

Church Planting Institute
The Christian Leader As A Shepherd



Church Planting Institute

**PO Box 5262 SMC
NAMBOUR
QUEENSLAND 4560
AUSTRALIA**

Email: churchplant@bigpond.com

THE CHRISTIAN LEADER AS A SHEPHERD

**“God will one day judge every
Christian leader by the Biblical
criteria of a shepherd!”**

The word pastor in the Bible indicates a shepherd, from the Hebrew Rohi; = shepherd, or “one who tends.” The Greek word “poimen,” has the same meaning. This simile is the finest picture of what a true Christian leader ought to be. It is the preferred Biblical analogy of a leader of God’s people.

All Christian leaders are, to some degree “pastors” in the sense that they have a clear responsibility to value and care for God’s people who are said to be “*The sheep of God’s pasture.*” (Psa 79:13) True and faithful Christian leaders must have a “shepherds heart.” A disposition of loving concern for God’s flock.

The Greek word translated pastors in Ephesians 4:11, is used elsewhere in the New Testament.

of shepherders, literally or symbolically Matt. 25:32;
of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, John 10;
and of "shepherds," or leaders, of the church Eph. 4:11.
Also compare Jeremiah 23:1-2 (KJV).

GOD IS PORTRAYED AS THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL.

In the Old Testament God is often likened to a shepherd. David used this beautiful metaphor for God in Psalm 23. The prophet Isaiah used the same image, probably with Psalm 23 in mind, comparing God with a faithful shepherd leading and feeding his flock.

Isa 40:10-11

“Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.

He will feed His flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.” (NKJ)

FIGURATIVELY, THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURES GOD AS ISRAEL'S SHEPHERD-LEADER

Ps 80:1-2

“Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth

before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.”

Ezek 34:14-16

"I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD.

I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice." (NIV)

ACCORDING TO JEREMIAH, GOD THE SHEPHERD PROTECTED HIS FLOCK

Jer 31:10

"Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'" (NIV)

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL SPOKE OF THE DIVINE SHEPHERD WHO SEEKS OUT HIS FLOCK

Ezek 34:12-15

"As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.

I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD." (NIV)

JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Matt 2:6

"'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" (NIV)

1 Pet 2:25

"For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (NIV)

The New Testament reveals Jesus as the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. When He said, "I am the good shepherd" John 10:11, Jesus linked His own divine nature with one of the most ordinary occupations in Israel. Jesus declared that He is the good shepherd who cares for, protects, and redeems His flock-- the people of God John 10:2-16.

He is the good shepherd who suffers for the sheep, (Matt. 26:31) and divides His own from the goats at the day of judgment Matt. 25:32.

He is the "great Shepherd of the sheep" Heb. 13:20.

ISRAEL'S LEADERS ARE FREQUENTLY DEPICTED AS SHEPHERDS

In the Old Testament, leaders of God's people are often called shepherds Num. 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17.Gen. 4:2.

Kings who led Israel Jer. 6:3; 49:19 and certain ministers Jer. 23:4 are also called shepherds.

The sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob herded sheep Gen. 13:7; 26:20; 30:36.

Rachel was a shepherdess Gen. 29:3.

Moses Ex. 3:1,
David (2 Sam. 5:2; Psa 78:70-72,) and Amos (Amos 1:1) found herding to be excellent preparation for future leadership roles.

A good pastor, in New Testament times, is the feeder, protector, guide, or shepherd, of a flock of God's people. In speaking of spiritual gifts, the apostle Paul wrote that Christ "gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" Eph. 4:11. The term pastor by this time in church history had not yet become an official title, it implied the nourishing of and caring for God's people.

Every servant of God, whatever their ministry role, should have a shepherd heart that manifests itself in genuine concern for God's people. No true shepherd will abuse or misuse the sheep, for they are God's sheep. Sheep are very trusting animals and their trust can be easily abused. Shepherds who do so will one day have to answer to the Chief Shepherd for the abuse of their authority.

