

The Nature of Shepherding

I. Eldership, A Word Study

A. *Presbuteros* (noun)

1. Definition: Elder, and aged man
2. Most common word in the New Testament
3. Similar to *Zachen* in the Old Testament
4. Root meaning: Age
5. Acquired meaning: Leader
 - a. Never intended to be an exclusive title for leaders of the church
 - 1) Also called bishops and pastors (Phil. 1:1; Eph 4:11)
 - 2) Was a description, not a title
 - b. Could also mean an old man
 - 1) I Timothy 5:1
 - 2) I Peter 5:5
 - 3) Contrasting young and old

B. *Episkopos* (noun)

1. Definition: Superintendent, guardian, bishop, overseer
2. Used 5 times in the New Testament
3. Passages
 - a.. I Peter 2:25 - To Christ, shepherd and “guardian”
 - b. Acts 20:28 - Ephesian elders as overseers
 - c. Philippians 1:1 - Bishops and Deacons
 - d. I Timothy 3:2 - Uses “bishop” when discussing qualifications
 - e. Titus 1:7 - Uses “bishop” when discussing qualifications

C. Verb forms of *Episkopos*

1. *Episkeptomai* - Definition: To look at, see, examine, visit, inspect
 - a. James 1:27 - “visit” orphans and widows
 - b. Matthew 25:36 - I was sick and you “visited” me
 - c. Acts 7:23 - “visit” his relatives
 - d. Acts 15:36 - “visit” the brethren
 - e. Acts 15:14 - how God first “concerned” himself
 - f. Hebrews 2:6 - that thou art “concerned” about him?
2. *Episkopeo* - Definition: To look at, to take care of, to see to something
 - a. Hebrews 12:15 - “see to it” that no one
 - b. I Peter 5:2 - the flock of God among you “exercising oversight”

D. *Poimen* - Pastor/Shepherd

1. Used literally for Shepherds (Luke 2:8f)
2. Examples of metaphorical use in the Old Testament
 - a. Psalms 23:1-4

- b. Isaiah 40:11
 - c. Numbers 27:17
 - d. Ezekiel 34
- 3. Metaphorical use in the New Testament
 - a. Matthew 9:36; 26:31
 - b. John 10
 - c. Matthew 18:12-14
 - d. Used of Church leaders - Ephesians 4:11-12
 - 1) Pastor is from Latin versions, Shepherd by far a better translation
 - 2) Construction of sentence in Greek implies Shepherds & Teachers form a single group
 - a) Apparently teaching was a vital part of Shepherding
 - b) I Timothy 3:2 - Able to teach
 - c) Titus 1:9 - Holding fast to the word ... sound doctrine

E. Verb form of *Poimen* is *Poimaino* - Definition: To shepherd

- 1. I Peter 5:2 - "Feed", "Tend the Flock", or "Shepherd"
- 2. Acts 20:28
- 3. John 21:16
- 4. Matthew 2:6
- 5. Revelation 7:17
- 6. Only the NASV is consistent in showing the noun verb connection

F. *Oikonomos* - "Steward, manager"

- 1. Usually a slave put in charge of a household and/or property of the master
- 2. Titus 1:7 - As God's stewards
- 3. Luke 12:42-43, 48 - Example of a steward
- 4. I Corinthians 4:1-2 - Another example

G. Terms in reference to elders are interchangeable

- 1. Acts 20:17, 28 (elders, overseers, shepherds)
- 2. Titus 1:5-7 (elders, overseers, stewards)
- 3. I Peter 5:1 (elders, shepherds, overseer)
- 4. Therefore, these words are meant to be descriptions, not necessarily "titles"

I. SUMMARY of words used for elders

- 1. Presbuteros
- 2. Episkopos
- 3. Poimen
- 4. Oikonomos

J. Implications from the study on the nature of shepherding in the church:

1. Elders are older men
2. Elders are guardians
3. Elders are overseers
4. Elders visit
5. Elders feed their flock
6. Elders have charge over the house by their master

II. Elders as Shepherds

A. Prominent common metaphor to refer to spiritual leaders in the Bible. Also a metaphor for leaders in general in the Ancient Near East.

B. The metaphor was used of:

1. God, Psalm 80:1-3; Isaiah 40:10-11; Psalm 23
2. Jesus, Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 34:23
3. Leaders of God's People, Jeremiah 23:1-4

C. Zech 11:15-17 - Picture of the shepherd who doesn't fulfill his duty

1. Care for the perishing
2. Seek the scattered
3. Heal the broken
4. Sustain the one standing

D. Ezekiel 34:1-10 - the Shepherds of Israel

1. Shepherds work was to involve:
 - a. Feeding the Flock (v.2)
 - b. Strengthening the sickly & diseased (v.4)
 - c. Bringing back the scattered & lost (v.4)
2. In this passage, shepherds were guilty of:
 - a. Feeding themselves, but not feeding the flock (v.2)
 - b. Not strengthening or healing the sickly (v.4)
 - c. Not bringing back the scattered and the lost (v.4)
 - d. Dominating the sheep with force and severity (v.4)
3. The result of the shepherds' poor work
 - a. Sheep were scattered with no one to search for them (v.5, 6)
 - b. They became food for every beast of the field (v.5)
 - c. Condemnation of the Shepherds (v.10) (see also 33:1-16)
 - d. The Lord himself will deliver the flock (v. 10)

