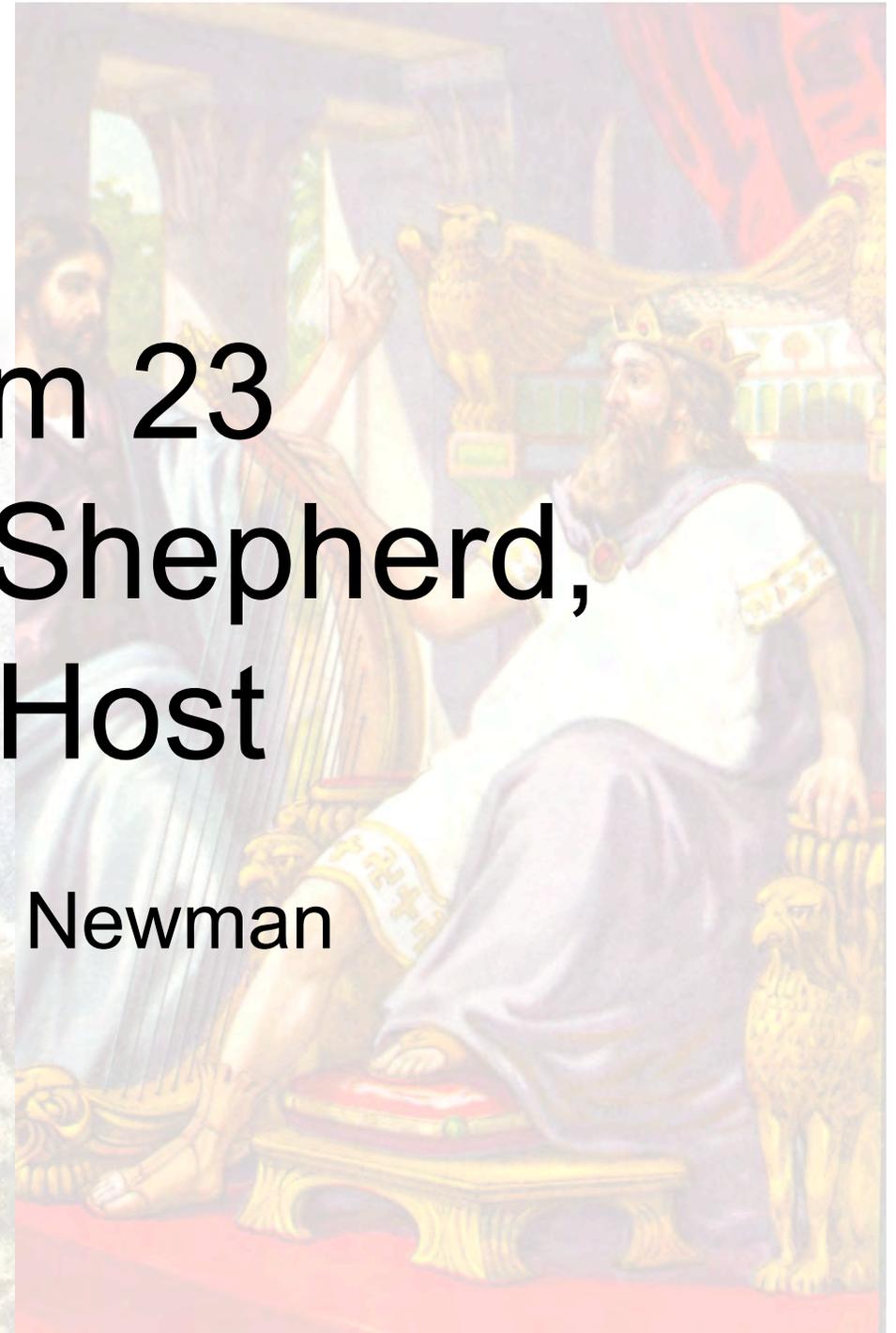


Psalm 23

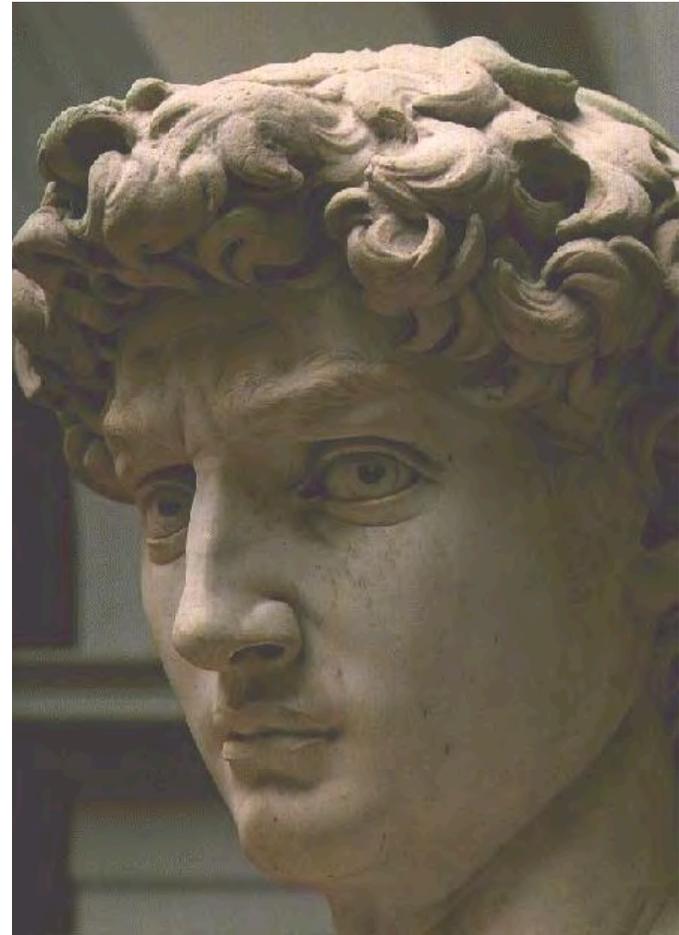
God: Our Shepherd, Our Host

Robert C. Newman



David the Author

- David's life experience provides the background for this psalm.
- First part: God as Shepherd
 - David was a shepherd for his father's sheep.
- Second part: God as Royal Host
 - David became God's king, had numerous guests in his palace.



The Psalm Translated

A sacred song to musical accompaniment,
composed by David

- (1) The LORD is my shepherd
I lack nothing.
- (2) In pastures of tender grass
He makes me lie down,
To waters of refreshment
He leads me;
- (3) He revives my life.
He leads me in right paths
For His name's sake.

The Psalm Translated

- (4) Indeed, when I walk in the valley of death-shadow
I will fear no evil,
For You are with me;
Your club and staff,
They comfort me.

The Psalm Translated

- (5) You will set a table before me,
In the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil,
My cup overflows.
- (6) Surely Goodness and Kindness will attend me
All the days of my life
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
My whole life long.

God Our Shepherd

Verses 1-4

Verse 1

- (1) The LORD is my shepherd
I lack nothing.
 - Verse 1 is a summary:
 - Just as the sheep of a good shepherd lack nothing they need,
 - so we as God's people lack nothing we need.

Verses 2-3

- (2) In pastures of tender grass