The manner in which some preachers subtly extort money from God's people is like a hireling, fleecing the flock for his own advantage.

JESUS IS OUR FINEST EXAMPLE OF A SHEPHERD

Jesus' life exemplifies these leadership traits. Jesus knows each of His sheep intimately. (John 10:3-5) Sometimes several shepherds will pen their sheep together in a cave or a sheepfold at night. The next morning each shepherd calls to his own sheep with his own unique guttural cry. Each sheep knows his shepherd's voice and responds immediately. Even in a large flock, one individual sheep will run to his shepherd when his own pet name is called. (John 10:27)

SHEEP NEED A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD AND A GOOD SHEEPFOLD

Sheep are curious but naïve animals, often unable to find their way home even if the sheepfold is within sight. Knowing this fault, the shepherd never takes his eyes off his wandering sheep. (Psa. 32:8)

Often a sheep will wander into a briar patch or fall over a cliff in the rugged Palestinian hills. The shepherd tenderly searches for his sheep and carries it to safety on his shoulder, wrapped in his own long cloak. (Luke 15:6)

EASTERN SHEPHERDS LEAD THEIR FLOCKS

Ancient shepherds went before their flocks (John 10:4-5) and led them rather than driving them. A flock knew its shepherd's voice and would follow only him. Often for protection flocks were lodged together at night and separated in the morning when the shepherds called their flock by name.

They provided their flocks with water and food (Psa. 23:2; Jer. 31:10) They knew each sheep and lamb. When one was lost, they went out to find it. (Ezek. 34:12; Luke 15:4-5) Small lambs, unable to keep up with the flock, were often carried next to a shepherd's breast inside the fold of his outer garment. (Is. 40:11) The shepherd also protected his flock, risking his life if necessary. (Amos 3:12; John 10:12)

In the arid climate of Syria and Palestine, shepherds have always had to search diligently for water, sometimes for hours every day. Sheep must be watered daily. The shepherd might find a bubbling stream for the sheep that are always on the move and needing fresh pastures every day. (Psa. 23:2) An old well with a quiet pool or trough close by might provide the water. (Gen. 29:7; 30:38; Ex. 2:16) Often the shepherd carries a small pail with him, patiently filling it many times for the thirsty sheep who cannot reach the available water.

TRUE SHEPHERDS PROTECT THEIR FLOCK

A trusted shepherd also provides loving protection for his flock. Shepherds on the Bethlehem hillsides still use a sling, made of goat's hair or leather and immortalized by David against Goliath: 1 Sam.17:49. At times the shepherd will throw his rod at a stubborn, straying sheep that refuses to hear his voice. At other times he gently nudges the stray with the end of his six-foot staff, crooked at one end to fit his strong hand. Both the rod and the staff work together to protect the sheep. Psa 23:4.

When Jacob kept sheep for his father in law Laban, he assumed responsibility to pay for animals that were stolen or killed whilst in his care.

Gen 31:38-39

"I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks.

I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night." (NIV)

This procedure was modified somewhat under the Mosaic law, which declared that if an animal were stolen, the shepherd must make restitution, but if it were killed by wild animals, the remains of the animal must be produced but no restitution was required.

Exod 22:12-13

"But if the animal was stolen from the neighbour, he must make restitution to the owner.

If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring in the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal." (NIV)

SHEPHERDS AND UNDER-SHEPHERDS

Not all shepherds were of equal status. There were often senior and under-shepherds. For example, it is a mistake to think of Moses as a simple shepherd, caring for a few straggly sheep. He was a sheep master for his father in law Jethro. He probably had numbers of under-shepherds under his care. The management and supervision of those shepherds would be his major responsibility.

It was ironic that later, when he became a shepherd of Israel, he resorted to doing everything himself until Jethro reminded him that the same principles he had used over his flocks should pertain in his care of God's people. Exodus 18: 13-27.

