

# Kingdom Government—Shepherds

## Introduction

In previous lessons we have stated that the so-called five-fold ministry constitutes the functioning government of the Kingdom of God. When the Lord ascended, He gave gifts of men to His people to perform the function of equipping the believers for their work and for the building up of the body of Christ.<sup>1</sup> In some spiritual sense, the five-fold ministry or the ascension ministries of Jesus are the “shoulders” of Jesus upon which the government rests.<sup>2</sup> It is important that we understand how these ministries function. We will now look at the function of Shepherds in the government of God; but first we need to clear up some confusion.

## Pastoral Confusion

We will need to fully define “shepherd” from the scriptural viewpoint; but before we can do that we will have to address our traditions about “pastor”. Pastor is an old English word that means 'shepherd' and was used by the King James translators to translate the normal Greek word for shepherd in Ephesians 4:11. This is the only occasion where the Greek word for shepherd is translated as 'pastor'. As a matter of fact, this is the only occasion where the word 'pastor' is used in the Bible (which should tell us something).

The hirelings in the church have latched onto the word 'pastor' and created from it the employment position that the institutional church utilizes today. This employee position, a job function in the church, that we call “pastor” has nothing to do with the biblical definition of shepherd. That makes it hard for us to get our minds around the work of a true shepherd because of our traditions concerning “pastor”.

Some may object to the idea that pastor is an “employment position, a job”; but if you have a position available within an organization for which you have to apply and be interviewed and which has a salary with some level of benefits along with expected job performance criteria, what else could it be but an employment position? What is different about this position from any other position in any other organization? Not a thing.

It is important that we face the facts about this because it is serious. Jesus spoke very plainly about the problem with “hired hands” taking care of the sheep.

### John 10:12-13 NASB

- (12) **"He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*.**
- (13) **"He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.**

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1 Ephesians 4:11-12

2 Isaiah 9:6-7

Does not the idea of “hired hand” fit the modern designation of “pastor” in the institutional church system? Could it be that this is one of the reasons that the sheep are rent and torn by wolves? Do the “hired hands” avoid the wolf by fleeing because they are not concerned for the sheep but for themselves?

I am not saying that there are no sincere 'pastors'. I am sure that there are many who love the Lord and His people and are doing all that they know to do to serve faithfully. However, they cannot do what the Lord requires of true shepherds within the institutional system—because the organization takes precedent. In many cases they are deceived and blind to the government of God and the ascension gifts that He gave to us.

## The True Shepherd

Jesus is the True Shepherd. He is also our pattern for the 'under-shepherds' that He has given us as part of His ascension gifts. This is how Jesus described Himself as 'shepherd':

John 10:11 NASB

(11) "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:14-16 NASB

(14) "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,

(15) even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

(16) "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd.

In verse 11 in the original language the article is repeated twice making the actual wordage read in this manner: “I am the shepherd the good one”. Good, according to Thayer's Greek Definitions, also means “approved, appointed”. So, Jesus is saying that He is the approved shepherd or the appointed shepherd. The Father had appointed Him and the Father had approved Him as shepherd of the sheep. Therefore, in keeping with the pattern for Jesus as the approved, appointed shepherd by the Father, all under-shepherds are approved, appointed by Jesus, which fully fits the description of the ascension gifts of Jesus—the five fold ministry.

The scriptures above clearly present the main aspects of a shepherd's work as presented by Jesus as the *pattern shepherd*.

1. To lay down his life for his sheep,
2. To know his sheep individually,
3. To be personally knowable and known,
4. To speak and lead.

Of course, “his sheep” here is “His sheep” not our sheep. We don't have any sheep. All of the sheep belong to the Lord. We are simply under-shepherds caring for His sheep. It is amazing that the “hired hands” think of the sheep as 'their sheep' while the true shepherds think of the sheep as His sheep.

Additional aspects of the work of the true shepherd is given to us in the twenty third Psalm:

#### Psalms 23:1-6 NASB

- (1) **A Psalm of David.** The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
- (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.
- (3) He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.
- (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
- (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.
- (6) Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

While this Psalm is speaking of our Lord, it also has application to His under-shepherds. We see in this two primary responsibilities of the shepherd:

1. to provide food, water and rest
2. to protect, comfort, guide, and anoint

Of course, the under-shepherds do this at the direction and by the supply of the Lord. We cannot be presumptuous as it relates to the sheep but we must wait on the Lord.

