

"THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF"

Part 2.

"CHRIST AS THE SHEPHERD"

Outline

1. The Earlier Scriptures. Gen. 49.24 etc.
2. The Shepherd among Israel, in the days of
His flesh. Zech. 11; John 10.
3. The Shepherd Who died. Zech. 13.7; Heb. 13.20.
4. "The Shepherd and Bishop of your souls"
1. Peter 2.25.
5. The Shepherd in That Day. Micah 5.4; see Rev.
2.27.

By many wonderful different names God is pleased to reveal something of His character, and in accord with this, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God, though He became Man, is brought in front of us by a multitude of names and descriptive titles. Men are often untrue to their names. A Zedekiah was the reverse of righteous, ruling in iniquity, the last king of Judah at that time. Ahaz let go and held not fast the things of God. King after king fell short of high names; but Christ illustrates all, and every name may mean something to the experience of God's people. It is delightful when we are brought beyond the sphere of ordinary brain knowledge. It is interesting to notice how words, though mere sounds and letters in themselves, have meanings attached to them. In themselves letters have no meaning; - S-H-E-P-H-E-R-D has no more essential meaning than a collection of other sounds without any interpretation at all. You can put together twenty letters and obtain no thought, but 'Shepherd' by derivation, and by usage, has a precious meaning. These letters therefore, awaken a thought in your mind; but if I say L-X-B-D-C there is not such a thought. Yes, 'Shepherd' awakens a thought. In like manner certain words awaken a true affection in the heart. If I say B-R-D-S-Y you have no affection; but to many, even among those who are grown up, the utterance of the word 'Mother' or 'Father' has a meaning which is deeper than a BRAIN-meaning. In other words, we have not only a mental life

but an affection-life, and what we want is that the Names of the Lord Jesus may come into our affection life, and that "Shepherd" may not only be a term our brains understand, so that the thought of a shepherd comes in front of our mind, but that it may also be a word which our heart enjoys. Thus will the care of the shepherd appeal to our soul's experience at the same moment. Christ is described as the SHEPHERD, THROUGHOUT the Scriptures. I am convinced the earlier Scriptures are often overlooked. There are children of God who have not read them through. There are children of God who could quote ten verses from the New Testament for one from the old, yet the earliest church had no New Testament, but only the Old Testament. We need to lay a stress on the earlier Hebrew Scriptures. The people of Israel will tell us that we have our translations to emphasize the Lord Jesus Christ. I would yield to none on laying a stress on the value of the translation which God has given to us, but when it comes to a question of unveiling the Lord Jesus Christ in His merits, I am compelled to say that our version falls very, very far short of the Messianic evidences with which the Hebrew Scriptures are filled. A little prayerful knowledge of Hebrew will convince a believer that the Earlier Scriptures have the Lord Jesus in type and prophecy in numbers of passages which our translators have left out.

The term 'Shepherd' is before us primarily in Gen. 49 with respect to Christ, but there are types yet earlier. The first man called righteous was the shepherd, Abel; and we have in the family of Abraham the thought of Jacob as the shepherd, even as God afterwards was pleased to train Moses, and David too, among the sheep. This was not an accident, but with a view to CHRIST. Jacob's blessing of Joseph refers to the fruitful bough with branches over the wall, and then adds, "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong, by the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, by reason of the Name of the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel"; not, "From thence is the Shepherd", - the Shepherd did not spring from Joseph, - but "By reason of the Name of the Shepherd", - the SAME letters in the Hebrew. "By reason of the Name of the Shepherd". This, too, fits the balanced lines of the poetry. "By reason of the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by reason of the Name of the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel". Here then we are reminded that the Shepherd was the Stone, and that the blessing of Joseph was linked with the Shepherd-Stone. It is rather remarkable that we have brought before us the Vine AND the

Shepherd. You will recollect how that in connection with Israel's feasts we have the stress on the vine with regard to the Passover, and the Shepherd comes before us, as we shall shortly see, with respect to the day of atonement, AND as to the Passover also. We thus have the vine and the shepherd together, and in Psalm 80 also the vine and the shepherd. This is rather remarkable, for in the parables of John's Gospel, which are distinguished from the earlier Gospels, we behold the vine and the shepherd; and Christ claims to be the True Vine and the Good Shepherd. Nor is it accidental that we have the Shepherd described as the Stone, - the Shepherd is the Stone of Israel. A wonderful Name! WE should not have linked the two thoughts, yet the Holy Spirit links them.