Many under-shepherds were serving an apprenticeship. In a family business, the father would rule as the chief shepherd and his sons would serve under him as under-shepherds. They would thus learn the art of sheep herding and be able to take over from their father in due course.

This system and style of leadership is still appropriate today. Every pastor should have under-shepherds, serving the flock under his supervision. In a large church, the senior shepherd should shepherd the under-shepherds and delegate them to shepherd the flock.

DAVID'S APPRENTICESHIP

2 Sam 7:8

"Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. (NKJ)

It may have seemed fate that David, being the youngest son, had to care for the family flocks. But actually it was all part of God's plan. Working amongst the sheep and in the sheep fold, as a young man, helped to prepare him for the work of shepherding Israel later in his life. Lessons learned in the shepcote, proved advantageous later as King David ruled over the nation of Israel.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SHEPHERD

There are certain characteristics that are essential in a good shepherd.

1. Compassionate heart.

The heart of a true shepherd is a heart of compassion, tenderness and empathy, without which no person can ever truly be a shepherd to God's people. Compassion is essentially a deep concern for others. Someone, has described compassion as "your pain in my heart!" A shepherd cannot be a selfish, self centred person. His initial concern is for others above himself. A good shepherd will always place the welfare of his sheep above his own interests.

2. Concern for the sheep.

Concern goes far beyond compassion and becomes positively active to do something about the one for whom he has compassion. Shepherding cannot be accomplished by words alone. Words must be translated into acts of concern.

A classic biblical image of the good shepherd is presented in Luke 15. Ninety-nine sheep are safe in the fold, but the shepherd goes out into the dark and dangerous night to search for the one that is missing. Having finally found it, he carries it home on his shoulder. The concern for one sheep that is in trouble exceeds his interest in ninety-nine that are safe and secure in the fold.

3. Commitment in hard times.

A shepherd's life is not always an easy one. There are many sacrifices to be made. There are hardships and reversals to be endured. There are often disappointments and discouragement, but, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going." The ministry is often like the covenant of marriage, it is entered into "for better or for worse." Hard times and difficult circumstances often bring out the best and finest attributes in a true shepherd.

4. Essential goodness.

I have often observed that there is something essentially good in a shepherd. They are not perfect, but there are underlying attributes that are good, well meaning and admirable. Persons who are drawn to the life of a shepherd usually evidence those desirable attitudes of genuine concern for others.

5. Unselfish dedication. Gives his life for the sheep.

John 10:11

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (NIV)

The shepherd has a true servant heart. Like Jesus, he does not come to be served, but to serve others. (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45)

6. Humility

Phil 2:6-8

"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" (NIV)

7. Meekness

It is surely more than coincidence that the two greatest shepherds of God's people were renowned for their meekness. (Humility, submission and mildness) Some dictionaries suggest that meekness is weakness and spinelessness, but nothing could be further from the truth. Meekness is strength under control.

Jesus is the first and finest example:-

Matt 11:29-30

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (KJV)

Moses is the other:-

Num 12:3

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (KJV)

THE SHEPHERD'S DUTIES

A shepherd's duties in Bible are fairly clearly defined.

Each morning he would lead his flock out from their fold. (John 10:4)

He did this by going out before them and calling them to follow him.

Arriving at the pastures he would carefully watch over the flock.

If any sheep strayed from the fold, the shepherd would immediately begin to search for them until he found them. Ezek 34:12; Luke 15:4.

He sought for and supplied them with water, either from a quietly running stream or from troughs that were attached to the wells. Gen 29:7; 30:38; Ex 2:16; Psa 23:2.

In the evening he brought them back to the fold, carefully counting them to ensure that none were missing, by passing them "under his rod" as they entered the sheepfold. Lev 27:32; Ezek 20:37. He would then guard the entrance to the fold all night, usually placing his body across the gateway whilst he slept.

The shepherd's duties required him to be actively watchful over his sheep, particularly by night when wolves and other wild animals would try to attack the sheep under cover of darkness.