## The Under Shepherds

Remember we are discussing the government of the Kingdom not the Church. The government of the Lord encompasses all aspects of His Kingdom of which the Church is only a part, although in this age it is probably a primary part. So, the ascension gifts have functions that are broader than the local assembly. No local assembly is likely to have all five of the ascension gifts of Jesus operating within it. As a matter of fact, by its very definition, no local assembly would have apostles operating within it because the word means "sent" as a messenger. If you are sent then you are not local.

The local shepherds are responsible for the local assembly. There are the link between the local people of God and the broader aspect of the work of the Kingdom. Their function is presented best in the Old Testament in a negative form.

#### Ezekiel 34:2-4 NASB

- (2) "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"
- (3) "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock.
- (4) "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

Because the shepherds have not done these things and are receiving judgment for it, then we can assume that God expects the shepherds to perform these functions as part of their calling:

1. Feed the flock,
2. Strengthen the sickly,
3. Heal the diseased,
4. Bind up the broken,
5. Round up the scattered, and
6. Search for the lost.

From these verses we can see that the shepherds of Israel had become self centered, more concerned with their own needs than the needs of the flock—feeding and clothing themselves instead of the flock. They used the flock for their own purposes—killing the fat sheep and dominating them by force.

The modern church is filled with those who call themselves shepherds but are not so called by the Lord. Because the shepherds have not been faithful, have not done what was required of them by the Lord, God brings judgment in the form of foolish shepherds that are 'hired hands' only concerned for themselves. We are living in the days of the foolish shepherds.

#### Zechariah 11:15-17 NASB

- (15) The LORD said to me, "Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd.
- (16) "For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat *sheep* and tear off their hoofs.
- (17) "Woe to the worthless shepherd Who leaves the flock! A sword will be on his arm And on his right eye! His arm will be totally withered And his right eye will be blind."

The foolish shepherd takes the position of the shepherd without fulfilling the responsibilities of the shepherd. These worthless shepherds will have no strength and will be blind to spiritual Truth. Does this not describe our modern 'pastors'?

Its not by accident that those responsible for the local assembly are called shepherds. The natural function of a shepherd caring for the sheep is a powerful picture of the care that the Lord intends for His people through His under-shepherds.

## Elders Expressing the Shepherd's Function

Since the idea of "pastor" as we use it today is alien to the scriptures, we need to look for the shepherding functions in another way. Basically, the ministries of the Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, and Evangelists are trans-local, that is, mobile or itinerant; whereas, the Shepherd's ministry is resident locally. As such, they are restricted to a given locality and function within the local body in that locality. In the New Testament there is only one group mentioned in a governmental manner in the

local assembly and that is the “elders”, which are always mentioned in the plural and never in the singular as it relates to the assembly. The one man leader model is not Jesus' pattern for leadership in His Ekklesia.

There is some confusion about local leadership due to translation issues and traditions. In the New Testament there are three Greek words used for the local leadership which are translated by five English words which tradition has given different meanings.

1. “*Presbuteros*” equals Elder.
2. “*Episkopos*” equals Overseer (KJV sometimes translates as “Bishop”)
3. “*Poimen*” equals Shepherd (once in KJV as “pastor”)

These different words all denote one and the same ministry or function. We see how the words relate in these scriptures:

#### Acts 20:17 NASB

(17) From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

#### Acts 20:28 NASB

(28) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

The *elders* were made *overseers* to *shepherd* the church of God. In other words, their *qualification* for ministry was elder, their *ministry or function* was to shepherd; and the nature of their *work* was oversight.

This is reflected in two primary ways according to Paul's words to Timothy:

#### 1 Timothy 5:17 NASB

(17) The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

There are two primary aspects to the work of the elders as seen in this scripture:

1. Elders are to rule (shepherd)--this is a governmental function.
2. Elders are to teach—this is a provision and care function.

Instead of “rule”, we might say “govern, administrate, manage, supervise”, however, these fall short of the full meaning of the scriptures. There are three Greek words used to describe this aspect of the work of the elders with slightly different shades of meaning.

