

WEEK 6 — OUTLINE

The Apostolic Ministry in Cooperation with Christ's Heavenly Ministry

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

« DAY 1 »

I. John 21 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; 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 (20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45b); hence, John 21 should be an appendix.*
- B. *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; chapter 21 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.*

II. In 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. *First, the Lord's shepherding was in His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36; 10:1-6).*
- B. *Second, the Lord's shepherding is in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church, issuing in His Body.*

III. In this appendix, 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):

- A. *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.*
- B. *The following words of the apostle Paul confirm this:*
 - 1. "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 through His own blood" (Acts 20:28).
 - 2. "Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29).
 - 3. "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).

<< DAY 2 >>

IV. Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that:

- A. *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 (Christ) of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25).*
- B. *He exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them*

so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they will receive the unfading crown of glory (5:1-4).

C. Peter tells the elders that their obligation is to shepherd God's flock according to God (vv. 1-2):

1. According to God means that we must live God; we must have God on hand.
2. When we are one with God, we become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead; then we have God and are the acting God in our shepherding of others.
3. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes—love, light, holiness, and righteousness.
4. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to God's nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to man's preference, interest, and purpose.

D. 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 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.

VI. The matter of shepherding God's flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is referred to even 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).*

« **DAY 3** »

VII. Without John 21 as such an appendix, the Gospel of John does not have an adequate and complete ending:

- A. *If we do not know what shepherding is, the entire Gospel of John will be in vain to us; it is only when we shepherd others that we can know John in an intrinsic way; shepherding is the key to the Gospel of John.*
- B. *We must take the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church:*
1. We must not lord it over God’s allotments but become patterns of the flock (1 Pet. 5:3).
 2. We must be willing to be slaves to the saints and must humble ourselves under the saints.
 3. The elders should shepherd one another and love one another to be a model of the Body life.
 4. We must take care of the saints in everything and in every way for the dispensing of Christ into them.
 5. We must contact and visit the saints and invite them to our home for meals.

VIII. We need to shepherd people according to the pattern

of the Lord Jesus in His ministry for carrying out God's eternal economy (Matt. 9:36; John 10:11):

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A. *In Luke 15 the Lord Jesus unveiled the saving love of the Triune God for sinners:*

1. We need to follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people (vv. 1-10, 17-18).
2. Our not having the Father's loving and forgiving heart and the Savior's shepherding and seeking spirit is the reason for our barrenness.
3. We need to cherish people (to make them happy and to make them feel pleasant and comfortable) in the humanity of Jesus (Matt. 9:10; Luke 7:34).
4. We need to nourish people (to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His ministry of three stages) in the divinity of Christ (Matt. 24:45-47).

B. *Christ came not as a Judge but as a Physician to heal, recover, enliven, and save the lepers (8:2-4), paralytics (vv. 5-13; 9:2-8), the fever-ridden (8:14-15), the demon-possessed (vv. 16, 28-32), those ill with all kinds of diseases (v. 16), despised tax collectors, and sinners (9:9-11) that they might be reconstituted to become people of His heavenly kingdom (vv. 12-13).*

« DAY 5 »

C. *He had to pass through Samaria, purposely detouring to Sychar to gain one immoral woman, cherishing her by asking her to give Him something to drink that He might nourish her with the flowing Triune God as the water of life (John 4:3-14).*

D. *As the One without sin, He did not condemn the adulterous woman but cherished her by forgiving her sins judicially and setting her free from her sins organically (8:1-11, 32, 36).*

- E. *He went to Jericho just to visit and gain one person, a chief tax collector, and His preaching was a shepherding (Luke 19:1-10).*
- F. *He cherished the parents by laying His hands on their children (Matt. 19:13-15).*
- G. *The first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was a robber sentenced to death (Luke 23:42-43).*
- H. *In His heavenly ministry Christ as the High Priest, with a golden girdle about His breasts, is cherishing and nourishing the churches (Rev. 1:12-13).*
- I. *In His heavenly ministry Christ is the great Shepherd of the sheep to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant (Heb. 13:20-21).*