A good shepherd was always particularly concerned for those ewes that were pregnant and also towards the young or feeble. Isa 40:11.

This was especially true when he was leading them to and from the pastures. Gen 33:13.

The life and role of a shepherd in Bible times usually involved considerable hardship and frequent danger. Living outdoors much of the time he was exposed to extremes of blazing heat during the day and intense cold at night. His food supplies were often limited and he often faced attacks from wild animals, such as lions, bears and wolves. 1 Sam 17:34; Isa 31:4; Jer 5:6. He was also exposed to attacks from marauding robbers and thieves. Gen 31:39.

To help him combat these hardships and dangers, he had numerous items of equipment.

- A sheep skin robe to combat the cold night air. Jer 43:12.
- A pouch containing a small supply of food. 1 Sam 17:40
- A sling, with which to throw stones. 1 Sam 17:40.
- A rod, Hebrew; *shebet*, or club, usually about three feet long with a large knob on the end. This was a weapon with which to defend himself and the sheep.
- A staff, or crook, about six feet long to assist him when walking or climbing and for rescuing sheep.

THE SHEPHERD COMFORTS AND PROTECTS HIS SHEEP. PSALM 23.

The presence of the shepherd also offers comfort to the flock. David recognized this in Psalm 23. Sheep are content merely to be in the same field with their shepherd.

Jewish tradition suggest that Psalm 23, represents a day and a night in the life of a sheep, which is quietly reflecting on the goodness of its shepherd. Notice some of the benefits it appreciates.

1. A relationship with its shepherd. V.1.

*“The Lord is **MY** shepherd.”* Many flocks in Bible days were quite small and a shepherd usually knew each individual sheep. He frequently gave them names by which he called them. This kind of loving concern encouraged each sheep to personally identify with the shepherd and often a warm relationship was formed. To some shepherds their sheep were almost like their children, so warm and loving was the shepherd’s care.

2. Plenty of good, nourishing food. V.2.

*“He makes me lie down in **green** pastures.”* Tender, green grass was not easy to find in Israel, where the blazing sun and lack of water made the countryside barren and dry. A good, thoughtful and concerned shepherd, would do to great lengths to find some green pasture for his sheep. A fact that the sheep greatly appreciated.

3. Quiet waters to drink from. V2b.

Water was in extremely short supply and sometimes the sheep might become desperate with thirst. In such cases the smell of water would greatly excite a sheep. Should it find a fast flowing river and try to drink, it might easily be pulled into the water by the strong current.

Immediately its heavy woollen coat would absorb the water and that sheep could easily drown. So the shepherd would carefully search for “still waters,” a quietly flowing stream from which it was perfectly safe to drink.

4. Spiritual restoration. V.3.

“*He restores my soul.*” We rarely consider the possibility of a sheep being stressed out. They seem so quiet and docile, so tranquil and undisturbed. But sheep are also highly sensitive and very much aware of potential dangers and problems. They can easily become nervous and frightened, a fact of which the shepherd was very much aware. So he would purposefully deal and speak gently and soothingly to a sheep that was obviously distressed. He would restore its quiet confidence through loving concern.

5. Gently led in paths of righteousness. V.3b.

The Eastern shepherd never drives his sheep, he always leads them. He never forces them, he always coaxes them. His gentle attitude is like that of the Holy Spirit. He never forces us to do anything or go anywhere. He always leads, and entices us to go in His ways. The Spirit of God in the life of a believer will gently but firmly prompt them to walk in paths of righteousness. He will always show us the right and Godly thing to do and gently persuade us to do the right thing.

6. No fear of evil. V.4.

Jesus, our good shepherd, wants to deliver us from all fear. He does not guarantee to deliver us from all fearful circumstances, nor promise that we will never experience events in life that could easily cause us to fear. He does promise to deliver us from the fear of such evils. Even in life threatening circumstances, if we trust our shepherd implicitly, He will deliver us from fear. Death is an event that frightens many people but God promises that even when the shadow of that prospect falls on our life, God will preserve us from fear of it.