He makes me lie down,
To waters of refreshment
He leads me;
- (3) He revives my life.
He leads me in right paths
For His name's sake.

Verses 2-3

- These appear to follow the shepherd and sheep through a typical day.
- Tender grass - pretty rare in wilderness areas where sheep are usually herded
 - **God provides our needed sustenance.**
- Calls the sheep together at noon to huddle and lie down for rest.
 - **God provides the rest we need.**

Verses 2-3

- See thoughtfulness of shepherd for his flock.
 - Domesticated sheep are not smart enough to fend for themselves.
 - **We are not smart enough to fend for ourselves spiritually.**
- Leads them to water of refreshment.
 - Sheep will not drink from running water.
 - Water is usually drawn by shepherd from wells.
 - **God provides our refreshment .**

Verses 2-3

- Restores life
 - Probably the result of above; with rest and water, the sheep are able to go on.
 - **Similarly God helps us keep on.**
 - Compare the promise in Isa 40:29-31.

Isaiah 40:29-31

29 (NIV) He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Verses 2-3

- Restores life
 - Probably the result of above; with rest and water, sheep able to go on
 - Similarly God helps us keep on, cp Isa 40:29-31.
- Guidance in right paths
 - Shepherd's reputation depends on getting sheep to pasture, water, sheepfold, etc.
 - **So God will guide us for His Name's sake.**

