

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE PASTURE OF GOD



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DEDICATION

This book is entirely dedicated to the bride of Christ, the church, whom the Lord Jesus lay down His life that She may be relocated back to God. Through His death, He Did not leave the church to be orphaned but rather, He descended, resurrected and ascended giving gifts unto men, that through these gifts, man may be instructed, taught, connected and align himself to reach the maturity of the son of God

INTRODUCTION

The church being symbolically referred to as the bride of Christ owes her allegiance to God. God declared that He would betroth (engage) His Church to Himself forever; in righteousness, Justice, loving kindness, mercy and faithfulness so that man may know the Lord. (Hosea 2:19-21).

He further declares that it shall come to pass in that day He will hear the heavens and the heavens shall hear the earth.

Through this, God intends that he may have an unbroken fellowship with man, just like in the Garden of Eden, at the creation of man.

Apostle Paul, concurs with this allegory and reiterates;

"For I am Jealous for you with godly Jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste (pure) virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

He over emphasizes chastity because the Lord Jesus while executing His ministry set a bar of perfectness just as our heavenly Father is perfect (Mathew 5:48).

As a prophet, Isaiah was running his evangelical oracles, he outlined very stringent nuggets through which the Holy Scriptures ought to be dispensed. In Isaiah 28:8-10, whereas he wondered of whom would God teach knowledge, and whom shall He make to understand doctrine, he found out that such should be a person who is weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts.

That precept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little.

The above scriptures in prophet Isaiah vividly speak about teaching and understanding doctrine.

The only candidate that qualifies is one who has attained maturity. This maturity is reached through the complete functionality of the fivefold ministries (Ephesians 4:11-16).

However, the misnomer happens when Christians who constitute a flock congregation are intent and fervent to seek their God and join up in an everlasting covenant that shall not be broken.

They are instead let astray like the lost sheep, and the people who participate in this unfortunate episode are shepherds (Jeremiah 50: 4-7 and Ezekiel 34).

Based on the above scenario, this book; **The Shepherds and the pasture of God** seeks to correct and realign the church to the right trajectory that the Lord Jesus Christ pioneered for her. And the appeal of the author is that the Church of Christ ought to hearken to this clarion call: for thus says the Lord, the Holy one of Israel “In returning and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). **Shalom.**

FOREWORD

“The place of the ship is in the sea but woe to the ship when the water enters the ship!” That enigmatic statement by the colorful British Preacher, Charles Spurgeon, aptly captures the current woeful state of much of the church in Africa and worldwide. In other words, the woeful state of the church today is due to too much worldliness that has entered into the church.

This has recently been glaring highlighted by the recent ‘Shakahola horror’ in Kenya, where hundreds of innocent sheep, lost their lives at the hands of self-seeking and selfish wolves masquerading as shepherds.

In a bid to address the malaise that currently afflicts much of the body of Christ, world-wide, a multitude of well-meant prescriptions, ideas, methods, techniques and strategic plans, have been proposed and propagated over the years. Thank God for all the good that has been done by all kinds of churches and ministries, including: Purpose-driven, Seeker sensitive, cell churches, mega churches, evangelism explosions, Spiritual gifts, etc. But, by and large, all of these have not really adequately addressed the root of the problem: Shepherds and Sheep - and their condition in particular!

Interestingly, as I sit down to write this forward, the Religious Organizations bill 2024, has been presented to the Senate in Kenya’s Parliament, this week. It contains a raft of recommendations, seeking to regulate the Church, church

ministers and Christian ministry - in response to the malaise presently afflicting the church.

It is within this context, and for such a time as this, that I believe God has sent one of his seasoned shepherds, Pastor David Wanjala, with a message and prescription that is both very timely yet timeless. His book, **“The Shepherds and the Pasture of God”**, is timeless in the sense that it goes back to the very beginning, where we find God’s basic fundamental plan and model for the church: Shepherds and Sheep.

Historically, whenever the church has deviated from this Shepherd/Sheep biblical ideal, spiritual error and decay have crept in.

Evidently, the image of the humble shepherd (who cares more about the flock than himself) has served to guide the activities of Christian leaders and safeguard the flock of God from spiritual abuses.

Above every other title, Jesus calls Himself “the good shepherd” (John 10: 11, 14); Peter calls Jesus “the Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5: 4); and the Bible also describes Him as “the great Shepherd of the Sheep (Hebrews 13: 20).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd; His people are the sheep; and God has appointed some people to shepherd his sheep under the authority of the good shepherd.

In this timely and important book, Pastor Wanjala goes on to flesh out, thoroughly, exhaustively and precisely, the details

and implications of those fundamental Shepherd/ Sheep dynamics.

‘The Shepherds and the Pasture of God’ is deeply and squarely rooted on the Bible, the ultimate source of all true spiritual knowledge and wisdom.

Very instructively, the very first instruction and charge, given by our Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection to the very same person who referred to Him “the Chief Shepherd”, was: “Feed my Sheep” (John 21: 15-17). The history of the church begins with Jesus, basically saying to those to whom he entrusted his work: “I am a shepherd, be a shepherd too.”

As Pastor Wanjala powerfully and compellingly argues, this is what the founder and Lord of the Church is basically saying: “This is my church and this is my model under which my sheep can grow and flourish. If you are going to fulfill my purpose, here is what you need to do:

“Be shepherds of God’s flock under your care” (1 Peter 5: 2).

When sheep are shepherded according to God’s instructions, based on the Bible, both sheep and shepherds will grow to become what God ultimately intends His Church to be.

It is crucial and instructive to note that leaders in biblical times were seen, first and above all, as shepherds of the flock entrusted to them. Remarkably, though the Bible uses many images to describe leaders among God’s people, the one that stands out above all others is that of sheep and shepherd.

Instructively, the English term ‘Pastor’ is etymologically rooted in the Latin word ‘*Pascere*’ (“Shepherd.”). *Pascere* literally means “to put to pasture”. Being called a Pastor, Reverend, Bishop, Archbishop, is being reminded that you are called to be a shepherd of the flock (Acts 20: 28). Church elders are not exempted!

What wonder, what awe! That the Almighty God, Creator of the Universe not only calls sinful mortals, to be shepherds, but identifies Himself as a Shepherd along with them – infinitely greater than us, but still one of us.

These are no mere theoretical reflections from some academic or theological ivory tower. Pastor Wanjala’s concise thoughts and arguments are solidly rooted in the Bible. To his great credit, he carefully cites and expounds on hundreds of relevant passages of scripture

Moreover, his expositions are red-hot ironed, and hammered on a solid anvil of many years of intense real-life experiences and reflection, both as Sheep and Shepherd.

King David, arguably the greatest Shepherd of Israel, began his public career by narrating his real-life experiences and exploits as a shepherd boy, as a protector his flock from marauding lions, wolves and bears (1 Samuel 17: 34-36). Instructively, many other leaders that God chose and used to guide his people, spent several years training for their future leadership roles by caring for sheep. Take Moses, the greatest of all leaders of God’s people, as another classic case in point.

He learnt some of his finest leadership lessons, while attending 40 years of ‘classes’ in the desert of Midian, tending and looking after his father-in-law’s sheep (Exodus 3: 1).

A good shepherd must remain intimately connected to his sheep. And it is this intimate connection with sheep that God expects and demands of those he called to be shepherds.

God seeks out bewildered sheep, without shepherds (Matthew 9: 36); as well as scattered sheep under evil shepherds; He looks for and after them; rescues, feeds, tends, protects, heals and strengthens them. But God does not leave the guilty shepherds unpunished (Ezekiel 34).

What happens when Shepherds neglect their God-given roles? Time and again, calamities struck God’s people when they turned away from God to idols. Invariably God sent his Prophets, with diagnoses and prescriptions at hand. It is critical to note that God did not single out poor methodologies, techniques or strategies as the cause of His people’s woes and ill-health. But to uncaring and erring Shepherds! (Jeremiah 12: 10-11; Jeremiah 23: 1-2)

“The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the Lord...So they do not prosper and all their flock is scattered.” (Jeremiah 20: 21).

Why were these Shepherds senseless? Why did they along with the sheep not prosper? Clearly because they did not “inquire of the Lord”

To the best of my knowledge, apart from the Bible, this book is the best and most intensive, extensive, exhaustive and incisive enquiry and study on Shepherds and sheep, so far, to ever come out of the pen of a contemporary African Christian Shepherd and Writer.

It is therefore my great joy, honor and pleasure to commend this treasure to you, with the hope, prayer and belief that it will go a long way in enabling you to become the Shepherd/ Sheep that God intends and longs for you to be.

Dr. Kenneth Odhiambo, Th. D
Chaplain, Maasai Mara University.

CHAPTER 1:

BASICS OF SHEPHERDS AND THE PASTURE OF GOD.

Definition of the shepherds and the pasture of God

A Shepherd (n) - A person who looks after sheep.

Shepherd (v)- To guide or direct people as if they were sheep, e.g. A guide shepherded us into the museum.

The children were shepherded around by two teachers.

A Shepherd- One who cares for flocks.

A person who herds, tends, and keeps the sheep.

- Protects, guides, or watches over a person or a group of people.
- One who feeds the sheep.

Biblical Background of a Shepherd (s)

Genesis 4:2

At the creation of man i.e. Adam and Eve and after they began bearing children, it was not coincidental that the second son to Adam, Abel became the first shepherd of mankind.

This was by design as when you read through the subsequent scriptures, you realize that out of his occupation, when the time for offering a sacrifice to God came, his was accepted but Cain`s was rejected

Reason? Abel by the virtue of being a shepherd accustomed himself to doing well as opposed to Cain who allowed sin to lie at his door and finally, he became the first murderer in human history.

Shepherdhood applies to both males and females

Gen 29: 6, 1 Samuel 17:15 and 1 Samuel 16:11

In Genesis 29:6 we see Rachael the daughter of Laban tending/shepherding her Father`s sheep.

On the other hand, in the book of 1 Sam 17:15, the Bible records “But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father`s sheep at Bethlehem.

The two examples above give us an understanding that God conferred the duty of shepherd hood to both males and females.

As I move forward you will realize that the duties and expectations from male or female shepherds are the same.

Much as God treasures shepherd hood, on the other setting of Egyptian jurisdiction; a representative of slavery, a shepherd becomes an abomination to the ruler and the subjects of the land of Pharaoh.

This becomes an important phenomenon to carry along as you will realize in our later chapters.

When the Lord God pronounces reprimands to the shepherds, one of the misgivings that God will be pointing at reminisces the one character of Pharaoh.

Genesis 46:34 records that any shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians.

God`s man after His own Heart

When the time came for God to raise a king in Israel who was after His own Heart, He chose King David who was an acquainted shepherd and probably exuded a unique character borne out of being a seasoned shepherd in Israel.

Initially, people had requested for a King to rule over them as other neighboring nations were ruled respectively. This King was later turned into an instrument of cruelty and godlessness and thus immediately he was anointed, God rejected him.

1 Samuel 16:11-13

“And Samuel said to Jesse; Are all your children here? And he said, there remains yet the youngest, and behold, he keeps the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, send and bring him for we will not sit down till he comes here.

And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and also of a beautiful countenance and pleasant to look at. And The LORD said; Arise anoint him for this is he.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him amid his brethren, and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.

So, Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.”

In the above verses we decipher the following nuggets;

- a) According to the hierarchy of Jesse`s family, David ranked the last and insignificant on the measure of merit. Thus, the responsibilities of shepherding the sheep were vested on him.
- b) David based on the scale of God was enigmatic; a champion that portended restlessness to the whole family of Jesse, when prophet Samuel announced out of his abated breath; “send and bring him; for we will not sit down till he comes here.”

We may not know how long it took for David to be brought from the field, the pasture where he was shepherding his father`s sheep. But one denominator stands tall, that there was no sitting down until he was brought. Halelluia to God who sees beyond what man, even a prophet can see!

Measured in terms of physical features his countenance was goodly to look at, but his elder siblings had also exhibited the same.

Beneath the invisible lay the heart of a shepherd that God was interested in.

In the latter chapters we will realize that when God promises of raising His true shepherd hood, the only person He mentions is David.

c) The command to the prophet to arise and anoint him was with God alone; “Arise, anoint him for this is he.”

d) Immediately after the anointing the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.

The Spirit of the LORD upon David is what brought about the establishment of the heart of a shepherd that God was looking for in man.

Look at the following pronouncements; “I have found David My servant, with My oil I have anointed him. (Psalms 89:20-23)

I have found a man after My own heart (1Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22)

Throughout human history and especially biblical recordings no man has ever received such a high-profile appraisal from the creator as in the above scriptures except David.

David became a benchmark King in Israel that when God reckons the kingdom of Israel, David stands out tall to be acknowledged.

No wonder God esteemed him highly and from his seed God according to His promise raised to Israel a Saviour; The Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely, the great Messiah that mankind has ever anticipated came from the root of Jesse where also King David descended from.

CHAPTER 2:

IDEAL SHEPHERDS AND THE ROD

IMPORTANT DUTIES PERFORMED

BY AN IDEAL SHEPHERD

Isaiah 40:11 “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.

- a) Feeding the sheep
- b) Gathers the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom (caring for the weak and vulnerable)
- c) Gently leads those with the young ones
- d) Goes before and leads the sheep, (Psalms 77:22)
- e) Here, God is illustrated metaphorically demonstrating a role of a shepherd through the hands of Moses and Aaron (Psalms 80:1, Psalms 78:52)
- f) Cares for the sheep by seeking out good pasture for the sheep (Refer to; Psalms 25:2)

In 1 Chronicles 4:39-41, we see the posterity of Judah, given by names from the proceeding verses. They went forth on an exploratory expedition to the East and through the valley seeking for pasture for their flocks.

The results were that they found rich pasture which was good; the land was wide, quiet and peaceable.

They displaced the inhabitants and dwelled in their rooms because there was pasture for their flocks.

g) A shepherd should be clothed with care and tenderness that were illustrative of Christ in the Old Testament scriptures. Isaiah 40:11, Ezekiel 34:13-16.

Compare the above scriptures with Luke 19:10; “For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost.”

The description given in Ezekiel 34:16 only suites the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ as stated in Luke 19:10.

Jesus by promising to destroy the fat and the strong and feed them with judgements, sounds a warning to the sheep that predate on others and take advantage to exercise oppression to them.

The coming of The Lord portended a level ground where He expects that people of all cadres may have equality as far as kingdom matters are concerned- Ephesians 4:9-10.

He expects that nobody should take an advantage of hierarchy in life but one should consider another as better than himself. Those sheep who take advantage and predate upon others, their fate is pronounced in Jesus judging them.

In latter chapters we will find out that they are the ones that corrupt the shepherds and pervert justice, thus rendering the shepherds to have respect for them and overlook the poor and the needy.

h) Cares for the sheep in defending them when attacked by wild beasts- Amos 3:12, 1 Samuel 17:34-36.

The nation of Israel was faced with a very gigantic obstacle in the name of Goliath, the King of the Philistines.

The King of Israel had assessed his war tactics and found out that he was inferior to this giant of the time.

When David Son of Jesse, the heir apparent to the throne according to God's plan, came and saw the prevailing scenario, he invoked the true characters that defined a true shepherd.

And indeed, when the battle array was set, Goliath was defeated by this inexperienced young shepherd but skilled in shepherding tactics.

He did not use spears and Javelin which were characteristic arsenals in use at the time. In deed they were too cumbersome for him to bear, but instead invoked the Name of The LORD of Hosts. In deed JEHOVAH SABAOth Is the One That decisively masters the winning army battalion. Halelluia!

i) Carries along a staff or a rod.

SURVEY ON THE STAFF OR ROD

The staff or rod that was used by a shepherd may be presented in some elaborate pictorial format. It was used diversely like driving the sheep, gathering them, being reached forward to bring along the lost or distressed ones, used as a weapon to keep at bay the dangerous beasts that could attempt to devour the sheep etc.

But I get a simple understanding that a staff or a rod was a pole. As I take the biblical survey on this very important object that a true shepherd could not afford lacking, we will realise its real purpose and its symbolic representation.

Walk with me along the following scriptures that we may get the picture of this object and subsequently strike an understanding of its meaning.

Scriptures under the Rod usage

- The Rod of Moses – Exodus 4:2,3,4,17

Vs 2 “and The LORD said to him, what is that in your hand?
And he said a rod.

Vs 3 And He said, cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses fled before it.

Vs 4 And the LORD said to Moses; Put forth your hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.

Vs 17 And you shall take this rod in your hand, wherewith you shall do signs.

When time came for Jehovah Yahweh to deliver the children of Israel from a long period of slavery in the land of Pharaoh, as He had promised Abraham in the Book of Genesis 15:13-16, God designated Moses to accomplish this task He called him miraculously as he was tending the flock of Jethro the Father In- law the priest of Median (Exodus chapter 3)

Moses had a rod that he used to shepherd the flock of Jethro.

It was a normal rod (pole) made suitable for the work of shepherding the flock according to the culture that Moses

descended from. To Moses it had been a normal and usual rod that he used daily in executing his duties. But on this particular day as God was tasking him to go to an impervious hearted Pharaoh and command him to let the people of God that they may worship Him in the wilderness, as he was commanded to throw his rod on the ground, it so happened that the usual rod turned into a serpent.

Moses was scared and even ran away from his own rod. But God commanded him to use this rod to perform signs before Pharaoh. Therefore, we decipher that a rod is a symbol of performing miraculous signs.

- **The Rod of Aaron** -Numbers 17:8

When Moses had assembled the 12 elders representing the 12 tribes of Israel, there was a constant contestation against his leadership.

When God called Moses, He made him a god to Pharaoh and Aaron his brother was to be his prophet.

This means any rebellion against Aaron could also touch Moses directly. And by extension, whoever rebelled against the duo's leadership rebelled against God.

In Numbers 17:1-8, when Dathan, Abiram and Korah had rebelled against Moses, God had spoken to Moses to speak to the children of Israel and their princes to give him each his rod, Aaron was also among them.

Moses collected their rods and laid them before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

It came to pass that the following day when Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded and brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

This indicated that the priestly authority and leadership lay with the Levitical family, whose Aaron was the leader.

The rod in this context indicates priestly authority and leadership.

- **The Rod of God- Job 9:34**

“Let Him take His rod (chastisement) away from me, and let not His fear terrify me”

The rod of God brings affliction- in this context, the rod is used to indicate punishment, and chastisement, from God to a person who may have become wayward.

Psalms 2:9 “You shall break them with a rod of Iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel”. Denotes authority.

- **Revelation 2:27 “And He shall rule them with a rod of Iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers (pieces) even as I received of My Father”**

The Lord Jesus gives His promises to him that will emerge as an overcomer from the wiles of Satan. He will give them authority and empower them to rule the nations just as He received this onus from the Father.

Ezekiel 20:37 “And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond (obligation) of the covenant.

Psalms 23:4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me, your rod and Your staff they comfort me”

- Figurative of Christ- Isaiah 11:1 “And there shall come out a rod from the stem of Jesse, and the branch shall grow out of his roots.”
- Revelation 22:16 “I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”
- Psalms 110:2 – Rod represents strength- “The LORD shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion; rule you amid your enemies,”
- Rod means a medium through which corporal punishment is meted out;

i) For Backs of fools- Proverbs 10: 13 “In the lips of him that has understanding wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding”.

Proverbs 26:3 “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back”

ii) For Children- **Proverbs 13:24** He that spares his rod hates his son, but he that loves him chastens him betimes.

iii) Paul was beaten with rods- **2 Corinthians 11:25-** Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.”

Psalms 89:30-32 “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments,

If they break my statutes and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes.”

Scriptures on Staff (Pole)

- **Genesis 32:10** “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which you have showed to your servant; for with my staff, I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands”
- **Exodus 12:1** “And thus shall you eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it in haste; It is the LORD’S Passover“
- **Judges 6:21** “Then the Angel of The LORD put forth the end of the Staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the Angel of The LORD departed out of his sight.”
- **11 Kings 4:29** “Then he said to Gehazi, gird up your loins, and take my Staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute you answer him not again; and lay my staff upon the face of the child.”
- **11 Kings 18:21** “Now behold, you trust upon the Staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; So is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all that trust on him.” (Isaiah 36:6)
- **Isaiah 3:1** “For behold The Lord (Adon), the LORD of hosts (Jehovah Tsebaoth) does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay (supply) and the Staff (i.e.

Support), the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.”

- **Isaiah 9:4** “For you have broken (shattered) the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.”
- **Isaiah 10:11** “Shall the ax boast itself against him that hews, therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shakes it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.’
- **Isaiah 14:5** “The LORD has broken the Staff of the wicked, and the scepter of the rulers.”
- **Isaiah 28:27** “For the fitches (dill) are not threshed with threshing instruments, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod.”
- **Isaiah 30:32** ‘And in every place where the grounded Staff shall pass which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of shaking will He fight with it (them).”
- **Jeremiah 48:17** “All you that are about him, bemoan him; and all you that know his name, say, how is the strong Staff broken, and the beautiful rod!”
- Zechariah 11:10 “And I took my staff, even beauty and cut it asunder (in two, that I might break my covenant (agreement) which I had made with all the people.”
- **Mark 6:8** “And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip (provision bag), no bread, no money in their purse.”

- **Hebrew 11:21** “By faith, Jacob, when he was a dying blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his Staff.”
- **Leviticus 27: 32** “And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be Holy to the LORD,”

From the foregoing scriptures, we clearly understand the meaning of Staff or Rod i.e. for signs, support, supply, strength, provision, authority etc. figurative of Christ and all these descriptions converge at the characters of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The shepherd as a matter of fact ought to be endowed with priestly authority, entirely depend on God for provision, support and enablement.

Assurance of trust and confidence in God, godly counsel and leadership’

That God is the one who provides direction and levels difficult situations can be learned from when God caused the Rod of Moses to become a serpent.

We learn that the magicians of Egypt also made their rods to become serpents, but the one for Moses swallowed them up.

In the case of Aaron and the eleven elders, God causes the rod of Aaron to bud, bloom blossoms and bud almonds.

This shows that God`s purpose cannot be contested.

It is therefore imperative that a shepherd understands well the purpose of God, vision and mission. He should know his part to play in the equation of shepherding the flock and allow God to accomplish His Will.

We will realize that God Himself is the one who goes ahead of the shepherd to provide leadership to His flock. The shepherd should therefore be very sensitive to God, totally depend on Him, for Him alone knows the whole discourse of His sheep.

i)Cares for the sheep by searching them when lost and straying-

Ezekiel 34:12 “As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so, will I seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”

God requires that a true shepherd searches out his flock which is lost and scattered

A good shepherd gives his life for the sake of the sheep (John 10:11).

“What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he loose one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing (Luke 15:2-7)

The above scriptures give us a clean picture of the concern of the true shepherd _He preserves all the sheep given to him to shepherd. In case one gets lost or is scattered he leaves the rest of the present flock and goes all the way seeking for the lost,

and when he finds it, he carries it on his shoulders and come rejoicing.

We see Jesus praying to the Father and reminding Him that all that the Father gave unto Him, in the world, He did not lose any except Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled (John 17:12). The scripture that was fulfilled was (Psalms 41:9) that says” Yea, My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against Me” (also refer to Mark 14:18, John 13:18-21). The heart of a true shepherd is to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10)

j) Illustration of God as a leader of Israel. (Psalms 77:20) “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron”. A shepherd is always ahead of the flock. This means that, he should be a role model to the sheep in service and worship to God. He does not depend on the flock but all the sheep in the flock depend on him. The shepherd depends on God (Psalms 80:1) “Give ear O shepherd of Israel, you that leads Joseph like a flock, you that dwells between the Cherubim, shine forth”.

A shepherd must be well versed with godly leadership. We must therefore understand the true character of God. God requires that we fulfill His will and not to fulfill our will in His will. This is where the disconnect of many shepherds come in, they fulfil their own will within the pastures that they set up within the PASTURE OF GOD.

K) Cares for the sheep by showing tenderness to the ewes in lamb and to the young.

Genesis 33:13-14 “And he said to him, my lord knows that the children are tender (weak, delicate) and the flocks and herds with young are with me; and if the men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.

Let my Lord, I pray you pass over before his servant: and I will lead on Softly (gently, leisurely) according as the cattle that goes before me and the children be able to endure, until I come to my Lord to seir.

A good shepherd knows very well that in his /her flock there are ewes in lamb, and the young ones. These groups require a lot of care and love and cannot be handled like the rest. A shepherd who does not have a heart for this group of flock will just carelessly overdrive them and expose them to all sorts of danger. We have had shepherds who announce with less care to their congregations that I don't care, if you feel uncomfortable with this church, you can leave, because God will bring ten people who are more important than you.

Jacob knew well that the two bands he was travelling with, were all heirs of the promises God had made with Abraham, Isaac, Himself and their descendants, and so was courageous enough to tell his brother Esau, that he be allowed to move at the pace of the vulnerable group so as not to lose them; a true heart of a good shepherd!

L) cares for the sheep by numbering them when they return from the pasture.

Numbering is very important because it assures the shepherd of the following;

- i) all sheep are among the flock,
- ii) all sheep are well
- iii) whether there are lambings, mortalities, losses or injuries
- iv) Whether there is an intrusion of any strange sheep.

(Jeremiah 33:13) “In the cities of the mountains in the cities of the valley, in the cities of the south and in the land of Bejamin, and in the places about Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hand of Him that tells (counts) them, says the LORD (Jehovah)

M) He carries a bag or a script (pouch)

(1 Samuel 17:40) “And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook (valley) and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had even in a scrip (pouch): and his sling was in his hand; and he drew near to the Philistine.

The shepherd’s bag or scrip carries personal effects of the shepherd. He should learn to depend on God for his personal provision. When Jesus was sending His disciples to go and preach the gospel to the lost, He advised them not to provide gold or silver or brass in the purses nor scrip for their journey. Neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves for the workman is worthy of his food. (Matthew 10:9-10).

N) He hires keepers under him. A shepherd should always have someone to relieve him in case a side duty call.

In the Book of 1 Samuel 17:20, we see when David was shepherding his father’s sheep, and it happened that he had to

go to the war with Goliath, he left the sheep with the keeper who was always with him, helping him in shepherding his father's sheep.

Shepherds need to cultivate team working and should develop confidence in their deputies/ assistants and should grow a good working relationship.

More often you find that a minister in a given church, due to his monopolistic kind of leadership, exposes his congregation to rebellion in the event that he has to attend to other duties, and momentarily leave the sheep in the hands of someone else.

o) Cares for the sheep by attending to the sick. When The Lord Jesus send His disciples to go in to the field, He charged them thus, “And as you go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:7-8).

It is disheartening that God gives Spiritual gifts to His servants freely, but in the course of executing their ministerial duties, they do it at a price. The price is code named “the seed of the covenant or sacrifice”. To them the blood of Jesus needs to be jumpstarted in order to act, and what does the jumpstarting is “planting a seed”. I will later spend some time explaining this misnomer of seed planting.

Ezekiel 34:16 “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will

destroy the fat (rich) and the strong. I will feed them with judgment.”

p) Cares for the sheep by knowing them.

That one of the shepherds’ responsibilities is to know the sheep he shepherds, cannot be overemphasized. This helps the shepherd to know the character and need of every sheep and therefore attend to them appropriately.

Where the shepherd does not have an understanding of every individual sheep, the sheep’s needs cannot be addressed and therefore the flock’s welfare will be at stake.

John 10:14 “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”

When the shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep know him, they will have a cordial relationship with their shepherd, and therefore will always be obedient and willing to receive his guidance.

q) Cares for the sheep by watching over them by night.

Because the natural sheep are helpless during the night, and if not safeguarded can easily be devoured by ravenous beasts at night. The sheep of Christ are also at risk at night. Their night involves situations which may carry needful and desperate moments when they find themselves in stressful situations, they may easily be discouraged and therefore need the loving care of their shepherds.

It is during the night that ravenous beasts maraud freely and therefore a shepherd needs to be vigilant and properly armed to protect his sheep.

Luke 2:8 “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding (remaining) in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night”

In Luke 2:8-20, the shepherds who were watching over the sheep at night, were the first to witness the birth of the Messiah of mankind. They had an opportunity to witness the host of heaven glorifying God and celebrating for this grant event that brought hope to humanity, Luke 2:13-15.

The above signifies that a shepherd must be spiritually alert in order to walk by the leading of God.