7. The comfort of His rod and staff. V.4.

The rod was to defend sheep, the staff to rescue them. The shepherd usually carried one in each hand. When travelling through the dark nights, he would go before his sheep, tapping the ground alternately with his rod and staff. Although the sheep could not see anything, it was continually assured of the shepherd’s proximity by the sound of his rod and staff. As the sheep carefully followed the direction indicated by the rod and staff, it would always travel in safety knowing that all was well because the good shepherd had gone ahead. The sheep would gladly follow his leading knowing that it too would be safe.

8. Enjoying a prepared table. V.5.

Every night, when the sheep were safely in their fold, the shepherd would prepare fodder for his sheep. All around them, in the darkness, there may be wild animals and other enemies, but in the safety of the fold the sheep could eat without fear. This analogy speaks of the sense of security and safety that sheep feel when properly fed with well prepared food. Even though surrounded by potential enemies they enjoy safety and security within a safe sheepfold.

9. Enjoying the anointing. V.5.

As the sheep passed under the shepherd’s rod each night when entering the fold, he would inspect every head for indications of sun burn. The fierce heat would often burn the bony head of a sheep. Flies might then infect the burn. So the shepherd would carefully look for such wounds and when he found them he would anoint that sheep’s head with pure olive oil to soothe the wound and protect it from further infection.

The anointing of God's Spirit on our lives achieves a similar purpose. We may sometimes get burned by life's experiences but the anointing of God's Spirit will soothe and heal those sore spots. So the shepherd needs to ensure that the anointing oil is always flowing and the sheep have abundant opportunities to receive a fresh anointing.

10. An overflowing cup. V.5c.

The overflowing cup signifies the abundant life that Jesus promised (John 10:10) God does not merely fill our cup with His blessings and benefits, He causes it to overflow. This overflow represents our ministry to others. God does not bless us for our own good alone. He blesses us that we might bless others. While ever our cup keeps flowing into the lives of others, God will continue to fill it.

11. An eternal sense of security. V.6.

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The safety and security that God gives is not for this life only; it is for eternity. Christians are comforted by the very presence of the Lord. This thought is especially comforting when darkness overshadows the believer. Jesus is our Door; nothing can touch our lives without touching Him first. This is a perfect picture of the shepherd. He literally becomes the living door of the sheepfold. He curls up in the door or in the entrance of a cave. He puts his body between the sleeping sheep and ravenous animals or thieves.

THE CHIEF SHEPHERD WILL ONE DAY RETURN

1 Pet 5:2-4

*"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;
nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." (NKJ)*

He will come to judge His under-shepherds in respect of the discharge of their calling.

The criteria of His judgment will be :-

- 1) Did they faithfully shepherd the flock God placed in their care?
- 2) Did they do this willingly and eagerly?
- 3) Did they have to be compelled?
- 4) Did they do it for dishonest gain?
- 5) Were they Lords over God's people?
- 6) Did they present a good example to the flock?

If so they will receive a "Crown of glory" reserved for faithful shepherds.

Until that time, Jesus continues His search for every lost sheep. (Matt.18:12-14) His sheep are to yield themselves to Him for His useful service until, at last, they "will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psa 23:6)

IRRESPONSIBLE LEADERS ARE HIRELINGS RATHER THAN SHEPHERDS

Job 7:1-2

*"Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man?
Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, (NIV)*

Job suggests that a hireling, as distinct from a shepherd :-

- 1) Always complains that he is having a hard time. V.1.
- 2) Spends his days waiting for evening when he can finish work. V.2.
- 3) Is more interested in his wage and rewards than in caring for the sheep. V.2b.

