

# COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

## 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

EM Hymns 612

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

- John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
- John 10:16 And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
- John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.
- 1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,
- 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.
- Rev 2:1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:
- Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

### 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:

- Psa 22:1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? / Why are You so far from saving me, / From the words of my groaning?
- Psa 22:2 O my God, I call out in the day, but You do not answer; / And in the night, but there is no rest for me.
- Psa 22:3 But You are holy, You who sit enthroned / Upon the praises of Israel.
- Psa 22:4 In You our fathers trusted; / They trusted and You rescued them.
- Psa 22:5 To You they cried out and were delivered; / In You they trusted and were not put to shame.
- Psa 22:6 But I am a worm and not a man, / A reproach of men and one despised by the people.
- Psa 22:7 All who see me deride me; / They sneer at me; they shake their heads, saying,
- Psa 22:8 He committed himself to Jehovah; let Him rescue him; / Let Him deliver him since He takes pleasure in him.
- Psa 22:9 But You are the One who drew me forth from the womb, / Who made me trust while at my mother's breasts.
- Psa 22:10 I was cast upon You from birth; / From my mother's womb You have been my God.
- Psa 22:11 Do not be far from me, / For trouble is near, / For there is none to help me.
- Psa 22:12 Many bulls surround me; / The mighty bulls of Bashan encompass me.
- Psa 22:13 They open their mouth at me, / Like a ravening and roaring lion.
- Psa 22:14 I am poured out like water, / And all my bones are out of joint. / My heart is like wax; / It is

- melted within me.
- Psa 22:15 My strength is dried up like a shard, / And my tongue is stuck to my jaws; / You have put me in the dust of death.
- Psa 22:16 For dogs surround me; / A company of evildoers encloses me; / They pierce my hands and feet.
- Psa 22:17 I count all my bones; / They look, they stare at me.
- Psa 22:18 They divide my garments to themselves, / And for my clothing they cast lots.
- Psa 22:19 But You, O Jehovah, be not far off; / O my help, hasten to aid me.
- Psa 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword, / My precious life from the power of the dog;
- Psa 22:21 Save me from the mouth of the lion; / Indeed while I am in the horns of wild oxen, answer me.
- Psa 22:22 I will declare Your name to my brothers; / In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
- Psa 22:23 You who fear Jehovah, praise Him! / All you seed of Jacob, glorify Him! / And stand in awe of Him, all you seed of Israel!
- Psa 22:24 For He has not despised nor detested / The affliction of him who is afflicted; / And He has not hidden His face from him; / But when he cried out to Him, He heard.
- Psa 22:25 From You comes my praise in the great assembly; / My vows will I pay before those who fear Him.
- Psa 22:26 The lowly will eat and be satisfied; / Those who seek after Jehovah will praise Him - / May your hearts live forever!
- Psa 22:27 All the ends of the earth / Will remember and return to Jehovah, / And all families of the nations / Will worship before You;
- Psa 22:28 For the kingdom is Jehovah's, / And He rules among the nations.
- Psa 22:29 All the flourishing of the earth / Will eat and worship. / All who go down into the dust will bow down before Him, / Even he who does not keep his soul alive.
- Psa 22:30 A seed will serve Him; / That which concerns the Lord will be told to a coming generation.
- Psa 22:31 They will come and declare His righteousness / To a people yet to be born, that He has done this.
- Psa 23:1 Jehovah is my Shepherd; I will lack nothing.
- Psa 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; / He leads me beside waters of rest.
- Psa 23:3 He restores my soul; He guides me on the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake.
- Psa 23:4 Even though I walk / Through the valley of the shadow of death, / I do not fear evil, / For You are with me; / Your rod and Your staff, / They comfort me.
- Psa 23:5 You spread a table before me / In the presence of my adversaries; / You anoint my head with oil; / My cup runs over.
- Psa 23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me / All the days of my life, / And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah / For the length of my days.
- Psa 24:1 The earth is Jehovah's, and its fullness, / The habitable land and those who dwell in it.
- Psa 24:2 For it is He who founded it upon the seas / And established it upon the streams.
- Psa 24:3 Who may ascend the mountain of Jehovah, / And who may stand in His holy place?
- Psa 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, / Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood / Or sworn deceitfully.
- Psa 24:5 He will receive blessing from Jehovah, / And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- Psa 24:6 This is the generation of those who seek Him, / Those who seek Your face, even Jacob. Selah.
- Psa 24:7 Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in.
- Psa 24:8 Who is the King of glory? / Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!
- Psa 24:9 Lift up your heads, O gates; / And lift up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in.
- Psa 24:10 Who is this King of glory? / Jehovah of hosts - / He is the King of glory! Selah.
- 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.
- Psa 23 be omitted.
- Psa 22 be omitted.
- Psa 24 be omitted.