For effectiveness in shepherd hood, one needs to domesticate the Book of Romans 8:1-16, sensitivity to the Spirit of God helps us to always know the will of God in our lives, and therefore qualifies us to be good shepherds.

r) Shepherds dwell in tents while tending their flocks

Traditionally, shepherds` residences were tents. Reasons for a shepherd living in a tent are obvious.

When you sleep in a tent, you sleep a wink. No comfort in the tent so it means the shepherd remains vigilant most of the hours of the night.

Because shepherds were required to move their flocks to where the pasture was green, residing in tents suited their lives.

The account of the pioneers of faith in the book of Hebrews lived like pilgrims on the earth and none of them was concerned of the comforts of this world. The bible records that they were looking for a better country, whose maker and builder is God, Hebrews 11:13-16

Most of them wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitutes, afflicted, tormented. Some wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, caves of the earth, Hebrews 11:37-38.

Today`s shepherds live as if the world is their inheritance. They live large and own posh things on this earth, they revel in opulence of the present world, and yet the bible records where your treasure is your heart shall be. Matthew 6:19-21

Isaiah 38:12 “My age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd`s tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life. He will cut me off with pinning sickness from day even tonight will you make an end of me”

Song of songs 1:8 “If you know not, O ye fairest among women, go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed your kids beside the shepherd`s tents”

s) Religious Zeal or Fervour

Luke 2:17-18 “And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at these things which were told them by the shepherds.”

When the angel of the Lord visited the shepherds who were abiding in the field with the sheep, He urged them, to fear not, for He was bringing them good news of great joy, which shall be to all the people.

That this day a Saviour was born in the city of David (Bethlehem), and this Saviour was Christ the Lord. They were commanded to go and worship Him and were given a sign, that the babe would be found wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

And as if these sayings were not enough, the Bible records that suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God saying;

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. After these visitations, the shepherds resolved to go to Bethlehem and see these things which had come to pass, which the Lord had made known to them.

The Bible records that they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger.

As shepherds, we should be consumed by a godly zeal and always be committed to sharing with people about the kingdom of God. This makes a good and true shepherd to be a witness of God and he will always be doing the work of his heavenly Father.

The following examples can help us cultivate this character as we serve in the vineyard of the Lord,

Numbers 25:7,11

Vs 7 “And when Phinehas the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand.”

VS 11 “Phinehas the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in My jealousy.”

When the children of Israel abode in Shittim they begun to commit whoredom (i.e. have illicit relations) with the daughters of Moab.

This portended danger because people of Moab were worshipping Baal Peor, who was lord of the opening according to the Moabites.

And indeed, Baal Peor was the lord of opening because when the Israelites embraced him, they opened themselves to all manner of indecent behaviours including acting sensually.

This is seen when one of the children of Israel came and brought to his brethren a Midianite woman, who was also a Baal Peor worshipper, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

He even openly lay with the woman and this prompted Phinehas who had a zeal for God to take a spear, enter the tent of this abomination and thrust both of them through, the man

of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So, the plaque was stayed from the children of Israel.

The act of Phinehas stopped the slaughter that God had caused in Israel, and twenty-four thousand people had died in the plaque.

Joshua 14:10-12 “And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.

Vs 11 As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in.

Vs 12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so, be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.”

Behold, such courageous words coming from Caleb to Joshua, who was now eighty-five years. He remembers what GOD did through him when he was forty years, and assures him that he was still strong at eighty-five to do even more. This is only possible to one who is zealous

11 Kings 10:16 “And he said, come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So, they made him ride in his chariot.” When you read the story of Jehu, you realize that he managed

to kill Jezebel and all Baal worshippers and thus got rid of idolatry in the land.

Jezebel had initially sent the fiery prophet of Israel, prophet Elijah, scampering for his dear life after he had slaughtered the false prophets of Baal.

The Bible records that he ran on a journey of forty days and forty nights, running away from the threats of Jezebel. When you read this story, you realize that this itinerary taken by Elijah was cumbersome and vain.

In fact, it was a journey without the God of Israel, and that is why you hear later a voice questioning him what he was doing there (1 Kings 19)

Jehu having a Zeal for God of Israel, simply killed Jezebel by looking at her and seeing a real whorish image- The Bible records that she had painted her face and tied her hair and looked out at a window. Jehu just send out an exclamation that reached the two or three eunuchs that were guarding Jezebel.

He wanted to know who was on his side and the Bible records that the Eunuchs looked out to him and Jehu commanded that Jezebel be thrown out through the window from the storey and that is exactly what caused the death of Jezebel (11 Kings 9:30-37). Surely, a true shepherd needs a great zeal to get rid of gross idolatry that defines the church of Christ at this present age.

- Lack of zealousness is sin Amos 6:1-6**Vs 1**

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountains of Samaria, which are named chief of the Nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

Vs 2 pass you to Calneh, and see; and from there go you to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their boarder greater than your boarder?

Vs 3 You that put far away the evil day and cause the seat of violence to come near;

Vs 4 That lie upon beds of Ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall.

Vs 5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David;

Vs 6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.”

The above verses in Amos chapter six, give a true picture of a complacent people. They lack any zealousness and therefore dwell carelessly, incorporating all and everything in their lives. This accurately describes the church of Christ today, who has lowered and changed the standards of God to suit their own whims. Their shepherds notwithstanding. By so doing they leave the church of Christ reeling in the complexities of sin and

thus alienating herself from their Saviour who redeemed them and charged them to be Holy as our Heavenly Father is Holy.

Acts 21:20

“And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said to him, you see brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law.”

Apostle Paul while on his missionary journey witnessed about the risen Messiah through whom man could be saved, had come across many Jews people who were zealous to the law of Moses, they had listened to him and they had accepted the message that was preached by him. They received the message in their thousands and believed. They had cultivated a zeal in the laws of Moses, because in one of his Prophecies, Moses had promised that God would raise a prophet like him from among their midst and he had urged them to obey Him. (*Deuteronomy 18:15-18*)

Through the preaching and expositioning of Apostle Paul, they understood that the Lord Jesus Christ was this promised prophet and so they believed in the message and got converted and became Christians.

- **Apostle Paul was zealous for the Jews Religion** -*Acts 22:3*

“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cicilia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and

taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Fathers, and very zealous towards God, as you all are this day.”

When Apostle Paul was brought to Jerusalem and accused before the multitude and everybody was baying for his blood, he had to defend himself and in the above verse, he makes it clear that before his conversion, he was also zealous to the Jews religion as the people listening to him were.

- **Zealous in good works** (*Galatians 4:18*)

But it is good to be zealous (eagerly) affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am “present with you.”

Titus 2:14 “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity (lawlessness) and purify to Himself a peculiar (special) people, zealous of good works.

Revelation 3: 19 “As many as I love I rebuke (reprove) and chasten (discipline); be zealous therefore and repent.”

We are urged to be zealous in good works because this is a character that God desires from every Christian.

When the shepherds serve God with a zeal, and on the other hand the sheep obey God zealously, the cumulative achievement is that they both raise to God a sanctuary where God can dwell and thus, they are assured of His benefits.

- **Moses** -Exodus 2:12

When Moses was living in the palace of the King of Egypt, one day he went out to visit his brethren in the field and saw an Egyptian fighting with a Jew; the Bible records that Moses took sides and fought the Egyptian and killed him. This was because in his heart he, had love for his people and couldn't withstand anybody molesting his own people.

This forced him to exile himself into the land of the Midianites for forty (40) years where later God appeared unto him and send him to Pharaoh to go and deliver His people from slavery.

Today, the sheep of Christ are wasting under the oppressive servitude to the course of this world, we need shepherds who are consumed by the zeal of God, to face this humongous servitude, and set the people of God free so that they can serve the living God.

- **Joshua**- Numbers 11:27-29.

God had commanded Moses to choose seventy elders of Israel to help him administer judgment to the congregation of Israel.

After Moses was done, the Bible records that the LORD came down in a cloud and spoke to him, and took of the spirit that was upon him and gave it to the seventy elders and it came to pass that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied and did not cease.

The account is given of the two who remained in the camp i.e. Eldad and Medad, that the spirit of God also fell upon them and they prophesied. When word reached Joshua the son of

Nun about the happening, he was jealously zealous and desired that Moses would stop them from prophesying. According to him (Joshua), prophecy was just a preserve of a few.

But the desire of Moses was that God would make the congregation to prophesy and would put His Spirit upon them.

It could have been an easy task for Moses to lead a Spirit filled people because they could be obedient and comply accordingly.

- **Gideon-Judges 6:11-32.**

When Israel committed sin before God and He surrendered them unto the hands of the Midianites, we see how the Midianites oppressed the Israelites. The Israelites could sow their crops i.e. wheat and barley, but the Midianites spoilt them with their livestock.

Gideon, the least in the family of Manasseh, whose Father was Joash, the Priest of Baal was very zealous in everything that he did. Unveiling the predicament that the Nation of Israel was in required to be done by one individual who had undivided zeal.

And we see Gideon standing out with this gusto and through him, the altar of Baal and the grove of Asherah were thrown down, and an altar of God raised.

He risked his life by night and wrecked destruction to the kingdom of Baal. And through him God delivered the Israelites from the oppressive grip of the Midianites.

- **Jephthah-** Judges 11:30-31.

Because of the zeal that Jephthah had towards God, he made a vow with God, as he went to fight and wrestle the Israelites from the cruel hand of the children of Ammon and he returns safely, he could offer as a sacrifice, a burnt offering, whatsoever comes forth of the doors of his house to meet him.

When he returned with victory, we see his only child, a virgin daughter came out first to meet him from the battle field. Even if Jephthah had no other child and because he had made a vow to God, he had to fulfill this vow and we see him performing his promise.

In Psalms 15:4, when the Bible gives descriptions of the one who qualifies to dwell in the tent of God, we see the very character that was exhibited by Jephthah applying.

Quote; “In whose eyes a vile person is contemned (despised); but he honours them that fear the LORD. He that swears to his own hurt, and changes not.”

In deed the vow of Jephthah was hurting but because he had a zeal for God, he did not contemplate to change his vow but he faithfully fulfilled all that he had spoken before God.

- **Samuel** -1 Samuel 12: 23.

“Moreover, as for me God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach the good and the right way.”

Samuel reiterates that he was under obligations to pray for the people of God, the Israelites. That if he stops praying for them, he could be committing sin to God.

He was also obligated to teach the Israelites the good and the right way and these he did faithfully.

- **Saul-** 1 Samuel 14:38-44

King Saul had zealously but foolishly committed the children of Israel who were going to take part in war not to eat nor drink anything.

His son Jonathan had encountered bees on the way having lived in a certain tree and had reached out the end of his staff and scooped the honey and ate.

He did this because the battle was hot and he was famished, but when he tested the honey, his strength returned.

Because Saul had vowed that whoever was found guilty was worthy death, when the verdict was made and the lot had fallen on Jonathan, he was surely condemned to die but people saved him because he had mastered several battles with victory to the Israelites. So, the people said he could not die for he was a star for their battles.

- **David-** 11 Samuel 16

When God was establishing King David and his Kingdom, David could not be satisfied with anything until the ark of God was brought to Jerusalem. The first attempt was very punitive

because the LORD God caused the oxen to shake the Ark and it almost fell from the new cart on which it was borne.

When Uzzah stretched out his hand to steady the Ark, the anger of God burned against him and the LORD killed him;

Despite this mishap, we see King David zealously seeking ways of how the Ark of God could be removed from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem, and he finally succeeded when he did it in the right way.

King David's heart was incensed by the victory and triumph that finally the presence of God was arriving in his city. He leaped and danced before the Ark of God with all his might and could not care about how the handmaids and the lads thought about him.

When his wife, Michal registered her displeasure insinuating that the King has made himself appear vile before his handmaids, the King retorted that it mattered little to him how people considered him to be, but he could even leap and dance more as long as he was doing this before the LORD, the creator of heaven and earth and all things therein are. What a joy to possess such a zeal that our eyes may be removed from looking at what people think about us and instead seeing what God expects from us.

- **Elijah-1 Kings 19:10.**

“And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your Altars, and slain your prophets with the

sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

Prophet Elijah had just returned from a mammoth victory on Mount Carmel, where he had slaughtered four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. A word from Jezebel had reached him that by tomorrow his head could be cut off the way the heads of Baal prophets were cut off.

He had set out on a long tiresome journey whose itinerary was not ordered by God. This is why when he was resting in the cave, the Angel appears to him and asks him, what he was doing there.

From his reply you realize that indeed he had a zeal with God. He had been jealous about the gross idolatry the children of Israel had turned to and the persecution they had visited upon the prophets of God.

When Apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, he conjures prophet Elijah by saying this in **Romans 11:2-4** “God has not cast away his people which He foreknew. Know you not what the scripture says of Elijah? How he makes intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed your prophets, and dug down your Altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

But what says the answer of God to him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed their knee to the image of Baal.”

Apostle Paul reveals that the zeal that prophet Elijah had for God caused him to intercede against Israel. He saw

unwillingness that the children of Israel cultivated towards God.

Shepherds need to clothe themselves with a great zeal towards God, so as to protect and prevent the sheep from falling into idolatry. Our God is a jealous God and cannot allow any form of idolatry to rob Him of His position.

- **Asa-1 Kings 15: 11-15.**

When King Asa got an opportunity to reign in Judah for forty and one year, the Bible records that he accomplished the following;

- He did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his Father.
- He took away the sodomites (male cult prostitutes) out of the land.
- He removed all the idols that his Father had made.
- He removed his mother, Maachah, from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove, and Asa destroyed her idol, and burned it by the brook Kidron.
- But the high places were not removed: nevertheless, Asa`s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.
- And he brought in the things which his Father had dedicated into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels.

Nothing explains such great and herculean task accomplished by King Asa, as stated above, other than burning with a zeal to uphold righteousness in the land of Judah.

He did not even shy from dethroning his own Mother from being queen because she had raised idols in the land.

This is such a zeal that God requires us to possess that we may jealously guard His holiness.

- **Jehoshaphat**-11 Chronicles 17:3-10.

King Jehoshaphat the Son of King Asa also purposed to rule Judah with almost the same zeal that his Father had, and he got favour before God.

The Bible enumerates his deeds during his reign which went down well in the Annals of history of the Kings of Judah.

The Bible notes that the LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the first ways of his Father David, and sought not to Baalism.

He sought the LORD God of his Father and walked in His commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

God established the Kingdom in his hand and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents (tributes) and he had riches and honour in abundance.

His heart was lifted in the ways of the LORD, moreover he took away the high places (shrines) and groves (Asherah Idols) out of Judah.

He published the law of God throughout the cities of Judah, using the Levites and Priests.

And in verse 10, the Bible records that the fear of the LORD fell upon all the Kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

What awesome peace we see being brought by King Jehoshaphat when he chose to walk and rule his Kingdom zealously upholding the requirements of the LORD!

- 11 Chronicles 29:31 Hezekiah

Reading through the Book of 11 Chronicles chapter 29, you realize that King Hezekiah during his reign zealously sanctified the temple which had been defiled by his Father Ahaz.

He also restored pleasant sacrifices to God which were freely offered from willing hearts and consecrated before God.

- Anna-Luke 2:38.

When the Lord Jesus was presented to the temple and received by Simeon, the Bible accounts that there was one prophetess, by the name Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Aser;

She was of a great age, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity.

She was a widow of about fourscore and four (84) years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day.

What a wonderful dedication that such an old widow could be reckoned with. After being widowed when she only lived with her husband seven years, she chose to dedicate her remaining

seventy-seven (77) years serving God in the temple without departing.

Because of this choice, she also rejoiced and thanked God for bringing redemption to His people through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Paul for Christianity-**Romans 1:8-9.

This is what Apostle Paul was to say about his service to God; “First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my Spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”

He confesses confidently that he is persuaded that God bears him witness of his zeal to the work of the cross. Truly he was, because as the least of the Apostles, he became the most instrumental

Apostle in the epistles he wrote both to the Jews and Gentiles.

- **Isaiah -**Isaiah 6:8.

When God was unveiling His divine mission, as He revealed Himself to prophet Isaiah, and He was asking whom He would send, and who would go for us? Prophet Isaiah confidently answers in the affirmative that God may send him. This truly shows how Isaiah was zealous to God to an extent of offering himself to be send as God`s messenger.

- **Without love it is profitless-1 Corinthians 13:3--**

The above scripture teaches us that our zeal to God is only profitable when covered with love. If we lack love, however much we dedicate ourselves to God`s service, it becomes profitless. Love therefore becomes the crown of perfecting our zeal.

Our zeal for spiritual gifts should be geared towards seeking for our excellence to the edifying of the church, (1 Corinthians 14:12)

As Christians we seek to attain spiritual excellence, but the Bible urges us to seek to benefit the church.

Apostle Paul expounding on the gifts of prophecy and tongues, makes it clear that all the gifts that God endows us with should be used to build the church. They should not be used for our own selfish ambitions.

- **Zealous in the work of the Lord-1 Corinthians 15:58---**

Quote; “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work Of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

The climax of our zeal to the work of God is that we receive an everlasting reward. This should therefore be our motivating factor.

God always takes note of our dedication to His work and He records every detail for rewarding, therefore our zeal should drive us towards this.

- **In the millennium** -Isaiah 2:3-5.

During the millennial rule of our Lord Jesus Christ, prophet Isaiah saw a vision of what would happen to people across the face of the earth;

Quote; “And many people shall go and say, come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And He shall judge among the Nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Oh, house of Jacob, come you, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”

The above scriptures as given in the Oracles of prophet Isaiah, as he saw the events which will unfold during the millennial reign of Jesus. That people will be consumed with a great zeal and they will urge one another to go up to the temple of God to worship Him. Remember this has been the desire of God that the nations of the earth at present time may be consumed by such an ardent desire and seek Him, because He is willing to bring them healing.

- **Christ demonstrated this great zeal**—John 2:17, Psalms 69:9, Romans 15:3

John 2:17 “And His disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of your house has eaten me up.”

Psalms 69:9 “For the zeal of your house has eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached you fell on me.”

From the above exhaustive examples where the incidences of the zeal were demonstrated, we pick lessons that it is incumbent upon true shepherds of God to bear the true marks of this zeal

When this is done, the kingdom of God which is a holy Kingdom, will be upheld.

A shepherd who is zealous to God, will jealously and zealously guard the sheep that God has committed into his hands, and whatever comes his way, he will not short change them for any reason.

God treasures this character and His desire is that every shepherd should possess a heart after His own heart, after He commented King David, Son of Jesse.

t) A good shepherd epitomizes loyalty of the sheep

(Zechariah 13:7) “Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, says the LORD of hosts; Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn My hand upon the little ones.”

In the above prophetic scripture spoken by prophet Zechariah, we see a figure of Christ as a true shepherd who would be smitten and His sheep would be scattered.

This prophecy find fulfillment in the following New Testament Books;

Matthew 26:31; “Then says Jesus to them. All you shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.”

Also Mark 14:27, John 16:32

Without overemphasizing, a good shepherd must bear characters that all the sheep under his care exhibit undivided loyalty. And because of this virtue, when the shepherd is smitten every sheep scamper for his/ her life.

On the contrary many shepherds exercise masterly demeanors to the sheep and that is why the sheep show no loyalty. The consequences are that although the sheep may be counted under the shepherd hood of a certain individual, they may show stints of apathy and may neither comply nor abide by the requirements of the shepherd. Thus, such sheep cannot be easily managed

The great shepherd of the sheep that has ever lived is The Lord Jesus Christ. This is exemplified from Hebrews 13:20 “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

His greatness is found in His eternal sacrifice, through His shed blood.

King David when tending his father's sheep a lion and a bear came from the woods to devour his sheep and he could not just sit pretty but he endangered his life and fought these beasts and overcame them.

This could later act as a testimony that he stood with when the time for him to fight the giant of the time came.

Thus, through this confidence, he killed Goliath who was a giant and well exercised in battle.

While God was giving oracles of the future status of His sheep, He exalted one quality of good shepherd hood.

In Ezekiel 34:23, He says; *“And I shall set up one shepherd over them and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.”*

Rev 7:17 “For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

We will later find out that shepherds who are not true, instead of feeding the sheep, they prey on them. This is the most untoward expectations of God from His shepherds who foul His pasture and force the sheep to graze on this defiled pasture. God promises to throw them out from His pasture. Walk with me along as I unfold this blow by blow.

Jesus in the Book of John 10:14 declared thus, “I am the good shepherd and know My sheep, and I am known of mine.” We saw earlier that a good shepherd has the knowledge of every

individual sheep under his flock; but a hireling as the Bible describes the pretender shepherds, thrive on favouritism.

CHAPTER 3:

SHEPHERDHOOD AS A CHARACTER IN KINGS.

Over a long-stretched period of time, during the reigns of various Kings in Israel, God always concerned Himself with one strong quality when raising an individual to rule over the nation of Israel. This quality is shepherdhood.

Before Kings ruled the nation of Israel God used judges to carry along His divine purpose. Alongside judges, He appointed various priests to execute the work of divine worship to God by offering sacrifices and teaching people the laws of God.

During the priesthood of Eli and especially when he was aging, we see a gross sacrilegious act taking place from his servants, who were his sons; just as God had commanded Aaron to serve as His high priest, and his sons as his assistants.

The sons of Eli became notorious, waxed careless and did every abominable act before God without any care. They became very ravenous and insatiable with a voracious appetite where they occasionally robbed God of His offerings and went ahead to commit acrimonious immoral acts of sleeping with women in the temple of the sacrifice without any restraint.

God concluded this heinous sin of Eli and his sons thus in the Book of 1 Samuel 2:29; “Wherefore kick you at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My habitation;

and honour your sons above Me to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people.”

In 1 Samuel 2:31-34 God announces the severest judgment to Eli because of his sons; Hophni and Phinehas, whose judgment was to culminate into their death in one day. And in respect to this God promises to raise up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which was in His heart and His Mind (will).

And He promised that He would build him a sure house; and he shall walk before His anointed forever, 1 Samuel 2:35.

Out of the above promise, we see Samuel being born from Elkanah and Hannah, from the descency of Ephraim (fruitfulness), an Ephrathite. And when God called Samuel as the last judge in Israel, He gave him the following charge sheet;

1 Samuel 3:11-14

Vs 11 ‘And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle (ring in amazement)

Vs 12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: When I begin, I will also make an end

Vs 13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.

Vs 14 And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged (atoned) with sacrifice nor offering forever.

This is how serious the judgment over Eli and his house was; no purging either by sacrifice nor offering, and God made it an eternal pronouncement.

Samuel therefore was charged to become the last judge of Israel and God also doubled him as a priest and a prophet.

During his era, he was very careful as he jurisdicated his mandate so as not to fall in the noose of rebellion that had been preceded by his predecessor, Eli. Although his sons also carried some baggage. It was during his reign that we see the people of Israel demanding that they should also be ruled by a King as the neighbouring nations were.

In the annals of jurisdicating godly mandate, Samuel did well according to the zeal he had for God. The Bible wraps up a summary into his era thus;

1 Samuel 7:15-17

Vs 15 “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

Vs 16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

Vs 17 And his return was to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel and there he built an Altar to the LORD (Jehovah).

However, as Samuel aged and as an attempt to perpetuate his dynasty, he made his sons; Joel and Abiah, judges who ruled in Beersheba- the Bible records that his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre and took bribes and perverted judgment **1 Samuel 8:1-5**

Lucre means unjust gain, profit acquired by violence.

For this reason, the elders of Israel were prompted to ask Samuel to coronate them a king and this became a piloting reason that emptied an uncertain multifaceted Kings who ruled Israel in succession, thus plunging the Godly chosen nation into a long circus of ungodly leadership, climaxing at the division of the United Kingdom.

All this continued the various besieging of Israel by their enemies, their returns to their land, the coming of the Messiah whom they did not embrace, and their ensuing spiritual desolation hitherto.

In this episode, where people adamantly rejected God and demanded a King, Samuel was very much displeased and when he prayed, God allowed him to make for them a King but warned him to protest solemnly to them and show them the manner of the King that shall reign over them, (1Samuel 8:6-9)

Reading along verses 10-17 therein are explained weird characters of tags that analytical conclusion proves that the candidate of such characters was devoid of shepherd hood in his system.

The descriptions in the above scriptures will find their amplification when I will be covering on the PASTURE OF GOD, in later chapters.

Comparing the demeanor of the pioneering King of Israel, King Saul with his successor King David, one does not see any single glimpse of shepherd hood in the former. All that King Saul was concerned of achieving was to make Israel his servant.

All his efforts were geared towards the formation of a personality cult of Me, Myself and I. He was concerned about himself and everything done by his subjects was for his glorification.

That is why when God rejected him, He set out on a journey of seeking for one after His own heart; the heart of a shepherd, and yes, He found King David a man after His own heart. In the early chapters I explained this expansively.

Based on the above insight, when God raises a King / ruler the primary quality He is interested in is a heart of a shepherd.

In Isaiah 44:28, we read the following testimony given by God to one of His Kings He chose to accomplish a noble task; “That says of Cyrus, he is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasures; even saying to Jerusalem, you shall be built, and to the temple, your foundation shall be laid.”

After a long period of rebellion characterized by the Nation of Israel that ended in Babylonian exile for a period of seventy years as prophet Jeremiah had warned the Israelites, to fulfill the seventy sabbatical years, King Cyrus the Persian was

anointed by God to bring restoration to His Holy nation. Before I highlight on King Cyrus, let me record a verbatim quotation on the events that led to this Babylonian exile; 2 Chronicles 36:11-23.

Vs 11 Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

Vs 12 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD.

Vs 13 And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning to the LORD God of Israel.

Vs 14 Moreover, all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations (detestable practices) of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which He had hallowed (made holy) in Jerusalem

Vs 15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, (rising betimes, and sending, i.e. again and again), because He had compassion on His people and his dwelling place.

Vs 16 But they mocked the messengers of God and despised (scoffed at) His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

Vs 17 Therefore He brought upon them the King of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the

house of their sanctuary and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age, He gave them all into his hand.

Vs 18 And all the vessels (articles) of the house of God, great and small, and treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the King, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon.

Vs 19 And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

Vs 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried him away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the Kingdom of Persia.

Vs 21 To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate, she kept the sabbath, to fulfill three score and ten years.

Vs 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the Spirit (moved the heart) of Cyrus King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing saying;

Vs 23 Thus says Cyrus King of Persia, all the Kingdoms of the earth has the LORD God of heaven given me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah, who is there among you of all His people? The LORD his God be with him and let him go up.

The above scenario explains the prophetic utterances made by the prophet Isaiah. That Jerusalem which lay in ruin was to be built again and that the foundations of the temple were to be laid. And indeed, this happened under the oversight of the shepherd that God promised.

A shepherd restores God's dwellings and builds the foundations of the temple. The temple of God is laid on specific foundations based on the very pattern that Jehovah showed Moses on the mountain.

Jeremiah 49:19; “Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong; but I will suddenly make him run away from her; and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? For who is like me? And who will appoint Me the time? And who is that shepherd that will stand before Me?”

Jeremiah 6:3 “The shepherds with their flocks shall come to her; they shall pitch (set up) their tents against her roundabout; they shall feed everyone in his place.”

In Jeremiah 49:19, God treasures the virtue of being a shepherd. He raises the standards of those who ought to stand before Him, and one character that towers high is shepherd hood.

In **Jermiah 6:3**, we see how shepherds ought to relate with their flock. They come and pitch their tents and every one feeds his flock in his place. When you look closely at these shepherds, they understand the nature of the pasture and the

Bible sums up that everyone feeds his flock in his place but within one pasture.

As shepherds we are supposed to be informed that God has gifted us with different diets and He has entrusted us with His flocks, but the grazing ground is in His pasture.

His pasture contains standard marks that we must be careful to observe as we feed His flock, lest our carelessness may lead us to foul His pasture.

CHAPTER 4: FOOLISH AND UNWORTHY SHEPHERDS.

Before I transition into the PASTURE OF GOD; I would like to take some time to elaborate on some vices that define another group of shepherds who exhibit foolishness and unworthiness, and seemingly, these ones constitute quite a large number of the shepherds that God raises.

Ignorant and foolish (Bad ministers)

The two adjectives above define outstanding characters that define most of the ministers of the Gospel. Ignorant because they know what God expects of them but instead, they overlook and do their own ways.

Foolishness defines denying Godliness in their hearts and therefore proceeding to do their own versions.