IX. The apostles were a pattern of the glad tidings that they spread—"you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thes. 1:5b):

- A. *In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work; what you are is what you do (John 5:19; 6:57; Phil. 1:19-26; Acts 20:18-35; Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-37).*
- B. *We need to follow the pattern of the apostles to pay more attention to life than to work (John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:12).*

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- C. *Paul shepherded the saints as a nursing mother and an exhorting father (1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12).*
- D. *Paul shepherded the saints in Ephesus by teaching them "publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20) and by admonishing each one of the saints with tears even for as long as three years (vv.*

- 31, 19), declaring to them all the counsel of God (v. 27).
- E. He had an intimate concern for the believers (2 Cor. 7:3; Philem. 7, 12).
 - F. He came down to the weak ones' level so that he could gain them (2 Cor. 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; cf. Matt. 12:20).
 - G. He was willing to spend what he had, referring to his possessions, and to spend what he was, referring to his being, for the sake of the saints (2 Cor. 12:15).
 - H. He was a drink offering, one with Christ as the wine producer, sacrificing himself for others' enjoyment of Christ (Phil. 2:17; Judg. 9:13; Eph. 3:2).
 - I. Paul indicated in his teaching that the church is a home to raise up people, a hospital to heal and recover them, and a school to teach and edify them (2:19; 1 Thes. 5:14; 1 Cor. 14:31).
- X. "I hope that there will be a genuine revival among us by our receiving this burden of shepherding. If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery" (The Vital Groups, p. 40) (cf. Psa. 22–24 [footnote 1 on 22:1 and footnote 1 on 24:1]).**

<< WEEK 6 — DAY 1 >>

Morning Nourishment

John 21:15-17 ...Jesus said to Simon Peter,...Do you love Me...? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again a second time,...Do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep. He said to him the third time,...Do you love Me?...And he said to Him, Lord,...You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry. After Christ ascended to the heavens, He began His heavenly ministry. In doing this, He raised up a group of His followers as His apostles who could fully cooperate with Him. These apostles were commissioned by the ascended Christ to cooperate with Him to carry out God's New Testament economy. What He was doing in the heavens, the apostles did on earth to carry out His heavenly ministry. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John," p. 446)

Today's Reading

The entire [Gospel of John] 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 21 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....[This chapter] 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.

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.

First, the Lord's shepherding was 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 (10:1-6).

Second, the Lord's shepherding is in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body.

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.

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.

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.

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

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. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John," pp. 446-448)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John," ch. 13

<< WEEK 6 — DAY 2 >>

Morning Nourishment

1 Pet. 5:1-2 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: 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.

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 (Christ) of their souls (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. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John," p. 448)

Today's Reading

In his first Epistle, Peter speaks of Christ being the Shepherd and Overseer of our soul, our inner being and real person (2:25). Then in 5:1-2 he tells the elders that their obligation is to shepherd God's flock according to God. According to God means that we must live God. We must have God on hand. We have God in our understanding, in our theology, and in our teaching, but we may not live God when we are shepherding people. When we are one with God, we become God. Then we have God and are God in our shepherding of others. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes. God is love, light, holiness, and righteousness. "According to God" is at least according to these four attributes of God. We must shepherd the young ones, the weak ones, and the backsliding ones according to these four attributes. Then we will be good shepherds. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 114)

To oversee according to God means according to God's nature, desire, way, and

glory, not according to man's preference, interest, and purpose. The elders should not oversee according to their opinion, concept, or likes or dislikes. Instead, they should oversee according to God's choice, desire, intention, and preference. The elders must oversee the church altogether according to God's thought, feeling, will, and choice. (Life-study of 1 Peter, p. 293)

Peter's word [in 1 Peter 5:1-4] 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 are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God.

This matter of shepherding God's flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is referred to even in Song of Songs. In this book Christ shepherds His seeker and pursuer.

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]?"

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" (v. 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.

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.

