

Message 2: 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

2017 ITERO-S 2b



Hymns: 612

REVELATION

- I. Psalm 23 reveals that we will need to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd the church of God and bring the Lord back:**
 - A. **The bridge of Christ two comings:** Psalm 23 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. **The cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry:** In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people to bring the Lord back.
- II. John 21 reveals that we will need to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd the church of God and consummate His economy**
 - A. **The end of the Gospel of John:** The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter 20.
 - B. **The continuation of Christ's earthly ministry:** 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 and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit—John 1:14; 20:22.
 - C. **The cooperation of Christ's heavenly ministry:** 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. Christ was the good Shepherd who came that the sheep might have life abundantly. He must lead His other sheep (the Gentiles) to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd—John 10:10-11, 16:**
 - A. The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry—Matt. 9:36; cf. 10:1-6.
 - B. The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body—1 Pet. 5:4.
- IV. The Lord commissioned Peter to cooperate with His heavenly ministry to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep—John 21:15-17:**
 - A. After His resurrection, the Lord 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. Through interceding, minister God into His people: Per Peter, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word"—Acts 6:4; Heb. 7.25; 8:2.
 - D. So that they can return to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls: Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he told the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they had now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls—1 Pet. 2:25:
 - 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. To cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry to build up the body of Christ: 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 apostle Paul also incorporated the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock—Acts 20:28-19; Heb. 13:20:**
 - A. Elders should shepherd the church of God: 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. Care of God's flock: 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. Lord Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep: 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":
 - 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. God raised up our Lord from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant.

APPLICATION

- 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 shepherding is being executed through our love to the beloved**
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:
- To make the sheep to be satisfied:** "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]?"—S.S. 1:7a.
 - To make the sheep to go forth on the footsteps of the flock:** "Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds' tents"—S.S. 8b.
 - To live a life of trusting in God with a single heart:** "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]"—S.S. 2:16.
 - To enjoy the love of being one with the Lord:** "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies"—S.S. 6:3.
- VIII. The importance of shepherding – a very crucial and practical way of preaching gospel and reviving the church**
We must take the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church:
- Need a prayer of being a shepherd:** 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."
 - Shepherding will bring the sheep to become on flock:** In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: *feed*, *shepherd*, and *flock* (John 10:16; 21:15-16); we can also use the word *flock* as a verb.
 - We will need to take a lead to practice shepherding:** 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:**
- The Son of Man is in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His divinity, and breasts are a sign of love:
 - 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).
 - 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.
 - Christ takes care of the churches in His humanity as the Son of Man to cherish them—Rev. 13a:
 - 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;
 - He trims the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, cutting off all the negative things, which frustrate our shining. He also 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—Exo. 25:38;
 - 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:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - To participate in His move and enjoy His care, we must be in the churches.
- X. Conclusion: Through Christ's wonderful shepherding, we will enjoy Him as our blessings both today and for eternity—Isa. 49:10; Rev. 7:9-17.**

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REVELATION

SHEPHERDING

APPLICATION

- I. Psalm 23 reveals that we will need to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd and bring the Lord back:**
- Psalm 22 describes Christ's redeeming death and His church-producing resurrection
 - Psalm 24 describes Christ's coming back as the King, who will regain the entire earth through the church as His Body
 - Psalm 23 is the bridge [Psa 23:1] *Jehovah is my Shepherd* describes Christ's heavenly ministry in shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him to bring the Lord back.
- II. John 21 reveals that we will need to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd and consummate His economy**
- The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter 20.
 - John 21 is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John [John 21:16]... *do you love Me?... Shepherd My sheep.* 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. Christ's shepherding in His earthly and heavenly ministries**
- The Lord's shepherding in His earthly ministry [Matt. 9:36] *And seeing the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and cast away like sheep not having a shepherd.*
 - The Lord's shepherding in His heavenly ministry (incorporated with apostolic ministry [1 Pet. 5:4] *And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*
- IV. The Apostle Peter cooperated with Lord's heavenly ministry to shepherd**
- Before His ascension, the Lord commissioned Peter to shepherd His sheep, the church [John 21:16]... *do you love Me?... Shepherd My sheep.*
 - Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God [1 Pet. 5:2-3] *Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God...Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.*
- IV. The Apostle Paul cooperated with Lord's heavenly ministry to shepherd**
- A. Shepherd the church of God [Acts 20:28] *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock...shepherd the church of God, which He purchased] through His own blood.*
- B. Lord Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep [Heb. 13:20] *Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant."*
- VI. The main purpose and goal of shepherding: to build up the Body of Christ and consummate the eternal economy of God**
- [Eph. 3:2] *If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you*
- Stewardship, in Greek, is the same word as economy (Eph. 1:10) Stewardship is dispensing grace of God to complete the economy of God
- * HOW TO SHEPHERD**
- VII. The shepherding is being executed through our love to the beloved**
- [1 Cor. 12:31] *And moreover I show to you a most excellent way.*
- Love makes the sheep satisfied [S.S. 1:7] *Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock*
 - Love makes the sheep to be one with the Lord [S.S. 6:3] *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; He pastures his flock among the lilies.*
- VIII. The shepherding is the way of preaching gospel and reviving the church**
- The Lord used three words concerning shepherding: *feed, shepherd, and flock* [John 10:16] *And I have other sheep...and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.*
 - We should respond to Lord's commission by declaring "Lord, I will go and shepherd your sheep and bring them to the flock"
- IX. The shepherding includes cherishing in His humanity and nourishing in His divinity**
- [Rev. 1:13] *And in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.*
- The Son of Man is girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle: Son of Man is His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His divinity, and breasts are a sign of love
 - Christ cherishes us in His humanity that we may be happy, pleasant, and comfortable [Psa. 42:5] *Why are you cast down, O my soul? ... praise Him For the salvation of His countenance.*
 - Christ nourishes us in His divinity that we may grow and mature [Acts 6:4] *But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.*
- X. Praise the Lord! We will enjoy Him as our blessings both today and for eternity**
- [Matt. 25:21] *His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. Enter into the joy of your master.*
- [Rev. 7:17] *For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them... and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*