This group is full of predators who prey on the flocks that they feed. They major in enriching themselves at the expense of the flock and they misuse the flock.

In **Ezekiel 34:10**, this is how God laments;

‘Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed

themselves anymore; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

God raises His concern that those who were meant to feed the sheep and care for them, have replaced this noble duty and substituted it with making the flock to be their servants.

They benefit themselves from the fatling of these sheep. And God`s final verdict is that He will deflock them from feeding His flock, the shepherds will be famished and they will no longer have sheep to look after.

The above narrative is true because even if, earthly, many pastors are seen tending a certain flock, their end is already determined and they will end up tormenting in hell, if at all, they don`t follow the benchmarks of God.

Isaiah 56:11; *“Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter,”*

The above scripture perfectly describes a group of foolish and ignorant shepherds who are obsessed with gross naivety. They have demarcated their own quarters in the PASTURE OF GOD, and they zealously work for their own gain.

Everything they do is geared towards their own coronation. They only mention God, The Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as their refrain stanzas to create justification in their drama.

The sheep, on the other hand, having been deprived of any stint of Godliness, cheer them up to the hoarsing of their voices.

They celebrate them as ‘my spiritual fathers and mothers.’ They follow their innuendos with a religious zeal and they are ready to even involve themselves in physical altercations to ‘defend the glories of their wayward shepherds.

This is something that leaves a fundamental reprint of wonder to God, and as God daily watches over this hullabaloo drama, He frowns and exclaims thus; Oh, that one would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on My Altar!

I am not pleased with you.’ Says the LORD Almighty.

“And I will accept no offering from your hands -But you profane it by saying of the Lord’s table, it is defiled and of its food, it is contemptible (Malachi 1:10, 12-NIV).

Surely, useless religious fires are daily lit on the altar of God worldwide, in the name of God.

The church has constantly drifted away from the pattern of God and has instead customized all worldliness into her worship mode.

True salvation and its fragrance are largely missing among those who proclaim to be Christians. From their talks, social demeanors, dress codes, behaviors, actions, and lifestyles, they present an indecent demeanor before God.

Every Christian is racing to outdo the worldly norms. Godliness and characters of a seriously born-again Christian

are considered archaic and termed as yester years requirements.

One needs to apply some microscopic scrutiny to tell that one is a born-again Christian. Our places of worship are modernized and all manner of personality appearance is celebrated as a concoct of God`s Grace.

Men and women who are supposedly created after and in the image of God, can wear any manner of make-up and freely appear before our places of worship, and when these all happen the disconnected shepherd`s applause them that they look smart, even if they are wearing some ‘Bikini’ like clothes.

All these barbaric applauses are made so that the innocent sheep of Christ who are struggling and wrestling to shed off the worldly weight that doth easily beset them, instead of the shepherds who know what God requires from His followers, teaching them the right way, they short change their sermons to get some monetary values from the adorners of the weird make-ups.

Because their goal is to get some gain from their sheep, they will compromise the standards that define the PASTURE OF GOD. They cannot create their pastures outside but rather mark their pastures within the PASTURE OF GOD.

The menu in these quarters includes all pleasant things of this world but spiced with Godliness so that the blind sheep can’t tell whether they are grazing on the right or wrong pasture.

Such a scenario prompted God to pronounce loudly during the oracles of prophet Ezekiel thus; “Son of man **prophecy**

(preach) against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them; Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (Ezekiel 34:2)

How do shepherds feed themselves instead of feeding the flocks? This scripture implies that the shepherds instead of upholding high Godly standards by teaching and instructing the sheep into the high requirements of God, they bent the standards so as not to offend their sheep. When the sheep live anyhow and then pledge their loyalty to their compromised shepherds, the shepherds reap benefits from their impenitent sheep who struggle to put up with Christianity and worldliness.

Jeremiah 50:6-7 Quote; “My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place (dwelling place).

Vs 7 All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, we offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD (Jehovah), the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.”

God through prophet Jeremiah, saw the dire predicament of His people. He testifies that His people have been lost sheep. And the reason why they are lost is that their shepherds have led them astray.

They have turned them away on the mountain and made them wander from mountain to hill, this kind of heedless wandering caused them to forget their resting place (dwelling place).

From verses 4-5, this is what we read about the people of God before they were made to stray away; “In those days and in that time, says the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go and seek the LORD their God.

They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces aside there, saying, come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.”

We see that before being let astray, the people of God possessed a penitent heart (going and weeping), they went with an urge to seek the LORD their God. They ask about the way that leads to the presence of God, and their faces are intent on this way. They burn with an earnest desire to join themselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

But come to verse 6 and you see God terming them lost sheep. Why? Because their shepherds failed to teach them the ways and the standards of God.

Jeremiah 50:2 ‘Declare you among the nations and publish, and set (lift) up a standard; publish and conceal not: say Babylon is taken, Bel is confused, Merodach is broken in pieces, her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

This verse describes the fate of Satan, his agents, spirits, and idols. God proclaims that His people should exude triumph because Satan and his powers are no more. But instead of the shepherds picking this and publishing it with boldness to the sheep so that the ardent desire of the sheep to abide in their dwelling place is realized, they instead apply alien and unorthodox ways of disconnecting the sheep from their great shepherd.

Surely, this is what the shepherds are busy doing in the PASTURE OF GOD; alienating the sheep and exposing them to the offensive arsenals of their enemy (adversary), who finds them and devours them. And as he does this, he justifies himself that he devours them because they have sinned against their God.

The vulnerability of the sheep to be devoured at will is a result of bad shepherds that are strewn all over the earth.

When shepherds domesticate falsehood, they become predators of the sheep, instead of feeding them. This is where the adage, ‘fattening for slaughter’ comes in. The fatlings are favoured at the expense of the weak ones. Favouritism and partiality set in (Ezekiel 34:2-3)

CHAPTER 5:

REPROOF TO THE SHEPHERDS

The book of Ezekiel chapter 34 presents a long dispute that God has with His shepherds who were chosen to take care of the flock. Their duties were described and the field of shepherding is the PASTURE OF GOD.

I will explore one verse after another so that we may understand the misgivings of the shepherds in line with what God expects of them.

Vs 2 “Son of man prophesy (preach) against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

In the above scripture we see shepherds abdicating their duties of feeding the flock of God and instead feed themselves at the expense of the sheep. This is an obvious occurrence among the shepherds that we have today. They explore extensively scriptures in the Bible, that speak about giving, and their sermons augment with phrases like ‘Offering God a sacrifice.’ They teach that for one to please God, he/ she must always come to the altar of God with a choice sacrifice, lest God overlooks him/ her.

Even prayers are made at the exchange of a sacrifice and they have code named this sacrifice as ‘the seed of the covenant.’

One wonders which covenant because the Bible only talks of two covenants; the old covenant which was always confirmed

by the blood that came from blameless animals and the new covenant which was dedicated / confirmed with the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus was affirming the love of Peter and so His disciples in John 21:15-17; Vs 15; “so when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these? He says to Him, Yes Lord, you know that I love You. He says to him, Feed My sheep.

Vs 16 He says to him again the second time, Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me? He says to Him, Yes Lord, you know that I love You. He says to him, Feed My Sheep.

Vs 17 He says to him the third time, Simon son of Jonah do you love Me?

Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You, know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

By Jesus emphasizing three times about the love of Peter to Him, He charges Peter three times to feed His sheep.

This is the sole purpose of a shepherd- to feed the sheep of God, but we see in Ezekiel the LORD complaining that the shepherds of Israel are feeding themselves instead of feeding the sheep. Remember that Israel is used to refer to the people of God (children of God).

CHAPTER 6:

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Zechariah 9:11 “As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have send forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water,”

Matthew 26:28 “For this is My blood of the New Testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Exodus 24:8 “And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant (agreement), which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words,”

Mark 14:24 “And He said to them, this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.”

Luke 22:20 “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you.

1 Corinthians 11:25 “After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped (finished eating), saying, this cup is the New Testament (agreement, covenant) in My blood: this do you as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Hebrews 10: 29 “Of how much sorer punishment suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 13:20 “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

Hebrews 9:18 “Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated (confirmed, inaugurated) without blood.”

Hebrews 9:20 “Saying, this is the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined to you.”

From the above scriptures that talk about the blood of Jesus being the confirmation of the new covenant, no other sacrifice or offering is left to atone anyone and present him blameless before God.

We hear from today`s pastors (shepherds) always refraining concerning` the seed of the covenant` (sacrifice) whereas this is a euphemism of planting a seed which most of the shepherds insist that their sheep should practice in order to receive blessings from God.

They sneer at the blood of Jesus and their overtones suggest that something else need to be done in order to jumpstart the blood of Jesus, which is supposedly ineffective, to accomplish its purpose.

They vehemently insist on the sacrifice which is always monetary and through this, they enrich themselves, thus feeding themselves.

Ezekiel 34:3 says; “You eat the fat, and you clothe you with the wool, you kill them that are fed; but you feed not the flock.”

According to the Mosaic law, in Leviticus 7:31; the priests were commanded to burn the fat to the LORD. They were only apportioned the breast.

During the times of Priest Eli, we see his sons despising the offerings of the LORD. Among the sins they committed is eating the fat that was to be burned that it may give a fragrant aroma before God (1Samuel 2:15-16)

They applied force to those who appeared before God to offer their sacrifices by forcefully taking away the fat.

We see God reprimanding His shepherds because of this excessive appetite. The appetite is meant to benefit the physical person at the expense of the spirit.

Wool provides warmth and so comfort, by God saying that the shepherds clothe themselves with the wool, it means they fail to shepherd the sheep into the ways of God and instead seek all that creates comfort in their lives from the sheep.

Killing those who are fed implies brainwashing those who may be zealous in seeking the Lord. They get indoctrinated with what the shepherds claim to have as a revelation from God, and slowly they drift from feeding on the PASTURE OF GOD!

Ezekiel 34:4 “The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them.

From the above scriptures, we pull out duties that are assigned to be accomplished by the shepherds of the flock. We see God strongly pointing out serious acts of omission committed by His trusted shepherds;

Among the concerns He raises are;

- i) The diseased need to be strengthened, but the shepherds have neglected them. They have no spiritual growth, they look spiritually famished and the antidote is the true word of God, which can address their conditions.

The shepherds instead of versing themselves in the word of God so that they can minister this pure and unadulterated word to this group, speak their false promises to the sheep. These persistent own innuendoes keep on perpetuating these sheep in the same diseased conditions, and the sheep never grow spiritually and therefore never mature.

- ii) Some of the sheep are sick both physically and spiritually. When the Lord Jesus Christ was commissioning His disciples, He charged them to heal the sick. This gift was supposed to be exercised without any attachment.

It is obvious in today`s Christianity that when one is sick and needs prayers, the shepherds make loud announcements that they must carry along ‘the sacrifice’ to be prayed for so that they can be healed.

Some shepherds make weird pronouncements that even when you visit a witch doctor or a sorcerer for any assistance, you don't just appear to them empty-handed.

The healing which was meant to be received freely and in the name of Jesus Christ is instead merchandised. And remember most of the celebrated healings are faked. Victims are meant to confess forcefully that they are healed so that the shepherds can use them as baits to attract many.

Let me make it clear that I am not illegitimizing all incidences where healings have been received. Some healings are genuine and verifiable testimonies can be ascribed, but most of the so-called healings are theaterized.

The healed continue with their conditions silently and even die of the same. When the victims register that their former conditions still remain, they are rebuffed that they don't have enough faith to sustain their healings or they have gone back to their old sinful ways.

The healing process is reduced to a gambling orgy, that instead of an instant and complete healing, failed healers claim that God will continue healing the sick gradually.

When God gives a justifiable concern that those who are sick have not been healed, He takes cognizance that people who are initially claimed to be healed, later succumb to the same conditions.

True healings glorify God and ignite great revival in the hearts of those who witness such scenarios, and even to them that God uses to dispense this gift of healing.

iii) Binding up the broken—Because of today`s challenging living conditions, most people, if not all, go to spiritual leaders to seek spiritual comfort to their broken hearts. Some are suffering from broken marriages and relationships, loss of jobs, stigmatization from their contemporaries, failed financial investments, etc.

When the above and many other unmentioned conditions are presented to the shepherds, most of them very fast explore channels to use to exhort some monetary benefits from these vulnerable sheep.

Thus, instead of binding their brokenness, they leave them more broken and hopeless.

You will always hear such untoward news that a certain woman who was undergoing marital problems went to a certain man of the cloth seeking help, but instead, the shepherd took advantage of her and sexually harassed her.

The shepherd will of course invoke several defensive scriptures like, touch not the anointed, neither do My prophets any harm-----, that you will be falsely accused without cause but take heart etc. They will come out bleating fire to the enemies of the Gospel, but all their heinous acts are visible before God.

When such scenarios happen, many will stand to defend their shepherds because of the benefits they receive from them, but the truth is that God has already destined an end for those who don`t hear Him; whether they be sheep or shepherds.

iv) Those sheep that are driven away/ lost.

The work of a true shepherd is to seek and bring along those sheep that have been lost. Some got lost because they embraced some false teachings from wayward shepherds, they followed their heresies and got alienated from the true ways of God.

Others got lost because initially nobody introduced them to God and so they went along practicing their old traditional practices. After the shepherds in this bracket go out to evangelize to these lost sheep and the sheep agree to convert and be among their flock, instead of the shepherds teaching them godliness, they instead proceed to teach them what is itching to their ears, thus making them more lost than before,

Through these many Christians have become apostatic even after being born again. The reason is that the shepherds who lead them are compromised.

v) Ruling the sheep with force and cruelty.

It is obvious that when one looks at most of the shepherds' demeanors one sees the elements of force and cruelty in their administration.

The sheep are meant to believe that their shepherds are demigods and whatever comes out of their mouth is the voice of God.

That the sheep of God can only enter Heaven strictly based on the pronouncements of their shepherds' tongues.

Anything pronounced by their shepherd is akin to a divine law and whoever does not obey is anathema. Here, the sheep are

held hostage and their lifestyle is basically influenced by their spiritual leader.

The spiritual leader determines what food his sheep should eat, what attire the sheep should wear, what relationship the sheep should involve itself into, how and what the sheep should pray. This ends in one being brainwashed and he takes anything advanced by his/her shepherd as a divine dogma that going against one cannot be able to enter into the kingdom of God.

This is why God concludes in Ezekiel 34:4, the last line that, “But with force and with cruelty (severity) have you ruled them”.

Ezekiel 34:5 *“And they were scattered because there is no shepherd, and they became meat (food) to all the beasts of the field where they were scattered”*.

Despite the physical presence of a shepherd, the status of the sheep gives an impression to God that there is no shepherd. Because of the disconnect of shepherds from their God, the sheep appear to be scattered, thus move away from their God, and thus expose themselves as food to every beast of the field.

The beasts of the field are false preachers who maraud around and they don't spare any stray sheep they come across. They bring around strange doctrines which are easily assimilated by the sheep because these sheep have no foundation, their standing is on a sinking sand, they easily fall prey to these beasts who unfortunately transverse the field; THE PASTURE OF GOD!

When God places his shepherds in his PASTURE (FIELD), He hopes that his shepherds should tend them. God lays the lives of his sheep under the care of the shepherds He has assigned to take care of the sheep. But because of the carelessness of the shepherds who are constantly driven away by every wind of doctrine, the sheep detours from the true path that God wants them to walk, they assimilate strange things and incorporate them into this highway and thus they foul the way of righteousness!

Ezekiel 34:6 *“My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill; Yeah, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and no one did search or seek after them”.*

The reason why the sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every hill is that they may find protection and safety. The mountains and hills above illustrate churches and ministries in which the children of God wander from one to another hoping to find a stable anchor to God. But because the keepers of these mountains and hills are dumb and mute dogs that cannot bark the wandering sheep are exposed to ravenous beasts which devour them mercilessly.

God calls his shepherd to attention and wants them to vividly envision the state of his sheep, how they have become prey and meat to every beast of the field. The reason as to why the sheep are exposed to these beasts according to God is that the shepherds miss in action and if they are present, they fail to search for God's flock. Instead, the shepherds feed themselves instead of feeding the flock **(Vs 6-8)**

Because of this gross abdication of the shepherds to tend the sheep of God. God promises that he is against the shepherds and will require his flock at their hands and cause them to stop feeding the flock. When God does this, the shepherds will no longer be able to feed themselves and God will deliver His flock from the mouths of the shepherds that they may not be meat for them. God Himself promises to search His sheep and seek them out. In verse 12 God spells out the works accomplished by a true and caring shepherd. That he seeks out His flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered.

In the same manner, God promised to seek out His sheep and deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark days. The description made by God of a cloudy and dark day means dire situations in the lives of the sheep when the sheep need urgent help because they are surrounded by precarious situations.

John 10:9 *“I am the door by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture”.* Jesus Christ is the true door that lets the flock enter in and be saved. There after go in and out and find pasture. There is salvation in Jesus and whoever embraces Him, he gets saved and will always feed in the fat PASTURE OF GOD. From verse 13 onwards, we will share when we be handling the PASTURE OF GOD. When God promises to deflock his shepherds, it means they have lowered themselves and embraced ungodliness which has gradually drifted them from God. The only option is that God may separate His sheep from the shepherd’s peradventure He may save them. Continue walking

along with me that I may explore the vices characterized by impervious hearted shepherds.

And hear what God announces to these types of shepherds; **Zechariah 11:17** “Woe to the idle shepherd that leaves 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, what a severe judgement pronounced over all individual bearing the above untoward characters!

False shepherds are insatiate and pleasure loving.

Hear what the Lord God testifies to this group in *Isaiah 56:10-12*,

Vs 10 “His watchmen are blind: They are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs (i.e. voiceless men), they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

Vs 11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way. Every one for his gain from his quarter.

Vs 12 Come you, say they I will bring wine and we will fill ourselves with strong drink and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

Such description suites a despicable lot of shepherds that we have in these last days. God made them to be watchmen, but they are blind and cannot see well. Then how can a blind man lead the blind?

They are all ignorant. They know what is expected of them but they ignore. They are voiceless and if they produce any sound, its heard faintly. No barking meaning, they have lost authority that is God given. Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber denote that their spiritual visions are blurred and therefore they are visionless. They have insatiable appetite and are shepherds who do not understand. All the above adjectives describe the sorry state of the shepherds in the PASTURE OF GOD. They have mismatched the PASTURE OF GOD with immeasurable impunity.

False shepherds lead the sheep a stray Jeremiah 50:6

The reason why God assigns shepherds to take care of the sheep is that the sheep may stay on the right course. When you look at the character of the natural sheep, you realize that they are not endowed with the ability to differentiate between the genuine and the false shepherds, and they tend to comply with the requirements of any who presents himself as a shepherd to them.

They easily cooperate and be led even on the way of slaughter, God's expectation from his Shepherds is that they may lead the sheep in his ways.

2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to show yourself approved to God a workman that needs not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of Truth." When apostle Paul writes to his young pastor, he charges him to assimilate the above scripture in 2 Timothy 2:15. A Shepherd needs to study and know all that appertains

to God. Paul says such a workman is approved to God and need not be ashamed. Thus, he can rightly divide the word of truth without erring. When the sheep of God find themselves in such safe hands they will love to graze in the PASTURE OF GOD. They will resent any other doctrines that are drawn outside the word of God.

Prophet Jeremiah was used of God to Lament concerning the predicament the wayward Shepherds pose to the sheep of God this is what he had to say **Jeremiah 50:6** *“My people has been lost sheep their Shepherds have caused them to go astray they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place (dwelling place)”*.

When the sheep voluntarily veer off from the PASTURE OF GOD and feed in a strange pasture, they are exposed to many risks but despite all these they have themselves to blame.

The tragedy is when a shepherd whom God assigned to feed them leads them astray; because the sheep by over associating themselves with the Shepherd get used to him and are always obedient to him when he turns to falsehood the sheep may not be in a position to tell where the fault starts from. They innocently follow and thus they are meant to be in a wandering state; which God likens to; wandering from mountain to Hill. And truly, when you look at today's Christian, he/ she is always exhibiting this demeanor. Always in a state of wandering looking for the truth but never coming to the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They are perpetually bound by an urge and desire to know God fully and please Him, but they don't have the gravity of grounding themselves in the ways of God.

Christians of our century can rarely relate with God one-on-one they need a bridge through a certain man of God (shepherd) to bridge them to God. When they find one, they are told they must come with a bribe for God to be able to hear their requests. This Circus is widening day by day and almost all Shepherds including those who have been faithful to God are slowly falling prey to this group that God declares in his sovereign habitation as we shall later be seeing he loudly exclaims **Jeremiah 23:1** "Woe to the pastors (Shepherds) that destroy and Scatter the sheep of my PASTURE! says the LORD (Jehovah).

Surely, Shepherds are in a competing spree of destroying and scattering the sheep of the PASTURE OF GOD.

False Shepherds scatter the flock.

Jeremiah 23:2 "Therefore thus says the LORD GOD (Jehovah^{sf}, Elohim^{sf}) of Israel against the pastors that feed My people; you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not visited them; behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doing says the LORD. The controversy of God to his shepherds who are supposed to feed His sheep is that the flocks to which they were given the responsibilities to feed; instead of feeding them they have scattered them i.e. they have alienated them from their owner. As the flock gets scattered

the same shepherds drive them away individually and attach them to vanity.

They estrange the sheep never to visit them again and return them to their maker. The verdict of God is that He will visit upon them the evils they have done and will never leave them unpunished.

False Shepherds (hirelings, Unfaithful) forsake the Sheep- John 10:12

“But he that is a hireling, and not the Shepherd whose own the sheep are not, sees the Wolf coming and leaves the Sheep and flees and the wolf catches them and Scatters the sheep.

Verse 13 “The hireling flees because he is a hireling and cares not for the sheep”

It is very unfortunate that most of the Shepherds who were called and assigned by God to feed his flock have degenerated into hirelings.

They have exposed the dear flock of God to every form of doctrine. The doctrines that the biblical prophets and Apostles of the Bible held on are barbaric to them. They trample down godly virtues and tower their own man-made philosophies without blinking.

They have really severed the sheep of God and made their ears deaf so that none of them can hear the imploring voice of God. What they only hear is what is itching to their ears.

The following writings in **Jeremiah 2** rightly describe this generation.

Verse 7 “And I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof and the Goodness thereof but when you entered you defiled my land and made my Heritage an abomination (detestable).

Verse 8 “the priests said not, where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not, the pastors also transgressed against me and the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that do not profit.

Verse 9 “Wherefore I will yet plead with you, says the Lord and with your children's children will I plead

Verse 10 “For Pass over (cross over to) the Isles (distant lands) of Chittim, and see, and send to Kedar, and consider diligently and see if there be such a thing.

Verse 11 “Has a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

Verse 12 “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate (in despair)

Verse 13 “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living water and hewed (cut) them out cisterns broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Verse 21 “Yet I had planted you a noble Vine, wholly a right seed; how then are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to me?

Verse 22 “For though you wash you with niter and take you much soap yet your iniquity is marked before me says the Lord God (Adonai, Jehovah)

Just like we see gross idolatry of the children of Israel in the above decimated scriptures, our generation fitly plays out the same and even does better with expertise borne out of a long mastery of ungodliness. Verily, when God looks at our present-day Christianity, He sees a conglomeration of gross idolatry which has with impunity crept into our lives and therefore there is a necessary need for the church to repent. She should retrace the old ancient ways, align herself with and walk therein.

Shepherds need to place a momentary pause in their haphazard operations, reflect and realign themselves on this ancient waymarked Road and return the sheep of God there.

False Shepherds prey upon the flock instead of feeding it-
Ezekiel 34:2-3, Zachariah 11:17,

Ezekiel 34:2-3 “Son of man, prophecy against the Shepherds of Israel, prophecy and say to them, thus says the Lord God (Adonai Jehovah) to the Shepherds; woe to the Shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves, should not the Shepherds feed the flock?

You eat the fat and you clothe yourself with the wool, you kill them that are fed but you feed not the flock.

Zachariah 11:17" Woe to the Idle (worthless) Shepherds that leave 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"

In the above scriptures, God underlines some practices which are done by Shepherds that are not part of their assignments.

i)Feeding themselves instead of feeding the flocks.

When you closely follow almost all Shepherds who are ministering to the sheep of Christ at present, you will realize some use undertones and others overtones which all denominate at benefiting the Shepherds at the expense of the flock.

You will hear them giving sermons like “offering sacrifices for our children” and they will profusely quote biblical incidences like when Job made a circuit in sacrificing for his children peradventure, they had sinned against their/ his God during their feasting.

You hear the preachers emphasizing that parents should put sacrifices representing their children in the form of money into envelopes and present them before the ‘altars’ so that the priests/ pastors can pray for them to shield the spirits that may pursue their children and wayward them

This ought to be done regularly so that their children can be right with God.

Job lived in the Old Testament where the Lord Jesus Christ had not yet come and been sacrificed. When Jesus came and offered himself as a sacrifice, he did not leave a portion where other sacrifices were to be perpetually offered to atone the wrongdoers. The Book of Hebrews Chapters 9 and 10 clearly

states that there is no other sacrifice left through which man should participate to receive acceptance before God. The blood of Jesus is daily removed at the altar of sacrifice and replaced by divers so-called 'sacrifices' They present in different formats including but not limited to children sacrifices, sacrifices for healing, sacrifices for prosperity, sacrifices for promotion, sacrifices for asset development, sacrifices for excelling in examination and development projects, sacrifices for breaking various curses and how much depends on the gravity of a curse sacrifices for divine protection sacrifices for breaking spirits of rejection sacrifices for protection against various pestilences experienced in our times like covid-19 sacrifices___ sacrifices ___sacrifices ___sacrifices and the list is endless. This is akin to discarding the blood of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:28 - 29

Verse 28 he that despised (rejected) Moses` law died without mercy under two or three Witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6)

Verse 29 of How much sorer (more severe) punishment suppose you shall be taught worthy who has trodden underfoot the son of God and has counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing and has done despite to the Spirit of Grace?

You hear Shepherds Waxing with religious gusto quoting very powerful scriptures but obviously, out of their context like **Psalms 118:27** which says "God is the lord which has showed us light bind the sacrifice with cords even to the Horns of the altar"

In the Old Testament the sacrifices that were brought at The Horns of the altar were in form of flesh. Before that flesh was presented for a sacrifice blood was shed and this animal had to meet some minimum requirements it was the blood that made an Atonement and not money.

Hebrew 9:7 -14 " but into the second went the high priest alone once every year not without blood which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people.

Verse 8 the Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest (disclosed) while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing.

Verse 9 which was a figure for the time then present in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.

Verse 10 which stood only in meat (food) and drinks and diverse washing and canal ordinances imposed on them until the time of Reformation.

Verse 11 but Christ being come a high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle not made with hands that is to say not of this building

Verse 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal Redemption for us.

Verse 13 for if the blood of Bulls and goats and the Ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh

Verse 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot (defect)

to God Purge (cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

And **Verse 15** sums it all; “And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions (sins committed) that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance”

By the Shepherds calling and emphasizing that the sheep should give this and that sacrifice, they’re in essence calling for the sheep to enrich them, they change the discourse of God instead of feeding the sheep they feed themselves

The monies that are brought at the altar are meant to benefit the shepherd and not the sheep. The sheep of Christ need to be taught to give offerings which are biblical faithfully- offerings and tithes and the offerings and tithes out to be used as God intended, I will spend some time to teach on tithes and offerings in a later chapter.

ii) Eating the fat and clothing themselves with their wool

In the Mosaic times when offerings were made before God, the fat belonged to God. It was completely burned and a sweet savor emitted found it acceptance before God. Wool provides warmth and by God lamenting that the Shepherds clothe themselves with the sheep's wool he means that the Shepherds are busy seeking comfort for themselves instead of comforting the sheep of Jehovah.

Isaiah 40:1 comfort you comfort you my people says your God (Elohim).

God speaks comfort to his flock who have different spiritual needs.

iii) killing the fed and feeding not the hungry. By introducing the sheep to a different and unpalatable staff, we malnourish them and subject them to slow spiritual death. They become hypnotized; trance-like Mental state in which people experience increased attention concentration and suggestibility

This is a process where you will hear people say they have received a new revelation, they become sensual and scripture interpretations are skewed to converge at a certain focal Point. This explains why 10 people can read a single scripture but give a dozen interpretations based on his school of thought. **2nd Timothy 3:16 to 17** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof for correction for instruction in righteousness.