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. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John," pp. 448-449)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," ch. 7

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Morning Nourishment

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

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

John 21 is a chapter on shepherding...This chapter is not merely an appendix but also the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John, a book on Christ being God coming to be our life...Eventually, such a book has a conclusion on shepherding. If we do not know what shepherding is, the entire Gospel of John will be in vain to us. It is only when we shepherd others that we can know John in an intrinsic way. Shepherding is the key to the Gospel of John.

John 21:15 says, “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.” Peter said, “Lord, You know,” because he had denied the Lord three times. He lost his natural confidence in his love toward the Lord. In restoring Peter’s love toward Him, the Lord charged him to shepherd and feed His sheep. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” p. 114)

Today’s Reading

Without John 21 the Gospel of John does not have an adequate and complete ending. [We need to take] the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, “Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John,” pp. 449-450)

First Peter 5:3 says, “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.” To lord it over others is to exercise lordship over those who are ruled (Matt. 20:25). Among the believers, besides Christ there should be no lord. All should be servants, even slaves (Matt. 20:26-27; 23:10-11). The elders in the church can only take the leadership (not the lordship), which all the believers should honor and follow (1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17).

All the elders should be slaves of the saints. It is not adequate for the elders even to be servants; they must be slaves. This is something Peter learned from the Lord Himself. Peter heard the Lord Jesus say that those who desire to become great must be slaves. Elders should regard themselves as slaves, and the brothers and sisters as their masters.

Literally, the word allotments means “lots, portions”; hence, “allotments, portions entrusted.” Here this word refers to the flock. The churches are God’s possession, allotted to the elders as their allotments, their portions, entrusted to them by God for their care.

The church is God’s flock and His possession. The elders have been appointed by God to be shepherds of the flock. Hence, God has allotted the church in their locality to them for their care. The church in a particular locality is God’s possession; it is not the possession of the elders. But God has allotted that church to the elders so that they may care for it and shepherd it. Furthermore, the church is only allotted to the elders for their care temporarily. For eternity the church is God’s possession. Even the elders themselves are a part of the church as the possession of God.

Instead of lording it over the allotments, the elders should become patterns of the flock. This means that they take the lead to serve and care for the church so that the believers may follow. (Life-study of 1 Peter, pp. 294-295)

Shepherding and teaching are our obligation as a charge given to us by the Lord. This is the basic way ordained by God in the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate His eternal goal—the New Jerusalem....The Gospels reveal Christ’s shepherding and teaching in His ministry for carrying out God’s eternal economy. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” p. 105)

I care for only one thing—to carry out what the Lord has charged us to do. We all need to rise up and put everything of the unscriptural practice of Christianity under our feet. The number one thing we should do in these days is to visit people in their homes. This is to follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus. We must go to visit people. (CWWL, 1986, vol. 3, “Elders’ Training, Book 9: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (1),” pp. 38-39)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” ch. 6

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Morning Nourishment

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.

Luke 15:20 And he rose up and came to his own father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately.

Luke 15:4 says, “Which man of you, who has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” Here the “wilderness” signifies the world. The shepherd going into the wilderness to seek the lost sheep indicates that the Son has come to the world to be with men (John 1:14).

Luke 15:5-6 continues, “And when he finds it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes into his house, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” Here we see the Savior’s saving strength and His saving love. (Life-study of Luke, p. 291)

Today’s Reading

Shepherding is something divine. In order to be a shepherd, we must be a witness of Christ, a member of Christ, and a brother of Christ, sharing His sonship....We need to shepherd people. This is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase. If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ’s Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” pp. 92-93)

The spirit of not shepherding and seeking others and being without love and

forgiveness is spreading in the recovery everywhere. I believe that not having the Father's loving and forgiving heart and not having the Savior's shepherding and seeking spirit is the reason for our barrenness. I realize that you all work hard, but there is almost no fruit. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "A Word of Love to the Co-workers, Elders, Lovers, and Seekers of the Lord," p. 31)

To cherish people is to make them happy, pleasant, and comfortable; to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry in His three stages....He takes care of the churches as the lampstands in His humanity as the Son of Man to cherish them.

