

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Hebrews 12:12-13

OUR SHEPHERD

Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Isaiah 40:10-11

I find it quite interesting that the birth of the LORD JESUS was announced to a group of obscure shepherds who were in the fields doing what shepherds do. The fanfare that surrounded this proclamation (“*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” (Luke 2:13-14)) was hidden from the world in general and yet revealed to these humble shepherders, who were, no doubt, quite overwhelmed with this announcement. This is an illustration of that truth which the LORD JESUS declared, saying, “*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*” (Mat 11:25-26) This is how the LORD is pleased to reveal HIMSELF in the Gospel of HIS glory. (see I Tim.1:11) It is not to the wise, the righteous, or the religious man that HE reveals HIMSELF but to sinners who are poor in spirit and lack anything wherewith to commend themselves unto HIM. “*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*” (Psa 34:18)

The English word, “*shepherd*” appears in the KJV 45 times. At least 37 of those instances, there is either a direct or indirect reference to the LORD as the SHEPHERD of HIS sheep. HE clearly identified HIMSELF as such. “*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*” (John 10:11) “*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*” (John 10:14) In HIS declaration we can plainly make two observations: 1. HE describes the dedication of a “GOOD SHEPHERD” as being willing to lay down HIS own life for the benefit of the sheep. David is an example of this as he fought with a bear and a lion to protect his father’s sheep. (see I Sam.17:34-36) The LORD JESUS has trod the winepress of GOD’s wrath for HIS sheep, (see Isa. 63:3-6) (which were given to HIM) even to the death of the cross. 2. The “GOOD SHEPHERD” knows the names of each of HIS sheep and has taught them to know HIM. “*And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*” (John 10:5)

If HE knows them by name, then there must be a particular number of them and not a random flock. “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.*” (John 10:27-29) HE made this statement in order to contrast HIS sheep with those who were not HIS sheep, as HE spoke to the religious Pharisees. “*But ye believe not, **because** ye are **not** of my sheep, as I said unto you.*” (John 10:26)

The religious hucksters of our day get this truth backwards as they tell men that they can become sheep by believing. Yet the scripture plainly says that men believe because they are HIS sheep. HIS sheep were given to HIM by HIS FATHER and HE has come into the world to give HIS life for HIS sheep and to call them out of the darkness and into HIS glorious LIGHT. HE knows each one personally and individually and will neither slumber nor sleep until HE has gathered them all. “*It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*” (Mat 18:14)

There is probably no more humble station than that of a shepherd, yet at the same time there is no more noble calling than overseeing the preservation, care, and feeding of a flock which is entrusted into one's charge. The LORD JESUS has revealed HIMSELF in this capacity and HE is singularly suited to carry out the task of being a SHEPHERD to a flock given to HIM by HIS FATHER.

Some, in times past, have pointed out that: HE is the GOOD SHEPHERD (see John 10) who has laid down HIS own life for the flock. HE is the GREAT SHEPHERD (see Heb.13:20) who has arisen from the grave, triumphant over death as the FIRST FRUITS of those that sleep in HIM. HE is the CHIEF SHEPHERD (see I Pet.5:4) who will return to gather HIS flock which HE has purchased with HIS own blood. David wrote of HIM in the twenty third Psalm. "*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*" (Psa 23:1-3)

CHRIST is the SHEPHERD who seeks HIS sheep until HE finds them. (see Mat.18:12-14) "*he shall gather the lambs with his arm.*" HE brings them by a way which they did not know and HE will never forsake those who belong to HIM. "*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*" (1Pet 2:25) They will seek HIM because HE has never ceased to seek them. "*We love him, because he first loved us.*" (1John 4:19)

CHRIST is the SHEPHERD who will protect HIS flock at all costs. "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" (Rom 8:31-32) "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*" (Rom 5:8-9) HE has a "strong hand" by which HE shall prevail. "*And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.*" (Isa 63:5)

CHRIST is the SHEPHERD who will feed HIS sheep. "*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.*" "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*" (Psa 23:5) "*I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.*" (Eze 34:14) Though HE may be pleased from time to time, to use under shepherds (which HE has appointed) to dispense food for the sheep, it is HIS hand that supplies that sustenance and directs its dispersal to the hungry mouths that wait for it. "*And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; (i.e.; CHRIST HIMSELF) he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.*" (Eze 34:23)

CHRIST is the SHEPHERD who leads HIS sheep. HE "*shall gently lead those that are with young.*" (i.e.; those who are the weakest and most vulnerable). HE "*shall carry them in HIS bosom.*" When we are weak HE is strong. HIS grace is sufficient for all things. "*When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.*" (Psa 94:18) "*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*" (1John 3:20) Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, HE does always lead us, whether we can see HIM or not, or even feel HIS presence. HE also leads HIS flock by example. HE leads and they follow. "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*" (1Pet 2:21) "*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*" (Heb 5:8-9)

CHRIST is the SHEPHERD who is triumphant. "*HIS work (is) before HIM*". What HE has set out to do, HE has fully accomplished. "*HE has obtained eternal redemption*" for HIS sheep, by HIS suffering and death and subsequently by HIS triumph over death and the grave (i.e.; hell). HE is completely satisfied with HIS work. HE has no regrets and no failure. "*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*" (Isa 53:11) The SHEPHERD is calling HIS sheep, do you hear HIS voice?

"Jesus, Shepherd of thy people, Lead us through this desert land; We are weak, and poor, and feeble, Yet we trust thy mighty hand; Great Protector! By thy power alone we stand. All thy sheep shall come to Zion; With them thou wilt never part; Beasts of prey, nor roaring lion, None shall pluck them from thy heart; All thy chosen Cost thee wounds, and blood, and smart." (by J.Adams, #349 Gadsby's Hymns)

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