- 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:**

John 21 be omitted.

- A. The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter 20.  
John 20 be omitted.
- 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.  
John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.  
John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.  
John 21 be omitted.
- 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.  
John 21 be omitted.

**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) which He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd:**

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.

John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:16 And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.

- A. The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry—Matt. 9:36; cf. 10:1-6.  
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.  
Matt 10:1 And He called His twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority over unclean spirits, so that they would cast them out and heal every disease and every sickness.  
Matt 10:2 And the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;  
Matt 10:3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;  
Matt 10:4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.  
Matt 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, charging them, saying, Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans.  
Matt 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- B. The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body.  
1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

**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.

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

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).

Heb 7:25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.

Heb 8:2 A Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

D. 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:

1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

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.

Heb 13:17 Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

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.

1 Pet 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed:

1 Pet 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;

1 Pet 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

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.

Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of 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”:  
 Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who 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.**

- Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,  
 Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel  
 Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,  
 1 Pet 5:10 But the God of all grace, He who has called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground you.

**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.  
 John 10, 21 be omitted.  
 John 10:16 And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.  
 John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.  
 John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
- 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:**

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.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:14 I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me,

1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,

A. The Son of Man is in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His 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 for the churches that He has produced by His love (Rev. 1:13).

Exo 28:4 And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a girding sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and for his sons that he may serve Me as a priest.

Dan 10:5 I lifted up my eyes and I looked, and there was a certain man, clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with the fine gold of Uphaz.

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.

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:

Rev 1:13a And in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, ...

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:

Exo 30:7 And Aaron shall burn on it fragrant incense; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it.

Psa 42:5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? / And why are you disquieted within me? / Hope in God, for I will yet praise Him / For the salvation of His countenance.

Psa 42:11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? / And why are you disquieted within me? / Hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, / The salvation of my countenance and my God.

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.

Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,

1 Tim 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,

2. He trims the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, cutting off all the negative things, which frustrate our shining—Exo. 25:38:

Exo 25:38 And its tongs and its firepans shall be of pure gold.

- 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.

1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

2 Cor 12:18 I entreated Titus and sent with him the brother. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not walk in the same spirit? In the same steps?

Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

- 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:

Rev 1:13b ... and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

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.

Rev 2:1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Exo 27:20 And you shall command the children of Israel to bring to you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually.

Exo 27:21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall maintain it in order from evening to morning before Jehovah; it shall be a perpetual statute to be observed throughout their generations by the children of Israel.

Zech 4:6 And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.

Zech 4:11 Then I answered and said to him, What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?

Zech 4:12 And I answered a second time and said to him, What are the two olive branches that are by the side of the two golden spouts, which empty the gold from themselves?

Zech 4:13 And he spoke to me, saying, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, sir.

Zech 4:14 And he said, These are the two sons of oil, who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

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.**

Isa 49:10 They will not hunger or thirst; / Neither the scorching heat nor the sun will strike them; / For He who has compassion on them will lead them / And will guide them beside the springs of water;

- Rev 7:9 After these things I saw, and behold, there was a great multitude which no one could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands.
- Rev 7:10 And they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.
- Rev 7:11 And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,
- Rev 7:12 Saying, Amen. The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanks and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.
- Rev 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?
- Rev 7:14 And I said to him, My lord, you know. And he said to me, These are those who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- Rev 7:15 Because of this they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits upon the throne will tabernacle over them.
- Rev 7:16 They will not hunger anymore, neither will they thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat upon them, nor any heat;
- Rev 7:17 For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

## **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

### **JOHN 21 BEING THE COMPLETION AND CONSUMMATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter twenty. 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 (1:1-14) and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit (ch. 20); hence, chapter twenty-one should be an appendix. 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. Without chapter twenty-one, John is not completed. 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 New Testament economy.