But before we pass to this, let us notice in Psalm 23, the Lord is again brought before us as the Shepherd, though here the allusion may include the Lord Jesus as the Shepherded One in the days of His flesh, as we see Him in Psalm 22. Yet Psalm 23 does not only refer to Him as the Shepherded One, but rather as the Shepherd on resurrection ground. He Who became the Lamb is also the Shepherd, and the believer can say "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want". This word describes somewhat more fully WHY the Name "Shepherd" is given to the Lord Jesus. It alludes to His possession of His people; His relationship to His people; His love for His people; His care concerning His people, and the dependence of His people upon Himself. The Shepherd is not a mere drover. The true Shepherd is contrasted with the western idea of a drover. We have brought before us a guardian of gracious, tender love. In Eccl. 12 the words that are powerful are from the masters of assemblies from one Shepherd. There are the under shepherds, the masters of assemblies, but the one Shepherd appoints these words. He cares for all His people, and in Jer. 50 we are asked Who He is. Anti-Christ comes up as a lion from the swelling of Jordan, but God causes him suddenly to run away, and the reason is explained - "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?" The answer must be Christ. This Shepherd stands. Here is the unveiling of the Shepherd-King. He deals with the lion, at the right time, even as David smote the lion and the bear. Yet more definitely Psalm 80 comes before us, "Give ear O Shepherd of Israel Thou That leadest Joseph like a flock, Thou That dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up

Thy strength, and come and save us". You will recollect how that we are told in Num. 2,17 that the tabernacle set forward in the midst of Israel. Consequently as we find the third camp was the camp of Ephraim, it was appropriate to say "BEFORE Ephraim...stir up Thy strength". Hence the Shepherd of Israel is viewed as leading Joseph. The tabernacle was always central, whether in camp or in march, and "BEFORE Ephraim" is thus fitting. Ephraim and Manasseh were in the third rank; the camp of Joseph, therefore followed the tabernacle. PROPHETICALLY with a view to this Jacob had spoken of the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, with respect to Joseph. The Shepherd leading Joseph; but the allusion here is very remarkable, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest...Thou that DWELLEST between the cherubim, shine forth". The Shepherd LEADS, the Shepherd DWELLS and SITS. What is the meaning of this precious unveiling of the Lord Jesus? "Thou That dwellest between the cherubim". "Every priest standeth daily ministering". This Man when He had offered one sacrifice SAT down. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou. Thou art a Priest for ever. And so in Zech. 6, the One Whose Name is the Branch is a priest upon His throne. He shall sit, the sitting Priest. Here then "Thou that sittest between the cherubim" is a wondrous reference to the Lord Jesus having accomplished His work. But He is called the Shepherd of Israel. Here is one of those veiled allusions which link Scripture with Scripture. If they were on the surface, they would not be half so striking. Let us ponder them. In Genesis 3 God causes the tabernacle at the door of the garden of Eden, cherubim, and a flaming sword which turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life. But the next view is given of Abel as a keeper of sheep. The first one marked out as righteous is the shepherd, and he is killed. True he falls short as a type, but there is a precious hint. The blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel, is before us. As soon as the way of the tree of life is to be 'kept' we have the death of a shepherd. We come along to Exodus, and we find the cherubim no longer outside, but having gone right inside, and instead of a sword between them there is blood. The sword has done its work, and so the Psalm says "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou That dwellest between the cherubim". The Shepherd dwells there, NOT the sword. So far you say a measure of helpful teaching; but can we go further? Undoubtedly. In Zechariah 13 another passage comes in, to make the mosaic more wonderful. "Awake, O SWORD, against My SHEPHERD, and against the Man that is My FRIEND, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd". So the sword of Genesis 3 meets the Shepherd; meeting it fully, He opens

