

## Message Two

### Shepherding in John's Ministry

Scripture Reading: John 10:10-18; 21:15-17; Rev. 1:13; 2:7; 7:16-17

- I. **The meaning of shepherding is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; cf. Psalms 23:1-2:**
  - A. Shepherding refers to caring for all the needs of the sheep.
  - B. All the sheep need to be well provided for and well tended to.
- II. **The Gospel of John reveals that the Lord is the good Shepherd—10:10-11:**
  - A. As the good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly— vv. 10-11:
    1. 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, the eternal life—vv. 11, 15, 17.
    2. 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.
    3. The Lord has formed the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers into one flock (the church, the Body of Christ) under Himself as the one Shepherd—v. 16.
  - B. It is important for us to realize that the Lord shepherds us not in the way of outward activity but inwardly in the way of life; this means that He shepherds us from within— v. 10b:
    1. Inwardly, we have Him as our Shepherd, as a Shepherd of life and in life—vv. 2, 9, 10b.
    2. We need to see that the Lord shepherds us by being life to us from within; we enjoy His shepherding when we live by Him as our life—v. 10b:
      - a. As we are under the Lord's shepherding, there will be a life consciousness within us and also an instruction, a guidance, in life; the life within us, which is actually Christ Himself, will indicate that the Lord intends to lead us in a certain way— cf. Rom. 8:6; *Hymns*, #390.
      - b. The Shepherd, who is life to us, leads us, guides us, and directs us in everything; therefore, we should not be directed by anything outward but instead should be directed inwardly by Christ, who is life to us.
- III. **John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry; this chapter is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John:**
  - A. The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter 20:
    1. The entire book covers the earthly ministry of Christ, beginning with His incarnation as the Word of God to become a man in the flesh (1:14) and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit (20:22); hence, chapter 21 should be an appendix.
    2. Although it is correct to say this, it is more intrinsic to say that John 21 is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John.
  - B. In John 21 the Lord commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep—vv. 15-17:
    1. When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens.

2. This is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ.
  3. Later, in the book of Acts, Peter said, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word" (6:4); this is to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry of intercession (Heb. 7:25) and of ministering God into His people (8:2).
  4. Peter's word concerning shepherding in his first Epistle indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body—1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4.
- C. Shepherding the believers is very crucial for their growth in life; we must take the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church:
3. We should pray, "Lord, I want to be revived; from today I want to be a shepherd; I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people, and to flock people together."
  4. In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: *feed*, *shepherd*, and *flock* (10:16; 21:15-17); we can also use the word *flock* as a verb.
  5. All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blended together; the elders and the co-workers should take the lead to practice this.

**IV. The organic maintenance of the golden lampstands is Christ's heavenly ministry to cherish the churches in His humanity and nourish the churches in His divinity to produce the overcomers through His organic shepherding—Rev. 1:13; 2:7; John 10:11, 14; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20:**

- A. The Son of Man is Christ in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity, and breasts are a sign of love:
1. Christ was girded at the loins, strengthened for the divine work (Exo. 28:4; Dan. 10:5) to produce the churches, but now He is girded about at the breasts, caring in His love for the churches that He has produced (Rev. 1:13).
  2. The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity as His divine energy, and the breasts signify that this golden energy is exercised and motivated by and with His love to nourish the churches.
- B. Christ takes care of the churches in His humanity as the Son of Man to cherish them—v. 13a:
1. He dresses the lamps of the lampstands to make them proper, cherishing us that we may be happy, pleasant, and comfortable—Exo. 30:7; cf. Psa. 42:5, 11.
  2. He trims the wicks of the lamps of the lampstands, cutting off all the negative things, which frustrate our shining—Exo. 25:38.
- C. Christ takes care of the churches in His divinity with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts, to nourish the churches—Rev. 1:13b:
1. He nourishes us with Himself as the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages so that we may grow and mature in the divine life to be His overcomers to accomplish His eternal economy.
  2. As the walking Christ, He gets to know the condition of each church, and as the speaking Spirit, He trims and fills the lampstands with fresh oil, the supply of the Spirit—2:1, 7; cf. Exo. 27:20-21; Zech. 4:6, 11-14.
  3. To participate in His move and enjoy His care, we must be in the churches.

**V. For eternity we will have the experience and enjoyment of Christ as our eternal Shepherd—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.