### **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

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) which He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd.

#### **In His Earthly Ministry**

The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36). The Lord saw the Israelites as sheep harassed by their leaders; they were cast away like sheep not having a shepherd. The Lord as the Shepherd of God's elect prayed, and God told His sent One to appoint twelve apostles that they might take care of the sheep of God (Matt. 10:1-6).

#### **In His Heavenly Ministry**

The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body. When He was on the earth, He was shepherding. After His resurrection and ascension to the heavens, He is still shepherding.

### **COMMISSIONING PETER TO FEED HIS LAMBS AND SHEPHERD HIS SHEEP**

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). Shepherding implies feeding, but it includes much more than feeding. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock.

### **Incorporating the Apostolic Ministry with Christ's Heavenly Ministry**

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.

#### **The Words of the Apostle Paul concerning Shepherding**

The following words of the apostle Paul confirm this.

##### ***The Elders' Shepherding the Church of God***

In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders of 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." Although Paul was on an urgent trip back to Jerusalem, while he was journeying he sent word for the elders in Ephesus to come to him. Then he gave them a long word recorded in Acts 20.

##### ***Fierce Wolves Not Sparing the Flock***

Paul said that "fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). The flock is the church.

##### ***The Great Shepherd of the Sheep***

Paul said 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.

### **PETER'S IMPRESSION WITH THE LORD'S COMMISSION TO FEED HIS LAMBS AND SHEPHERD HIS SHEEP**

#### **Telling the Believers to Return to Christ as 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 (Christ) of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Christ's shepherding of His flock includes His caring for their outward things and also their inner being, their souls. He takes care of the things concerning their souls by overseeing their souls. Christ indwells us to be our life and everything, but He is also overseeing, observing, the condition and situation of our inner being. 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.

#### **Exhorting the Elders to Shepherd the Flock of God**

Peter exhorted 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).

**The Heavenly Ministry of Christ  
Being Mainly to Shepherd the Church of God**

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.

**THE MAIN PURPOSE AND GOAL OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY  
INCORPORATED WITH CHRIST'S HEAVENLY MINISTRY**

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.

**THE SHEPHERDING OF GOD'S FLOCK IN SONG OF SONGS**

This 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. In this book Christ shepherds His seeker and pursuer.

**The Lord Pasturing His Flock for Satisfaction and Rest**

In Song of Songs 1:7a the seeker says, "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]?"

**Going Forth on the Footsteps of the Flock**

The Shepherd responds to the seeker by saying, "Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds' tents" (1:8b). Under the Lord as the Chief Shepherd there are many other shepherds. The many shepherds pasture their young by their tents, that is, where they live.

**Pasturing His Flock among the Lilies**

Song of Songs 2:16 says, "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]." The Lord is pasturing all His seekers as lilies, taking care of them, feeding them, and shepherding them that they may grow.

**Shepherding Being Crucial for the Growth in the Divine Life**

Song of Songs 6:3 says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies." To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in life.

**JOHN 21 BEING AN ADEQUATE AND COMPLETE ENDING**

Without John 21, the Gospel of John does not have an adequate and complete ending.

**TAKING THE SHEPHERDING WAY  
TO PREACH THE GOSPEL AND REVIVE THE CHURCH**

When I first went to Taiwan, I thought nothing could be worked out there. At that time it was a desolate small island. One day the Lord told me to go along the railway from Taipei to visit the saints. After that visitation I was deeply impressed that Taiwan could be a very good field for the Lord's recovery. I picked up a burden and decided to begin the ministry there with a conference on August 1, 1949. About four or five hundred Christians from different denominations, who had escaped from mainland China to Taiwan, came on the first day of the conference. I said to them, "We are here to serve one kind of food—Christ. Please be clear about this. If you want anything else, you are wasting your time in coming here." Most of them did not come back. Only the real seekers came.