1. “to stand in front”--used in I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Timothy 3:4-5, 5:17
2. “to lead”--like an oriental shepherd—used in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24
3. “to shepherd”--Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2

As you can see, if we think of “rule” as a form of management, we miss the fullness of the meaning.

The Shepherds or Elders are the vital link between the mobile ministries of the Kingdom of God and the local church. They anchor the local assembly into the broader aspect of the work of the Kingdom.

It is the apostles that appoint the first elders of a local church not the people. Until elders are appointed, the order of the local church is incomplete.

#### Acts 14:23 NASB

- (23) When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

#### Titus 1:5 NASB

- (5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

The transition from a group of disciples into a functioning church, Ekklesia, is the appointment of the elders by the apostles. The elders then become the shepherds, the ones responsible for oversight of the local assembly.

Normally, an elder can only come into full effective ministry when he is officially recognized by the local assembly. Authority is not received through position but through responsibility; however, it is made effective by recognition.

## Qualifications of a Shepherd, Elder, Overseer

The basic qualifications of a shepherd reveal the fact that he has taken the Word of God seriously and has applied the teachings of the Lord to his life and that of his family. In other words, he has sought the Kingdom of God for himself and his family by applying the rulership of the Lord to himself, his family, and his work.

#### 1 Timothy 3:1-7 NASB

- (1) It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.
- (2) An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
- (3) not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.
- (4) *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity
- (5) (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),
- (6) *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.
- (7) And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Paul told Titus, when he left him in Crete to set in order the things that remained by appointing elders in every city. The implication of this is that the final step of putting things in order is the appointment of elders. I believe this step is what moves a group of disciples into a lawful assembly (Ekklesia).

Paul told Titus to evaluate the prospective elder by the same set of characteristics that he had told Timothy.

**Titus 1:5-9 NASB**

- (5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,
- (6) *namely*, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.
- (7) For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,
- (8) but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,
- (9) holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

One of the requirements listed above is that the elders must be “able to teach”. This doesn't necessarily mean the an elder must have what we would call a “pulpit personality”. This type of teaching was not the norm in the early Church. It is only as we have moved to large buildings and created a distinction between clergy and laity that the “pulpit personality” has come into being. Most local teaching in the early church was done in small groups or even one on one. Any Elder should be able to counsel or teach an individual or family in a small environment. This type of teaching is closer to a discipleship relationship than what we would consider to be that of a teacher.

**Table of Qualifications for an Elder (Shepherd) From Timothy**

| Elder Qualifications From Timothy | Fuller Meaning of Original Greek Words   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| above reproach                    | blameless, Or <i>without reproach</i> : one who cannot be <i>laid hold of</i> , who gives no ground for accusation.              |
| husband of one wife               | husband with only one wife   |
| temperate                         | sober, circumspect, vigilant, to be <i>sober and wary; cool and unimpassioned, to be calm, dispassionate, and circumspect</i>    |
| prudent                           | <i>safe (sound) in mind</i> , that is, <i>self controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion)</i> : - discreet, sober, temperate |

| <b>Elder Qualifications From Timothy</b> | <b>Fuller Meaning of Original Greek Words</b>   |
|--|---|
| respectable                              | <i>orderly</i> , that is, <i>decorous</i> : - of good behavior, modest                      |
| hospitable                               | <i>fond of guests</i> , that is, <i>hospitable</i> : - given to (lover of, use) hospitality |
| able to teach                            | <i>instructive</i>  |
| not addicted to wine                     | <i>quarrelsome over wine</i>  |
| not pugnacious                           | a <i>smiter</i> , that is, <i>pugnacious (quarrelsome)</i> : - striker                      |
| gentle                                   | <i>forbearing, appropriate</i> , that is, <i>mild</i> : - gentle, moderation, patient       |
| peaceable                                | <i>not contentious, peaceable</i> : - not a brawler   |
| free from love of money                  | <i>not a money-lover, unavaricious</i> : - without covetousness, not greedy of filthy lucre |
| manages household well                   | <i>placed in front, dwelling, family, home</i>  |
| dignified control of children            | children under <i>subordination</i> : - subjection  |
| not a new convert                        | a <i>young convert</i> (“neophyte”): - novice   |
| good reputation outside church           | <i>good evidence</i> given - record, report, testimony, witness                             |