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good work.

Whether it is possible for shepherds to perform the duties of shepherding without God's approval.

The answer to the above statement is yes

Ezekiel 44:10-14 Quote *“And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which, went astray away from me after their idols: they shall even bear their **iniquity (sin)***

Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house and ministering to the house they shall

slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people and they shall stand before them to minister to them.

Because they ministered to them before their Idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into **iniquity**; (sin), therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, says the Lord God (Adonai Jehovah), and they shall bear their iniquity.

And they shall not come near to me, to do the office of a priest to me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed.

But I will make them keepers of the charge (custody) of the house for all that serve thereof, and for all that shall be done therein”.

Warning to the sheep of Jehovah and to the Shepherds, God is saying that he allows the Shepherds who lead the flock astray to be ministers in his sanctuary. The Shepherds who fail to guide the sheep of God through the right way will usually perform ministering duties of a shepherd in the sanctuary of God. They will slay the burned offering and sacrifices and claim to be custodians of God's law, but God will draw a demarcation line between him and them.

God will bar them from accessing his holy presence but they will be literally appearing in the sanctuary of God doing usual services at the altar of God.

This is a catch situation that has found the sheep of Jehovah into. They have no discernment to tell whether their shepherd is true or false because they see them ministering before the

Sanctuary of God. Little do they know and understand that God has already drawn their destiny.

Ezekiel 44:15-31

In the above scriptures, the Lord Jehovah presents another pack of true priest, the Levites whom he calls the sons of Zadok who are well versed in the requirements of God. They know what God expects them to do and they do it rightly. This group is allowed to access into the holy presence of God and please him with their fragrant offering and God charges them to carry out all the services that are required at his sanctuary.

These are the Shepherds, who God allows to access his holy presence and behold the beauty of his holiness.

The sheep of God should therefore be very careful not to be duped and Holden into fake ministration in guise of following Shepherds whom the Lord has distanced from accessing his sanctuary and instead allowed them to minister a far off from his sanctuary.

Biblical warnings of false Shepherds /teachers

The Bible gives countless and stern warnings about the emergency of false ministers in the future; our present times, just as there were in the past.

2 Peter 2:1 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly **(craftly)** shall bring in damnable **(destructive)**

heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction".

Heresies are false teachings which present in Disguise of Truth. The proponents of these destructive heresies are very cunning and everything they present is coded with some scripture but obviously Misinterpreted. It becomes difficult for the recipients to realize the lies/falsehood contained therein.

The Bible terms this kind of heresies damnable (destructive), meaning they gradually destroy the mental faculty of the Followers.

This process results into the church disconnecting herself from the true gospel of the cross and hanging on other baseless doctrines, thus decontextualizing scriptures.

Apostle Paul gives very wise coachings to his own faith-born son, who became instrumental to the early church.

In **1Timothy 6:3-5** "If any man teaches otherwise and consent (agrees) not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud (conceited), knowing nothing but doting about (dwelling on) questions and strives of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings (abusive talks) evil surmising (suspicions), perverse disputing (constant frictions) of men of corrupt minds, and destitute (deprived) of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness from such withdrawal yourself.

Indeed, when you listen to the Teachings from many servants of God you hear them teaching otherwise. They do not consent

(agree) with wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto the doctrine which is according to godliness.

The Lord Jesus Christ told the doubting Thomas that he is the Way the Truth and Life and that no one goes to the Father except through Him (**John 14:6**).

Truth is knowing God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The doctrinal basis of the Bible was laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ himself and taught with strict adherence by his Apostles and disciples.

Many servants of God in this end age are devoid of the wholesome words of Jesus Christ, they teach their own contexts. The Bible sums up that through this, they become proud (conceited), knowing nothing but dwelling on questions and strife of words and thus generating envy, strife, abusive talks, and suspicions.

They produce constant frictions, puffed with corrupt minds and deprived of the truth.

That is why you find most preachers of the gospel, supposing that gain (material substance) is godliness.

Apostle Paul sounds a warning to Timothy that he should withdraw from such because godliness with contentment is great gain (**1st Timothy 6:6**.)

1st Timothy 4:1-2 “now the spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy (disguise); having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Departure from Faith, which is apostasy has tracked many to derail from the true ways of God. Instead, they have given heed to seducing spirits and doctrine of devils.

One may ask, how can a person who is born again and filled with the Holy Spirit give heed to seducing spirits? The story in **1 Kings 22** can give us a vivid picture of how these lying spirits work.

A scenario arose in Israel when Jehoshaphat king of Judah visited King Ahab. Ahab wanted to go and reclaim Ramoth Gilead from the hands of Syria who had annexed it.

King Ahab requested King Jehoshaphat to take him to the battle so as to repossess Ramoth Gilead. King Jehoshaphat requested that they first inquire from God whether they could go to fight against the Syrians or they should forbear. About 400 prophets were gathered.

The Bible does not account whether these prophets were false or true prophets. But when we read on, we will understand that the only element that separated them from prophet Michaiah son of Imlah was that he was sensitive to God and never fell victim to seducing spirits which afforded to possess the 400 prophets who never saw the demise of King Ahab in the War field.

Remember that King Ahab by the help of his wicked wife had plotted and killed Naboth for refusing to exchange his field he inherited from his father so his demise was eminent. Listen to the oracle of prophet Michaiah son of Imla.

1 Kings 22:17-25

“And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd and the Lord said, these have no master let them return every man to his house in peace

Verse 18 And the King of Israel said to Jehoshaphat did I not tell you that he would prophesy no good concerning me but evil?

Verse 19 And he said hear you therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of Heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left.

Verse 20 And the lord said, who shall persuade Ahab that he may go and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner and another said on that manner.

Verse 21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

Verse 22 And the LORD said to him, wherewith? And he said, I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, you shall persuade him and prevail; also go forth, and do so.

Verse 23 Now, therefore, behold the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning you.

Verse 24 But Zedekiah the son of Chanaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak to you?

Verse 25 And Micaiah said, behold, you shall see in that day when you shall go into an inner chamber to hide yourself.

Remember that this was initially just a spirit. When God wanted to know how this spirit would accomplish the mission, the spirit said I will become a lying spirit [seducing spirit] and will enter his prophets and cause them to lie.

In verse 11, prophet Zedekiah, the son of Chanaanah had made the King iron horns and given them to him demonstrating how he would conquer the Syrians by pushing them until he consumes them.

Such lying spirits have inhabited servants of God and they cannot discern because Apostle Paul says their minds are seared/burnt with the hot iron.

1 Timothy 1:5-7

Now the end (goal) of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good Conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

From which some having swerved have turned aside to vain jangling [meaningless talk].

Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm [speak positively].

The Bible clearly states that the end [goal] of the commandment is love. Jesus and the apostles exalted love above all other commandments. This love must be practiced out of a pure heart and should not be pretentious. Our

consciences ought to be good and we need always to be driven by Faith which is genuine [unfeigned].

This benchmark raised here is high and Apostle Paul intimates that some have swerved and turned aside to meaningless talks.

They pretend to be teaching the law of God, but none can understand neither what they say nor what they affirm. The audience is always left in a spiritual dilemma and therefore becomes susceptible to the manipulation of evil spirits. The reason why it is almost impossible to discern any spiritual fruit springing from Christians of our times. They have lost the fragrant aroma that defined the Christians of the early church.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables. Sound doctrine is indeed a riddle in our age. Many Preachers coronate themselves with big titles of which the one that leads the hierarchy is 'apostle'. Once they coronate themselves as Apostles, they become a law unto themselves and all they do is wrest scriptures for their benefit. **2 Peter 3:16.**

Through this opportunism, the sheep of Christ have also rejected sound doctrines and rather chosen to be taught what is itching to hear.

The so-called Shepherds seize an advantage over these people who are eager to learn but their ears are always itching to hear any nuance that is pronounced.

Every Shepherd molds a group of followers who cultivate an unquestionable following. They blindly follow without any reservation and are always willing to take bullets for their Shepherds. They will ardently defend the Shepherd even if it is obvious that the Shepherd may be in the wrong. Even when scriptures are read and interpreted differently from the orthodoxal context, they will say that is a fresh and new revelation from heaven.

Titus 1:1-4 " Paul a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect [chosen], and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

Verse 2 In Hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

Verse 3 but has in due times manifested [revealed] his word through preaching, which is committed to me according to the commandment of God our savior;

Verse 4 To Titus my son after the common Faith; Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our savior.

In the above scriptures, we learn of very fundamental tenets that describe and authenticate a true servant of God, and how he can be easily identified.

Our main character here is Paul, he is a servant of God. Being a servant means he's a slave and legally bound to the

requirements and demands of God. He cannot advance anything else apart from what his master requires of him.

Apart from being bound by the law of servanthood, he is an apostle. An apostle simply means a messenger sent to run errands that Christ himself could have run.

A messenger is sent with a specific message, and this message originates from the sender. A Messenger has no authority, whatsoever to fabricate or carry his own message. He only advances the message he receives from the sender and in its context.

Apostle Paul reiterates that the message he carries is according to [conforms] to the faith of God's elect [chosen]. Clearly speaking the mission of the messenger is to establish faith in a people who have been elected / chosen by God Himself [read Romans 8:28-30, 2 Peter 1:10].

In electing / choosing of His people, God has formatted his own version in which those who are chosen ought to sync themselves with its requirements.

Thus, he chooses a servant/slave and downloads these requirements to him and the Servant must convey them faithfully.

In the execution of his duties, the Servant/priest must ensure that whatever he does is according to the acknowledgment of the truth which leads to godliness [God-like character].

The core value that defines the mission of the servant/priest must be to instill Hope of eternal life which God Who cannot lie promised before the beginning of the world.

Because the promises of God were cast in mysteries the servant, apostle/priest is charged with the responsibility of revealing it through preaching and this preaching must be based on the commandment/law of God our Savior. This means that a priest must ensure that anything that he does and preaches to the elect of God must bear its Anchorage and rightly, in both the Old and the New Testament- no more no less. Any other format constitutes heresy and falsehood.

It is obvious that today, falsehood among different gatherings of many who profess Christianity is peddled easily and that the audience whose consciences are seared with a hot iron, and their ears are itching to hear this because they can no longer endure sound doctrine.

Many priests have mushroomed and every day the body of Christ is continually fragmented into divisible pieces and the true apostolic and prophetic doctrine is thrown out of the window of religion.

Apostle Paul had to charge these to his son Timothy whom he raised and made instrumental to the early church.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

" And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise to Salvation through Faith which is In Christ Jesus.

Verse 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine [teaching] for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;

Verse 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works". Prophet Isaiah quips thus in **Isaiah 28:9-10**" Whom Shall He teach knowledge? And Whom Shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts.

For precept must be upon precept, precept, upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.

Spiritual maturity is what prophet Isaiah is explaining, such a person is able to understand doctrine and be able to articulate scriptures in their right context- by collaborating different scriptures given in different settings but in the same context thus arriving at the right and required scripture interpretations.

Winding up the preamble of apostle Paul to Titus who was raised in the faith and left at Crete to set things in order by appointing high profile people to take the oversight of the fast-growing Church during the first century.

He exalts the following pillars which he makes us to understand that they should bear uniformity among all Christians. He calls them common, meaning all Christians the world over should hold on; faith, Grace, Mercy, and Peace.

The above four pillars must be held commonly because they all originate from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

Matthew 5:19;

"Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the

least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven,”

It is imperative to note that listening to the different preachers across the globe, one denominator stands out, the warning in the book of Matt 5:19 above applies almost to all.

They break many of the least commandments and teach others to do the same. Their die is already cast and the verdict is that they feature least in the kingdom of God.

Matthew 15:9

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines, (as precepts or facts) the commandments of Men.”

The scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem were pragmatic in holding and teaching the traditions of their elders. They were very keen and observant to others who according to them were also obligated to observe these traditions.

When they discovered that the disciples of Christ ate without ceremonially washing their hands, they found grounds for accusing them and demanding that Jesus ought to chastise them because of this act of omission.

In reply, Jesus reprimanded them that they were the ones breaking the traditions by not honoring their parents whom God created and elevated to a certain level in every parental setting.

They dishonor their parents and teach others to do the same. In respect to the above, shepherds are taken in the same trap whereby they teach and preach their insinuations.

The struggle of advancing their own made messages baptizing them with motivational speeches at the expense of the true and pure word.

Shepherds read scriptures to their followers but give their interpretations which are skewed towards meeting their end desire.

OTHER RELEVANT SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTARIES

Before I transition into discussing the pasture as the title of my book is; *'The Shepherds and The Pasture of God.'*

I would like you to remember that the **PASTURE OF GOD** is singular. God has one pasture but He calls different shepherds and assigns them to feed His sheep within the confines of this Pasture.

Unfortunately, every shepherd carves out his niche within the pasture of God, insulates the sheep under his/her custody, diverts them, and teaches them to follow his spiritual itinerary exuding a religious zeal.

He molds his doctrines which become spiritual food for his sheep.

Genesis 49:24 “But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob; (from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel)

When Jacob was blessing his twelve sons, blessings which until today define the twelve tribes of Israel. He presented Joseph as armed with a bow, which is said to have abode in strength, to have proved firm; signifying that he sustained all their shocks with unbroken fortitude and resolution, like a tough bow, which though long employed in battle, neither breaks nor becomes more flexible.

And the arms of his hands were made strong, by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob; i.e. His firm trust in the divine providence was rewarded with support and deliverance from that God, who is here emphatically called the God of Jacob, for His distinguished mercies to that patriarch.

From there is the shepherd the stone of Israel?

That is, Joseph, from that divine providence, that mighty God of Jacob, just mentioned, has become the shepherd, who nourishes us as his sheep.

Genesis 47:12 “And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father`s household, with bread, according to their families.”

And the stone, or up-holder of me Israel, and my family. In the same sense Christ is called the stone,

Isaiah 28:16 and God the rock, **Psalms 18:2.**

Isaiah 28:16 “Therefore thus says the Lord God (Adonay Jehovah) Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste.”

Psalms 18:2 “The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength; In whom I will trust; my buckler (shield), and the horn(strength) of my salvation, and my high tower.

Psalms 95:7 “For He is our God (Elohim); and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today if you will hear His voice,”

The use of the Name God as underlined above means Elohim and is in plural, as in **Gen 1:1** and **john 1:1**.

He has a pasture and we are the people and the sheep (used metaphorically) of this pasture.

We are entitled to fit on His pasture and therefore we need shepherds who understand the nature of this pasture.

We will see in our later description of the manner of shepherds that God desires to have.

Psalms 79:13 “So we your people and sheep of your pasture will give you thanks for ever: we will show forth your praise to all generation.”

The writer of the above Psalm emphatically and confidently declares that we the people of God are sheep of His pasture, and that we are obliged to give Him thanks for ever.

The sheep who finds themselves under the care of a true shepherd who ensures that they always feed within the pasture of God, should always be thankful to God and supportive to such a shepherd.

Psalms 100:3 “Know you that the LORD(Jehovah) He is God (Elohim): it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”

If indeed the sheep of God (Christians) understand that they belong to the pasture of God, they would always cause their shepherds to lead them in the same pasture.

But because they do not have any clue nor understanding of what the pasture of God looks like, the reason to why divers and kindred shepherds take them on different trajectories, teaching them strange doctrines and they all follow zealously.

They obediently follow all that they receive from their shepherds, even if it is obvious that the teachings don't find their context in the Holy Bible.

It therefore becomes important that the sheep of the pasture of God make all efforts to study and understand the nature of the pasture of God so that their hearts` desire may always revolve around this pasture.

Jeremiah 50:6-7

Vs 6 “My people has been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place (dwelling place)

Vs 7 All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, we offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.”

The cry in the heart of God is that His people are become lost sheep. This means that initially, they were on the right path but then they strayed and became lost.

The tragedy is that the shepherds are the ones who have strayed them away. The shepherds raised their own imitate mountains bearing similarities with the mountain of God.

The unsuspecting sheep were easily drawn towards these mountains convincing themselves that they were ascending on the mountains of God.

When they found out that the mountain, they had moved to was an imitation, they moved to another mountain and then to hills.

All these have become a norm for Christians who are always on a spiritual exodus. They move from one shepherd to another, because these shepherds have elevated mountains and hills.

Through these episodes, they have forgotten their resting place. They can no longer conjure the nature of God; they become hypnotized and fall into spiritual hallucinations.

The result of these is that the sheep become vulnerable to ravenous false peddlers and teachers. They devour the sheep of God at their will and find justification that the sheep are worthy to be devoured because they have sinned against their God, the hope of their fathers.

This group of shepherds absolve themselves from doing any offense to the sheep because the sheep have predisposed themselves to such a situation.

It therefore behoves the sheep to cultivate a high level of wisdom towards her relating with God so that they do not fall prey to these wayward shepherds.

It is incumbent upon the sheep to save themselves from these riotous false shepherds, because the Bible promises that they will indeed multiply during the end times. The Bible clearly points out that because iniquity abounds, the love of many grows cold.

When you read the book of **1 Kings chapter 22**, you realize that during the reigns of kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat in Israel and Judah respectively, there were four hundred prophets(shepherds) in Israel. When King Ahab had married apostate Jezebel, he ruled in an ungodly way in Israel, by killing all true prophets of God and loved thriving on falsehood.

When God wanted to bring Ahab down in Ramoth-Gilead, He allowed the spirit to enter into the four hundred prophets(shepherds) of Israel and put a lie in their tongues.

They lied to Ahab that he would go to Ramoth-Gilead and prosper. Besides these four hundred prophets, we only find prophet Micaiah (**vs. 14-28**) who spoke what was in the mind of God.

Comparing the big ratio between falsehood and truth, falsehood constitute a very large percentage; 99% as compared to truth which only constitutes 1%.

We even see Zedekiah who seemingly topped the list of the prophets demonstrating with a lot of gusto the falsehood. Vs 11 says” And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, thus says The LORD (Jehovah), with these shall you push the Syrians, until you have consumed them.”

See how he confidently invokes the Name of Jehovah the God of Israel. He even goes ahead to smite prophet Micaiah on the cheek as he reprimands him of speaking contrary to what the four hundred had spoken.

Vs 24 “But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak to you?”

Just like there was a physical contestation between good and evil even today this scenario is played out only that the big population of shepherds and the sheep subscribe to what Zedekiah subscribed to- falsehood.

Apostle Paul through the same revelation that was given to prophet Micaiah, revealed this to the present church that ought to usher in the second coming of The Lord Jesus Christ **1 Timothy 4:1** “Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

Nobody either the shepherd or the sheep endures sound doctrine, but have instead turned to the teachings which are itching to the ears **2 Timothy 4:3-4**

Sound doctrine is strange to today's shepherds and the sheep. The present-day Christianity considers sound doctrine as archaic. Their ears are ready and accustomed to hearing fables, and because of this, falsehood is on the rampage.

Ezekiel 34:31 “And you My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God. Says the Lord God (Adonay Jehovah).

Just like in the very many scriptures, we hear the overtone in Ezekiel 34:31, God affirms that we are His flock and the flock of His pasture. He insists that we are men (subject to shortcomings), and He is our God.

His desire is that we feed in His pasture and therefore He desires for a shepherd who will confine God's flock into His pasture.

As shepherds, we have an opportunity to hearken to this clarion call of God and take this charge and feed the flock of God

Luke 19:32 “And they that were send went their way, and found even (just) as He had said to them.”

When the Lord Jesus Christ was to enter Jerusalem in a triumphant entry, He send two of His disciples into the opposite village where at the entering, they were to find a colt tied, whereon yet no man sat: to lose him and bring him to the Lord.

And in **verse 32** we read that they obeyed and went as He had said and they found exactly how He had said to them.

We should note importantly that a shepherd should adhere to the instructions he receives from his sender and he should fulfil to the letter all that he is sent to accomplish.

But this is not true with many shepherds who today assign themselves duties that they were never given by the sender (God).

Genesis 48:15 “And He blessed Joseph, and said, God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long to this day.”

Jacob acknowledges God who fed him all his lifelong to the very day that he was blessing Joseph`s sons. Herein we see the responsibilities of a shepherd—to feed the sheep all lifelong.

A shepherd must always adhere to the very course that he is assigned to undertake. This calls for undivided focus unlike what we see today when some shepherds will pronounce that God has called them to oversee the sheep only to hear them making announcements of plunging into politics and other callings that they were not called into.

Hosea 4:16

“For Israel slides back as a backsliding (*stubborn*) heifer; now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.”

Prophet Hosea records a wonder whereby the stubbornness of Israel makes her to keep on sliding back as a backsliding

heifer, but thanks be unto God because He promises to feed them as a lamb in a large place.

God always desires that His Children may make a detour and loosen themselves from shackles of ungodliness exacted upon them. That when they do so He will feed them graciously like lambs in a large and peaceful place.

The loving nature of God causes Him to speak peace to His people, but He warns them not to slide to folly again.

Psalms 85:8 “I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly.”

Micah 7:14 “Feed (*shepherd*) your people with your rod, the flock of your heritage, which dwell solitarily (*alone*) in the wood, amid Carmel: Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.”

From this scripture, we hear an echo of good shepherding. In the early chapters, I explained extensively the rod and staff.

The shepherd is urged to take good care of the flock because the flock is his heritage. That the flock dwells alone in the forest of Carmel, that the shepherd should drive and feed them in Bashan and Gilead just like in the days of old.

In the woods, danger looms because the flock can easily be devoured by marauding wild animals. Bashan and Gilead represent good and pleasant pasturelands. So, a good shepherd ensures that his flock feeds in such a safe place.

Psalms 28:9 “Save your people and bless your inheritance: feed them also and lift them up forever.” The connotations in

the above scriptures are that a good shepherd should be able to lead his sheep safely, navigating them free from anything that can endanger their lives.

He holds the onus of blessing the sheep because they are his inheritance. If he faithfully leads the sheep, as the sheep inherits God`s kingdom, he will also be a partaker therein.

The candid description herein is that he feeds the sheep and supports them.

But when you hear the constant lamentations of God in relation to His sheep and the shepherds, you will note that the above characters are wanting in the shepherds.

Genesis 49:23-24

“The archers have sorely grieved (bitterly hurt) him, and shot at him, and hated him, but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob;(from there is the shepherd, the stone (rock) of Israel)

God points out the desirable good character of a worthy shepherd.

Even though he may be faced with diverse oppositions and loomed by all manner of danger, he persistently and consistently leans on God as his dependence.

He always trusts upon God for he knows that much as he is the shepherd of the sheep, God is his shepherd also.

Jeremiah 31:10 “Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock.

In Jeremiah, we gather that God requires that a good shepherd be endowed with two unmatched qualities, i.e., he gathers and keeps/ preserves his flock. The sheep need to be gathered and preserved to be protected from the marauding excesses.

The sheep who obey their shepherd will be willing to be gathered from pretenders who take advantage of their innocence and desire to be fed on almost any food of thought.

They will appreciate the virtue of being protected and preserved from destiny spoilers. Their focus will remain fixed on their chief shepherd, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize that a good shepherd does not exhibit spiritual rigidness, he is always easy to be led by God`s direction and therefore his behavior is separate from other people who may have acquired impenitence of the heart and live recklessly.

Psalms 119:176

“I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments.” Shepherds have heavy responsibilities of praying for the sheep to have a penitent and repentant heart. In the above scripture, the Psalmist making an open confession discloses that he is lost and desires that he be sought out to return on the right path.

Such characters instill confidence in the shepherds and give them hearts filled with God`s love and therefore show tender care to the sheep.

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

When such an earnest cry of confession is heard from the sheep, the shepherd is encouraged to sympathize with the weakness of the sheep. It touches the heart of God who restores mercy and forgiveness to the stray flock. Because he will remember that all our iniquities were laid on the sinless Lord Jesus Christ. He took all our transgressions and acquainted Himself with our sorrows and sufferings.

These words touch the very tender heart of God and make Him be moved with compassion and look at the state of the ones filled with such confession with lots of kindness. A shepherd also needs to be touched by such wave in the like manner.

Because he is assigned by God to take the oversight of the sheep, he ought to bear the very character of God.

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Vs 11 For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out.

Vs 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered: so, will I seek out My

sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Vs 13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains, and will bring them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

Vs 14 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 mountain of Israel.

Vs 15 I will feed My flock and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.

Vs 16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bring up that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong: I will feed them with judgment.

In the above verses, we see God`s blue print in what are His requirements in a true shepherd that He has installed to shepherd the flock.

To simplify these requirements, I will break them down into short hand notes for easy understanding;

- **Searching his sheep---** meaning the sheep will be mixed with another big flock but the shepherd knows of some

specific identification marks of his sheep, so he walks in the midst and picks out his sheep.

- **Seeking them out** – This means the sheep may be lost and not easily found so he goes out seeking them.

The act is simulated to an exercise where a shepherd carries out in his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered.

The shepherd may not certainly know the true identity of his sheep until he moves closer to his sheep. So, this informs that a true and good shepherd should personally know every individual sheep.

- **Delivering his sheep from where they have been scattered to.** The process of scattering may be caused by being frightened by a dangerous animal, moving anyhow looking for pasture, tactfully convinced to follow the wrong path, etc. and this scattering was enhanced by a cloudy and dark day.
- Separating them from the people.
- Gathering them from the countries and bringing them to their land.
- Feeding them upon the mountains (good pasture)
- Bringing them to their land and accustoming them to the true voice of their chief shepherd.
- **Feeding them safely in the green pasture where rivers water them**—safe places where no danger looms.
- **Feeds his flock in a good pasture upon the high mountains of Israel.** The Bible is specific about the mountains of Israel because the promise of God came first to Israel.

A good shepherd should therefore align his flock to the very ways that God required from His people Israel.

- **The fold of the sheep ought to be conspicuously separate from other folds.**

This means that there must be a marked difference between those who believe and those who don't.

There can be no borderline that can be accessed by any party. Instead, we need a clear demarcation where a Christian is different from a non-Christian.

- Feeding the flock and causing them to lie down, meaning providing comfort for the flock.
- **Seeking the lost and bring back the ones driven away**—meaning restoration to the ancient and right paths.
- **Binding up the broken** (healing and caring for the vulnerable).

CHAPTER 7: DESTRUCTION AND JUGDEMENT OF THE FAT AND STRONG SHEPHERDS AND FLOCK

**Why would God promise to destroy the fat and the strong
and feed them with judgment?**

It is because they predate on and take advantage of the weak and vulnerable.

They also use their fatness/ richness to corrupt the shepherds. By so doing, they create favoritism between the shepherd and the flock. They cause the shepherds to show respect of persons.

God desires that there may be a level field among all the flock because some are very needful. The fat influences and changes the equilibrium to favor them at the expense of others and therefore God pronounces judgment over this lot.

Matthew 18:12-14

Vs 12 “How think you? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray?

Vs 13 And if so be that he finds it, verily I say to you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Vs 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

The heart of a true shepherd treasures every individual sheep he has under his fold. He concerns himself with the welfare of his sheep. The one that strays away is as important as the ninety-nine that are present and secure under his custody.

He will toil himself seeking out regardless of the task to make sure that the lost sheep is found out and brought home.

After the lost sheep is found out, the joy that fills his heart outweighs that of owning the ninety-nine that are present.

The will of our heavenly Father is that none of any man, however little he may be, may get lost but that all may be able to inherit everlasting life.

The reason why God sent His only begotten Son is that all may believe in Him. When the Lord Jesus was making out a farewell prayer in the Book of **John 17:12**, He reminded the Father of the following “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your Name: those that You gave Me I have kept and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition (**Psalms 41:9 i.e. Judas**)_that the scripture might be fulfilled.

When you look at the individual characters of the twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, it stands out clearly that they all had different characters and personalities from one another, but Jesus made sure that they all except Judas Iscariot remained as one under His fold.

Even when Jesus knew vividly that Judas was the one who would betray Him, He disclosed this to all disciples with a desire in His heart that the betrayer would relent of His intention and repent.

Jesus even made sure that the woes awaiting the betrayer were indeed very dire and did not mince words describing them.

In Mark 14:21, we read the following; “The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born.”

All that was required to be sounded as a warning to the betrayer were made including Jesus pointing out that the one that was dipping his hand with Him in the dish, was the same who would betray Him.

Matthew 26:23 “And He answered and said, He that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me”.

