

Message Eleven

**Shepherds according to God's Heart**

Scripture Reading: Jer. 2:8; 3:15; 10:21; 23:1-4;  
Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11-31; John 10:11; Heb. 13:20-21;  
1 Pet. 2:25; 5:2, 4; Rev. 7:16-17

**I. Jehovah spoke through the prophet Jeremiah concerning the shepherds, the rulers—Jer. 2:8; 10:21:**

- A. The shepherds, the rulers, transgressed against Jehovah; they did not seek Jehovah, and their flock was scattered—2:8; 10:21.
- B. The shepherds destroyed and scattered the sheep of Jehovah's pasture—23:1-2.
- C. Jehovah promised that He would gather the remnant of His flock and bring them back to their pasture and that He would raise up shepherds over them who would shepherd them, and they would be fruitful and multiply—vv. 3-4.
- D. Jehovah promised to give Israel shepherds according to His own heart; such shepherds would give the people of God proper knowledge and understanding of God—3:15.

**II. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament reveal Christ as the Shepherd according to God's heart—Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11-31; John 10:11; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Rev. 7:16-17:**

- A. As the mighty One, the ruling and judging One, Christ comes to be a Shepherd; He cares for His flock by ruling and correcting His sheep and by feeding His flock, gathering the lambs in His arm, carrying them in His bosom, and leading those who are nursing the young—Isa. 40:10-11; Matt. 2:6; 9:36.
- B. Ezekiel 34:11-31 prophesies that the Lord Himself will come as the Shepherd to search for His sheep and seek them out:
  - 1. As the Shepherd, the Lord will gather His people, His sheep, out of the nations and bring them back to the land of Canaan, which typifies the all-inclusive Christ as the allotted portion of God's people, to dwell on the high mountains, signifying the resurrected and ascended Christ—vv. 11, 14.
  - 2. When the Lord Jesus comes as the Shepherd to care for us, He comes also as the King to govern us; the issue of the Lord's caring for us as our Shepherd is that we obey Him as our King and come under His kingship and His throne within us—vv. 23-24.
- C. Christ is the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, and the Shepherd of our souls—John 10:9-17; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2:25:

## JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

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1. As the good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus came that we may have life and may have it abundantly—John 10:10-11:
  - a. He laid down His soul-life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep that they may share His zoe life, His divine life—vv. 11, 15, 17.
  - b. He leads His sheep out of the fold into Himself as the pasture, the feeding place, where they may eat freely of Him and be nourished by Him—v. 9.
  - c. The Lord has formed the Jewish and Gentile believers into one flock (the church, the Body of Christ) under His shepherding—v. 16.
2. God raised up from the dead “our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant”—Heb. 13:20:
  - a. The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body of Christ and consummating in the New Jerusalem.
  - b. As the great Shepherd, the Lord is making real to us the contents of the new covenant and is leading us into the experience and enjoyment of all the positive matters revealed in the book of Hebrews—8:8-13; 1:1-3; 2:9-18; 5:6-10, 14; 7:16, 22, 24-26; 13:1, 8, 12-15.
3. As the Chief Shepherd, Christ shepherds His flock through the elders of the churches—1 Pet. 5:4:
  - a. Without the elders’ shepherding, the church cannot be built up—v. 2.
  - b. The elders’ shepherding should be Christ’s shepherding through them.
4. As the Shepherd of our souls, the pneumatic Christ oversees our inward condition, caring for the situation of our inner being—2:25:
  - a. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our soul and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our inner being.
  - b. Because our soul is very complicated, we need Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, to shepherd us in our soul, to take care of our mind, emotion, and will and of our problems, needs, and wounds.

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- c. As the Shepherd of our souls, the Lord restores our soul and gives rest to our soul—Psa. 23:3a; Matt. 11:28-30.
- 5. In eternity future Christ will be our eternal Shepherd guiding us to springs of waters of life—Rev. 7:16-17:
  - a. As our eternal Shepherd, Christ will lead us into Himself as the springs of waters of life so that we may enjoy the eternal dispensing of the Triune God—v. 17a.
  - b. The waters of life will be supplied, and the water of tears will be wiped away—v. 17b.
  - c. Under Christ's shepherding in eternity, there will be no tears, no hunger, and no thirst—only enjoyment—vv. 16-17.

**III. In His heavenly ministry the Lord Jesus continues the shepherding that He began in His earthly ministry—Heb. 13:20-21:**

- A. In John 21:15-17 the Lord commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens; this was to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd God's flock:
  - 1. What He was doing in the heavens, the apostles did on earth to carry out His heavenly ministry—Heb. 13:20-21; John 21:15-17.
  - 2. Regarding shepherding, the apostolic ministry cooperates with Christ's heavenly ministry—vv. 15-17.
- B. The apostle Paul is a pattern of shepherding the saints in cooperation with Christ's shepherding in His heavenly ministry—Heb. 13:20-21; 7:25-26; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Acts 20:20:
  - 1. Paul shepherded the saints as a nursing mother and an exhorting father—1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12.
  - 2. Paul shepherded the saints in Ephesus by teaching them “publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20) and by admonishing each one of the saints with tears even for as long as three years (vv. 31, 19), declaring to them all the counsel of God (v. 27).
  - 3. Paul had been enlarged in his heart to have the intimate concern of the ministering life—2 Cor. 7:2-3; 1 Thes. 2:8; Phil. 2:19-20.
  - 4. Paul came down to the weak ones' level so that he could gain them—2 Cor. 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; cf. Matt. 12:20.
  - 5. As a lover of the church in oneness with the church-loving Christ, Paul was willing to spend what he had, referring to

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his possessions, and to spend what he was, referring to his being, for the sake of the saints in order to build up the Body of Christ—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 11:28-29.

**IV. Those who shepherd the flock of God should shepherd according to God—1 Pet. 5:2:**

- A. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes—Rom. 9:15-16; 11:22, 33; Eph. 2:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:12.
- B. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to God's nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to our preference, interest, purpose, and disposition.
- C. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become God in life, nature, expression, and function—John 1:12-13; 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:4:
  - 1. We need to be the reproduction of Christ, the expression of God, so that in our shepherding we express God, not the self with its disposition and peculiarities—John 1:18; Heb. 1:3; 2:10; Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19.
  - 2. We need to become God in His function of shepherding the flock of God according to what He is and according to His goal in His economy—Eph. 4:16; Rev. 21:2.
  - 3. When we are one with God, we become God in life and nature and are God in our shepherding of others—1 John 5:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Pet. 5:2.

**V. The shepherding that builds up the Body of Christ is a mutual shepherding—1 Cor. 12:23-26:**

- A. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive, tender care of the flock—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28.
- B. All believers, regardless of their stage of spiritual growth, need shepherding.
- C. All of us need to be under the organic shepherding of Christ and be one with Him to shepherd others—1 Pet. 2:25; John 21:16.
- D. We need to shepherd the flock of God according to the Father's loving and forgiving heart and according to the Son's seeking, finding, and shepherding spirit—Luke 15:4-24, 32.
- E. We are both sheep and shepherds, shepherding and being shepherded in mutuality; through this mutual shepherding, the Body builds itself up in love—Eph. 4:16.