He is also the High Priest with His divinity as the "energy belt" to nourish us with Himself....His nourishing the churches in His divinity is so that the churches may grow and mature in His divine life and become the overcomers in His sevenfold intensification. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," pp. 151, 158)

While the Lord Jesus was enjoying a feast with tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees criticized and condemned Him, and they asked the disciples why their teacher ate with such people (Matt. 9:10-11). The Lord took the opportunity...to give a very pleasant revelation of Himself as the Physician: "Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill" (v. 12). The Lord was telling the Pharisees that the tax collectors and sinners were "patients," sick ones, and that to them He was not a judge but a physician, a healer....The judgment of a judge is according to righteousness, whereas the healing of a physician is according to mercy and grace. Those whom the Lord made people of His heavenly kingdom were lepers (Matt. 8:2-4), paralytics (8:5-13; 9:2-8), the fever-ridden (8:14-15), the demon-possessed (8:16, 28-32), those sick of all kinds of illnesses (8:16), the despised tax collectors, and sinners (9:9-11)....He came to minister as a physician, to heal, recover, enliven, and save them so that they might be reconstituted to be citizens of the kingdom of the heavens. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 490-491)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," chs. 4, 11; "A Word of Love to the Co-workers, Elders, Lovers, and Seekers of the Lord," ch. 2

« WEEK 6 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

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.

When Christ as the God-Savior wanted to save an immoral woman of Samaria, He traveled from Judea to Galilee through Samaria, He detoured from the main way of Samaria to the city of Sychar, and He waited at the well of Jacob, near Sychar, for His object to come that He might cherish her by asking her to give Him something to drink so that He might nourish her with the water of life, which is the flowing Triune God Himself (John 4:1-14)....He waited at the well of Jacob for her to come in order to cherish her so that she could be nourished with the living water of the Triune God. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 149)

Today's Reading

[In John 8 a] sinful woman was accused by the scribes and Pharisees, but eventually they were condemned by Christ. None of them could condemn her, and they all left. The Lord said to the woman, "Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." Then He said, "Neither do I condemn you" (vv. 10-11). This is cherishing. None of the scribes and Pharisees could say that he was without sin. The Son of Man is the unique One without sin, so He was the only one qualified to condemn the sinful woman, but He would not do it. He came not to condemn the lost but to save them.

The first gospel preacher, Christ, carried out His ministry by shepherding. He went to Jericho just to visit one person, a chief tax collector (Luke 19:1-10). He did not go there to hold a big gospel campaign with thousands of people. His desire was to preach the gospel to gain one person, and His preaching was a

shepherding.

When His disciples rejected people bringing their children to Him, He stopped their preventing and asked them to bring the children to Him, and He cherished the parents by laying His hands on their children (Matt. 19:13-15). The disciples' preventing surely offended the parents. Quite often we are preventing people instead of cherishing people. The Lord stopped the disciples' preventing.

While Christ was being crucified on the cross, two robbers were crucified with Him (27:38). One of them said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (v. 43). The first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was not a gentleman but a criminal, a robber, sentenced to death. This is very meaningful.

Christ is the best model of cherishing and nourishing as seen in Revelation 1. In verses 12 and 13 John said, "I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, 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." This shows that Christ is taking care of the lampstands by being the Son of Man with a long garment. This garment is the priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35), which shows that Christ is our great High Priest. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," pp. 135-136, 113, 148, 123, 154)

In 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 Paul reminds the Thessalonians that, in the matter of orderly living, the apostles were a pattern to them: "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat bread as a gift from anyone, but in labor and hardship we worked night and day so that we would not be burdensome to any of you; not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us." The apostles were for the building up of the church in all things (2 Cor. 12:19). They were absolutely not disorderly among the believers but were a pattern for the believers to imitate. (Life-study of 2 Thessalonians, p. 57)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," chs. 9-10

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Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.

11 Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying.