the way into God's presence; and Hebrews 10 now says "A new and living way". He is the end of that way. Having offered one sacrifice He sits down. So we have the Shepherd of Israel; and Heb. 13 adds "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the everlasting covenant". So in Hebrews we have the Shepherd sitting down between the cherubim. Instead of the sword being there, and the cherubim being OUTSIDE, and in front of, the way of life, they have become the INSIDE of the way of life WITHOUT the sword; but WITH the Shepherd instead. Instead of the way of life being the OTHER side of the sword, the way of life is now opened, and the Shepherd, instead of the sword, welcomes at the END of the way of the tree of life, and there is boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. No sword there, but a Shepherd who has been raised from the dead, and He is now the Lamb That is in the midst of the throne. One of the most remarkable sentences in Scripture, to which we have become so used that it does not strike us as strange, is "The Lamb That is in the midst of the throne shall lead them". I heard that sentence from childhood, but I never felt its meaning till it dawned upon me it was an extraordinary thing for a Lamb to lead. I could understand a shepherd leading a lamb, but for a Lamb to lead was remarkable, and the sentence was MEANT to be extraordinary. But it is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. The Shepherd became the Lamb that He might die. As raised from the dead He is the Shepherd-Lamb. As the Lamb He reminds of the fact that He met the sword; as the Shepherd He sits on the throne. Abel's sacrifice and Abel combine together to give the type, just as Noah and the ark, and Isaac and the ram. Abel is the righteous one, Abel's sacrifice the one that dies for the sinner. Noah is the righteous one, the ark is the protection. Isaac is the willing one, the dearly beloved; the ram actually dies; Isaac is typically raised. The twofold types are necessary. The Lamb is the Shepherd. The Lamb in His death, the Shepherd in His resurrection, but still remaining the Lamb in the midst of the throne; so that the Lamb in the midst of the throne is the Shepherd on the throne, instead of the sword. The sword has now been sheathed. This was brought before the shepherd-king in striking type, in 2 Sam. 24 and 1 Chron. 21. Go and offer up a sacrifice in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. He must offer it there, in the THRESHING-floor of the Jebusite, - and the Jebusite means one trodden down. The Lord Jesus, the True Corn of wheat was threshed. Bread corn is bruised, and He became the One

trodden, as Gethsemane suggests. He met the sword, all in grace, and He will return to TREAD the winepress (Gethsemane meaning winepress), and He will tread down, as Isa. 63 shows, when He returns with the sword of Rev. 19 in His mouth. But He Himself met the sword when He came the first time. "And the Lord spoke unto the angel, and he put up the sword in his sheath", BECAUSE of grace and the sacrifice. The shepherd-king had the lesson brought before him. A king needs a throne, and God appointed to Israel a shepherd-king as the man after His own heart. Hence "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou That dwellest between the cherubim". The Shepherd-King is here SITTING as the One Who has met the sword.

But, you say what has this to do with the Stone? "From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel". Our mind travels back, - "Make thee an ark". Why? To put it with the stones of righteous commandment. Those stones were pictures of law, and when an altar was made to picture the Obedient One, it was made of whole STONES on which the words of the law were written very plainly. Christ is the Stone as the Obedient One, and as the One Who will yet judge, - of Dan. 2. At once our mind connects the two passages. But let us remember also Exodus 17 "Take thy rod and smite the rock, and its waters will flow out". Awake, O sword, smite the shepherd. In Isaiah 53 He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, smitten. For the transgression of My people was He smitten. The smitten Lamb, the smitten Shepherd, the smitten Rock, - the threefoldness is remarkable. "By reason of the Name of the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel". He is the smitten Shepherd. He is the smitten Stone, the smitten Rock. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou That LEADEST Joseph like a flock". They drank of the rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ. As the smitten Shepherd He is the Leader; as the smitten Rock He is the One that followed; and all the blessings are wrapped up in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit ever shows this.

Now I venture to suggest that these somewhat veiled allusions connecting together Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, Zechariah and so forth, are beyond human originality. We can only see them but faintly. It is evidence that we have a Divine Book wherein are underlying allusions which are probably more numerous than the stars of heaven of which we only see parts. Christ is thus exalted.