Indeed Jesus made frantic efforts to sensitize the would be betrayer of the woeful destiny that awaited him, but Judas Iscariot just as it was prophesied in **Psalms 41:9**, was hell bent to accomplish his mission; “ Yea , My own familiar friend; in whom I trusted , which did eat of my bread, has lifted up heel against me” Judas was truly trusted that is why he was made a treasurer in the team that Jesus had. Jesus knew the heart of every individual disciple but He tirelessly tried to qualify them that they may all inherit eternal life, but He reminds us in Mark 14:21, that the die of Judas Iscariot had already been cast
Luke 15:3-7

“And He spoke this parable to them saying, **Vs 4** What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he loose one of them, does not leave, the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?

Vs 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.

Vs 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

Vs 7 I say to you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety-nine just (**righteous**) persons, which need no repentance.

Dr Luke in his gospel captures individual aspects that other gospel writers don't indicate. Luke records of the place where the ninety-nine sheep which are not lost are left in a wilderness. This indicates that the ninety-nine sheep in the fold have been taught and well mastered the virtue of fellowship and togetherness.

Despite the location of where they are left, they well understand the status of the environment in which they find themselves in and therefore they take charge of themselves.

In the search expedition, when the shepherd finds out the lost, he carries it on his shoulders and return rejoicing and calls for his friends together to celebrate and rejoice together because of the lost and found sheep and this is similar to the joy that is ensued in heaven when a sinner turns away from his wicked ways and returns to the fold of the righteous,

A good shepherd should always concern himself with the lost rather than those already in the fold. On the contrary, we see the present days' shepherds concerning themselves with the fatlings of the flock because they get material benefits from them.

They unwillingly reach out to the lost to convert them to righteousness.

They neglect the great commission of going into the world to make disciples as recorded in **Matthew 28:18-20** “And Jesus came and spoke to them saying all power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

Go you therefore and teach (*disciple*) all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen”.

Jeremiah 26:2 “Thus says the LORD; stand in the court of the LORD`S house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD`S house all the words that I command you to speak to them; diminish (**omit**) not a word.

Zechariah 10:2-3

Vs 2 “For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore, they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

Vs 3 My anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats; (*i.e., leaders, chief ones*) for the LORD of Hosts has visited His flock the house of Judah, and has made them as His goodly horse in the battle”.

Matthew 9:36 “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

1 Kings 22:17 “And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd and the LORD said, these have no master; let them return everyone to his house in peace.”

When idolatry and divination take the pack, vanities, lies, false dreams bring vain comfort, the flock gets troubled and go astray.

Their condition is similar to a flock without a shepherd. The work of a shepherd is to give divine direction to the flock. In his absence their hearts are troubled and spiritual peace is deprived from them. They become vulnerable to forces of swaying and they lose spiritual fortitude.

When Jesus looked at the multitudes who were gathered to hear Him, He saw their hearts fainted and were scattered abroad even though they physically appeared to be gathered where He was. He saw that spiritually, no one had shepherded them.

During the reign of King Ahab, together with his apostatic wife Jezebel who sold herself to commission of maximum abominations before God. As he requested Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, to accompany him that they may go and repossess Ramoth- Gilead which was his territory that was annexed by the Assyrians, when four hundred prophets were consulted to give their counsel, they all prophesied lies because God had purposed that he may go and fall at the battle field and that

dogs would lick his blood as they had licked the blood of the righteous Naboth whom Ahab in conspiracy with Jezebel had killed.

When prophet Micaiah who was sensitive to the Spirit of God was called to give his prophecy, we hear him giving the true status of Israel. That even if Israel was ruled by King Ahab, before God, they were scattered upon the hills like sheep without a shepherd.

And that God commanded them to return home because they did not have a master.

In the physical, King Ahab was visible but spiritually, he was missing in action. God had already determined his destiny and therefore the Israelites were filled with leadership desolation.

This is a classical picture today, when God looks at the shepherds who are shepherding His flocks, He sees His sheep scattered on mountains and hills and spiritually lack true shepherds who can rightly navigate them through spiritual terrain.

Zechariah 11:16

“For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit that that is broken, nor feed that that stands still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.”

That God can purpose to raise up shepherds bearing the above characters tells you that He is neither happy with the sheep nor the shepherds.

Raising shepherds who are characterized with care free and instead are cruelly bent to devour the fat sheep, and plunder them.

Not caring for the perishing, no seeking out the young ones, no healing of the broken, no feeding of the unprivileged ones but instead feasting on the fat.

This comes as an afterthought when God reaches such a resolution because His sheep have adamantly rebelled according to His divine purpose of helping them. Instead, they keep on rebelling against Him and scoffing Him. He makes such a casting away remarks and subjecting His sheep to the cruelty of God fearless shepherds.

Matthew 25:32-46

Vs 32 “And before Him shall be gathered all nations and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

Vs 33 And he shall set the sheep **(believers)** on His right hand, but the goats **(unbelievers)** on the left

Vs 34 Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world:

Vs 35 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;

Vs 36 Naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.

Vs 37 Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying. Lord, when saw we you hungry, and fed you? Or thirsty and gave you drink?

Vs 38 When saw we you a stranger, and took you in? or naked and clothed you?

Vs 39 Or when saw you sick, or in prison, and came to you?

Vs 40 And the King shall answer and say to them, verily I say to you, inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it to me.

Vs 41 Then shall He say also to them on the left hand, depart from me you cursed, into everlasting fire (**hell**) prepared for the devil (**Satan**) and his angels.

Vs 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food: I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.

Vs 43 I was a stranger, and you took me not in; naked and you clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited me not.

Vs 44 Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord when saw we you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you?

Vs 44 Then shall He answer them, saying, verily I say to you, inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.

Vs 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

CHAPTER 8:

THE SHEEP AND GOATS NATIONS

The deeds of the righteous and the unrighteous will be clearly spelt out on the day of reckoning.

The righteous will be commended for doing the following deeds;

- Feeding the hungry
- Giving drink to the thirsty
- Welcoming a stranger
- Clothing the naked
- Visiting the sick and those in prison.

Because of the above acts, they are blessed and fit to inherit the kingdom of God that was prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

On the contrary the unrighteous will, be rebuked for failing to fulfil the above deeds and will be apportioned curses and will be commanded to depart from Him, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

We are therefore expected to align ourselves with the sheep nation so that when the time of reckoning comes, we may be commended and, be ushered into everlasting life, thus evading the agony of weeping and gnashing of teeth as we torment in eternal hell.

2 Samuel 5:2

“Also, in the past, when Saul was king over us, you were he that led out and brought in Israel; and the LORD (Jehovah) said to you, you shall feed My people Israel, and you shall be a captain over Israel.” **(1 Chronicles 11:2)**

In the above scriptures, the Israelites give an acknowledgement that indeed God had already earmarked David to feed His people and rule over them. This was despite the fact that king Saul was already ruling Israel

We get an understanding that king Saul lacked a heart of a shepherd and that is why God saw this heart in David, He craved that he would soon succeed Saul and shepherd His people Israel.

David had faithfully gone out as one of the captains of king Saul, and God had mightily used him to subdue his enemies and he always sustained few cases of fatalities because God had called him from being a shepherd where he tended his father`s flock and anointed him. The qualities of an ideal shepherd were already at play.

Psalms 78:70-72

Vs 70 “He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds;

Vs 71 From following ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.

Vs 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. The above virtues earned him the onus of being assigned by God to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.

In the like manner, God requires His shepherds to possess integrity in their hearts, but this virtue lacks in many shepherds.

Skillfulness is acquired through fellowshiping with God individually over a long period of time.

When one remains in the presence of God and always seeks for His counsel, he will definitely acquire these skills that will anchor him to expedite his mandate responsibly as the LORD always leads him.

Ezekiel 37:24

“And David My servant shall be King over them; and they all shall have one shepherd, they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes and do them.”

How God desires one heart among all His shepherds to shepherd His flock.

He would that one shepherd should rule His people emulating the character of our chief shepherd, The Lord Jesus Christ.

As God’s shepherds, we have only one central point we can mold our shepherdhood from, The Lord Jesus Christ—a good

shepherd who lay down His life for His sheep and is always willing to protect His sheep.

Micah 5:4

“And He shall stand and feed (graze) in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide: for now, shall He be great to the ends of the earth.”

A shepherd himself should always feed in the strength of the LORD. The LORD should always be his reference point.

Apostle Paul rightly quipped that we imitate him as he imitates Christ. Christ should be our role model and the sole script that we read from.

When shepherds can stick to these nuggets, the sheep will benefit because they will be rightly feeding from the menu that is provided by Christ Himself.

Matthew 2:6

“And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come the Governor, that shall rule My people Israel,”

The above was prophecy given by prophet Micah concerning the birth of Jesus Christ; **Micah 5:2**, that Christ was to be a

Governor to rule over His people, indicates that shepherds as they jurisdictionate their duties in the vineyard of the Lord, should always confine themselves within the framework of the government of the Lord.

Isaiah 63:11

“Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people, saying, where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him?”

The above may mean either of the Lord who remembered His loving kindness towards these people , and His tender mercies which had been ever of old, the covenant He made with their fathers ; Abraham, Isaac , and Jacob; the wonders He did for them in Egypt, at the Red sea, and in the wilderness by the hand of Moses; his intercession to Him on their behalf , and the many great and good things He did for them; and therefore determined not now to cast them off altogether, but to do as he had done before ; and to stir up himself thereunto.

Jeremiah 3:15

And I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. ”

The state of the fear of God is to every shepherd. Those shepherds who fear/ revere God are wise and they gain knowledge of the Holy one which is understanding (**Proverbs 9:10**).

When the pastors lack the fear of God, they will also breed the sheep who will equally lack the same fear to God and therefore knowledge and understanding will always evade them.

Jeremiah 23:4

“And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking says the LORD.”

May the LORD God hasten to fulfill this promise to the sheep. That the sheep may feed contently, without any fear or dismay. May the sheep of Christ lack nothing but instead be fed from the menu of Christ.

This is a clarion call to all shepherds, awake from dangling strange doctrines to the innocent sheep of God. Feed them on what the Lord Jesus intended that they feed on.

Why did Jesus tell Peter to “feed My sheep” in John 21?

Answer.

Jesus gave Peter a three-fold command to “**Feed My sheep**” in *John 21:15-17*. Each time Jesus said, “**Feed My sheep**”, it was in response to Peter’s threefold declaration of love of Jesus.

The setting was one of the last of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus Prepared breakfast of fish and bread for them and then commissioned Peter with the task of feeding His sheep and tending His lambs.

The three commands although often translated the same way, are subtly different. The first time Jesus says it, the Greek means literally pasture (tend) the lambs (**vs 15**). The Greek word pasture is in the present tense, denoting a continual action of tending, feeding and caring for animals.

Believers are referred to as sheep throughout scriptures. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care (**Psalms 95:7**)

Jesus is both our good shepherd (**John 10:9**). By describing His people as lambs, He is emphasizing their nature as immature and vulnerable and in need of tending and care.

The second time the literal meaning is “**Tend My Sheep**” (**Vs 16**). In this exchange Jesus was emphasizing tending the sheep

in a supervisory capacity, not only feeding but ruling over them.

This expresses the full scope of pastoral oversight, both in Peter's future and in all those who would follow Him in pastoral ministry.

Peter follows Jesus' example and repeats this same Greek word *poimaino* in his first pastoral letter to the elders of the churches of Asia Minor: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers" (**1 Peter 5:2**)

The third time the literal translation is "pasture" (tend) the sheep (**Vs 17**). Here Jesus combines the different Greek words to make clear the job of the shepherds of the flock of God. They are to tend, care for, and provide spiritual food for God's people, from the youngest lambs to the full-grown sheep, in continual action to nourish and care for their souls bringing them into the fulness of spiritual maturity.

The totality of the task set before Peter, and all shepherds, is made clear by Jesus' three-fold command and the words He chooses.

What is this food with which the shepherds are to feed the flock of God? It can be no other than the word of God. Peter declares that Christians are to desire the pure spiritual milk of the word so that by it, we can mature in our salvation (**1 Peter 2:2**).

As early as the book of Deuteronomy, we see The LORD describing His word as food for His people who live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from His mouth (**Deut 8:3**).

Jesus reiterates this thought in His temptation in the wilderness (**Matt 4:4**). The importance of the word of God as food for our souls cannot be over-emphasized.

Clearly, the job of the shepherds of God's people is to provide them with the pure milk of the word of God so they can move on to the meat and solid food of the spiritually mature (**Hebrews 5:12-14**). Pastoral ministry should be primarily one of pastors feeding their people the word of God. Only then can pastors declare, as Peter did, their love for the Lord Jesus.

1 Peter 5:2-4

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint (**compulsion**) but willingly; not for filthy lucre (**sordid gain**) but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd (**i.e. Christ**) shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.”

Shepherds are urged to feed the flock of God and take oversight over them willingly, not expecting any gain.

The tendency of lordship over the sheep is akin to Pharaoism. A shepherd should understand well that every individual sheep has a soft spot for the chief shepherd, who is The Lord Jesus Christ, he should not be the one to fill this part, but should teach the flock to entirely depend on Jesus Christ.

Because the flock is God`s heritage, the shepherd ought to be an example to the flock, knowing that when the chief shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

When a shepherd incorporates the above treasures spoken out by the great apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he will be mindful of right motives and be driven to tend the sheep of God rightly and within the confines of the pasture of God, for the pasture of God is standardized and patterned with irreducible minimums.

CHAPTER 9:

THE PASTURE OF GOD

Before I venture into expositioning on this topic, we ought to understand the literal meaning of the word PASTURE.

Pasture means:

- 1) Land covered with grass and other low plants suitable for grazing, especially cattle or sheep. Areas of rich meadow pasture. Similar words; grazing land, grazing.
- 2) Used to refer to a person's situation in life.

“She left the office for new pastures.”

Verb—put (animals) to graze in a pasture. “They pastured their cows in the water meadow.”

Pasture; 3rd person present; pastures; past tense (pastured); past participle (pastured); gerund or present participle; (pasturing)

Biblical meaning of pasture

This is well mentioned in **Psalms 23:2**; God provides green pastures. He makes us lie down in green pastures or “pastures of tender grass” as someone renders it, ‘springing grass.’ Without any doubt, the idea is that of freshness, not stale. God's word is fresh every day and God delights to feed us with fresh pasture.

Spiritual Meaning of Pasture

The **pasture** in the eternal sense denotes that which sustains man's spiritual life, is also evident from other passages in the word; as in **Isaiah 49:8-9**.

"I gave you for a covenant of the people, to restore the land; to say to them that are bound, go forth; to them that are in darkness, be ye revealed. They shall feed upon the ways; and on all hillsides shall be their pasture."

To feed upon the ways denotes to be instructed in truths. Ways are truths; and to feed is to be instructed, pasture on all hillsides denotes to be sustained from good, for hills like mountains, are goods of love.

Jeremiah 23:1 "woe to the shepherds that destroy and scatter the flock of My pasture." Where pasture denotes such things as sustain spiritual life. Again: -

Lamentations 1:6 "The princes of Zion are become like harts; they have found no pasture."

They have found no pasture denotes no truth of good.

Ezekiel 34:11,14

"For thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. 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.”

Where good and fat pasture upon the mountains of Israel denotes the goods of truth.

Ezekiel 34:18

“Seems it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters but you must foul the residue with your feet.”

Prophet Ezekiel receives an oracle in which God is bitterly complaining of untoward behaviors of the shepherds. They feed on the good pasture and tread down the residue, thus rendering them unpalatable for the sheep.

The deep waters which represent the secrets of God are drunk by the shepherds then they foul the residue so that their condition may become undrinkable.

The above illustration reflects the shepherds who are ministering at the Altars of God presently. They twist the true word of God and give their own interpretations based on their own hidden agenda.

Prophet Hosea intones the following in **Hosea 13:5-6** “I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

According to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore, have they forgotten Me.

The dangers looming at the doorsteps of the sheep is to feed carelessly on the available pasture and forget God. God demands that His sheep may be entirely dependent on Him, they shouldn't compliance and fall prey of forgetting God.

When good pasture lacks, there is groaning, perplexing (disturbance) and desolation among the beasts of the field, the herds of the ox and the flocks of small cattle.

The above conditions measured spiritually, are what we see characterizing the sheep of Christ because they lack the requisite pasture.

King David took solace in God when he recited the following comforting scriptures:

Psalms 23:1-3 "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me besides the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

The following parameters must be indicative in the pasture of God; satisfaction (no want), safety, spirit leading besides still waters, restoration and righteousness for the sake of God's name. These are irreducible minimums in the ideal pasture of God.

The sweet psalmist captures the summary in a very astute way. **Psalms 100:3** *“Know you that the LORD He is God; it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”*

This should be a refrain scripture to the sheep of God. Every sheep ought to know that he/she belongs to the pasture of God, lest they be ensnared into the pastures that the shepherds have demarcated which have become baits of veering the sheep from God’s pasture and thus feeding them on strange stuff.

Pasture in the above passages denotes the truth in which man is instructed, here, such things as regards spiritual life is such that if this pasturage fails, it languishes and as it were pines away as does the body when it lacks food.

The pasture denotes the good and truth which restore and sustain the soul or spirit of man; is clear from the Lord’s words in **John 10:9**

“I am the door: by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” What an assurance that when one is in Christ, shall go in and out and shall find pasture—and this pasture is the PASTURE OF GOD.

Pasture denotes the goods and truths which those have who acknowledge the Lord, and seek life from Him alone.

Scriptures on pasture and their commentaries

Genesis 47:3-4 *“And Pharaoh said to his brethren, what is your occupation? And they said to Pharaoh, your servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers.*

They said moreover to Pharaoh for to sojourn in the land are we come; for your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan; now therefore, we pray you, let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.”

The children of Israel were shepherds by occupation. When famine raged their land and there was no food in the land, they set out to go to the land of Egypt to seek for food.

They went with their animals also to seek out pasture for them. True shepherds will always care for their flocks and they will always go out to find pasture for the flock. Because the church belongs to God, the place of their shepherding is in the pasture of God.

1 Kings 4:23

Ten fat oxen and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides harts, and roebucks (gazelles) and fallow deer and fatted fowl.

The good pasture should provide nourishment to the flocks feeding therein and thus fatten them. Children of God need to be nourished by the richness of God's pasture and thus this helps them grow in stature and height to reach maturity.

1 Chronicles 4:39-41, “And they went to the entrance of Gedor, even to the east side of the valley, to seek Pasture for their flocks.

And they found fat (rich) pasture and good, and the land was wide and quiet and peaceable; for they of Ham had dwelled there of old.

And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly to this day and dwelled in their rooms: because there was pasture there for their flocks.

In the above scriptures, we see the characteristics of a good pasture highlighted as below;

- Rich (fat)
- Good (pleasant)
- Spacious (wide)
- Quiet and peaceable

Once such quality pasture is found, good shepherds ensure that it is hedged and guarded from intruders who may bring defilement.

Vs 41 gives account by name of individuals who invaded the inhabitants, smote them and took possession of the pasture, the Bible records that until this day.

It means a good shepherd ensures that the pasture of God is shielded at all times from intrusion of strangers.

Job 39:8

The range of the mountains is His pasture, and He searches after every green thing.

Strategic position of the pasture indicates the spiritual location of the pasture of God.

The symbolism of every green thing means that in the pasture of God, all good and pleasantness thrive (**Psalms 23:2**)

Psalms 65:12-13

Vs 12 “They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

Vs 13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn (**grain**) they shout for joy; they also sing.”

When God is allowed to rule in His pasture, sufficient rain, and nutrients keep on dropping upon this pasture, thus providing enrichment. This ignites joy all around.

Verse 13 says that the pastures are clothed with flocks, valleys are covered over with grain, and shouting for joy and singing are heard.

The flocks browse on the rich and succulent pastures thus assimilating spiritual nutrients required for their spiritual wellbeing.

The flocks get enough from the pasture because the pasture is under the constant provision of God with His heavenly enrichments.

Psalms 74:1

O God (Elohim), why have you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your Pasture?

The writer of this psalm is lamenting the deplorable state of the sheep of the pasture of God. He wonders for how long will the LORD cast His flocks off. How long will God`s anger smoke against His sheep?

Such lamentation can only be contextualized in the state where the shepherds and the sheep have waxed cold and detached themselves from God`s presence. God may have implored them to amend their ways and return unto Him, but the sheep may have adamantly turned their deaf ears to God. God has therefore decided to mete out the most severe judgment against His flock in His pasture.

The sheep and the shepherds must cultivate sensitivity to what God requires so that they may feed in His pasture and be seasoned to inherit the everlasting and Holy Kingdom of God.

Psalms 79:13

“So, we Your people and sheep of Your pasture will give You thanks forever: we will show forth Your praise to all generations.”

The people of God have an inherent understanding that they are the sheep of the pasture of God. They are always indebted to God for giving Him thanks and will forever praise Him in all their generations.

When God’s people have this understanding, they will know how to differentiate themselves from the rest. They will live a life that reflects Godly character, always seeking to please God in all circumstances. Their lifestyle will always reflect godly virtue and will always identify themselves with the pasture of God.

They will understand all that pertains to God’s pasture and they will always walk circumspectly knowing that they owe God their allegiance. How God desires that His flock may be endowed with this awareness to show a marked demarcation between them and those who walk foolishly.

Psalms 95:7-8 *“For He is our God (Elohim); and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.”*

Obedience and reverence are tags that explain the true sheep of God. Those who know that God destined them to shepherd in the confines of His pasture. They are always ever sensitive and cannot fall prey to posturing shepherds. Their ears are circumcised and will always detect the deceiving undertones in their speeches.

Psalms 100:3 “Know you that the LORD (Jehovah), He is God (Elohim): it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

Looking at the church of Christ at this present time; she lacks such knowledge that is towered high in the above scripture

True Christians know that Jehovah is their God. They can't be willing to follow otherwise, regardless of who is advancing it. To them what God has not approved, can't be accepted by them. They don't pledge their loyalty to anybody, however decorated he may be. The only thing they fathom is that God is their creator, they are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Their perpetual desire is to always seek God God's will and therefore cannot be misled by anybody. They are always in step with the Holy Spirit.

These are the true Christians who understand the premium price paid by the Lord Jesus when He died on the cross at Calvary. They understand the ultimate sacrifice Christ offered.

Isaiah 30:23

“Then shall He give the rain of your seed that you shall sow the ground with; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous; in that day shall your cattle feed in large pastures.”

That God is committed to nourish His pasture so that it may provide fatness and plentifulness to His flock is not an overemphasizing fact

The rain that is needed to water the seed is given plentifully. The ground is richly and readily prepared to receive the seed, let it germinate and give an increase, blossom into fatness and plentiful and give rise to large pastures so that God's flock may feed therein.

The pasture of God is replicated with reviving seed---the word of God received in the power of the Holy Spirit revives the penitent hearts, porous earth that causes increase growth in plenty and gives rise to multiplication thus causing domino effects.

Isaiah 32:14

“Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts; and towers shall be for dens forever a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; Flocks need a good pasture to graze in.

God ensures that such pasture is set with standards and requirements to be observed by both the shepherds and the flock.

When each party is sensitive and vigilant, they will ensure that the pasture of God is not tilted to the excesses of the shepherds.

Isaiah 49:9

That you may say to the prisoners, go forth to them that are in darkness, show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

Jesus declared to Thomas that He is the way, the truth, and life
-John 14: 6

In the prophet Isaiah, God assures Him that His people shall be liberated from prison and that those in darkness will be illuminated.

They shall feed in the ways, and these ways present truth that is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. There pastures shall be in all high places. Whatever is in the high places is visible and easily noticeable by anyone who beholds.

This defines the characters of the true sons of God. Salvation is an element that every person that comes in contact with, ought to cultivate a desire to own such character.

On the contrary, the present-day Christians and shepherds fail an aromatic test of attracting many unbelievers to Christ.

Salvation is concocted with worldly yeasts that have leavened the broth of Christianity. But God makes it clear that true Christians ought to stand on a different demarcate from the rest. And unfortunately, the state of the church of Christ is compromised.

Jeremiah 23:1

*Woe be to the **pastors** (shepherds) that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!* Says the LORD

Pointed herein are two vices/ misgivings that are practiced by pastors whom God charged with responsibilities to shepherd the flocks of His pasture.

In our earlier chapters, we saw good practices that ought to be done by good shepherds; protect and gather the sheep of God.

But in the prophet **Jeremiah 23:1**, God sounds an alarm that His shepherds destroy and scatter the sheep of His pasture. This is accomplished out of the rebellion that is infectiously welling up in the hearts of shepherds. Every shepherd is busy devising new ways of fleecing the innocent sheep of God. They do it without abandon, carefully hiding in the framework scriptures. These prompt God to announce from the outburst of anger that; WOE be to the pastors.

Woe means great sorrow or distress (often used hyperbolically) (misery, sorrow, distress)

God does not call any servant with a reservation of pronouncing any negativity on him.

Romans 11:29- For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

John 10:8 *“All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them” (listen to)*

When the Lord Jesus was addressing the same scenario, He likened such shepherds to thieves and robbers. As the Bible clearly states; the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy but Jesus came that we may have life and have it more abundantly;

John 10:10

Destroying and scattering are the definite descriptions of a thief or a robber.

But the good news is that Jesus exalts a unique character of His loyal sheep who cannot comply with thieves and robbers. The Lord Jesus sounds a clarion call to His Sheep that they should beware of such marauding shepherds, walking in the camouflage of true shepherds. If the sheep of Christ can't be circumspect, they will be destroyed and scattered by these thieves and robbers at their peril.

Jeremiah 25:36 *“A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling (wailing) of the **principal** (master) of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD has spoiled their pasture.”*

Because of the carelessness of the shepherds in waxing more liberal and fouling the pasture of God, He promises to subject the whole lot of shepherds and the flocks to crying and wailing because He will render His pasture spoiled.

Misery and anguish will consume the shepherds and the flock within His pasture. There will be no more sustenance because God will pronounce judgment and wasting will be the only mark in the pasture.

Lamentations 1:6

“And from the daughter of Zion, all her beauty is departed; her princes have become harts (bucks) that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer”

When the flock lacks the pasture, they become famished and thus are feebly predisposed to the devourer, who is the devil, who always walks around mimicking a roaring lion looking for someone that he may devour.

The godly beauty departs leaving the sheep to wear a semblance of worldly ugliness. Thus, the appearance tag predisposes the Bride of Christ to all worldly weapons that disfigure the beauty of the church and by so doing makes her wear the same semblance with the world.

No wonder it almost becomes impossible for one to draw a difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. They all

wear the same characteristics. The reason why the world is awash with all manner of evil which are mistakenly accepted as the norms.

Ezekiel 34:14-15

“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.

I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, Says the Lord God (Adonay Jehovah)

The earnest desire of God is to feed His flock in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel. Here is where the fold of His people should be. That the sheep may lie down peacefully in a good fold and in a fat pasture. This pasture is found in the mountains of Israel. The pasture of God is likened to the mountains of Israel, meaning it is lifted, protected, well-watered, well-seasoned, and well-covered by God’s presence. No ravenous beast can access to devour the sheep.

In the book of **Deuteronomy 11:10-12** this is what God assured the children of Israel when He was taking them to the promised land;

Vs 10 “For the land, where you go in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed

your seed, and watered it with your foot (i.e., a treadmill) as a garden of herbs:

Vs 11 But the land where you go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water of the rain of heaven:

Vs 12 A land which the LORD your God cares for: the eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.”

Nothing better describes the ideal pasture of God than what is described in the above verses in Deuteronomy.

All who are shepherding the flock of God must understand the irreducible minimums that God raises concerning His pasture and the flock.

Gone are the days when shepherds lived carefree from the strict requirements of God.

May every shepherd align himself with what God requires from him as we feed the noble flock of God!

Ezekiel 34:18

Seems it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the **residue** (rest) of your pastures?

And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?

We see the situation that is unusual as God looks at it. The shepherds eat up the good pasture and tread with their feet the rest of the pasture. This gives the true character of the mean and egocentric shepherds; they scramble to eat the good pasture and the rest which ought to be eaten by the sheep is trodden upon by their feet to ensure that the sheep don't get access to any good pasture. They are famished, malnourished, and remain in a hungry stupor, always wandering looking for pasture to satisfy them.

Hosea 13:6

“According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore, they have forgotten Me.”

Much as the pasture of God provides sufficiency to the hearts of the shepherds and the sheep, God warns them of complacency. When they have eaten and their hearts are filled, they should make sure that they don't exalt their hearts and forget God.

