

## Message Five

### **The Apostolic Ministry in Cooperation with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd the Church of God as His Flock for the Building Up of the Body of Christ and a New Revival**

Scripture Reading: John 10:11, 16; 21:15-17;  
1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 1:13; 2:1, 7

- I. Psalms 22 through 24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion through His shepherding to His kingship in the coming age:**
  - A. Psalm 23, which concerns Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection and ascension, is the bridge between Christ's redeeming death and His church-producing resurrection in Psalm 22 and Christ's coming back as the King, who will regain the entire earth through the church as His Body in Psalm 24.
  - B. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people; if this fellowship is received by us, there will be a big revival on the earth to bring the Lord back.
- II. John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry; it 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.
  - B. 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.
  - C. 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; it consummates the entire Gospel of John by showing that Christ's heavenly ministry and the apostles' ministry on the earth cooperate together to carry out God's economy.
- III. In John 10:10-11 and 16 the Lord unveiled to the disciples that He was the good Shepherd who came that the sheep might have life abundantly and that He had other sheep (the Gentiles) that He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd:**
  - A. The Lord's shepherding was first in His earthly ministry—Matt. 9:36; cf. 10:1-6.
  - B. The Lord's shepherding is second in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body.
- IV. The Lord commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep:**
  - A. 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—John 21:15-17.
  - B. 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.
  - C. 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).
  - D. Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he tells the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls—1 Pet. 2:25:

1. Christ indwells us to be our life and everything, but He is also overseeing, observing, the condition and situation of our inner being.
  2. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our soul, our real person—cf. Heb. 13:17.
- E. Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they, the faithful elders, will receive the unfading crown of glory—1 Pet. 5:1-4.
- F. Peter’s word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body.

**V. The following words of the apostle Paul also show the incorporation of the apostolic ministry with Christ’s heavenly ministry to take care of God’s flock:**

- A. In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders in Ephesus, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained [or purchased] through His own blood.”
- B. Paul said, “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (v. 29); the apostle did not care for his own life (v. 24), but he was very concerned for the future of the church, which was a treasure to him and to God.
- C. Paul says in Hebrews 13:20, “God...brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant”:
1. The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body and consummating the New Jerusalem; the eternal covenant of God is to consummate the New Jerusalem by the shepherding.
  2. God raised up our Lord from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God’s eternal covenant.

**VI. The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ’s heavenly ministry are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God—cf. Eph. 3:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 5:10.**

**VII. The matter of shepherding God’s flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is even referred to in Song of Songs:**

- A. “Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock [for satisfaction]? / Where do you make it lie down at noon [for rest]?”—1:7a.
- B. “Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds’ tents”—v. 8b.
- C. “My beloved is mine, and I am his; / He pastures his flock among the lilies [the seekers of Christ who live a life of trusting in God with a single heart]”—2:16.
- D. “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies”—6:3.

**VIII. To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in life; we must take the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church:**

- A. 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.”
- B. In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: *feed*, *shepherd*, and *flock* (10:16; 21:15-16); we can also use the word *flock* as a verb.
- C. All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blent together; the elders and co-workers should take the lead to practice this.

**IX. The organic maintenance of the golden lampstand 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 in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His divinity, and the 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 for the churches that He has produced by His love (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:
    - a. The Lord's presence provides an atmosphere of tenderness and warmth to cherish our being, giving us rest, comfort, healing, cleansing, and encouragement.
    - b. We can enjoy the cherishing atmosphere of the Lord's presence in the church to receive the nourishing supply of life—Eph. 5:29; cf. 1 Tim. 4:6; Eph. 4:11.
  - 2. He trims the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, cutting off all the negative things, which frustrate our shining—Exo. 25:38:
    - a. The charred part of the wick, the snuff, signifies things that are not according to God's purpose, which need to be cut off, such as our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation.
    - b. He trims away all the differences among the churches (the wrongdoings, shortages, failures, and defects) so that they may be the same in essence, appearance, and expression—cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 12:18; Phil. 2:2.
- 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.

**X. Through Christ's wonderful shepherding, we will enjoy Him as our blessings both today and for eternity—Isa. 49:10; Rev. 7:9-17; John 6:35; 4:13-14; Psa. 36:7-9; 91:1; Isa. 12:1-6; Rev. 22:1.**