We took down their names and began to shepherd them. We distributed their names to different brothers and sisters to go and visit them. From the beginning of the work in Taiwan we practiced shepherding. When we had a big gospel meeting, we could get about five to six hundred names. Then we distributed all the names for the proper care. Most people want to have genuine, proper visitors. When we visit people, we should be genuine in our care for them. They will sense that we are not vain people. This shepherding way of preaching the gospel by visiting people warms them up. The church life in Taiwan began with about three or four hundred believers, but after four years we had forty thousand. Most of the people were not saved directly by my ministry; they were saved by the proper shepherding, the proper care. We all have to learn this.

Before I went to Taiwan in 1949, I was in Chefoo. I spoke each Lord's Day, and during the week I and an older brother went to visit the new ones. We were warmly welcomed by every family. They would gather their household together when we came. Within a short time, there was a real revival in Chefoo. The gospel was preached everywhere, not just by myself but by all the saints.

I also made the decision to set up a kitchen in the meeting hall, and I invited groups of twenty or thirty saints to eat together for fellowship. Within a little over half a year, I had invited all the members of the church. At that time there were at least five to six hundred saints in the church in Chefoo. This kind of shepherding stirred up the entire church. I hope the elders would use the hall as a dining room and invite the saints to come for fellowship. An elder should contact at least one person every day for the purpose of shepherding. We should also invite people to our homes for a meal, not inviting the familiar ones but the new ones. The revival in Chefoo occurred because of this kind of shepherding.

Shepherding works. We should not desire to be giant speakers to make a name for ourselves. People may be attracted to come to listen to us, but who will take care of them afterward? The way of having large gospel campaigns does not work. In some places this has been tested out. We may have big gospel meetings with many people, but eventually not many of them are added to the church. Also, we should not use famous or well-known people to testify in our meetings. This will not save people to be added to the church. Even if someone is the president of the country, he should be in the meeting just as anyone else. The way that can save people effectively must be by small vital groups, and everyone in this small vital group must be a shepherd. After a short time, the church will be revived. No other way is more prevailing than this shepherding way.

For the shepherding of the saints, there must be the healthy teaching in the vital groups. In 1 Timothy 3:2 Paul said that an elder should be apt to teach. Teaching here is similar to parents' teaching their children. An elder must be apt to render this kind of home teaching to the members of a local church. Then in 5:17 Paul said, "Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching." *Double honor* refers to material supply for the support of the faithful elders, especially those who labor to teach others.

In the vital groups, we must have something to teach others. We are the prophethood, the prophets speaking for God, and the sonship, the sons of God. Every son must be a speaker. Today God speaks in the Son (Heb. 1:2), not only the individual Son but the corporate son. As a son of God, we must learn to be a speaker. We can speak of the five great historical events in John 1: creation, incarnation, the Lamb, the Spirit, and the ladder. This will stir up people's interest. When we explain these things, they will be edified.

At another time we can speak of our Lord as the Son of Man, who as the ladder brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven. He is the Son of Man who has been lifted up on the cross, just as the bronze serpent was lifted up by Moses (John 3:14). As the Son of Man, He has ascended and is at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). In Revelation, Christ is trimming all the lampstands as the Son of Man (1:13), and as the Son of Man, He will be sitting on a cloud to reap the harvest of the believers near the end of the great tribulation (14:14). He will return again as the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64). Matthew 25:31 says that He will be the Son of Man sitting on His throne of glory to judge the nations. Eventually, in eternity He will be the Son of Man as the ladder of this

universe (John 1:51). If we teach these things, we will stir up people. We have to learn to teach. We have to labor in the Word. If there is no labor, there will be no gain. We lovers and seekers of Christ should learn how to speak as prophets and sons of God.

I hope that we would 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.” In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: *feed*, *shepherd*, and *flock*. He said, “Feed My lambs,” and, “Shepherd My sheep” (21:15-16). He also said, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd” (10:16). The other sheep are the Gentile believers who would be joined together with the Jewish believers to be one flock. The Lord used the word *flock* here as a noun. I also like to use it as a verb. We should learn to feed, to shepherd, and to flock together. All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blent together. In the atmosphere of flocking, people are subdued, convinced, nourished, and stirred up by the Lord. All the nearby churches should be flocked together for the saints to be shepherded and stirred up. The elders and co-workers should take the lead to practice this. (*Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John*, pp. 130-137)