The above prohibitions are also written in the Book of **Deuteronomy 8:10-18** and I quote;

Vs 10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

Vs 11 Beware that you forget not the LORD your God in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you this day:

Vs 12 Lest when you have eaten and are full (satisfied) and have built goodly houses, and dwelled therein;

Vs 13 And when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold are multiplied and all that you have is multiplied (increased).

Vs 14 Then your heart be lifted up and you forget the LORD your God which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

Vs 15 Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; Who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint;

Vs 16 Who fed you in the wilderness with Manna, which your Fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that He might prove (test) you to do you good all your latter end.

Vs 17 And you say in your heart (i.e., to yourself) my power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth.

Vs 18 But you shall remember the LORD your God for it is He that gives you the power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Joel 1:18-20

“How do the beasts groan? The herds of cattle are perplexed (disturbed i.e. milling about), because they have no pasture, yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

Vs 19 O LORD, to you will I cry: for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field.

Vs 20 The beasts of the field cry also to You: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

The above situation describes the razing of the pastures by fire and the drying of the rivers causing desolation and anguish to the dependents on them.

The beasts, the cattle, and the flocks depend on natural pastures and water. Now that their sustenance is no more, they languish in magnitude of want, they cry in perplexity, waning in desperation because their livelihood is deprived and their survival threatened.

When the spiritual pasture that sustains the flock of God finds itself in a similar situation, it gets famished spiritually and pine in spiritual malnourishment.

When one gets hungry, he is prone to eat anything that looks edible. Therefore, when Christians lack the requisite sustenance from the languishing pasture of God, they become

receptive to any manner of doctrine taught by shepherds regardless of their identities- whether true or false.

Water represents life and therefore the Spirit of God. When sources of water are dried and the existing ones fouled, the flock becomes thirsty and therefore can drink anything that bears the resemblance of water. This explains why there is a great disparity among believers.

In **Ephesians 4:4** “There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling;

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all.

The above scriptures explain oneness that should be found in the body (Church) of Christ.

The church ought to domesticate common values in matters faith, because the Bible says there is one body, one spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all and in us all.

There must be oneness in our shared faith, but you realize that among different denominations, different practices and dogmas are elevated to be observed zealously.

This is a misnomer that is found in the pasture of God and is propagated by shepherds.

It calls for high time that shepherds should understand that the pasture of God is one, and therefore operate within the precincts of the pasture.

Joel 2:22 “Be not afraid you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

This scripture carries hope as the springing of the pasture which was indicated to have been spoilt. God promises moments of revival to His church, when He raises true shepherds to return the church to her original trajectory. The old foundations that He had intended when He designed the discourse of the church.

John 10:9 “I am the door; by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

God makes a revelation to us that Jesus is the true door through which any man should enter and be saved (enter into a relationship with God). This entrance results into spiritual freedom where one enters freely and comes out and finds pasture. Every Christian is mandated to know the true pasture of God, and it is in this pasture where he/ she should accustom himself to always feed.

God never intended that a Christian should be led in naivety and spiritual mediocrity by being feed on anything that looks like the pasture of God.

Ezekiel 34:12 *“As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so, will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”*

This is the divine assignment spelt out by God after He realized that His flocks are driven away and assumptiously accustomed to what looks like pasture to them. He promises that this will be carried out after He raises shepherds who simulate His heart. Shepherds who concern themselves and properly understand the pasture of God.

CHAPTER 10:

SPIRITUAL MEANING OF PASTURE

Isaiah 49: 8, 9

Vs 8 Thus says the LORD, in an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation I helped you and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

Vs 9 That you may say to the prisoners, go forth; to them that are in darkness, show yourselves.

They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

The pasture in the eternal sense denotes that which sustains man`s spiritual life, which is also evident from other passages in the word.

To feed upon the ways denotes to be instructed in truths.

Ways are truths, and to feed is to be instructed.

Pastures on all hillsides denote to be sustained from good, for hills, like mountains are goods of love.

Jeremiah 23:1

Woe be to the pastors (shepherds) that destroy and scatter the flock of My pasture.

Where pasture denotes such things as sustaining spiritual life.

Lamentations 1:6

And from the daughter of Zion, all her beauty is departed; her princes have become like **harts** (bucks) that find no **pasture**, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

No pasture means no truth of God, thus predisposing the flock to the pursuer who is the devourer, the devil.

Where the true pasture lacks, the sheep are vulnerable and easily lured to anything tossed as pasture. This explains why the sheep of God fall prey to the wiles of the devil

Ezekiel 34:11, 14

Vs 11 For thus says the Lord God; behold I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out.

Vs 14 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.

Good and fat pasture upon the mountains of Israel means the good of truth.

Ezekiel 34:18

Seems it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet.

The good pasture is eaten up by the shepherds and the residue is trodden down. The deep waters are drunk and the residue is fouled by the feet of the shepherds.

This tells of the meanness and egocentric character worn by the shepherds who pretend to be anointed. They steal the unsuspecting sheep of Jehovah and cunningly veer them off the path that God would desire them to walk.

The end result is that we get a breed of shepherds and sheep who have no faithfulness to their God. They live and do service liberally. They play Christianity which lacks in godly ingredients. Such is a great fall of the church of Christ and therefore need for repentance cannot be overemphasized.

Hosea 13:5-6

Vs 5 I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

Vs 6 According to their pasture so were they filled, they were filled and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten Me.

That God knew His people in the wilderness, in the land of great drought, after helping them out of this dire situation they looked for their own pasture, ate the pasture and they were filled and after being filled they exalted themselves and forgot their God.

From the present semblance of the church, one doesn't need to be a keen observer to know that she has compromised with the world.

All her deeds resemble the deeds of the world. Moral authority is automatically diminishing on daily basis and Christianity is quickly morphing into other religions where their relationships with their god is just casual

No standard is set in regard to the worship of their gods. They set their god on one side of the fulcrum to compete with a myriad of gods on the other side of the same.

The fear of God and Godhead is slowly but systemically waning as the long-wound clock ticks by.

Modernism has furtively crept into Christianity and almost all participants in the Christian equilibrium, i.e., shepherds and flocks can no longer locate the irreducible minimums as far as God's requirements are concerned

The true pasture of God stands at arm's length from man who was divinely created to feed and benefit therein.

And because the pasture of God is eaten and trodden down and water drunk and fouled, there is groaning among the beasts, the herds of the ox are perplexed, the flocks of the small cattle are made desolate, all these is because there is no pasture. (Ref Joel 1:18)

The shepherds and the sheep must understand that the LORD (Jehovah) is our God (Elohim). He is the one who created us and not ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

The pasture belongs to God and bears specific waymarks. We as the sheep who ought to graze in this pasture ought to know the requirements and expectations therein.

Every flock belongs to a certain shepherd, but all shepherds and flocks belong to the Chief Shepherd who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one that makes us one in Him.

There isn't any preference before God, but we are all made equal. None of us should claim having a special standing with God, but we are all equally obligated under the same fold of requirements. The sheep of Christ should relate with their shepherds with respect but much respect should be given to God who created them.

They should not compromise their direct relationship with God by blindly following what their wayward shepherds instruct them.

Psalms 100:3

Know you that the LORD He is God; it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves, we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Psalms 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name`s sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

CHAPTER 11:

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.

Benefits when we make God our shepherd.

- No lacking- Always satisfied with plenty
- Resting/lying down in green pastures- always abiding in sufficiency
- His leadership directs besides still waters/spiritual nourishment
- Restoration of soul
- Walking in righteousness for His name`s sake
- No fear whatever the situation
- Provision of comfort through His rod and staff (Refer to chapter 2).
- A table of provision always prepared before me, even in the presence of the enemies
- Constant anointing with the oil
- Exceeding provision (my cup runs over)
- Followed by goodness and mercy forever
- Abiding/dwelling in the presence of the LORD forever.

The above is amplified in the book of Psalms 91:1-16

Therein are enumerated a myriad of benefits and achievements that one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High receives. This secret place is the PASTURE OF GOD.

Every Christian ought to cultivate such a special relationship with God because such benefits don't require anybody to act as a mediator. Jesus Christ came and played the role of the Only Mediator and therefore once we receive Him as our personal Saviour, we ought to grow such an unbroken relationship with Jehovah our God to be able to enjoy such enviable privileges.

When we are fed on the wrong pasture, we derail and estrange ourselves from God who desires that we be always nourished in His pasture.

John 10:9

"I am the door, by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find PASTURE".

Isaiah 44:28

That says of Cyrus, he is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, you shall be built; and to the temple, your foundation shall be laid.

The true concern of a true shepherd who feeds the flock of God in the pasture of God. He is always ceased with one ardent concern; the building of Jerusalem and laying the foundation of the temple- all these are geared towards ensuring that he does not defile the dwelling place of God.

For by so doing, such acts would drive God out of His dwelling place (temple) and the desolate place would be inhabited by every foul spirit.

Picture the following lamentation of God from the Book of **Ezekiel 8:1-18**. I quote for clarity

Vs 1 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me.

Vs 2 Then I beheld, and lo a likeness of the appearance of fire: from the appearance of His loins even downward, fire; and from His loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber.

Vs 3 And He put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head, and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looks toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.

Vs 4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

Vs 5 Then said He to me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now the way toward the north. So, I lifted up my eyes the way

toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

Vs 6 He said furthermore to me, Son of man, see you what they do? Even the great abominations (**detestable things**) that the house of Israel commits here; that I should go far off from My sanctuary? (**Holy place**) but turn you yet again, and you shall see greater abominations

Vs 7 And He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

Vs 8 Then said He to me, Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I had dug in the wall behold the door.

Vs 9 And He said to me, go in and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

Vs 10 So I went in and saw, and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts (detestable) and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

Vs 11 And there stood before them seventy men of ancients (elders) of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up

Vs 12 Then said He to me Son of man, have you seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chamber of his **imagery**? (Own Idol) for they say, The LORD sees us not; the LORD has forsaken the earth.

Vs 13 He said also to me, turn you yet again, and you shall see greater abominations (Things more detestable) that they do.

Vs 14 Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD`S house which was toward the north, and behold there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

Vs 15 Then said He to me, have you seen this O son of man? Turn you yet again, and you shall see greater abominations than these.

Vs 16 And He brought me into the inner court of the LORD`S house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, they worshipped the sun towards the East

Vs 17 Then He said to me, have you seen this O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

Vs 18 Therefore will I also deal in fury, my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Prophet Ezekiel the son of Buzi, the priest. He was born into a priestly family and therefore understood what was expected from the priesthood.

He is regarded as a stern, heartless individual. He is said to be impersonal in his detachment from his hearers and is concerned only with the vindication of God's glory even in the proclamation of mercy.

While his feelings do not in fact come to the surface as in the case of Jeremiah, to assert that he lacks sympathy is, however, to go beyond the evidence. Nor can radical critics sustain their theories that he was subject to cataleptic seizures and afflicted with schizophrenic paranoia.

The symbolic actions he performs and visions he receives are not essentially different from those recorded by other prophets. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in **597 B.C.** and called to prophetic service five years later. He was active for at least twenty-two years **(29:17)**

EZEKIEL'S EXPOSEE

Having been born from a priest and called to be a prophet at a critical time when the Israelites were struggling to fully yoke themselves into the true worship of their God, JEHOVAH.

When he began his ministry, the worship at the temple in Jerusalem seemed to have gone on normally; superficially, the worship was ok by the judgment of any beholder.

For him, it was just a usual and normal day, he was just sitting and reclining in his house and the elders of Judah sat before him.

He may have been engaged with the elders who held a big stake in the affairs- both physical, economic, social, spiritual, etc. of the Israelites, maybe they were in communication discussing various matters.

Then suddenly the hand of the LORD God fell there upon him.

WHAT DID HE SEE?

The likeness as the appearance of fire, from the appearance of His loins even downward, fire; and from His loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber (the color amber is a pure chroma color, located on the color wheel midway between the colors of yellow and orange).

What Happened?

The person seen in the vision put forth the form of a hand and took Ezekiel by a lock of his head, and the spirit lifted him up between the earth and the heaven, and he was brought in the visions of God to Jerusalem.

The scene at the Door of the Inner Gate that looks toward the north.

At this place, he saw a seat and this seat was reserved for the *image of jealousy*, which provokes jealousy.

There was also the Glory of God of Israel standing in the plain. This image of jealousy alongside the glory of God speaks about rivalry in worship.

The people of Judah instead of worshipping their only true God Jehovah whom they knew from their forefathers, placed Him alongside other idols they worshipped.

On the way towards the north, at the gate of the altar, there was the image of jealousy in the entrance.

Before the people could enter through this gate, the first thing they could meet would be this image of jealousy.

This acted as a hindrance, an abomination that drove God from His sanctuary. But God registered that there were greater and worse abominations, therefore Ezekiel needed to turn and see more.

At the Door of the Court

There was a hole at the door of the court and Ezekiel was instructed to dig through the hole in the wall. When he dug, he saw a door connecting and he was urged to go in and behold the wicked abominations that they do there.

Entering in, he saw every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts (**detestable animals**) and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed (**were curved**) upon the wall round about.

Seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, stood before them. In the midst of them stood JAAZANIAH, the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

Who is Jaazaniah?

It is hardly probable that two persons of the same character and the same (not very common) name should have been among the leaders of the people at the same time.

The mention of his grandfather here would be appropriate, as bringing out the contrast in their characters, and showing the change for the worse that had been going on among the people Shaphan was an officer of King Josiah and active in the reformation instituted by him (**2 Kings 22:3; 2 Kings 22:14**).

While his son (Elasah) was one of the messengers by whom Jeremiah sent his prophecies to the captivity (**Jeremiah 29:3**); and another son, Gemariah, was a scribe, having a chamber “in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord’s house” in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (**Jeremiah 36:10**).

At the same time his grandson, Michaiah, was sufficiently prominent at court to join in the intercession of the princes against the destruction of Jeremiah's prophecies (**Jeremiah 36:11; Jeremiah 36:25**) and a little later, in the general captivity of the ninth year of Zedekiah, another grandson, Gedaliah, had the person of Jeremiah given into his charge (**Jeremiah 39:14; Jeremiah 40:5**) and was made governor over the remnant of the people (**Jeremiah 40:11**). Such being the family connections of Jaazaniah, the corruption which could make him a leader of Idolatry is strongly shown.

Seventy Men of The Ancients of The House of Israel

There may have been no enclosed chamber about the courts of the temple capable of actually containing so large a number; but again, we are to remember that as this is in vision and for purpose of instruction, it is not necessary that all the details should be actually possible.

The seventy elders were not the Sanhedrin, which was not constituted until after the return from Babylon; but the number has probable reference to the seventy chosen to enjoy with Moses the Theophany of **Exodus 24:9-10** and the other seventy selected to share with him the gifts of the spirit (**Numbers 11:16**).

In contrast with those selected for a special nearness to God, these seventy are engaged in abominations most abhorrent to Him.

With every man his censer in his hand—The burning of incense was the exclusive function of the priesthood (**Numbers 16, 2 Chronicles 26:16-18**); and it was unlike the necessity and the choice of the idolaters of Israel to devolve this office upon those who were not of the Aaronic family. (**comp. 1 Kings 12:31**)

When the seventy elders offered incense to their idols, they claimed thereby to be the priests of those idols.

Jaazaniah—perhaps chief of the seventy; son of Shaphan, the Scribe who read to Josiah the book of the law, the spiritual privileges of the son (**2 Kings 22:10-14**) increased his guilt.

The very name means, “Jehovah hears”, giving a lie to unbelieve which virtually said; “The Lord seeth us not”, (**Ezekiel 9:9**) (**compare Ps 10:11, 14; 50:21; 94:7,9**).

The offering of the incense belonged not to the elders, but to the priests; this usurpation added to the guilt of the former

Cloud of Incense—They spared no expense for their idols. Oh, that there was the same liberality with God!

In the above abomination, the elders of Judah are the ones who led in idolatry. Jaazaniah was their leader and they were all

discrediting the work of the priests by burning incense, whose responsibilities reserved only for the priests.

All this was done by the ancients of the house of Israel in the dark. Every man in the chambers of his imagery. And as they did this, they say that the LORD sees them not and that The LORD has forsaken the earth.

What was happening at the Gate of the LORD'S house which was towards the north?

At this door of the gate, there sat women weeping for **TAMMUZ**.

WHO IS TAMMUZ?

The prophet is now taken to the north gate of the outer enclosure of the Temple courts, and there sees a new and exceedingly corrupt form of idolatry.

Tammuz is nowhere else mentioned in scripture, but is identified by ancient tradition (incorporated into the vulgate) with the Greek Adonis, **-the beloved of Venus**. The name Adonis could not well have been used, because in its Hebrew form it means **Lord**, and is frequently used of God. His worship is first heard of in Phoenicia, and was wide-spread throughout Syria and the adjacent countries.

As the creature worship before mentioned was undoubtedly connected with political reasons, while aid was being sought

from Egypt, so the worship of Adonis may have been affected by the league which Zedekiah attempted to form (**Jeremiah 1:1-11**) with the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites and Philistines against Nebuchadnezzar.

The Annual Feast of Adonis consisted of mourning by the women for his death, followed by a rejoicing over his return to life, and was accompanied by great abominations and licentiousness (lacking legal or moral restraints especially; disregarding sexual restraints, licentious behavior, licentious revelers; marked by disregard for strict rules or correctness)

The myth of Adonis was also closely associated with the worship of nature. This festival did not fall in the “six months”, but the description is not necessary of what was occurring, at the moment; there is brought before the prophet’s vision a representation of the wickedness practiced at various times in Jerusalem.

Women engaged in the service of idolatry near the Temple are mentioned in **2 Kings 23:7 (comp. Jeremiah 7:18)**

Thus far the prophet has seen in the different courts of the Temple the general image worship of the people, then the creature worship of their elders, and now the corrupt and debasing rites of their women.

Jamieson—Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

From the secret abominations of the chambers of imagery, the prophet's eye is turned to the outer court women were not admitted but only to the door.

Sat-the attitude of mourners (**Job 2:13, Isa 3:26**)

Tammuz-from a Hebrew root; “**to melt down**”, instead of weeping for the national sins, they wept for the idol.

Tammuz (the Syrian for Adonis), the paramour of Venus, and the same name of the river flowing from Lebanon, was killed by a wild boar, and according to the fable, permitted to spend half the year on earth, and obliged to spend other half in the lower world. An annual feast was celebrated to him in June (hence called Tammuz in the Jewish calendar) at Byblos, when the Syrian women, in wild grief, tore off their hair and yielded their persons to prostitution, consecrating the hire of their infamy to Venus; next followed days of rejoicing for his return to the earth; the former feast being called “**the disappearance of Adonis**”, the later, “**the finding of Adonis**”.

This Phoenician feast answered to the similar Egyptian one in honor of Osiris.

The idea thus fabled was that of the waters of the river and the beauties of spring destroyed by the summer heat, or else the earth being clothed with beauty, during the half year when the sun is in the upper hemisphere, and losing it when he departs

to the lower. The name Adonis is not here used, as Adon is the appropriate title of Jehovah.

The women of Israel had assimilated the worship of idols as other women did. This manifests through weeping for Tammuz who we have seen was a Phoenician fable personality highly regarded by the Syrians and her neighbors.

Prophet Ezekiel is taken through the different levels where the God-fearing nation of Israel had complacently drifted into gross idolatry.

God was lamenting that these heinous acts were driving Him out of His Sanctuary and that Israel was toppling fast into a Godless people.

As if the three incidences were not enough, God urged prophet Ezekiel to turn again so that he may continue witnessing more degrees of idolatry until the whole nation is engulfed and clothed with abominable worship of idols.

What happened in the inner court at the door between the porch and the altar?

At these level twenty-five men with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east and they worshipped the sun towards the east.

All this was happening within the precinct of the temple. Only different groups of people dedicated their spiritual lives to

several idols. All the above was summed up as great abominations committed by the children of Judah. Through these, the land was filled with violence. God was provoked with anger and as if the above was not enough, they committed the last sneer by putting the branches to their noses; i.e. trying to block their noses as if they were smelling a bad odor.

Their action was implying to God that He was emitting a putrid smell and therefore they were busy blocking their noses not to feel the smell.

In **verse 18** God concludes Thus, “Therefore will I also deal in fury; My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.”

This is the very scenario that people who stray from the pasture of God find themselves in. Their reverence to God becomes casual and they canonize liberality into the worship of God.

Isaiah 56:7-12

Vs 7 Even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burned offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon My altar: for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people (Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17).

Vs 8 The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says, yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered to him (John 10:16)

Vs 9 All you beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all you beasts in the forest

Vs 10 His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all **dumb dogs** (voiceless men), they cannot bark, sleeping, laying down, love to slumber.

Vs 11 Yeah, they are greedy dogs that can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their way, everyone for his gain, from his quarter.

Vs 12 Come you, say they I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

From the foregoing, God promises to bring others on board His already-owned people. We know that God entered into an eternal covenant with the Israelites and He separated them from the rest of the people of the world.

He extends a generous hand that even to others who are not Israelites by descency, so long as they choose to obey Him, He will cheerfully bring them to His holy mountain.

He will allow them to rejoice in His house of prayer. He emphasizes that His house should be called a house of prayer unto all people.

A place where His worshippers should present prayers and offer their utterly (burned) offerings

Prophet Isaiah emphasizes that He is the Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel and others beside them who are already gathered to Him.

That the practices and services in the house of God are indicated, we can only marvel at what businesses go on in various houses of worship. A lot of merchandise augments places of our worship.

These include but are not limited; to the selling of small plastic bottles filled with olive oil codenamed containing anointing that breaks all limitations in life and ushers one into greatness, handkerchiefs, brooms, some branded stickers, hand towels, books, and other kinds of literature written by the presiding shepherds and that they are anointed and a must read for all members, seed planting, sacrifices and other extra-biblical offerings which have no anchorage in the Bible.

I was privileged to visit one church in Nairobi where I was to minister in an event early this year, 2022, and was surprised by the ministrations carried out by the presiding bishop who bears the title of an “apostle”. Everything that he did including praying for people for any need; the prayer was to be accompanied by a “sacrifice”. Even when he administered the holy communion to people, he concluded by saying that if you partook in the Lord’s table without offering a “sacrifice” at the end, the holy communion would be of no effect.

It is obvious that at the altar of sacrifice where the only propitiation allowed is the blood of Jesus, mammon has

replaced this precious and ultimate sacrifice accomplished by the blessed and only potentate, the King of Kings, and lord of lords, Jesus Christ **(1Tim 6:15)**.

The message of “giving a sacrifice” has centrally and tactfully entrenched itself into the worship of the church and no service can be complete without the worshippers participating in offering “diverse sacrifices.”

This is a big error in the church that ought to be founded on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

The biblical prophets and Apostles never extorted money from those whom God brought into their congregations.

But in today`s churches, the worship of God is not complete until one offers several “sacrifices” to be specific - MONEY. Salvation and commitment to church membership are measured by how freely one offers “sacrifices.”

God carefully makes a summary about the state of the ministers wallowing in the above misconnection, that they are blind and ignorant watchmen. They are all dumb dogs who can`t bark, sleeping, laying down, loving to slumber- they are hazed in a spiritual trance.

Their greediness is likened to greedy dogs which have insatiable appetites. Their gluttony, nothing can satisfy.

They are shepherds without understanding, and everyone looks his way. Everyone is concerned with self-gain from his quarter, and so there seems to be unwarranted competition among the ministers of the gospel.

They revolve in the wantonness of feasting and reveling intoxicating themselves with the affluence of life. They urge others to come and drink and make merry, filling themselves with strong drinks, hoping that tomorrow will present itself like today and even much more abundant.

Based on the above religious orgies, God is rattled to pronounce His judgment on them as in **Isaiah 56:9**, “*All you beasts of the field, come to devour, Yea, all you beasts of the forest.*”

He concludes that these people ought to become prey and be feasted upon by beasts from the forest.

PSALMS 23:1

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

When we make the LORD our shepherd, we will be satisfied with abundance. He makes sure that we get sustained from His pasture.

The pasture which is always green- thus filled with every spiritual ingredient that we need. He is loving, caring, kind and

always understands our individual needs. He gathers us and confines us within the boundaries of His pasture.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

Isaiah 40:11

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.

Ezekiel 34:12

As the shepherd seeks out his flocks on the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered: So, will I seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

In an ideal PASTURE that God refers to, whoever does the role of shepherding therein bears the character of goodness. He sacrifices all for the sake of the sheep.

He understands that his sole responsibilities as a shepherd are to feed the sheep, gather the lambs (vulnerable) with his arm, carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those with young, meaning caring and considerate.

His care mandate is to seek out his flock among the scattered sheep. His work is well cut out, he gathers and not scatters.

Hebrews 13:20

Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of everlasting covenant.

Isaiah 63:11

Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people, saying, where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock, where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him?

The blueprint imprinted in the pasture of God recognizes that Jesus is the great shepherd.

All shepherds who operate within this pasture understand that they are just subordinates to Him. They will always ensure that they point the sheep to Jesus the great shepherd.

One rarely sees them raising their persona and even posturing as if they are greater than Jesus.

Apostle Paul understood this pretty well as he quipped to the church to imitate him as he imitates Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Corinthians 4:16**). This is not true with today's shepherds, who have niched themselves into their revered

enclaves. They exist in their fiefdoms as demigods. But the true shepherdhood in the pasture of God is marked by reverence to the Godhead- The Father, The Son of God, and The Holy Spirit.

Luke 2:8

And there were in the same country shepherds **abiding** (remaining) in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Vss 17-18 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

There are clear illustrations in the above scriptures of what true shepherds operate within the pasture of God bear as their characters; abiding tendency, meaning they can bear long when everybody else has owned up. We see them remaining in the field and watching over the flock at night when everyone else has retired to his bed and possibly dead asleep.

They see and receive from God and publicize abroad all that is told them about the child. Whatever they do, exalts THE Lord Jesus and not themselves. If a shepherd takes his correct stand and position in the pasture of God, he will never be ashamed of proclaiming the Gospel. And the Gospel is about the Lord Jesus Christ

(Romans 1:16)

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to Salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Jeremiah 23:4

And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, Says the LORD.

God promises to set up worthy shepherds to tend His flock in His pasture. When this happens there will be no fear for fear brings bondage, **(Hebrews 2:14-15)**. When the sheep recognize the sovereignty of God, they will not be dismayed as recorded in **Isaiah 41:10**. And none will lack/want because God Himself will be providing oversight in shepherding **(Psalms 23:1)**

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

The first requirement from the shepherd who works in the pasture of God is to take heed to himself before he takes heed to all the flock.

He pledges allegiance to the Holy Spirit because he knows that, he is the one who privileged him to oversee and feed the church (sheep, flock) of God. This awareness should not dodge the shepherd; that the Church was purchased by the own shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, so he is always indebted to the Lord.

Jeremiah 3:15

And I will give you pastors according to My Heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

A true pastor/ shepherd who tends the flock of God ought to fashion his heart to be like the heart of God. King David as a shepherd disciplined himself and, in the Bible, God acclaims him alone as a man after His own heart.

(1 Samuel 13:14)

But now your kingdom shall not continue; the LORD has sought Him a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be captain over His people because you have not kept that which the LORD commanded you.

Acts 13:22

And when He had removed him, He raised to them David to be their King; to whom also He gave testimony and said, I have

found David the Son of Jesse, a man after My own heart which shall fulfill all my will.

A man after the heart of God is flexible to fulfill the will of God. That is why when God rejected King Saul, He sought for one who would fulfill His will. Saul had not done according to what God had commanded him. He had failed to keep God's commandments and therefore devised His way of doing his mission when indeed he was sent by God on a divine mission to accomplish the will of God.

The shepherd whose heart likens to the heart of God will be filled with the knowledge and understanding of God. This is because in **Proverbs 9:10** the Bible records this; *The **fear** (reverence) of the LORD (Jehovah) is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

This scripture gives us an understanding of an unchangeable sequence that God has established through which man ought to follow to gain perfectness.

When one fears/reverences the LORD, he begins attaining wisdom; the fear of God. This wisdom generates knowledge that helps the candidate to get an understanding of the Holy One. Through this, man understands the true characteristics of God and therefore he will live a life geared toward pleasing God.

King Saul failed to fear God and God rejected him, even if he continued in the seat of the King but many woes befell him until finally, he perished in battle against his enemies.