We pass next to "The Shepherd among Israel, in the days of His flesh". Zechariah 11 alludes to Him. He is seen here in His love, yet, in large measure, rejected. The shepherds of verse 3

are very faulty. They claim to be possessors, and pity not the sheep; but there is One Who says, I will feed the flock of slaughter. He cuts off three Shepherds in one month, laying low it would seem, Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians with the power of His words. Their soul abhors Him; but now He goes a step further. He departs from the temple, and leaves them. He breaks His staff Beauty, and at this time thirty pieces of silver are given for His price, and the potter's field is bought to bury strangers. THE Shepherd is rejected. The foolish shepherd, the idol shepherd, Antichrist, is next brought before us. His arm is clean dried up, and his right eye utterly darkened. We see, therefore, the Lord Jesus, the True Shepherd, in the days of His flesh, and the poor of the flock, and these only wait upon Him and acknowledge Him. The majority reject Him. In accord with this we remember how in Matthew 9 when He saw the people as sheep having no shepherd, He was moved with compassion toward them; and in John 10 we have two striking parables. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber; but He That entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep". Christ is not the door of the sheepFOLD. He enters in by the door. Therefore He comes to Israel when in the fold. "To Him the porter openeth". John the baptist welcomes Christ. "And the sheep hear His voice; and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out". John, as the friend of the Bridegroom, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. "And the sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out". He came, therefore, to lead OUT from Judaism, not to reform Judaism, but to lead out. And when He hath cast out all His own, He goeth before them. When I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. He brings them out from Judaism that they may be a new position of the present dispensation. "And the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the Door(not of the sheepfold, but) of the sheep". The sheep have NOW been led OUT, i.e. the poor of the flock. The sheepFOLD is left, and Christ is now the spiritual Door of the spiritual sheep. There is NOT the fold of religion, but the sheep are in a new creation linked with Himself. "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not

hear them. I am the Door, by Me if any man enter in". In the first parable He leadeth them out: in the second parable "He shall enter in". He leadeth out of Judaism to bring them into the new position. "On this Rock I will build My church". "He shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture". In the present dispensation the thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy, but we are not told he DOES steal and kill and destroy. "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep". But He goes away, and the hireling is apparently in charge, in verse 12. "He that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep". The thief cometh to kill, but we are not told he does kill. The wolf comes and scatters. They shall be scattered. Christ prophecies the scattering of His sheep in the present time while the Good Shepherd is away. But in verse 14 the Good Shepherd KNOWS His sheep, even though away. Verse 16 "And other sheep I HAVE(Gentiles), which are not out from this fold(Judaism), them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one FLOCK(quite a different word, not the word 'fold'), and one Shepherd", - the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ. Thus the Shepherd came to the sheepFOLD of Judaism and brought out the sheep, the poor of the FLOCK, that there might be a new position of Jew and Gentile, one in Christ, because He gave His life for the sheep.

Ah, beloved friends, this has already been before us. The Shepherd Who died. He not only died because men rejected Him, but "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd". The sword HAD not been sheathed, but it had been, as it were, asleep. "Awake, O sword". The old dispensation is the dispensation of the sleeping sword. The passing by, or passing over, of transgressions, says Romans 3. The sword was sleeping, but the sword was there, and judgment must take place. The sword awakes. It is the sword of Divine vengeance. It awakes against the Shepherd. When God turned out Adam He did not destroy the tree of life, or its way, but "TO KEEP the way of the tree of life". For years I read that as if it meant, "to keep closed the way of the tree of life", but the Lord deigned to show me I had made a mistake. The sword was to keep the way of the tree of life as a way, to guarantee it should yet be an open road, and, therefore, the sword was to keep it as "a way", only not an open way UNTIL the appointed time. If there had been no sword, there would be no way. It was not to keep it closed, but to KEEP the way, to

GUARANTEE there should be the preserved way of the tree of life by wrath breaking on a Substitute, and, in the fulness of time, this did break. The sleeping sword awoke. It met the Shepherd. He died. The Great Shepherd of the sheep is brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Wrath is met for all who rest in Him, and they can sing for joy because the Shepherd died in their place.

