

Message Eleven

God's Recovery by Life through His Shepherding

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

I. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive, tender care of the flock—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28:

- A. Shepherding refers to caring for all the needs of the sheep—Psa. 23.
- B. All the sheep need to be well provided for and well tended to.

II. In Ezekiel 34 the Lord Himself comes as the Shepherd to search for His sheep and seek them out—vv. 11-31; Luke 15:3-7; Matt. 9:36; John 10:11; 21:15-17; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:3-4:

- A. The Lord brings us out from among the unbelievers to Himself—Ezek. 34:12-13a; cf. Eph. 2:12-13.
- B. He brings us to our own land, signifying Christ as the good land of Canaan—Ezek. 34:13b; cf. Col. 1:12.
- C. He brings us back to the high mountains, signifying the resurrected and ascended Christ—Ezek. 34:13-14.
- D. He brings us back to the streams, signifying the living water of the life-giving Spirit—v. 13; Rev. 22:1; 1 Cor. 12:13; Psa. 36:8.
- E. He feeds His flock by the streams, signifying His feeding us with His riches—Ezek. 34:13; Rev. 22:1-2a.
- F. He brings us back to the good and rich pasture, signifying Christ as our life supply—Ezek. 34:14; Psa. 23:2; John 10:9; cf. 1 Tim. 1:4.
- G. He causes us to lie down, giving us inward rest—Ezek. 34:15; S. S. 1:7; Matt. 11:28-30.
- H. He binds up the broken one and strengthens the sick one, signifying His binding up and healing the brokenhearted and sick ones—Ezek. 34:16a; Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19; Matt. 9:9-13.
- I. The Lord exercises righteous judgments among us, clearing away all the unjust things—Ezek. 34:17-22; Col. 3:15.
- J. Christ is the real David, the real Shepherd, set up as the one Shepherd to feed us and cause us to be filled and satisfied—Ezek. 34:23:
 - 1. He takes care of us, including all our problems and responsibilities and every aspect of our living—Psa. 23.
 - 2. 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—Rev. 7:17.
 - 3. As we experience the Lord's shepherding and remain under His kingship, we enjoy His covenant of peace and are no longer subject to spiritual troubles and disturbances—Ezek. 37:25a.
 - 4. Under His shepherding, all the evil beasts, evil persons, are kept away from the Lord's recovered people—34:25b; cf. Acts 20:28-29; Phil. 3:2-3.
 - 5. He breaks the bars of all our yokes, including the yokes of sin and the world, and delivers us from all kinds of slavery—Ezek. 34:27b.
 - 6. He promises that we will not be prey to the enemy and that we will dwell in peace and safety—vv. 28a, 25b.

- K. He causes us to become a source of blessing to others so that they may be supplied with Him as the showers of blessing and as the planting place of renown—vv. 26-27a, 29; Zech. 10:1; Ezek. 36:35.
- L. Through the experience of His shepherding, we have God's presence; we are His and He is ours in our fellowship with Him in oneness for the mingling of God and man—34:30-31.

III. 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:

- A. As the good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly—John 10:10-11:
 - 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—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 and Gentile believers into one flock (the church, the Body of Christ) under His shepherding—v. 16.
- B. 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:
 - 1. The eternal covenant is to consummate the New Jerusalem by shepherding.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. As the great Shepherd, the Lord is making real to us the contents of the new covenant—8:8-13.
- C. As the Chief Shepherd, Christ shepherds His flock through the elders of the churches—1 Pet. 5:4:
 - 1. Without the elders' shepherding, the church cannot be built up.
 - 2. The elders' shepherding should be Christ's shepherding through them.
- D. As the Shepherd of our souls, the pneumatic Christ oversees our inward condition, caring for the situation of our inner being—2:25:
 - 1. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our soul and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our inner being.
 - 2. Because our soul is very complicated, we need Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, to shepherd us in our soul in order to take care of our mind, emotion, and will and our problems, needs, and wounds.
 - 3. As the Shepherd of our souls, the Lord restores our soul and gives rest to our soul—Psa. 23:3a; Matt. 11:28-30.

IV. John 21, a chapter on shepherding, is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John; shepherding is the key to the Gospel of John:

- A. The Gospel of John is a book on Christ coming to be our life by cherishing and nourishing us; to cherish people is to make them happy, pleasant, and comfortable (Matt. 9:10; Luke 7:34), and to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ (Matt. 24:45-47).
- B. After His resurrection, the Lord shepherded Peter and commissioned him to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep; this is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, the church, which issues in the Body of Christ—John 21:15-17:

1. The apostles were commissioned by the ascended Christ to cooperate with Him to carry out God's New Testament economy—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10.
2. Regarding shepherding, the apostolic ministry cooperates with Christ's heavenly ministry, doing on earth what He is doing in the heavens.

V. First Peter 5:2 speaks of shepherding the flock of God according to God:

- A. *According to God* means that we live God.
- B. When we are one with God, we become God and we are God in our shepherding of others.
- C. 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.
- D. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes—1 John 1:5; 4:8, 16.
- E. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become God in life, nature, expression, and function:
 1. We need to be filled to the brim with the divine life, enjoying the Triune God as the fountain, the spring, and the river to become a totality of the divine life, even to become the divine life itself—John 4:14; Col. 3:4.
 2. We need to become God in His attributes of love, light, righteousness, and holiness—1 John 3:2; 2 Pet. 1:4.
 3. 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 12:24.
 4. 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—Psa. 23:6b; Eph. 4:12, 16; Rev. 21:2, 10-11.

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