

## The Ministry of the Shepherd

*Scripture reading: Ephesians 4:11*

The word "*shepherd*," translated "*pastor*," does not give any minister absolute charge over any congregation. It gives him the responsible position of being answerable to the "*Chief Shepherd*" for the ministry to care for the sheep given to him. Therefore, while he is caring for sheep in the congregation, there are others who would be caring for lambs, and others neither sheep nor lambs, but sons - little sons and big sons. Therefore, in God's Order, we FIND A PLURAL MINISTRY OF ELDERS WORKING TOGETHER.

It is very easy to discern the true God-appointed shepherds, as different from the man-appointed ones or the self-appointed ones. In Ephesians 4:11, we notice that the Word says that "He gave some, Apostles, etc."

A man-made apostle is an alien creature in God's business, yet all the churches appoint their own trainees to positions. Divine Order is totally rejected in the modern church as recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

*"Let no man deceive you by any means: For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (rebellion) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."*

History is repeating itself. Just as Israel turned away from God to the dumb idols of the nations, even so, 90% of the church has turned from God to worship buildings, and pews, money and status - rebelling against God. Jesus Christ, our Lord, said that this would happen before His return. He gave a parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30. Then from 37-43, He gave the meaning of this parable of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 13:37-43, *"He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather OUT OF HIS KINGDOM all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear."*

The above passage outlines the condition of the church before Christ comes. It clearly shows that there is at this time a rebellion in the church, against the Master of the Vineyard, and that He is waiting for the time of His judgment to separate the wheat from the tares. From what I can observe, the tares have taken up the chief corners of the streets of our cities with magnificent edifices. They occupy the major positions of authority in the vast majority of the congregations of the world. They are the richest institutions on earth, but we understand that the time of harvest is very near, even at the door.

The true shepherd seeks the glory of the Lord. The false shepherd seeks the glory of his denomination, or group, or nondenominational denomination, or something else beside Jesus. The question here arises, what is meant by seeking the glory? The question brings us back to the teaching of the "*firstfruits*." Whatever is the focal point of our operation and programs is the thing that is first in order of priority. Are we more interested in holding our members than in their spiritual growth? If we are more interested in their spiritual growth, even if we lose them, then Christ is first. Are the shepherds God-trained, God-appointed men, or man-appointed pastors, herdsmen, cowboys, man-appointed, Seminary-trained after the order of man, Romish? As God-appointed shepherds, they would be laying down their lives and not

looking after their own enrichment or status. Then that is putting Christ first. Is the shepherd striving to do the will of the Father, rather than to please his congregation and the other church leaders around? Then he is Christ centered. Is the shepherd making plans for bringing in money in the church? Then he is NOT Christ centered but otherwise centered. Is Christ the whole motivation of the church? If so, then they are putting Christ in His rightful place - first. A shepherd, therefore, is not a hireling. He cannot be bought or fired, because he is working with God Himself who trained and sent him, and he will teach every sheep to follow Jesus Christ. Every God-appointed shepherd knows that the word shepherd is not a title like the "Names of Blasphemy" - Reverend, Pastor, Father, Holy Father, Pope etc. (Revelation 17:5) - but that it is a spiritual endowment, a deep compassion in the heart for God's children everywhere. It is a gift of the Spirit, and we should only be under-shepherds with Jesus Christ.

(Excerpt from *The Pattern*, pg. 77-79)

*Thought for today:* Remember: A shepherd, therefore, is not a hireling. He cannot be bought or fired, because he is working with God Himself who trained and sent him, and he will teach every sheep to follow Jesus Christ.