Risen from the dead He is still the Shepherd. "After I am risen, I will go before you" - wonderful words. "The Shepherd and Bishop(or Overseer) of your souls". That was the Divine statement in a passage which alludes to Isaiah 53 where He is seen as the Sheep. The Sheep is the Shepherd. The Sheep in His death, the Shepherd in His resurrection. This is again and again before us in Scripture. Christ is Priest and Sacrifice. As Priest He offers, as Sacrifice He is offered. He is the Altar and the Burnt Offering. He is the Ark and the One Who builds the ark. He is exalted as the One Who DOES and the One Who suffers. Shepherd in His doing, Lamb in His suffering, and the Gospel of John emphasizes both aspects. "Behold the Lamb of God", "I am the Good Shepherd". Isaiah 53 is thus brought before us. He is led as a Lamb to the slaughter, "The Shepherd and Bishop of your souls". As such He is exalted. The Shepherd of your souls, that He may guide you, that He may possess you. A believer is not to be independent. We need shepherding, and we need the staff as well as the protecting rod. We sometimes go astray. "Ye were as sheep going astray". There was a time when I laid the primary stress on GOING ASTRAY, and ignored another part of the teaching. ALL is important. God brought me to see another stress, "Ye were AS SHEEP going astray". I MIGHT have been as a pig going astray, - as 2 Peter says, the sow that was washed, and the dog; but, thanks be unto God, "Ye were AS SHEEP going astray". Did the Shepherd forget? Nay. In the parable He goes after the sheep until He finds it. There are some of us who believe by ^{the} grace of God in sovereignty of living power in the salvation of poor lost sinners, - I trust MANY of us. It is not a bare chance when a soul is saved. "I lay down My Life for the sheep". "Other sheep I have". He says, before they are claimed, "which are not of this fold", before they were claimed He knew them and in wonderful love and in wonderful power He laid down His life for the sheep, not with a bare thought of chance. You were as SHEEP going astray. You were not forgotten then. You were not outside of His knowledge.

You were as SHEEP, even when going astray. He CLAIMED. All that the Father giveth Me SHALL COME to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. It is a joy to thank God for a guaranteed salvation. And so those who are claimed by grace are brought to acknowledge the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, the One Who guides and directs. Independence is always out of place in a believer.

But our mind must go on to that Day. Micah 5:4 says, "He shall STAND and feed His flock", and Matt. 2:6 tells us that out of Bethlehem One would come Who would shepherd His people Israel; but the same word is used in Rev. 2:27; 12:5 and 19:15 for ruling with a rod of iron, - shepherding with a rod of iron. The Shepherd not only has His staff but His rod. He Who is the Shepherd has wrath on the lion and the bear. The lion runs away, we have seen this in Jeremiah. One of the most remarkable sidelights on that passage in Jeremiah is found in Isa. 31. We find the lion coming up from the thicket, and the prophet says, "For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and so the hill thereof". The lion comes up, and he will not run away from the voice of the shepherds, but in Isa. 30:30 the Lord shall cause HIS glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lightning down of HIS arm. The Lord God will come with a strong hand, His arm shall rule for Him. He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, says Isaiah 40. So the Lord comes down, and the Shepherd makes the lion run away where the shepherds could not do so. The Lord comes down to fight for Mount Zion. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also He will deliver it, and pausing over He will preserve it. Not passing over, but pausing over. It is the PASSOVER word. When I see the blood, not I will pass over you, - I will pause over you. It is not that God went BY the door, but that God STOOD over the door, - Pausing over He will preserve it. He spreads His wings of grace over it. Pausing over is, therefore, a passover word, for our joy in the fulness of the types. Here then we have the Shepherd as the Passover Lamb, Who comes, and the Lion runs away; and the passage goes on to say (verse 8) "Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man shall devour him, but he SHALL flee from the sword", evidently

therefore, there is a sword of Another, neither a mean man nor a mighty man; it is the sword of the mouth of One Who met the sword as the Shepherd, but Who now returns as the Shepherd with the sword of His mouth, to smite the earth with the rod of His mouth. This is explained in Revelation as "He shall SHEPHERD them with a rod of IRON". The link of the words is most remarkable, and every passage dovetails into the other, and thus brings before us that the Lord Jesus on returning will have His flock of Israel, and at the same time He will go against those who must be laid low. O, beloved friends, are we those in His flock, or shall we be those laid low. The coming of the Lord has the twofold aspect. Hence the striking words in the shepherd passage of Micah 5, - "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep"; THEN instead of being the downtrodden sheep, the Lord will become the Leader of His lion-like people. He Who was the LAMB is the LION of the tribe of Judah, and there will be the turning of the arrangements round. No longer "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves"; no longer, You are the sheep, and the lion will waste, but in that Day He will take the lion-position, and Revelation emphasizes He Who is the Lamb in the glory because of redemption is the Lion upon earth. At the present time believers are in the HEAVENLIES. They are outside the camp, rejected. The woman clothed with the sun is to be in the wilderness fleeing, persecuted, but THEN the Lamb in the glory will be the Lion on the earth, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. May our hearts ever look upward with faith's anticipation.

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