F. Ezekiel 34:11-24 - The True and Ideal Shepherd

1. Would faithfully do everything a shepherd is supposed to do (v.11-16)
2. Would judge between the Fat & Lean, those who have made it difficult for ALL the flock to feed and drink (v.17-22)
3. The Lord will set over his sheep one shepherd, David (Jesus, see Ac 2:25-36) (v.23)

4. The Lord will be God, and David will be prince (v.24)

G. Luke 15:1-7

1. Shepherd is concerned about every single lost sheep
2. He carries the lost sheep home
3. Rejoices and calls everyone else to rejoice when he finds the lost sheep

H. John 10:1-6, 7-18

1. The reason Jesus brings this up was due to the "false shepherds", the Pharisees
2. Jesus is the door of the sheepfold
 - a. Anyone who enters through him shall be saved
 - b. They shall go in and out and find pasture
 - c. He came that the sheep would have life, and have it more abundantly
3. Jesus himself is the "Good Shepherd"
 - a. In Greek there are 2 words for good
 - 1) One means good as in perfect, capable, no defect, the other means good as in beautiful, or pleasant
 - 2) In this case, it is the second. (ILL: In Africa, - "The good doctor")
 - a. He lays down his life for the sheep (he sheep are his main concern)
 - 1) Exodus 22:10-13(Amos 3:12) - Bring evidence if animal torn to show it was beyond his power to save the animal
 - 2) Examples: David (1 Sam 17:34-36) / Isaiah 31:4-5
 - b. He knows his sheep and his sheep know him
 - c. He would bring others not of the fold and they would be one with one shepherd

I. John 10:24-29

1. He gives them blessing2 (eternal life v.28)
2. He protects them (no one snatches v.28)

J. William Barclay on Shepherds:

"The pictures of the shpheard [sic] is woven into the language and imagery of the Bible. It could not be otherwise. The main part of Judea was a central plateau, stretching from Bethel to Hebron for a distance of about 35 miles and varying from 14 to 17 miles across. The ground, for most part, was rough and stony. Judea was, much more a pastoral than an agricultural country and was, therefore, inevitable that the most familiar figure of the Judean uplands was the shepherd.

His life was very hard. No flock ever grazed without a shepherd, and he was never off duty. there being little grass, the sheep were bound to wander, and since there were no protecting walls, the sheep had constantly to be watched. On either side of the narrow plateau the ground dipped sharply down to the craggy deserts and the sheep were

always liable to stray away and get lost. The shepherd's task was not only constant but dangerous, for, in addition, he had to guard the flock against wild animals, especially against wolves, and there were always thieves and robbers ready to steal the sheep. Sir George Adam Smith, who traveled in Palestine writes: "On some high moor, across which at night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, leaning on his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to their king, and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice." Constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for his flock, were the necessary characteristics of the shepherd."

"...His equipment was very simple. He had his *scrip*, a bag made of the skin of an animal, in which he carried his food. In it he would have no more than bread, dried fruit, some olives and cheese. He had his *sling*. ... The shepherd used his sling as a weapon of offence and defence; but he made one curious use of it. There were no sheep dogs in Palestine, and, when the shepherd wished to call back a sheep which was straying away, he fitted a stone into his sling and landed it just in front of the straying sheep's nose as a warning to turn back. His had his *staff*, a short wooden club which had a lump of wood at the end often studded with nails. ... His staff was the weapon with which he defended himself and his flock against marauding beasts and robbers. He had his *rod*, which was like the shepherd's crook. With it he could catch a pull back any sheep which was moving to stray away. At the end of the day, when the sheep were going into the fold, the shepherd hold his rod across the entrance, quite close to the ground; and every sheep had to pass under it (*Ezekiel 20:37; Leviticus 27:32*); and, as each sheep passed under, the shepherd quickly examined it to see if it had received any kind of injury throughout the day.

The relationship between sheep and shepherd is quite different in Palestine. In Britain the sheep are largely kept for killing; but in Palestine largely for their wool. It thus happens that in Palestine the sheep are often with the shepherd for years and often have names by which the shepherd calls them. Usually these names are descriptive, for instance, "Brown-leg," "Black-ear". In Palestine the shepherd went in front and the sheep followed. The shepherd went first to see that the path was safe, and sometimes the sheep had to be encouraged to follow. A traveler tells how he saw a shepherd leading his flock come to a ford across a stream. The sheep were unwilling to cross. The shepherd finally solved the problem by carrying one of the lambs across. When its mother saw her lamb on the other side she crossed too, and soon all the rest of the flock had followed her.