Although the word fostering cannot be found in 1 Thessalonians 2, the fact of fostering can be seen in this chapter. Here Paul likens the apostles both to a nursing mother and to an exhorting father. This means that the apostles were mothers and fathers to the new believers. They regarded the believers as children under their fostering care. Just as parents care for their children, fostering their growth, so the apostles cared for the new believers. Thus, in 1 Thessalonians 2 we see the fostering of a holy life for the church life. In verses 1 through 12 we have the care of a nursing mother and an exhorting father, and in verses 13 through 20 we see the reward given to those who foster believers in this way. Because the apostles rendered such a care to the new believers, the apostles will eventually receive a reward from the Lord.

First Thessalonians 2:1-12 surely is a word to new believers. In these verses we do not have much that is weighty or deep. Here we do not have profound doctrines. Instead, we have a word that can be compared to the way parents speak to young children. Let us consider this portion verse by verse so that we may be impressed how to help new believers. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 96-97)

Today's Reading

In Acts 20 Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time” (v. 18). Paul was with the saints in Ephesus for three years. He not only taught them publicly in meetings but also taught them from house to house (v. 20). Night and day, he did not cease admonishing each one of the saints with tears (v. 31). This

teaches us how to perfect the saints. (CWWL, 1986, vol. 3, “Elders’ Training Book 9: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (1),” p. 115)

In 1 Corinthians Paul was like a father disciplining his children. But even this discipline came out of a deep, intimate concern. For example, a mother may spank one of her children. But while he is receiving that spanking, the child realizes that the mother is disciplining him with a loving spirit and attitude. Thus, even when she is spanking her child, she can love him. Children can tell whether or not their parents discipline them out of a spirit of love. It was with a loving, concerned spirit that Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians. To be sure, in 2 Corinthians as a whole, and especially in chapter 7, we see Paul’s intimate concern for the believers.

[In 2 Corinthians 12:15 Paul says], “I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?” In this verse “spend” means to spend what he has, referring to his possessions. To “be utterly spent” means to spend what he is, referring to his being. Paul was willing to sacrifice himself—his soul, his life, his entire being—for the believers. He was also willing to give all his money and material possessions. The Lord Jesus gave His soul for us; He was utterly spent for us. In like manner, Paul’s desire was to be utterly spent for the Corinthians. All the saints in the Lord’s recovery need to learn this crucial lesson: to receive grace to spend what we have and to be utterly spent for the saints and for the churches. (Life-study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 383, 498-499)

I hope that there will be a genuine revival among us by our receiving this burden of shepherding. If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ’s wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” p. 92)

Further Reading: Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, ch. 11

WEEK 6 — HYMN

Jesus, our wonderful Shepherd

The Church — As God's Flock

1221

Musical score for the hymn "Jesus, our wonderful Shepherd". The score is written in G major (one flat) and 8/6 time. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff (measures 1-4) has lyrics: "1. Je - sus, our won - der - ful Sheph - erd Brought us right out of the fold". The second staff (measures 5-8) has lyrics: "In - to His pas - ture so plen - teous, In - to His rich - es un - told.". The third staff (measures 9-12) is labeled "Chorus" and has lyrics: "(C) Glo - - ri - ous church life, Feast - ing from such a rich store!". The fourth staff (measures 13-16) has lyrics: "Here where we're dwell - ing in one - ness God commands life ev - er - more.". Chord symbols are placed above the notes: Bb, F/A, Gm, Bb/F, Cm, F7, Bb, Bb7/D, Eb, Bb/D, Gm, C, C7/E, F7, Bb, Bb/F, Bb, Bb/F, Bb, Gm, Cm, F7, Bb, Eb, Dm, Gm, Cm, F7, Bb, Eb/Bb, Bb.

2. In the divisions He sought us,
Weary and famished for food;
Into the good land He brought us,
Oh, to our spirit how good!
3. Jesus Himself is our pasture,
He is the food that we eat;
We as His sheep are fed richly
Each time, whenever we meet.
4. Dwell we here on a high mountain,
Wet with the morning-fresh dew,
Slaking our thirst at the fountain,
Water so living and new.
5. Christ is our rest and enjoyment,
Here we have nothing to fear;
Here all the sheep dwell securely,
Kept by His presence so dear.

