

Lifelines

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Topic: *The Birth of the Shepherd*

Who needs a Shepherd?

By Ed Jordan

This weekend begins the first week of Advent in the Christian Calendar. It is a time when we marvel at the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah; marvel that God became flesh in the person of Jesus to live among us (cf. John 1:14). One of the innate characteristics of the Messianic King was that He would be from the seed of Abraham, and of David. Both of these men were shepherds, who lived among their flocks, guided them, led them, and protected them from destroyers.

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we need to remember that He is not only the Messiah King, but He is also the Good Shepherd. In Psalm 28:9 (NASB95), David speaks to God saying: "Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever." In John 10:14-15 (NJB), Jesus told us: "I am the good shepherd; I know My own and My own know me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for My sheep."

In Psalm 28:9 we see that David asked for God to come and be the Shepherd of His people, to save them, bless them, shepherd them, and carry them in His arms forever. The "them" in the passage of old speaks of "us" in the present, since Christ has come. Jesus came as the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He also came as the Good Shepherd, sent to save, bless, shepherd, and carry His people (us) in His arms (Ps. 28:9; John 10:14-15).

It is a beautiful paradox. In Jesus, God came to live among His people, save us, protect and lead us like a Shepherd, and carry us throughout our lives in the strong arms of God. But at the same time, this Jesus came as the Lamb of God, who shed His blood for us to be forgiven of our sins. So God Himself came in the person of Jesus to pay our sins' death penalty, to bring us the forgiveness of sins, and also to give us rebirth into God's Kingdom, and to become the Shepherd of His people who are pastored and led by God Himself. This is the gift of Christmas.

So who needs a Shepherd? We are no longer farmers or shepherds; we believe we are pretty smart and can do just about anything. We have super computers, connected through the internet, and most of us carry our computers in our pockets, via our phones. We are able to guide and direct our own lives. So why do we need a shepherd? Why do we need God?

It is unfortunate that despite all our learning, many of us are ignorant of the most vital and eternally relevant information in the Universe. For it is God who created us, and this planet upon which we live. We, and planet Earth, are all way too sophisticated to be brought about by random chance.

So whenever God is excluded from our knowledge, then we are missing the crucial Person and integrity that makes everything else have purpose and meaning. Thus we all need God to be our Shepherd. We all need His presence, His wisdom, His power, and His abilities. We need Him do the four things the Psalmist requested in Psalm 28:9: We need a God to save us, and to rescue us from our self-destructiveness, our sins, our arrogance, our short-sightedness, our guilt and from death, which awaits each one of us. We also need God's blessings to sustain us and encourage us to keep going when the going gets tough. We need His wisdom to understand why we are here, and what we should

be doing throughout each day. We need to belong and be loved, and there is no greater motivator than to be valued and loved by God, our Creator.

We need a shepherd to warn us when we are entering a dangerous situation, to lead us around obstacles, to protect us from predators, and to feed our souls. We need a Shepherd God, who is big enough to deal with anything we face, and strong enough to carry us on His shoulders when we are exhausted. We all need a God who will carry us forever.

Jesus came to save you, bless you, lead and protect you, and lovingly carry you when you are overwhelmed, or exhausted. Do you have a relationship with Jesus? If not, why not turn to Him, ask Him to forgive you, to come live inside you, to unleash God's saving, blessing, guiding and carrying power in your life?

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