

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Psalm 23 – Part 4

I. Verse 5 – “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.”

A. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies..” – (NOTE: this phrase indicates to us that this Psalm is not talking about heaven, but is referring to our present life. There are no enemies in heaven!) Several scholars point out that this verse makes a shift from shepherds in the field to hosts at a banqueting table.¹ There are many possible ideas connected to the “table.”

1. The New Living Translation reads; “You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.” Some suggest that this means that God will prosper His people in the midst of their enemies. When the Bible speaks of prosperity, it is not just speaking of financial prosperity, but also prospering in terms of success, or victory. So, when the Lord is our Shepherd, and we follow His guidance in our lives, we can expect to have victory over our enemy, the devil. It’s important to remember that through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and in His resurrection, we have authority over our adversary, the devil. (cf. Mark 16:15-20; Ephesians 1:15-22;-2:1-6; Colossians 1:13; Luke 10:17-20.) Roger Ellsworth writes;

“Knowing about these enemies, David here subjects God’s care to what we might call the ultimate test. He asserts that God’s care cannot be negated or destroyed by these fierce enemies. David sees himself sitting at a banquet table while they gather all around. While they threaten and snarl, he feasts. Such is the care of God!”²

2. Another meaning that comes with the “table” in Scripture, are the ideas of acceptance, belonging and family. William Mounce writes: “To eat at someone’s table indicates acceptance and peace...”³ Another reference states; “An important use of the word is to evoke the picture of the fellowship shared by those seated around the table, such as the beautiful family scene in Ps 128:3...”⁴ God is the Father of all true believers in Christ (Romans 1:7; 8:15). Every believer is called a child of God (John 1:12-13; I John 3:1). Every believer should desire to know Him more intimately.

“[For I always pray to] the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation [of insight into mysteries and secrets] in the [deep and intimate] knowledge of Him,”
Ephesians 1:17 – Amplified Bible

B. “You anoint my head with oil...” – The word “anoint” means; “give health;...to prosper, be satisfied, be soaked (with fat); to be covered with fat”⁵ Tony Cooke writes:

“The act of anointing was readily understood in biblical times, more so than today. In the Mediterranean world, olive oil was common and was used in many aspects of daily life. It was used in cooking, in providing light (oil lamps), medicinally, and as a lotion and moisturizer. A gracious host would sometimes anoint a guest with fragrant perfume as an act of hospitality and respect. These are just a few of the practical functions of oil in biblical days.”⁶

¹ Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 50.

² Ibid., 51.

³ William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 702.

⁴ Hermann J. Austel, “שֶׁלֶחַ 2395” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 928.

⁵ Mounce, 921.

⁶ Tony Cooke, *Because the Lord is my Shepherd: The Twelve Blessings of and Empowered Life* (Shippensburg, PA: Harrison House Publishers, 2020), 69,

1. Under the Old Covenant, prophets, priests and kings were especially anointed for service. They were anointed outwardly with oil to symbolize that God's presence was with them and His favor was upon them to accomplish what He was calling them to do. **(I Kings 19:16; I Chronicles 16:22; Exodus 28:41; 30:30; Leviticus 8:30; 10:7; I Samuel 16:3, 13).**
2. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ reveals Himself as our anointed King, Priest, and Prophet. He is God's Holy and chosen Son, the Messiah. **"Messiah"** literally means **"anointed one"**⁷. **"Christ"** (Gr. *Christos*) is the Greek equivalent. **(Luke 4:17-19).**
3. Through Jesus Christ, believers receive **"an anointing from the Holy One"** **(I John 2:20).** At the moment of salvation, believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and joined to Christ, the Anointed One. As a result, we partake of His anointing **(**"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."** - II Corinthians 1:21–22.)** All believers are called kings and priests and are, therefore, anointed **(I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6).** There are, however, various giftings, given by God, which He will anoint (enable, empower) believers to carry out according to their individual and specific callings **(Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:7-12; I Peter 4:10-11).**
4. The New Testament also teaches the anointing with oil, coupled with the prayer of faith, to minister healing to the sick. When Jesus sent out the disciples to preach the gospel, **"And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil"** **(Mark 6:13, NLT).** James instructs believers to **"call the elders of the church to pray over them"** when they are sick **"and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord"** for healing **(James 5:14).**

C. **"My cup runs over."** – The words, **"runs over"** mean; **"place of abundance, overflowing"**⁸ David is saying that the Lord, Who is his Shepherd is a God of abundant supply. Tony Cooke puts it this way; **"If we continue looking at this through the lens of hospitality conveyed in the earlier part of the verse, we see that our Shepherd is indeed the most gracious host imaginable. He has truly received us as His honored guests; we are accepted and celebrated in a most extravagant way."**⁹ Max Lucado writes:

"The overflowing cup was a powerful symbol in the days of David. Hosts in the ancient East used it to send a message to the guest. As long as the cup was kept full, the guest knew he was welcome. But when the cup sat empty, the host was hinting that the hour was late. On those occasions, however, when the host really enjoyed the company of the person, he filled the cup to overflowing. He didn't stop when the wine reached the rim; he kept pouring until the liquid ran over the edge of the cup and down the table"¹⁰

"Give, and it will be given to you: A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure you receive." – Luke 6:38 - NET

⁷ Ralph P. Martin, "Messiah," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1111.

⁸ Mounce, 1039.

⁹ Cooke, 75.

¹⁰ Max Lucado, *Safe in the Shepherd's Arms: Hope and Encouragement from Psalm 23* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2009),