## Additional Qualifications of an Elder (Shepherd) From Titus

| <b>Additional Elder Qualifications from Titus</b> | <b>Fuller Meaning of Original Greek Words</b>                                     |
|---|---|
| believing children                                | <i>trustworthy, trustful</i> , believing, faithful, sure, true children           |
| no dissipation                                    | not charged with <i>unsavedness</i> , that is, <i>profligacy</i> : - excess, riot |

| Additional Elder Qualifications from Titus | Fuller Meaning of Original Greek Words   |
|--|--|
| no rebellion                               | not charged with <i>unsubdued</i> , that is, <i>insubordinate</i> - disobedient, that is not put under, unruly   |
| no reproach                                | <i>unaccused</i> , that is, <i>irreproachable</i> : - blameless  |
| not self-willed                            | not <i>self pleasing</i> , that is, <i>arrogant</i> : - self-willed  |
| no quick-tempered                          | not <i>irascible</i> : - soon angry  |
| loves what is good                         | <i>fond of good</i> , that is, a <i>promoter of virtue</i> : - love of good men  |
| sensible                                   | <i>safe (sound) in mind</i> , that is, <i>self controlled, moderate</i> as to opinion or passion - discreet, sober, temperate  |
| just                                       | <i>equitable</i> (in character or act), <i>innocent, holy</i> - just, meet, righteous  |
| devout                                     | <i>consecration, purity</i> from defilement, that is, <i>hallowed, pious, sacred, sure-</i> holy, mercy  |
| self-controlled                            | <i>strong in a thing (masterful)</i> , that is, <i>self controlled</i> (in appetite, etc.)-temperate   |
| holds fast to word                         | <i>adhere to, care for-</i> hold fast, hold to, support the trustworthy word   |
| able to exhort                             | <i>powerful or capable, possible-</i> able, could, power, strong; to <i>call near</i> , that is, <i>invite, invoke</i> (by <i>imploration, exhortation</i> or <i>consolation</i> ): - beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray |
| able to refute                             | <i>powerful or capable, possible-</i> able, could, power, strong; to <i>confute, admonish</i> : - convict, convince, tell a fault, rebuke, reprove; those who <i>dispute, refuse-</i> answer again, contradict, deny, gainsay, speak against                                 |

These requirements fit into three broad categories:

1) personal character, 2) family situation, and, 3) spiritual ability.

It may help us to understand how all of this applies by creating another table where we categorize the requirements for an elder as listed above into the three categories.

## Categorization of Elder (Shepherd) Requirements

| <i>Personal Character</i>      | <i>Family Situation</i>       | <i>Spiritual Ability</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| above reproach                 | husband of one wife           | able to teach            |
| temperate                      | hospitable                    | not a new convert        |
| prudent                        | manages household well        | holds fast to word       |
| respectable                    | dignified control of children | able to exhort           |
| not addicted to wine           | believing children            | able to refute           |
| not pugnacious                 |                               |                          |
| gentle                         |                               |                          |
| peaceable                      |                               |                          |
| free from love of money        |                               |                          |
| good reputation outside church |                               |                          |
| no dissipation                 |                               |                          |
| no rebellion                   |                               |                          |
| no reproach                    |                               |                          |
| not self-willed                |                               |                          |
| not quick-tempered             |                               |                          |
| loves what is good             |                               |                          |
| sensible                       |                               |                          |
| just                           |                               |                          |
| devout                         |                               |                          |
| self-controlled                |                               |                          |

As you can see, the personal character qualities far outweigh the other two categories. In our modern institutional system we have not emphasized personal character but, instead, have promoted administrative abilities and pulpit 'charisma'. Could this be why we have so few true shepherds?

The Lord is raising up and restoring His shepherds. They are being appointed and approved by Him according to His criteria. He appoints—the sheep do not elect. Even now there is a stirring in the hearts of the true sheep that is dissatisfied with the 'hired hands'. They are wandering away from the institutional church because they don't have a real shepherd in their life. The Lord as the Good Shepherd is leading them to His true under-shepherds.