The shepherds who are ministering at the altar of God in their ways are already relegated by God to their end destination, where when they are seeking God`s commendation on the day of reckoning, God will rebuttal them that they should depart from Him because He never knew them **(Matthew 7:21-24)**.

Ezekiel 34:23

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

Revelation 7:17

*For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them to living **fountains** (springs) of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

During the times of Prophet Ezekiel, King David had long rested with his people, but we see God promising that He will set up one shepherd over them to feed them, and He discloses that this servant will be David and that he shall be their shepherd.

In **Revelation 7:17**, we see this prophecy fulfilled and the revelation we get is that this shepherd is the Lamb of God i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, all shepherds purporting to be tending the sheep of God but don't bear the characteristics of Jesus are intruders, and thieves, and God warns His sheep to beware of them. They dress in sheep's skins but they are true masquerading wolves. The sheep innocently follow after them and they gradually veer off the sheep from their true shepherd and every individual shepherd makes out his quarter within the pasture of God.

Zechariah 13:7

Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, says the LORD of hosts (Tsebaoth): smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn My hand upon the little ones.

Prophet Zechariah gives this prophecy as an illustration of what happens to the sheep when the shepherd is smitten. This prophecy was pointing at the suffering of Christ at which point we see that after His arrest and subsequent sufferings that He went through and was crucified, His disciples were very much discouraged and they scattered from the course and returned to their own engagements.

The New Testament fulfillment can be read out in the following books; **Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27, John 16:32**

That the sheep automatically scatters when their shepherd is struck shows us how loyal and trustful, they are towards their shepherd. This reason explains why when various scandals concerning some shepherds are unraveled, the sheep that these shepherds command stand up in solidarity to defend their suspected shepherds. It is because a shepherd answers to spiritual attachment with His congregation. It is important that as shepherds we direct the sheep to cultivate a very strong and cordial fellowship with God so as not to dance to the whims of their shepherds and forget about what the chief shepherd taught whilst on this earth.

Psalms 78:52

But made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

There is always a forward movement for the people of God and they are expected to continue traveling with willingness and cooperation like sheep. Despite many wildernesses that define their itinerary God intends to guide them the way the flock is guided by the shepherd.

Indeed, there are many wildernesses in our lives, we encounter them daily and they are extremely challenging, but the good news is that God is willing to guide us and enable us to go through all myriads of obstacles. This calls for our total surrender and submission to His perfect and divine will.

The entire Bible; both the Old and New Testaments, is replicate with examples of individuals who trusted God to guide them and indeed their end obtained a good report. God is faithful and His mercies never fail.

CHAPTER 12:

TRUE WORSHIP AND GENUINE REPENTANCE.

The Debilitating Worship in Jerusalem

Isaiah 1:1-23

Prophet Isaiah at the beginning of his prophecy saw a debilitating form of worship in Jerusalem. This was during the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. The four Kings ruled Judah successfully.

God laments that He has nourished and brought up children but they have rebelled against Him. God draws a parallel of an Ox who knows its owner, the ass its master's crib, but that Israel His people, do not know, neither do they consider Him.

Instead, the people had turned sinful and laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, full of corruption, forsaken the LORD, provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger and have gone away backward.

God wonders as to why His people should continue priding themselves in being continually stricken as they revolt more and more when the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. No soundness from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head.

Their whole bodies are filled with wounds, bruises and putrefying sores which have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified (*softened i.e., cleaned*) with ointment.

The desolation of their country and the burning of their cities is because of their perennial idolatry. Strangers have devoured their land in their presence and it remains desolate as if overthrown.

In this situation, the daughter of Zion which represents the church is left as a cottage (*shelter*) in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

And were it not that the LORD of hosts had left to them a very small remnant, they should have been like Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of His grace, God had left to them a small remnant not because they deserve, but because of His gracious Name (**Ref. Romans 9:29**).

Gross idolatry had blurred the image of the people of God, the Israelites, until God addressed them as Sodom and Gomorrah. He calls for their attention that they should give ear to His law. They were fond of giving their continued and large amounts of Sacrifices to God, but God rebuffs that they are of no use to Him. He sneers that He is full of the burned offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and that He delights not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs or of the goats.

As long as they have forsaken the law of God and continued wallowing in rebellion, no amount or type of sacrifice would right them to God`s ways.

They were religiously appearing with all manner of sacrifices before God, but they could not amend their ways and relationship with God. God points out that their acts are akin to treading/ trampling down His courts.

He protests vehemently that they should no longer bring their vain (worthless) Oblations (offerings). And that their incense (prayers) is an abomination to Him.

Their new moons and Sabbaths (rest days), the calling of assemblies, God cannot endure. He says that even the solemn meetings are iniquities before Him.

Their special festivals including new moons, appointed feasts i.e., the seven feasts of the LORD in **Leviticus 23**, God says that His soul hates. They cause trouble to Him and He is weary of bearing them.

He loathes their gathering ceremonies and even as they meet in their fellowships and spread forth their hands in prayers, He promises to hide His eyes from them. He categorically assures them that even if they make many prayers, He would not hear them because their hands are soaked in blood. Before God all the religious services carried are considered religious orgies as long as the participants are not in right standing with God.

The above picture befits today's church which is taught that you can always appease God and find access to Him as long as you offer "a big sacrifice". It means that God has corrupted His Holy ways and human beings can easily manipulate His standards by bribing Him. The blood of Jesus which acted as the Only Sacrifice of the new covenant is replaced at the altar with fat envelopes carrying money, and worshippers are assured by runaway false shepherds that as long as they give their "Sacrifices" their prayers will be accepted.

A Call to Repentance.

Because of the loving-kindness of the LORD, He offered a solution to such a compromised people. He calls upon His people to wash and make themselves clean. To put away the evil of their doings from before His eyes and cease to do evil. He prescribes a process of learning to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widows.

Domesticate the willingness to come and reason together with God. That even if their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

God exalts willingness and obedience as leads towards eating the good of the land. But that refusal and rebellion shall lead to being devoured (destroyed) with the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.

Prophet Isaiah after learning this deplorable situation of God's people intone thus; **Isaiah 1:21-23** "How is the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers.

Vs 22 Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water (adulteration of doctrine)

Vs 23 Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves gifts (bribes) and follows after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come to them.

In **verse 23**, the princes who are synonymous with the shepherds, have become rebellious and companions of thieves. They have rebelled against the context of scriptures and chosen to company with thieves- they have developed a ravenous appetite for enriching themselves by receiving) gifts (**bribes**) codenamed "**sacrifices**".

They follow after rewards in every service they carry out. They have developed naivety to the divine requirement of God's ministry and mandate. Their focus is to always remind the sheep of God to give a sacrifice before or immediately after prayer is made for them.

This is a very despicable situation to look at but unfortunately, it is where the church of Christ has descended.

The faithfulness that once described the Church of Christ is no longer held in premium. Instead, spiritual harlotry is what is globally celebrated. Judgment and righteousness that lodged the early Church of Christ are no longer considered virtuous.

The silver and gold are now tossed at the altar and regarded as the pillars of the sacrifice. Peter and John met the lame man at the beautiful gate and he begged that they give him alms in the form of silver and gold, they replied that the only thing they had was the blood of Jesus, and they commanded the lame and sure enough he stood and walked leaping giving glory to the Name of Jesus (**Acts 3:1-11**)

God Promises Forgiveness after Genuine Repentance **(Isaiah1:24-31)**

God faithfully promises that He will be relieved of His adversaries and His enemies. He would turn His hand upon them and thoroughly purge away their dross and take away their tin.

He will restore their charges as at the first, and their counselors as at the beginning; and that they shall be called; the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. The destruction of the transgressors and of the

sinner shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

They shall be ashamed of the Oaks (Mighty trees, pagan shrines) which they have desired and they shall be confounded (disgraced) for the garden that you have chosen.

Those who continue clinging to worthless idols shall be as an Oak whose leaf fades, and like a garden that has no water. And the strong shall be as tow (***a strand of flax***) and the maker of it (***his work***) as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

God is faithful and righteous and He metes out judgment commensurate to the deeds done, be they good or evil, He is no respecter of persons and therefore He loves justice.

CHAPTER 13

SURVEY ON SACRIFICES BASED ON THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

Meaning of Sacrifice

- An act of slaughtering an animal or person, or surrendering a possession as an offering to a deity
- Give up (something valued) for the sake of other considerations
- To sacrifice also means to do without something or give something up.
- It simply means offering/ or giving and is usually voluntary rather than out of an urge.

In the Mosaic Covenant, God instituted various sacrifices that were to be carried out on a need basis and they were to be offered by a designated priest.

They included burned (burnt)offerings- from the herd, flock, and fowl. They had all to bear the following qualities; a male without blemish and that he who offers shall offer with his own voluntary will.

Fowls- turtle doves or young pigeons.

Grain offering: - fine flour with oil poured upon and frankincense put thereon.

Also, unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

No leaven or honey was to be burned before the Lord.

Sacrifice of peace offering- male or female without blemish

Sin offering- The service was offered for the sins which were committed ignorantly.

Free will offering, fellowship offering, thanksgiving offerings, etc.-

All these sacrifices were to emit a sweet-smelling savor before the LORD. The kind and manner in which these sacrifices were to be offered can be drawn from the book of **Leviticus**.

The animals involved in these sacrifices were specific and required to be blameless. Let us study different scenarios in which various individuals offered their sacrifices to God and what God speaks generally about sacrifices.

A test for Abraham—Genesis 22:1-13

After God had blessed Abraham with his only son, Isaac who was born out of a miracle, when Isaac reached his teenage years; God tested Abraham by commanding him to take Isaac, his only son that he loved, and get into the land of **Moriah**; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which He would show him.

Moriah—is the name given to a mountainous region in the **Book of Genesis**, where the binding of Isaac by Abraham is said to have taken place. Jews identify the region mentioned in Genesis and the specific mountain in which the near-sacrifice is said to have occurred with “Mount Moriah”, mentioned in the Book of Chronicles as the place where Solomon’s Temple is said to have been built, and both these locations are also identified with the current Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Samaritan Torah, on the other hand, transliterates the place mentioned for the binding of Isaac as Moreh, a name for the region near modern-day **Nablus**, it is believed by the Samaritans that the near sacrifice actually took place on **Mount Gerizim**, near Nablus in the **West Bank**.

We see Abraham obeyed God, rose up in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his Son, and split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him.

In the story, we see that when Abraham accessed the place that the Lord showed him, he built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched his hand and took the knife to slay his Son, but the Angel of the LORD called to him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham, and he said, here am I.

God instructed him not to lay his hand upon the lad but to look behind him where he saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his Son.

God had acknowledged that He had seen the fear of Abraham towards Him, by not withholding his only Son from offering him as a burnt offering (**Hebrews 11:17-19**).

It is important to remember that when offering a burnt offering, everything at the altar was utterly burned before God and a sweet-smelling savor was raised to God.

The sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah spiritually indicated the laying of the foundation stone for the earthly Temple on Mount Moriah. The Lord Jesus would later lay His own body as a sacrifice for raising the heavenly temple to give man access to God.

Genesis 31:54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

Human sacrifices are forbidden by God -
Deuteronomy 12:31. You shall not do so to the LORD your God, for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates have they done to their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burned in the fire to their gods.

The heathens offer all manner of sacrifices, including human sacrifices to their gods. Our God Jehovah who inhabits eternity detests this kind of sacrifice and therefore whoever offers a human sacrifice does an abominable act to the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:22. And Samuel said, Has the LORD as great delight in burned offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

King Saul had sinned against God as soon as he had been anointed. He had offered sacrifices which were to be offered by Samuel the prophet, who also doubled as the priest.

In **1 Samuel chapter 15**, God had sent him to run an errand of meting out utter destruction to the Amalekites for the sins they had committed to the Israelites.

This mission of King Saul was meant to be an opportunity for him to be accepted by God, so it was given as a second chance.

King Saul chose not to hearken and obey the voice of God but instead, spared the fatlings in the name of offering God sacrifices. He even spared King Agag who had afflicted the Israelites and when he went to meet prophet Samuel, he exuded confidence that he went all the way that God had sent him and accomplished all that he had been sent.

The bleating of the sheep and the lowing of oxen had been heard in the ears of the prophet Samuel even as King Saul reported his success in executing his duty as far as the mission of God was concerned. To Saul, he treasured the fatlings that the people had spared and insinuated to the prophet Samuel that they were meant to be offered as sacrifices to God. The prophet replied that God could only take pleasure in obedience rather than disobedience that tried to appease God by offering sacrifices to Him.

In the present time that we live in, shepherds insist that the sheep of God can outsmart Him by simply offering Him a sacrifice even if they are wanting in what God requires from them.

No one exalts the virtue of obedience to the laws and ways of God as cardinal values that God requires from His flock.

The sheep are taught that sacrifices unlock and unveil all possible acceptances from God. Simply put, that God can change His standards if we bribe Him.

Our Holy God is presented as a corrupt judge who can be tilted to change His standards. So, the shepherds simply invoke the Name of God to extort money from the sheep and so they enrich themselves.

Proverbs 3:9-10

Honor the LORD with your substance and with the first-fruits of all your increase. So shall your barns be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst out with new wine.

When we freely and voluntarily give God our offerings out of honoring Him, as opposed to doing it out of compulsion, the Bible records that our barns will be filled with plenty, and our presses (vats) shall burst with new wine.

When the sheep of God gains an understanding and offer their Offerings/sacrifices with the right motives, their offerings turn beneficial to them and they enjoy their relationship and provision with God.

Luke 18:20-24

You know the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother.

And he said, all these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, yet lack you one thing: sell all that you have, and distribute to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come: follow me.

And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful (sad): for he was very rich.

And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said; how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!

One aspect that the shepherds of God have failed to practice is what the Lord Jesus points out in the Book of **Luke 18:23**, giving out our possessions to be shared by the less fortunate in the societies- the poor, the weak, the strangers, the fatherless, the widows the widowers, etc.

In the Old Testament, God indicated the groups that were supposed to be the partakers of the offerings from His people.

Apart from Aaron and his sons, the priests, the Levites, the above-mentioned groups were also included in this share.

But the shepherds today lay less premium to the above vulnerable groups and instead they single handedly squander the offerings of God.

Proverbs 21:3

“To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice”

Psalms 89:14

“Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face”

Sacrifice is an important service to God as an appreciation and acknowledgement that all that we have has been provided by God. So, when we offer Him a sacrifice, we express our gratitude to Him. But God points out that sacrifice does not supersede justice and judgment. So, before our sacrifices are accepted by God, we must love justice and do judgment which are the habitation (foundation) of His throne.

Remember that God`s protocol never changes, if we excel in offering sacrifices, however fat they may be, but we fail to do justice and love judgment meaning being righteous, our sacrifices amount to nullity.

Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat opposite the treasury and beheld (observed) how the people cast money into the treasury and many that were rich cast in much.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called to Him His disciples, and says to them; Verily (truly) I say to you, that this poor widow has **cast** (put) more in, than they which have cast into the treasury.

For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

As Jesus sat opposite the treasury and observed how the people cast money into the treasury, His intention was not to see who was casting in much.

He wanted to see the connection between those who offered and the conditions of their hearts. Out of this observation, it turned out that the rich were offering to make a show of how much they possessed but the poor widow who genuinely offered all that she had earned commendation from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many shepherds today command their congregations to come and cast their offerings at their feet at the pulpits/altars and as they observe, you hear them muttering to some children of God that their offerings are way below what they should offer and they will even justify their act of observing to what Jesus did in the temple treasury. The opposite is that we did not hear The Lord condemning those who offered little and applauding those who cast in much.

Our offerings are commensurate to the conditions of our hearts. If we truly love God, we offer Him our sincere sacrifices without attaching any demand on them. Our God who sees our sincerity reciprocates by meeting all our needs according to His riches in Glory **(Philippians 4:19)**

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Apostle Paul raises the level of the kind of sacrifice our God requires. Our bodies/ lives should be offered to God as a living sacrifice.

This binds us to forego our pleasures daily and instead commit our lives to the service of God.

The service that we offer to God bears the brunt of holiness, acceptance, and responsibility. Holiness demands that we free ourselves from all manner of blemishes.

We must walk with God daily observing what is acceptable to Him. When we do these, our service is received as reasonable before God.

For us to achieve this, we should separate ourselves from the conformity of this world. The world has got its own standards and anyone choosing to live according to these standards, must train himself to exact them.

Apostle Paul rather points out that we should be transformed/changed by the renewing of our minds. When we do these, we approve what is good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Our minds because of daily interaction with the standards of this world, keep on compromising, and therefore when we assimilate our daily responsibilities, by offering our bodies as living sacrifices, we renew our minds and conform them to the perfect will of God (**Romans 12:2**)

The churches of Macedonia were endowed with much grace from God. They lived an average social life under great trials of affliction, their deep poverty abounded, but they exuded an abundance of their joy

They rejoiced in the riches of their liberality/ freedom from the bondage of sin.

They had far-reaching power to offer their gifts and urged the Apostles to take support/ service to the saints. This was made possible because they understood the aspect of offering their lives as living sacrifices (**11 Corinthians 8:1-4**)

CHRIST'S ULTIMATE SACRIFICE FOR US

Hebrews 9:24-26

For Christ is not entered into the Holy places made with hands, which are the figures (anti-types) of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of the others,

For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world (age) has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Verse 28, So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many: and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin to Salvation.

The Book of Hebrews chapter 9 presents a classical format in which worship and service took place under the old covenant.

There were ordinances/ regulations of divine service and a worldly/earthly sanctuary.

I will split all these in a nut shell that we may better grasp a glimpse into this mystery foreshadowing what was to be accomplished by Christ the Messiah.

a) Tabernacle/Tent with 2 chambers

The following were vessels found in the first tabernacle also called the sanctuary (i.e. Holy place).

- 1) Candlestick
- 2) The table
- 3) The showbread/sacred bread (**Exodus 26:33**).

b) The tabernacle/2nd chamber/Holy of Holies after the veil

Contained therein were;

- 1) The golden censer.

2) The ark of the covenant overlaid roundabout with gold

- Golden pot with manna
- Aaron`s rod that budded
- Table of the covenant (**Numbers 17:8**).
- Over the ark of the covenant the Cherubim of Glory shadowing the mercy seat.

After the above ordination, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

In the second chamber, only the high priest alone entered once every year with two types of blood, one for himself and the other for the errors of the people.

The significance here by the Holy Spirit is that the way into the holiest of all was not yet disclosed while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

This was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

These gifts and sacrifices stood only in meats (**food**) and drinks and divers (**various**) washings, and carnal ordinances (**fleshly laws**) imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Christ came as a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the messenger of reformation did not require the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the most Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

He was offered as the final sacrifice to propitiate our access to God.

The work of the Animal Blood

The blood of the bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies (**sets apart**) to the purifying (**cleansing**) of the flesh.

How much more?

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot (**defect**) to God purge (**cleanse**) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant

A mediator is a person who mediates between parties at variance: synonyms for mediator are broker, buffer, conciliator, go-between, honest broker, interceder, intercessor,

intermediary, intermediate, interposer, middleman, and peacemaker.

After man sinned, he fell short of God's glory and became separated from Him.

Romans 2:23 *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God".*

Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord".*

Acts 4:12 *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved".*

From the above illustrative scriptures, we find out that the reason why God had allowed sacrifices in the Old Testament is that they may take the role of mediation between God and man.

In **Hebrews 9:13**, we read and understand that the blood of animals managed to sanctify and cleanse.

The blood of an animal is the life of that animal (**Leviticus 17:11**).

Then the blood of Jesus becomes the perfect sacrifice as He took the role of a perfect mediator of **the New Testament**- the church of Christ was born out of the New Testament/ agreement/ covenant. We cannot afford to mix the blood of the

only mediator Jesus Christ, who came to perfect what the other sacrifices had failed to accomplish.

By means of His death, for the redemption of the transgressions (**sins committed**) that were under the first testament, they which are called, might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

The Bible clearly indicates to us that where there is a Will/ testament, there must also be the death of the testator (**will-maker**)

That the first testament (**will**) was dedicated (**confirmed**) with blood (**sacrifices**).

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop and sprinkled both the book and all the people saying, this is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined to you.

Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry. The Bible bears a record that almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission.

It was necessary that the patterns (**copies**) of things in the heavens should be purified (**cleansed**) with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

If Christ offered a better sacrifice, we can no longer turn to lesser sacrifices which were being offered figuratively and position them as ultimate to the blood of Jesus.

Verses 24-28 of Hebrews 9 records that Christ's sacrifice was not limited to a holy place made by hands which only acted as figures of the true; but that He entered into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

He appeared only once before the heavenly Holy of Holies to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

In the Mosaic arrangement, the high priest did the service of atonement every year, and if Jesus was to follow suit, the Bible records that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others.

ONE FINAL SACRIFICE

Hebrews chapter 10

The book of Hebrews chapter 10 gives an exposé, comparing the Mosaic sacrifices and the blood of Jesus.

The law only bore a shadow of good things that were to come. The usages of diver sacrifices performed in the Old Testament symbolized the true outline and likeness of what the blood of Jesus would accomplish.

Every candidate of whom a certain sacrifice was made on his behalf, never perfected him and that explains why it became imperative that a yearly offering was made to cleanse his mind of perpetual sin in his life.

Even as sacrifices were offered yearly, therein stood a remembrance of chronic sin that disabled man.

Verse 4 authoritatively states that the blood of bulls and of goats was not able to take away the sins of the people.

Thus, it became a ritual that at some point within the year, a certain type of sacrifice was to be made in order to put a sense of forgiveness in the mind of man.

When the Lord Jesus came to the scene, He did not mince with words but He made a bold declaration as quoted from;

Psalms 40:6-8 *“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; My ears have you opened; burned offering and sin offering have you not required”.*

But a body have you prepared Me: In burnt offering and sacrifices for sin, you have had no pleasure.

Then said I, lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do your will O God.

Above, when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin You would not, neither had pleasure therein, which are offered by the law;

Then said He, Lo, I come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first, so that He may establish the second.

Before Jesus came, offerings and sacrifices were augmenting the altar of God through the emission of a sweet savor, but we see that God had no pleasure in them.

Just like in **Malachi 1:10**, God quips thus; “Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nothing? Neither do you kindle fire on My altar for nothing. I have no pleasure in you.

We are only sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. The work of the priest was to stand daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

For Christ, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;

He received a coronation from God after having accomplished a perfect divine mission that no one had ever prevailed to undertake. God promises Him a better position until His enemies are vanquished and made His footstool.

Psalms 110:1 “The LORD said to my Lord, sit you at my right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool”. *Matt 22:44, Mark 12:35, Hebrews 1:3, Luke 20:43, Acts 2:34, Hebrews 10:13, 1 Corinthians 15:25, Ephesians 1:20 and Hebrews 1:13.*

Revelation 5:1- And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written inside and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong Angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

And one of the elders says to me, weep not: behold the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the **Root** of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to lose the seven seals thereof.

And I beheld, and, lo, amid the throne and of the four beasts, and amid the elders, stood a **Lamb** as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

A crisis had appeared in heaven during the apocalyptic visions that Apostle John received, a book written within and without and sealed with seven seals that needed to be, broken, opened, looked upon, and read, but there was nobody worthy, neither in heaven, above heaven, on earth and beneath the earth found.

But Glory to God because, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Messenger of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ prevailed and solved this puzzle and fulfilled the blueprint of God.

Ezekiel 2:9 “And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent to me: and, lo, a roll of a book was therein: And He spread it

before Me; and it was written inside and outside (i.e., on both sides): and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe”.

Prophet Ezekiel had been privileged to grasp a glimpse of what was written within and without this book. He explains that therein were written lamentations, mourning and woes, and true to what he saw because all the seven seals as they were broken one after another, we see magnitude lamentations, mourning and woes.

Going back to the book of Hebrews chapter 10 verse 14, we learn that a one-time offering that Christ gave has perfected (completed) for ever them that are sanctified (made holy).

Through this offering/ sacrifice of Christ, we enter into a New Covenant that God had promised through Prophet Jeremiah, **(Jeremiah 31:33)** where the laws of God are put in our hearts and written in our minds that we may know God from the least to the greatest. And our sins and iniquities are remembered no more.

The bible in Hebrews 10 verse 18 clearly states that where remission (forgiveness) of these sins and iniquities is, there are no more offerings (*sacrifices*) for sin.

The blood of Jesus gives us boldness (*confidence*) to enter into the holiest, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.

Because we have a high (great) priest over the house of God, we ought to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

At the altar of sacrifice, God requires us to come near with faith and clean hearts sprinkled with the precious blood of Jesus and our bodies washed with pure water, the word of God.

The ingredient that we are urged to hold onto fast is the profession of our unwavering faith, for He that promised is faithful. He also requires that we consider one another in love and good works.

These are the very words which the Lord Jesus urged the rich man to go and sell his riches and share with the needy people. The writer of Hebrews also exalts this tenet of *foregoing* i.e., *sacrificing* for others.

We are also urged to accustom ourselves to assembling (*fellowshipping*) together, exhorting (*encouraging*) one another as we see the day of His coming approaching.

There should be no more willful sinning in the guise that our 'sacrifices' will earn us acceptance before God.

After receiving the knowledge of the truth, we remain with no more sacrifice for sins. If we neglect the perfect sacrifice offered by our Lord Jesus and think that there are other sacrifices we can offer at the altar of God, the bible says that

we tread underfoot the Son of God, and we count the blood of the covenant, wherewith we were sanctified, an unholy thing, we do despise to the spirit of Grace; in other words, we insult the spirit of grace that brought salvation to us.

The bible draws a parallel that during the days of Moses, he who despised his laws died without mercy under two or three witnesses.

We are reminded that if we fall in the same noose of negligence of the great and final sacrifice, we have no other option, but to fearfully wait for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of God.

Think of living a Christian life in these present times but when the time of accounting before God comes, you partake in the same judgment and severe indignation meted out to unbelievers, just because you lightly regarded the only blood of the covenant as the perfect sacrifice and instead replaced it with mammon at the altar!

To such, the measure of judgment will be sorer, and they will be worthy to receive such an indictable punishment.

God is the author of vengeance and He recompenses and judges His people commensurate to their deeds. He is no respecter of persons. And the Bible without mincing any word presents a very terrible (*Fearful*) situation when one falls into the hands of the living God. None can be able to save him from

these hands, except the blood of Jesus, which unfortunately the church has slowly but surely presented as ineffective.

Hebrews 3:1-12

As a conclusion on an exposé on one final sacrifice, I would like us to take a survey on the above twelve scriptures in Hebrews chapter 3.

In verse one, the Bible calls us to attention to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (*confession*), Christ Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews calls us to *consider*- (Think carefully about (something) typically before making a decision) and as you think carefully, “each application is considered on its merits”.

It also means look attentively at. What are we urged to think carefully about and to look attentively at?

The Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as an Apostle and High Priest- An Apostle simply means a messenger sent with a packaged message and his work is to faithfully deliver it in the same format without unpacking it in any way.

The work of a high priest is to offer sacrifices in regard with the pattern (copy) given, he doesn't add, neither can he subtract or even edit.

Given that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Apostle and the high priest of our confession, how did He perform His Apostolic and High priest mandates especially teaching and practicing on offerings and sacrifices?

In the very context that these were exercised into by this Apostle and High Priest, is the same way in which His Church should contextualize her message. Any concurrence seen in this scenario is almost zero.

Instead, we see shepherds busy supplementing with their own versions.

This Apostle never taught anybody that if you have an issue to present to God at the altar through a priest, you must first come with a 'sacrifice'. Instead, after praying and ministering to people, He advised them to go and offer their thanksgiving sacrifices/offerings to their priests as Moses commanded in the law.

Example: Matthew 8:4

For a better understanding, we can read from verse 1 where after Jesus came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And in the process, a leper came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord if you will, you can make me clean.

And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Before I quote verse 4, this leper came to Jesus desiring Him to make him whole, we do not hear this Apostle of our confession telling him to come with a “sacrifice” for his leprosy to be cleansed. Instead, He raises His hand and touches him saying I will, be, you clean, and immediately leprosy was cleansed.

Then in verse 4, He charges Him thus;

“And Jesus says to him, see you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.

The gift/ ‘sacrifice’ as commonly used by preachers was not to be used as an insurance cover for healing, instead it was a thanksgiving and a testimony that he had been healed.

Luke 19:1-10.