JESUS IDENTIFIES SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIRELINGS AND SHEPHERDS

John 10:11-15

*“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.
But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.
The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.
I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.
As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (KJV)*

Poor leaders, rebellious against God, are called irresponsible shepherds who desert, mislead, and misfeed God’s flock. Jer. 23:1-4. New Testament leaders are also called shepherds of God’s flock and are admonished to lead and protect His people. Acts 20:28-30.

Hirelings are more interested in their reward than in the well being of the sheep.

Job 7:2

“Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, (NIV)

GOD WILL ONE DAY JUDGE UNFAITHFUL SHEPHERDS

Zech 11:15-17

*“And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.
For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.
Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened. (KJV)*

Every servant of God is designated by God to be a shepherd. Shepherding describes the nature of his relationship and function in respect of God’s people, His sheep. It is in this regard that the leader will be judged. Not according to preaching skills, administrative abilities, numerical success in church growth etc, but how faithfully has he fulfilled his call and charge as a shepherd?

GOD WILL SPEAK AGAINST THE FOOLISH SHEPHERDS. V15.

The marks of a foolish shepherd:-

- 1) Does not care for those that are cut off and perishing.
- 2) Does not seek the young ones that are straying.
- 3) Does not heal the broken or wounded.
- 4) Does not feed the ones too weak to stray.
- 5) Eats the flesh of the fat. (Is enriched through priestly offerings)
- 6) He tears their claws to pieces. (Wounding the sheep)

7) He leaves and deserts the flock. (Unfaithfulness)

GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THEM V.17.

- 1) God speaks woe (sorrow, anguish, distress, and grief) to them.
- 2) He prophesies sword wounds on his arm and right eye.
- 3) His arm shall be withered up.
- 4) His right eye will be utterly blinded.

GOD WILL JUDGE THE NATIONS

One day Jesus the Chief Shepherd will return, gather His whole flock into one fold, and divide the sheep from the goats

Matt 25:31-34

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

"Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (NKJ)

This is known as the judgment of the nations, when the Chief Shepherd will divide the "sheep nations from the goat nations." It is a judgment concerning the fate of those nations at the time of Christ's return. He will determine the nations who will live on earth during the earthly reign of Messiah.

- 1) The judge will be, "The Son of man, in all His glory."
- 2) He will be accompanied by a host of angelic beings.
- 3) He will sit on a judgment throne on earth.
- 4) All nations will be gathered before Him.
- 5) He will separate the sheep nations to His right.
- 6) The goat nations will go to His left.

- 7) The basis of judgment will be "How each nation treated His brethren." V.40.
- 8) His brethren are the Jews and Christians. (children of Abraham)
- 9) The sheep nations will enter the Kingdom Age under Messiah's rule.
- 10) The goat nations will be banished from His presence forever.
- 11) His throne will be in Jerusalem, the city of David. Zech 14:16.
- 12) His rule will be over all the nations that remain on earth.
- 13) The saints will rule with Him. Rev 11:15.
- 14) His reign will be eternal. Dan 7:14.

THE RULE OF THE ETERNAL SHEPHERD

Jer 23:4-6

"I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (NKJ)

In the eternal kingdom reign of Messiah God will set up a structure of authority through which to reign over the kingdom of this world. The various persons appointed will rule with the heart of a shepherd.

- 1) Jesus, the Messiah, will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Rev 11:15.
- 2) David will reign under Him, as Vice regent to the throne. Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:24-28; Hosea 3:4,5.
- 3) The twelve apostles will rule. Matt 19:28; Luke 22:29,30.
- 4) Resurrected saints will reign. Dan 7:18, 22, 27. Psa 149:4-9.

Jer 23:4.

"I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.

- 5) The Lord shall be called Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness.
- 6) He will be the righteous judge of all the earth.
- 7) His kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom.

The resurrected saints who reign with Christ (Rev 5:9,10) under Messiah, King David, and the twelve apostles of the lamb, will rule as shepherds. (Jer 23:4) From this fact we may see how important it is for leaders to develop their shepherding attitude and skills, for this will be their eternal function.

Church Planting Institute
The Christian Leader As A Shepherd