Verse 4

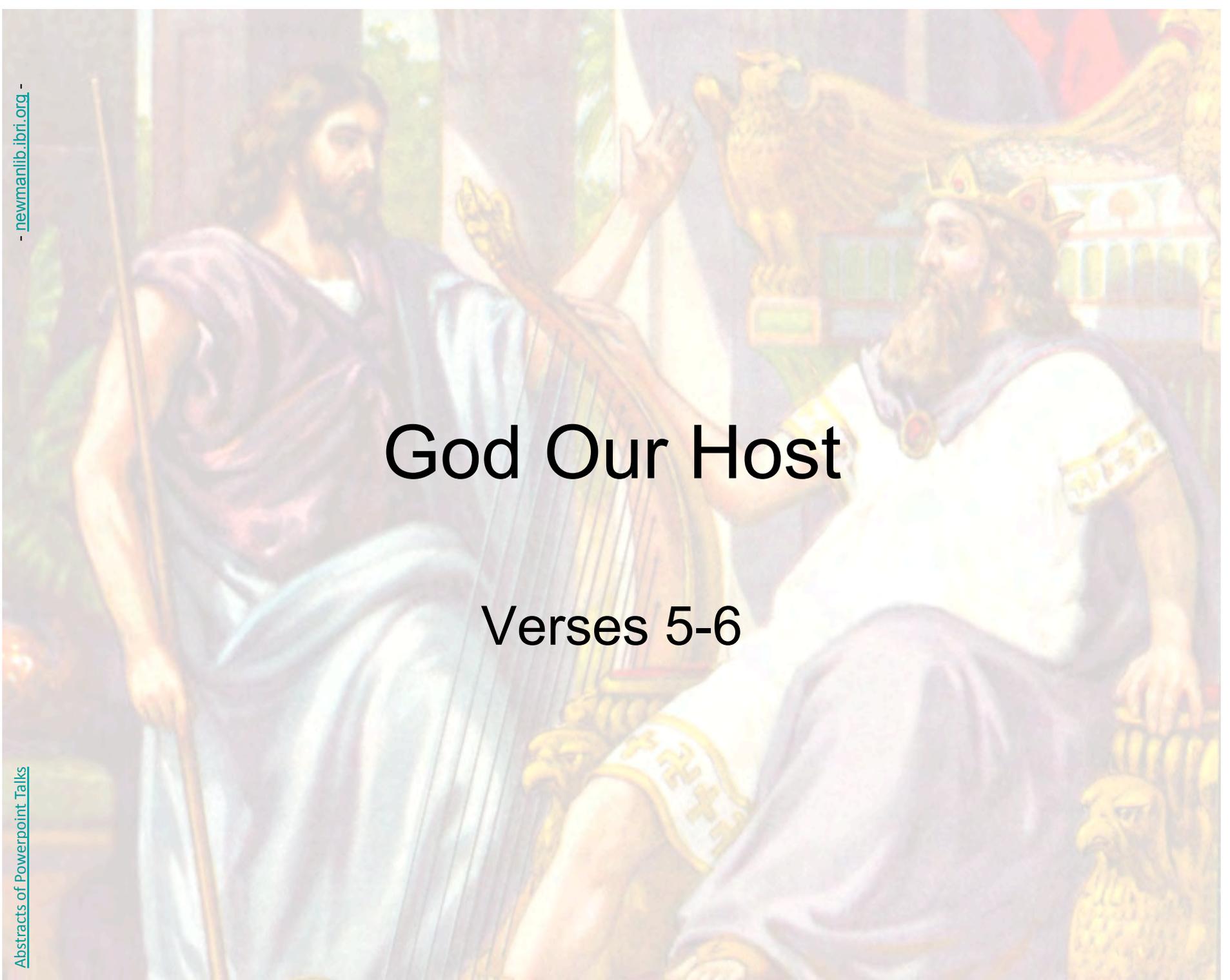
- (4) Indeed, when I walk in the valley of death-shadow,
I will fear no evil,
For You are with me;
Your club and staff,
They comfort me.

Verse 4

- Sheep return home as deep shadows fall.
- They are protected by the shepherd.
 - rod/club - from enemies
 - staff - from self
- **So God protects us, especially when death is near.**

God Our Host

Verses 5-6



Verses 5-6

- Picture:
 - Some commentators try to maintain shepherd/sheep figure throughout psalm,
 - But it looks more like the figure shifts here, to that of a lifelong guest in the palace of a king.
- Compare:
 - Mephibosheth, 2 Sam 9:11-13
 - Barzillai & Kimham, 2 Sam 19:33ff

Mephibosheth

2 Sam 9:11 (NIV) Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons...

13 And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet.

Barzillai & Kimham

2 Sam 19:33 (NIV) The king said to Barzillai, "Cross over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you." 34 But Barzillai answered the king, "How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king?... 37 Let your servant return, that I may die in my own town near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Kimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king. Do for him whatever pleases you." 38 The king said, "Kimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever pleases you. And anything you desire from me I will do for you."

The Transition

- Probably based on time:
 - Sheep come home in evening
 - Guest entertained at dinner in evening
- Even more, the shift probably corresponds to our death (valley of death-shadow) and subsequent promotion from sheep to guest.

Verses 5-6

- (5) You will set a table before me,
In the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil,
My cup overflows.
- (6) Surely Goodness and Kindness will
attend me
All the days of my life
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
My whole life long.

Verses 5-6

- Prepared table before enemies:
 - **Honor & vindication provided by host**
 - Enemies spectators at banquet?
 - One rabbinic parable has this
 - So, too, parable of Rich Man & Lazarus
- Anointed head:
 - When entering house, **honor**
 - Perhaps also **joy**
 - Compare Ps 45:7; Ps 133.

Psalm 45:7

(NIV) You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.

Psalm 133

1 (NIV) How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!

2 It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down upon the collar of his robes.

3 It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Verses 5-6

- Full cup:
 - Welcome
 - Filled to brim to symbolize **abundance**
- Goodness, Loving-Kindness
 - Apparently these are personified as waiters closely attending on guest.
- Dwelling in house:
 - Not the temple, but the king's palace
 - **So communion, fellowship**

Verses 5-6

- (6) Surely Goodness and Kindness will attend me
All the days of my life
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
My whole life long.
- Lifelong guest:
 - Hebrew has ‘for length of days.’
 - Going from picture to reality, this translates to **eternal life** with God.

Conclusions

- Contrast picture of:
 - Sheep w/ shepherd vs.
 - Guest w/ host
 - So it gives us a glimmer of the difference between life now and the life beyond.
- Are you now one of God's sheep, and so a guest later, or not?
 - See John 10:24ff

John 10:24ff

24 (NIV) The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