In the above scriptures, we read an encounter where Jesus was passing through Jericho, that there was a man named Zacchaeus; who was chief among the publicans, and the bible records that he was rich.

He sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not because of the press because he was little of stature.

Because of this, he ran ahead and climbed up the sycamore tree to see Him; for He was to pass that way.

When Jesus arrived at this point, He looked up and saw him and asked him to hastily come down, for this day Jesus had to abide at his house.

In verse 8 Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

We don't hear nor see this Apostle of our confession demanding that the riches be given to Him as a "sacrifice", an obvious slogan we freely expect to hear from our ravenous shepherds who have invaded the pasture of God and are without abandon plundering the sheep of God.

The other quality that was possessed by this Apostle and High Priest was that He was faithful to Him that appointed Him just like Moses was faithful in all his house. He never had any intention of enriching Himself but remained faithful to the terms He was sent with.

Isaiah 52:13-14

Behold My servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

As many were astonished at you: His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

This Apostle and High Priest was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honour than the house.

Deuteronomy 34:10-12

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like to Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.

In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all His servants, and to all His land.

And to all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.

The above scriptures give an account of the greatness of prophet Moses in the land of Israel and Pharaoh, but despite all these accolades, the Bible in **Hebrews 3:3** says that the Apostle and High Priest Jesus was counted worthy of more glory (praise) than Moses because He is the owner of the house. Because every house is built by some man; but He that built all things is God.

The faithfulness of Moses in all His house was that of a servant for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

But Christ exemplified His greatness as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

His greatness surpassed that of Moses and yet we see Him demonstrating it through unmatched humility that nobody has ever had (**Philippians 2:5-11**).

The quality of an Apostle in Christ was manifested when He made Himself of no reputation, but instead took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. This kind of humility led Him to die for the cause, even through the death of the cross, a true definition of an Apostle- he pays the ultimate price.

When you compare with the present day “apostles”, they have raised their own demeanor and persona and they are a law to themselves.

They present themselves as demigods to their congregations. What they say to the sheep must be regarded as divine law and whoever disobeys them is considered anathema as far as God’s Kingdom is concerned.

Hebrews 1:1-4, states; God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the Prophets,

Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, Whom He Has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds (*universe, periods of time*).

Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

That is how Jesus was greater in glory than Moses. Earthly riches places one to be great based on the earthly scale but has got nothing to do with heavenly greatness.

Riches that gender to heavenly greatness is when one is rich on this earth but answers to and fulfils heavenly requirements.

Abraham was rich but he believed God and led a righteous life; Isaac and Jacob were also rich but they lived within the confines of the covenant that bound them.

Job was very rich in the East but he was blameless before God, but remember that rich man in **Luke 18:20-24**, he had struggled from his youth to keep and practice Torah, but had failed to domesticate the greatest commandment of love.

When Jesus advised him to sell his belongings and share with the poor, and store his treasure in heaven, he frowned as he

pondered how he could lose his hard-earned riches by sharing with not so hard-working people.

Because he never treasured heavenly standards, his riches yielded to vanity and vexation of the spirit.

From **verses 7-12 of Hebrews chapter 3**, we are exhorted not to harden our hearts when we hear His voice as our forefathers did in the wilderness.

Hardening our hearts tends to nullify the promises of God concerning our lives and therefore delays us from quickly entering into our promises.

We should therefore take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Comparison Between the Altar and the Sacrifice

The altar is a very central place of worship. Sacrifices are offered on the altar, and they are either received or rejected.

The condition of the altar is very key to Sacrifices because the altar is the one that ought to sanctify the sacrifices and not the other way round.

During the times of King Ahab, the children of Israel had neglected the altar of God, left it to break down and raised altars of Baal and Asherah poles. During the times of Judges, the altars of God were broken down and forsaken and so the

children of Israel had to renew their covenant with God for them to be prosperous.

One way of doing this was to restore the altar of Jehovah so that their sacrifices could be accepted.

Two classic examples can be taken from the restoration of God's altar on mount Carmel **1 Kings 19:30-39**- The fire of God fell on the altar and ignited revival in Israel.

1 Kings 13. In this story, Jeroboam was standing by the altar at Bethel to burn incense- work that was only preserved for the priest. King Jeroboam never regarded the ordinance of God and therefore he misused the altar of God at his whims. We see God sending His Prophet from Judah who came and cried against the altar and gave a sign which came to pass.

I wouldn't want to expound very much concerning the altar because this would take a voluminous piece for all literature concerning the altar to be put together. God willing, I will extensively write about it in another volume.

But I would like to point out some misnomers in our contemporary setting as it was also during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus. Allow me quote the scriptures verbatim and then I will explain.

Matthew 23:16-22

Vs 16 Woe to you, you blind guides, which say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing, but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple he is a debtor!

Vs 17 You fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

Vs 18 And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing, but whosoever swears by the gift, that is upon it, he is guilty.

Vs 19 You fools and blind: for whether is greater; the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

Vs 20 Whoso therefore shall **swear** (pledge, solemnly promise) by the altar, swears by it, and all things thereon.

Vs 21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, swears by it, and by Him that dwells therein.

Vs 22 And he that shall swear by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by Him that sits thereon.

I thank God that He gave all solutions to every situation that may puzzle us.

During the pronouncement of woes to the two stringent religious groups, i.e. the Scribes and the Pharisees- these were religious zealots that literally exercised to the letter all that the law required, but they only did it ritualistically.

Remember these pieties were very religious and were willing to kill in order to defend the dogmas in which they believed.

Jesus had elevated their level of righteousness but had indicated that except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of these groups we will in no wise enter into the kingdom of God (**Matthew 5:20**).

You can take your free time and read about the righteousness of these two groups and you will realize that their bar of practice of righteousness was extremely raised high possibly surpassing the level of that of the present-day Christians. The only mistake they committed is that they did not understand that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah.

In Matthew 23:16-22, as a matter of summary, they considered the gold that adorned the temple to be of more value than the temple itself. That is why we read in **Matthew 24:1**; *“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple”*, - i.e. the material used in building of the temple.

To them, these materials were magnificent and of high value.

When you read along you will realize that the Lord announces an imminent destruction of the temple. Reason? They had missed the hour of their visitation (**Matthew 23:32-39**).

The die of the temple in Jerusalem had already been cast regardless of its beauty. They did not know that the temple is the one that sanctifies the vessels therein.

They also advanced another theory that between the altar and the sacrifice, the altar is less important compared with the sacrifice. In other words, they valued the “sacrifice” more than the altar.

This is the same misnomer that we hear shepherds without giving due considerations loosely declaring that it is the “sacrifice” that you bring at the altar that matters and not the altar.

But Jesus taught that the altar is what sanctifies all things thereon.

These scriptures demonstrate how shepherds are disconnected from their Chief Shepherd and they zealously teach their own imaginations.

Indeed, if the above many woes were pronounced to the scribes and the Pharisees who never received Jesus as their Messiah, how much more to those who purport to have received Him, but have deliberately chosen to tread Him down under their feet and count His blood of the covenant He shed to cleanse them as nothing.

This calls for a serious repentance among the shepherds to sincerely and truly repent, return to consider the Apostle and

High Priest of our confession, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may evade more sorer punishment.

Romans 11:21

Apostle Paul sounds a stern warning to us who were naturally gentiles thus from **verse 19**; “You will say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be **grafted in** (made a part)

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

For if God spared not the Natural branches (i.e. the Jews), **take heed** (care) lest He also spare you not”.

Shepherds, take care of this warning lest after you have devotedly done what you think is service to God, at the end He orders you to depart from His presence because He knew you not (**Matthew 7:23**)

Micah 6:6-8

During the time of Prophet Micah's prophesying, he saw the nature of God and how His standards are elevated. He wondered how he would approach before God and what kind of sacrifice he could offer God so that God could be pleased. He did not understand which posture he could use, whether to prostrate himself before God.

Whether he could carry burnt offerings taken from calves of a year old, whether the LORD would be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil. Could he even offer his firstborn for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul?

As he pondered over the best and acceptable way and sacrifice, he could offer before the LORD, he remembered that the LORD has already shown man what is good, and what the LORD requires-to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God.

Psalms 51:1

King David after he had answered his lust after he had seen the naked anatomy of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. He had plotted to kill Uriah so that he could get his wife as his, he put him on the battlefield where the war raged hotly, and sure enough, Uriah died and as Joab had sent a messenger to take news to King David, the King with a lot of subtility answered him to go and comfort Joab that the sword devours one as well as another.

Because of this willful act of sin that amounted to murder, God had punished David accordingly and therefore in **Psalms 51**, he brings a public repentance before God through fasting and chastening himself. God had ensured that the son who had been sired by David through sexual sin died.

David clearly brings out what the true sacrifices from man are; **verse 16**; he declares; *“For you desire not sacrifice; else would I give it; You delight not in burnt offering;*

Vs 17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Tithe- This is the tenth part of anything (any increase). One-tenth of annual produce or earnings was formerly taken as a tax for the support of the church and clergy. Pay or give as a tithe.

Jacob promised to give to God tithe- Gen 28:20

When Jacob who was to inherit the promises made to his fathers Isaac and Abraham, was running away from his brother Esau, fearing that Esau would slay him after he took away his blessings using trickery;

He reached Bethel which was initially called Luz, and when he lodged there at night, a great ladder was lowered from Heaven to right where he was, he saw angels ascending and descending and when he woke up, he realized that place was the house of God.

He made a vow to God and promised that if God would see him through the journey that he could go safely, prosper, and return safely, he would give Him tithes of his increase.

Abraham paid Tithes- Genesis 14:20

Abraham had deployed his servants who were born and trained in his house, 318 in number, to go and save Lot from the hands of the King of Elam, and king of Nations and king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings with five.

They went and prospered. They recovered Lot and all the goods which had been plundered.

Verse 18 says, “And Melchizedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the **Most High God** (El Elyon).

Vs 19 “And He blessed him, and said, Blessed, be Abram of the **Most High God**, possessor of heaven and earth.

Vs 20 “And blessed be the **Most High God** which has delivered your enemies into your hand”.

And he gave him Tithes of all.

It is important to note that before Abraham gave his tithes to Melchizedek, Melchizedek had blessed Abraham with bread and wine- symbolism of the word of God and the Holy Spirit. He also blessed him with spiritual blessings, and then Abram

tithed to him. Tithe is not to be given anywhere, but to the priest who normally has spiritual oversight over you. In other words, tithes should be given to your church to which you are a member because the shepherd(s) of that church is the one who holds spiritual oversight over you.

Hebrews 7:6-7 “But he whose **descent** (lineage, genealogy) is not **counted** (traced) from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises;

Vs 7 And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better (greater).

Probable beginning first fruits- Deuteronomy 26:2,10

Vs 2 “That you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which you shall bring of your land that the LORD your God gives you, and shall put it in a basket, and shall go to the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place His name there”.

Vs 10 “And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which you, O LORD, have given me. And you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God”.

Provided Sacrificial Meal- Deuteronomy 14:22-27;

“You shall truly tithe all the increase of your seed that the field brings forth year by year.

And you shall eat before the LORD your God in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of your corn, of your wine, and your oil, and the firstlings of your herds and your flocks; that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

And if the way be too long for you, so that you are not able to carry it; or if the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God shall choose to set His name there when the LORD your God has blessed you;

Then shall you turn it into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and shall go to the place which the LORD your God shall choose.

And you shall bestow (spend) that money for whatsoever your soul lusts after, for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or for whatsoever your soul desires; and you shall eat there before the LORD your God and you shall rejoice, you, and your household.

And the Levite that is inside your gates; you shall not forsake him; for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

Verses 28-29 “At the end of three years you shall bring forth all the tithes of your increase the same year, and shall lay it up inside your gates.

And the Levite (because he has no part nor inheritance with you), and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are inside your gates shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do”.

In verses 28 and 29 above, we find out that tithes were also used for charity, also as written in Deuteronomy 26:12-15

“When you have made an end of tithing all the tithes of your increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat inside your gates, and be filled.

Then you shall say before the LORD your God I have brought away the hallowed things out of my house, and also have given them to the Levite, and the stranger; to the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandments which you have commanded me: I have not transgressed your commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

I have not eaten thereof in my mourning neither have I taken away aught (**any**) thereof for any unclean use, nor given aught thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God and have done according to all that you have commanded me,

Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel, and the land which you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land that flows with milk and honey”.

Considered a just return for God`s blessings- Genesis
28:22

And this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God`s house; and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth to You.

Tithe belongs to God- Leviticus 27:30-33

Vs 30 “And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD`S: it is holy (***set apart***) to the LORD

Vs 31 And if a man will at all redeem (***buy back***) any of his tithes (***tenth portions***), he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.

Vs 32 And concerning the tithes of the herd or of the flock, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to the LORD.

He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he changes it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.

Tithes belong to the Levites for their services- Numbers
18:21, 24

Vs 21 “And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance (*i.e., their share*), for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation”.

Vs 24 “But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as the heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit; therefore, I have said to them, among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

Tithes are to be brought to the temple- Deuteronomy
12:6-20

God limited the places where offerings and tithes were to be given. Specifically, He advised the children of Israel to take their offerings and tithes into the temple where His name is registered.

Vs 13 “Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burned offering in every place that you see.

Vs 14 But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burned offerings, and there, you shall do all that I command you.

The tithes should not be eaten inside one's compound- tithe of corn, tithe of wine, tithe of oil, firstlings of your herds, flocks, nor any of your vows which you vow, nor your free will offerings, or heave offerings of your hand.

They must be eaten before the LORD your God, in the place which the LORD your God shall choose, you and your son, and your daughter, and your man servant, and your maid servant, and the Levite that is inside your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you put your hands to.

Stored in the temple- Nehemia 12-44

“And at that time were some appointed over the chambers (*storerooms*) for the treasures, for the offerings, for the first fruits, and for the tithes, to gather unto them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited (*who served*)”.

11 Chronicles 31:5-10

During the reign of King Hezekiah, people had willingness to give their offerings and tithes liberally. They did this continually for four months, from the 3rd month to the 7th month. As a result, verse 10 says; quote: “And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have left plenty; for the LORD has blessed His people; and that which is left is this great store”.

When the people of God can learn to be faithful and commit themselves to faithfully offer and tithe, God in turn releases His abundant blessings and His store house will always be full, and the poor in the society will always be ministered to.

In Malachi 3:8- the Israelites had mastered evading their responsibilities by not giving their tithes and offerings and we see God rebuking them severely; “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings”.

Because of this persistent act of robbery, God announces that His people are under a curse because of robbing Him. And He concludes that the robbery is done by the whole Nation.

But He urges the whole Nation to obey and bring in all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in His house, and that He be proved and He would open the windows of

Heaven and pour out a blessing that there shall be no room enough to receive it.

God, being a covenant keeping God, He promises an avalanche of blessings, He promises to rebuke the devourer (**Satan?**) for the sake of His people, so that their fruits of their ground will not be destroyed, neither shall their vine cast her fruit before the time in the field.

And because of these many blessings, all the Nations shall call His people blessed, because his faithful people shall be a delightful land.

Customs relating to tithing- Nehemiah 10:37-38

“And that we should bring the first-fruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, to the priests, the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground to the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.

And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes; and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers into the treasure house”.

It happened necessarily, so in the above scripture, where God required that the priest, the son of Aaron was to be present when the Levites were receiving tithes.

This was because of accountability. We therefore see that God requires faithfulness from the giver and the recipient of tithes so that no party should be seen by God as robbing Him. We have seen that robbing God in this manner brings a curse.

During the days of Nehemiah as he was rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem and reversing her desolation, he realized that the people were reneging on tithing.

Nehemiah 13:10

“And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers that did the work, were fled everyone to his field”.

When Christians don't tithe, the priests who depend on these tithes will divert their attention from committedly serving God in their capacities, and peradventure this may explain why the “gospel of sacrifice” is on a loose spree globally, or is it an insatiable appetite for riches?

Should Tithing be practiced in the New Testament as in the Old Testament?

I normally read divers comments on social media that tithing should not be emphasized as it was in the Old Testament. Those who subscribe to such aversions only perpetuate the level of robbing God.

The Bible does not either in the Old Testament or in the new abolish tithing.

In the New Testament, the word commonly used in reference to Christians honoring their God with their possession is giving.

In the Old Testament giving referred to offerings (various) and tithing.

The Lord Jesus Christ while chiding the scribes and the Pharisees in **Matthew 23:23** says: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites** (phonies, pretenders)! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone”

For the purpose of understanding the context in which the above scripture is put, let me also quote **verse 24**, “you blind guides, which **strain** at (field out) a gnat, and swallow a camel”.

In the above scriptures and when especially you read all verses in Matthew chapter 23, you see Jesus reproving several practices carried out by the scribes and the Pharisees.

Note that the Pharisees comprised of a party that chose to live a sticular life based on the Mosaic laws and rules. They strictly observed practices and rituals taught by Moses, the man of God.

Pharisees in Hebrew means ***separated ones***. They separated themselves from all manner of practices which they deemed could make them defiled. To cushion themselves from this defilement, they developed an extensive oral tradition by which the Mosaic laws were applied to every detail of life.

Under lay leadership, the Synagogue became a center of instruction in the law with the Pharisees as the teachers of the people.

They claimed the sole ownership of the law and to them, whoever did not subscribe to their party could not enter Heaven.

Sample **Matthew 23:13-15** Quote, *“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut (close) up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, neither allow you them that are entering to go in.*

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you **devour** (gobble up) widows houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore, you shall receive the greater **damnation** (condemnation).*

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you compass sea and land to make one **proselyte**, (follower, convert), and when he is made you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”.*

This party was known for stringent religious dogma, they differed with anyone who came and taught contrary to what they held on. So, during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, every time He brushed shoulders with them.

But it is important to understand that everything they were teaching was written in the law of Moses. What they zealously handed on was ascribed by Jesus as pharisaic righteousness and in **Matthew 5:20**, *He said; “For I say to you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”.*

So, they had a very high code of righteousness that revolved around faithfully fulfilling the requirements of the Mosaic laws, anyone who could break any Iota was worthy of dying the kind of death ascribed to the sin committed.

Now going back to **Matthew 23:23**, *“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone”.*

NIV *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices- mint, dill, and cumin, but you have neglected the more important matters of the law- justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former”*

They were very thorough in tithing, even in their smallest proceeds from small plants like spices. The only problem they had was that they neglected weightier matters of the law which are justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Jesus tells them that they ought to practice weightier matters without forgetting the others.

So, Jesus was conveying to the church that tithing was still a requirement among the Christian believers.

Some argue that Jesus spoke to the people who were governed by the law; all that was written in the law, prophets, historic Books, and Psalms constituted the Old Testament. Jesus said He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill:

Matthew 5:17 *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill”.*

The Lord Jesus came to act as a bridge between the Old and the New Testaments. He is the reason why the law and the prophets were written and He is the end of the law and the prophets, His blood was offered as the ultimate sacrifice to atone the sins of mankind (**Romans 10:4, Romans 10:1-13**).

Back to **Matthew 23:24** *“You blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel”.*

The scribes and the pharisees were fervently struggling to do impossible matters while filtering out small and basic matters that they ought to fulfill easily.

This can be seen reflecting in the Nation of Israel even after Jesus came to establish righteousness.

Apostle Paul registers with displeasure at the naivety that his brethren, the Israelites exhibited; **Romans 10:1-3** “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

For I bear them record that they have **a zeal** (fervour, desire, enthusiasm) of God, but not according to knowledge.

For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to **establish** (secure, insure) their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God”.

Jesus came to accomplish what was written in law and prophets, but Israel as a Nation did not conform to this thought. Instead, they adopted Pharisaism because we see them on the quest of establishing their own righteousness alongside the righteousness of God. You can now understand why Jesus had to harshly refer to them as blind, whitewashed sepulchers, fools, hypocrites, serpents, generation of vipers etc. in Matthew 23.

GIVINGS/ OFFERINGS

In the New Testament, the words giving and offerings are used interchangeably. The giving here refers to tithes and various offerings which were outlined in the Mosaic law. And because

I have mentioned and explained them elsewhere, here, I will limit my discussion concerning these offerings but I will name them and give relevant scriptures: A good and willing example is demonstrated in **11 Chronicles 31:5**.

Tithe as mentioned in **Malachi 3:10**.

Collections/ offerings done weekly- 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Upon the first day of the week (*i.e. Sunday*) let every one of you, lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gathering (*collections*) when I come.

11 Corinthians 8:11-12 Now therefore perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness (*eagerness*) to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have.

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has and not according to that he has not.

Matthew 6: 1-4- Alms are gifts we give to those who are needy. The Bible says that we have to do it in secret and not to sound a trumpet that we may be seen by men. Our charitable work should be done without expecting any applause. The Father who sees in secret blesses us publicly.

11 Corinthians 8:11-14

Vs 11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness (eagerness) to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have.

Vs 12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.

Vs 13 For I mean not those other men be eased, and you be burdened:

Vs 14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.

In giving, Apostle Paul exhorts the church that there must be a willing mind and the measure to be given should be according to what someone has.

We should learn to equally give so as not to burden others.

11 Corinthians 9: 6-7

Giving must be done cheerfully because God loves a cheerfully giver.

Vs 6 But this I say, he which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully (*generously*) shall reap also bountifully.

Vs 7 Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity (*under compulsion*): for God loves a cheerful giver.

Giving should never be relegated to compulsion, but the giver should rather give it freely and bountifully because he/ she knows that He is God who gives us all blessings including materials (**Luke 21:2-4**- example of the widow`s mite)

Numbers 7:1-4

Vs 1 And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them;

Vs 2 That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, who were over them that were numbered, offered:

Vs 3 And they brought their offerings before the LORD, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle.

For giving to flow freely out of willing hearts, the tabernacle of God must be fully set up, anointed and sanctified and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and the vessels thereof, must be anointed and sanctified.

Such a notable and divine duty, is reserved for the priests who are in charge of the sacred things of God.

Moses understood this and when he did the necessary, we see the princes of Israel, who were heads of the house of the fathers, giving a mammoth offering without any compulsion.

Offerings

These are things presented to God in worship. This means true worship is more demonstrational than presentational emptiness.

This format is antiquated as it was given in ancient times as early as in **Genesis 4:3-4**

Vs 3 And in the presence of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering to the LORD.

Vs 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings (*firstborn*) of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect to Abel and to his offsprings (*Hebrews 11:4*)

We see that as early as during the days of the first parents, their sons brought offerings before God. And in **Hebrews 11:4**. The Bible gives a more explicit definition of the offering that was made by Abel;

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of His gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks”.

Faith is a very important component to be considered as we do our day today`s service to God, for without faith it is impossible to please God.

The offering of Cain was without faith and was offered as a formality, contrary to the offering of Abel which received appraisal because it was offered by faith.

Offerings are to be made to God alone (Exodus 22:20).

When we give our offerings, we must ensure that they are accompanied with gratitude, in **Psalms 50:8,14**; this is what the Bible records;

Vs 8 I will not reprove for your sacrifices or your burned offerings, to have been continually before me.

Vs 14 Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High:

It is important to note however, that our offerings cannot be used as substitutes of righteousness. Righteousness is a measure that God has set that whoever will relate with Him, must attain to this measure (Hosea 6:6-8).

Qualities of a Good Offering

- Must be perfect- **Leviticus 22:19, 21**
- Must be brought to a place appointed by God- **Deuteronomy 12:6, Matt 5:22**
The gift/ offering must be brought to a designated altar, not just everywhere; This is what God judged the children of Israel. That it must be a place where His Name is.
- Must be brought in a clean vessel- **Isaiah 66; 20**
- The best of their kind- **Malachi 1:14**
- Offered in righteousness- **Malachi 3:3**
- Presented by the priest- **Hebrews 5:1**

Different Kinds of Offerings

- a) Burnt Offerings- **Leviticus 1:3-17**
- b) Drink Offering- **Genesis 35:14**
- c) First fruits- **Exodus 23:16**
- d) Freewill- **Leviticus 23:38**
- e) Gifts- **Exodus 35:22**
- f) Heave- **Exodus 29:27-28**
- g) Incense- **Exodus 30:8-10**
- h) Jealousy Offerings- **Numbers 5:15**
- i) Meat (Grain) Offerings- **Leviticus 2:1-16**
- j) Peace Offerings- **Leviticus 3:1-17**
- k) Personal for redemption- **Exodus 30:13,15**
- l) Sin Offering- **Leviticus 4:3-35**
- m) Thanks Offering- **Leviticus 7:12**

n) Tithe- Leviticus 27:30

o) Trespass Offering- Leviticus 5:6-9

p) Wave Offering- Exodus 29:26

The above offerings were figuratively used to foreshadow the advent of the following three tier significances;

a) The conversion of the Jews- Isaiah 66:20

b) The conversion of the Gentiles- Romans 15:16

c) Christ's offering of Himself- Ephesians 5:2

Ezekiel 20:41 *"I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein you have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen".*

The shadow of things to come

As I sum up, I would like to bring to our understanding that requirements under the law including offerings were given as antitypes pointing at the type which throughout the New Testament indicates that everything was pointing at the Messiah.

Christ came and laid down the structure of the Church. The gentile Church is not under any obligation to practice all that the Law requires.

Apostle Paul helps us to understand, drawing an example of what the council of the early Church stated that the gentile

Church should observe, abstaining themselves from Idolatry, fornication, from things strangled, and from blood.

Apostle Peter wondered why the Church would tempt God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the gentile disciples, when neither the Jews Christians nor their fathers were able to bear
(Acts 15:1-20)

In Hebrews 10:1 the Bible makes it clear that the law was just a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, it opines that the many sacrifices which they offered year by year continually could not make the worshippers thereunto perfect.

Apostle Paul in **Colossians 2:16-17**, *“Let no man therefore judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days;*

Which is the shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ”

Apostle James, the Lord`s brother had weighed in when Apostle Paul and Barnabas had gone to Jerusalem to receive the council`s verdict concerning the Gentiles who had converted to being followers of Jesus.

Some devout Pharisees had insisted that they ought to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.

Apostle James reiterated that Simon Peter had earlier declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a

people for His Name, (read Peter`s encounter with Cornelius **Acts 10**).

James points out that to this agree with the words of the prophets, as it is written, he quotes what was written in the oracles of Prophet Amos; **Amos 9:11-12**

Acts 15:16-17, “After this, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up;

That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called, says the LORD, who does all these things.”

Romans 11:11-21

Vs 11 “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid (i.e. by no means): but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy (to be jealous, angry, envious).

Vs 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing (loss) of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

Vs 13 For I speak to you Gentiles since I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office:

Vs 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation (*jealousy*) them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Vs 15 For if the casting away (rejection) of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving (*acceptance*) of them be, but life from the dead?

Vs 16 For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Vs 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and you being a wild olive tree, were grafted in (*i.e. made a part*) among them, and with them partakes of the root and fatness (*richness*) of the olive tree;

Vs 18 Boast not against the branches. But if you boast, you bear (*you support*) not the root but the root supports you.

Vs 19 You will say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Vs 20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off and you stand by faith. Be not high-minded (*conceited*), but fear (*be afraid, i.e. be respectful*).

Vs 21 For if God spared not the natural branches (*i.e. the Jews*), take heed (*care*) lest He also spare you not

Because the Gentile Church was made part of the partakers of the promise because of faith, and the Jews were rejected because of their unbelief, Apostle Paul warns us that we ought

to rightly stand in our grafted position with fear and respect so as not to be cast away as the Israelites.

That despite them being the natural branches, God did not spare them when they failed to believe in Him.

Even us we are warned to be very careful so as not to fall into their trap. Better for them because they have a second chance, for us if we are cast away, we won't have a chance to be restored,

May we as shepherds stand to our occasion and correct the many misnomers God has helped me to point out and be counted along with David His Shepherd.

The sheep belong to God and the pasture in which the sheep are to graze in should be preserved to the standards that God, who is the owner requires.

PARTING PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, through this book; *The Shepherds and The Pasture of God*, I have understood that you have a controversy with me.

I have not shepherded your flock right and all misnomers indicated herein apply to me. You have counseled me on how I ought to shepherd Your flock and I accept and take Your counsel.

I thank You for such great love that You have demonstrated to me. I enjoin myself with King David as I pray that may You make me lie down in green pastures: Lead me beside the still waters. Restore my soul and lead me in the paths of righteousness for Your name`s sake.

In Jesus` Mighty Name, I pray. **Amen. Shalom and God bless You all.**

MARANATHA.