

**MEETING GOD'S NEED
AND PRESENT NEEDS IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY**

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

**Entering into Christ's Wonderful Shepherding in His Heavenly Ministry
to Shepherd the Church of God as a Slave of God for the Fulfillment of the Dream of God**

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:19-20, 28, 31; John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; Matt. 24:45-47; 25:3-4, 9, 22-23

I. We need to enter into Christ's wonderful shepherding in His heavenly ministry by enjoying and ministering Christ to shepherd the church of God as a slave of God for the fulfillment of the dream of God, the eternal purpose of God—Acts 20:19-20, 28, 31; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 6:17; Mark 9:7-8; Eph. 3:11:

- A. God's dream is the dream of His eternal purpose to have the reality of Bethel, the house of God, the mutual dwelling place of God and man; in this universe God is doing only one thing—He is building His eternal habitation for His eternal expression—Gen. 28:11-12, 16-19a; Matt. 16:18; John 14:23; 15:5; Rev. 21:3, 22.
- B. Christ as the Slave-Savior did not come to be served, but to serve; as the great Shepherd of the sheep, He served us in the past, He still serves us in the present, and He is going to serve us in the future—Mark 10:45; Luke 22:26-27; 12:37; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 7:17; Gen. 48:15.
- C. Whenever we have a need, we can come to the Lord and let Him serve us so that He can serve others through us; as the life-giving Spirit, the Slave-Savior shepherds others through us by dispensing Himself as life into us so that we can become the channel for Him to dispense Himself as life into others—Matt. 26:13; John 13:12-17; 1 John 3:16; John 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6.
- D. Our service to the Lord in time is a preparation for our service to Him in the next age and in eternity—Matt. 25:21; Rev. 22:3:
 - 1. Our usefulness before God is the result of our being mingled with Him; the measure of God in us is the measure of our usefulness before Him—Col. 2:19; Heb. 13:20; Phil. 2:13; 3:8-9.
 - 2. God's only goal in time is to dispense Himself into us day by day so that we may be fully mingled with Him; all our service is a matter of God coming into us and coming out of us—John 7:37-39; 2 Cor. 3:2-3, 6, 16-18.
- E. Christ as the Steward in God's house makes us the dispensing stewards of the mysteries of God and of the varied grace of God for the carrying out of His eternal economy, His household administration—1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:10; Isa. 22:15-22.

II. To shepherd the flock of God is to watch over the souls of the saints, being one with the Lord as the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls in His care for the welfare of their inner being and in His exercising His oversight over the condition of their real person—John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-6; Heb. 13:17:

- A. For the sake of the flock, the elders must enjoy the Lord every day as grace and truth so that they may be dispensers of grace and truth—Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Tim. 3:2b; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 1:9.
- B. For the sake of the flock, the elders need to buy the oil every day (Matt. 25:3-4, 9), to pay the price to gain more of the Spirit, by buying the truth of God's economy (Prov. 23:23), buying gold refined by fire that they may be rich toward God, buying white garments

that they may be clothed with Christ by living out Christ, and buying eyesalve as the anointing Spirit to heal their blindness (Rev. 3:18).

- C. For the sake of the flock, the co-workers and elders need to be faithful and prudent slaves, taking care of the Lord's possessions and investing their spiritual gift by giving the food of the word of God, the full gospel of God's economy, to the sinners, the believers, and the churches—Rom. 1:1; Matt. 24:45-47; 25:22-23.

III. The elders should not lord it over God's flock, which is God's possession; the churches are God's possession, allotted to the elders as their portion, entrusted to them by God for their care—1 Pet. 5:3-4:

- A. To lord it over others is to exercise lordship over those who are ruled (Matt. 20:25); among the believers we are all brothers, and only Christ is our Lord, our Master, and the Lord of the harvest (23:8, 10; Luke 10:2).
- B. The elders in the church can take the leadership (not the lordship) only by becoming patterns of the flock, taking the lead to serve and care for the church so that the believers may follow—1 Pet. 5:3; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:17.
- C. We should not tell the saints where to live, what to do, or where to go without directing them to pray so that we can honor Christ as the Head of the Body:
 - 1. Any decisions that you make by yourself for others are an insult to Christ as the Head of the Body; none of us should ever tell others where they should go; what an insult this is to the Lord!—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16.
 - 2. If you have told others where to move, you must repent and ask them to forgive you because you gave them instructions about what they should do; to do this is to usurp the position of the Lord and to make yourself the Lord.
 - 3. Concerning any move you make in the Lord's recovery, you must go directly to the Lord Himself and pray; you must have the assurance that the Lord is sending you; everything must be brought into the presence of the Lord, and everyone should pray until he is clear about the Lord's leadings—Mark 1:35-38; 2 Cor. 2:12-14.
- D. We also need to check whether the leading we have from the Lord corresponds to the feeling of the Body—Acts 13:1-4a; 21:4, 11:
 - 1. If the leading ones, after much prayer, are truly burdened about a certain matter, through fellowship they should pass on their burden to the saints and ask the saints to pray; eventually, the saints will receive a personal leading from the Lord, and they may move accordingly.
 - 2. If you move to a place without prayer and fellowship, you will be shaken when tests, afflictions, and persecutions come; if you pray and fellowship, you will have the assurance that the Lord sent you there, and you will never regret your move, no matter what the outward situation may be.
- E. We need to be careful about directing or controlling the young saints related to their marriage—Matt. 19:5-6:
 - 1. In the church life all we can do concerning the young people's marriage is to minister life to them; we must help them to look to the Lord's leading, to learn how to walk in the Spirit, and help them not to indulge in lust or to have their own taste or choice—Gen. 2:21-24; 24:64-67; 49:31.
 - 2. We should not try to conduct them into a marriage or match them; only the Lord knows who is a good match for another person; we do not know.
 - 3. We do not control and, even the more, we do not conduct or indicate what brother or sister might be best for them; if we leave this matter to the Lord and pray for the ones concerned, we will save the church much trouble.

4. On the one hand, we should not interfere with them; on the other hand, we have to help them in morality, in life, in human living, in taking care of the future, concerning their parents, and even in praying and seeking the Lord concerning the one whom they marry not being their choice.

IV. We need to take care of the saints in everything and in every way for the dispensing of Christ into them:

- A. The elders must minister Christ to meet the need of all kinds of people, contacting and visiting them regularly and inviting them to their home for meals—1 Tim. 5:1-2; 2 Chron. 1:10; Col. 1:28-29; Jude 12; John 12:1-11.
- B. We must contact the saints and minister Christ to them as the sin-dealing life; the life of Christ is a life that deals with sin, a sin-dealing life—Lev. 10:17:
 1. If we are going to minister Christ to a person who has been committing sins, we have to trust in the Lord that we may have the grace with the Spirit to soften his hardened heart—Rom. 2:4; Titus 3:3-4; cf. Heb. 3:13.
 2. We do not need to mention his weakness, fault, or sin, because the life of Christ ministered into him will heal him, killing the germs, destroying the problems, and building up a permanent, lasting oneness of the Spirit.
 3. We have to do our best to recover a fallen saint; even if it took eight months or a year to get one or two sinful saints recovered, this would be a great thing—Gal. 6:1-2; 1 John 5:16a.
 4. This is to bear away the iniquity and solve the problems of the people of God; furthermore, this kind of ministry by the Spirit and in love will maintain the oneness of the Spirit in the church life—Col. 3:12-15.

V. In their fellowship with one another, the elders need to be restricted in their speaking—John 6:63; Acts 6:10:

- A. Those who cover others' sins, defects, and shortcomings enjoy, gain, and receive blessing, but uncovering brings in a curse—Prov. 10:12; James 5:19-20; Gen. 9:21-27.
- B. The elders need to realize that in their shepherding, they have to cover others' sins, not to take account of others' evils—1 Cor. 13:5-7.
- C. Love covers all things, not only the good things but also the bad things; whoever uncovers the defects, shortcomings, and sins of the members of the church is disqualified from the eldership—cf. Matt. 24:49.
- D. The elders should not speak reviling words (to revile is to rebuke or criticize harshly or abusively; to assail with abusive language); those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; in order for the church to maintain the oneness, the brothers and sisters must withstand reviling words—1 Cor. 6:10; cf. Num. 6:6; Lev. 5:3.
- E. The consciousness of sin comes from knowing God; in the same way, the consciousness of reviling words comes from the knowledge of the Body; reviling words are opposed to the testimony of the Body—1 Cor. 1:10.
- F. God will never entrust authority to those who by nature like to criticize others; the elders, on the one hand, should have a clear sight over the people with much discernment, and on the other hand, they should be blind spiritually—Eph. 4:29-32.

VI. 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.

VII. The goal of Christ's wonderful shepherding in His heavenly ministry is to build up the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God; for eternity we will enjoy the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shepherding us and continually guiding us to springs of waters of life—Rev. 7:13-17.