It is strictly true that the sheep know and understand the eastern shepherd's voice; and that they will never answer to the voice of a stranger. ... W.M. Thomson in *The Land and the Book* has the same story to tell. "The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow on; but, if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. I have made the experiment repeatedly." That is exact John's picture."

"...To the shepherd it was the most natural thing to risk his life in defence of his flock. Sometimes the shepherd had to do more than risk his life: sometimes he had to lay it down, perhaps when thieves and robbers came to despoil the flock. Dr. W.M. Thomson in *The Land and the Book* writes: "I have listened with intense interest to their

graphic descriptions of downright and desperate fights with these savage beasts. And the thief and the robber come (and come they do), the faithful shepherd has often to put his life in his hand to defend his flock. I have known more than one case where he had literally to lay it down in the contest. A poor faithful fellow last spring, between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing, actually fought three Bedawin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with their khanjars, and died among the sheep he was defending." The true shepherd never hesitated to risk, and even lay down, his life for his sheep."

-*William Barclay in The Gospel of John. p. 52-61*

K. Lynn Anderson on Shepherding

"My friend Roy tells a fascinating story about a trip to Palestine some years back. One afternoon, he stood on a ridge over-looking a long, narrow gorge. Below him, the gorge opened out into rolling grass-covered pasture lands. A single trail meandered down the length of the gorge floor, then branched out into dozens of trails when it reached the grasslands. A group of shepherds strolled down the gorge trail, chatting with one another, followed by a long, winding river of sheep. At the forks of the trail, the shepherds shook hands and separated, each taking a different path as they headed out into the grasslands. Roy recounted the fascinating sight that followed.

As the shepherds headed their separate ways, the mass of sheep streaming behind them automatically divided into smaller flocks, each flock stringing down the branch trail behind its appropriate shepherd. When the various shepherds and their flocks distanced each other by a few hundred yards, each shepherd turned to scan his own sheep, noting that some strays had been left behind and were wandering in confusion among the rocks and brush.

Then one of the shepherds cupped his hands around his mouth and called in a strange piercing cry, "Hy-yia-yia-yia-yia." At his shout, a couple of stray lambs perked up their ears and bounded toward his voice. Then a second shepherd tilted back his head calling with a distinctly different sound, "Yip-yip-yip-yipoo-yip." A few more strays hurried straight toward him. Then another called his strays with a shrill, "Hoot-hoot-hoot!" Each shepherd, in turn, called. Each of the strays, hearing a familiar voice, knew exactly which shepherd he should run to. "In fact," my friend Roy marveled, "none of the wandering sheep seemed to notice any voice but the voice of his own shepherd."

Lynn Anderson in They Smell Like Sheep. p. 15-16

L. Summary of the Shepherding Metaphor for Spiritual Leaders:

1. They feed the flock
2. They heal the sickly
3. They search for and rescue lost sheep
4. They care for the standing ones
5. They protect their sheep
6. They are deeply concerned for their sheep, even laying down their lives
7. They know their sheep and their sheep know them and follow

Discussion Questions for the Nature of Shepherding

1. What ways did the Elders of the Old Testament Function?
2. Is there any reason why one should ever look at the Old Testament in a study of elders. Why?
3. Is there a title for elders in the New Testament? Explain.
4. What implications do the various Greek words used of elders have on the nature of eldering?
5. What is the most prominent metaphor used in scripture for elders?
6. Based on this metaphor, describe the concerns and duties of an elder.
7. Based on this metaphor, discuss the ideal relationship between an elder and the rest of the church.
8. Discuss what it would take in order to achieve this ideal relationship.
9. Contrast the biblical image of the elder as a shepherd with some modern day concepts of leadership.

III. Nature of the “Office”

- A. Modern Connotation behind “office”
- B. I Timothy 3:1 - Is this the “office” of overseer?

1. What others have said about the “office of elders”

“A mistaken view is prevalent that when elders are installed into “office”, they also receive an aura of infallibility.” - Waymon D. Miller, New Testament Elders

“Why must we rely upon an inaccurate rendition of one verse in the King James text to validate the claim that elders occupy an *office*, and because of that possess *officialdom*? Yet this is fundamentally necessary to the authoritarian view, because if elders are vested with *official authority* they must have an *office*. An *office* is a source of *authority*, and if there is no *office* then there can be no *authority*” - Waymon D. Miller, The Role of Elders in the New Testament Church.

“To grant that elders occupy an office does not necessarily mean that they will possess a certain kind of *officialdom* not found in the New Testament. ... The word occurs in Acts 1:20 with reference to the office of an apostle. ... When Paul addressed the church at Philippi with its *overseers* and *deacons* (Phil. 1:1), he was addressing two recognized bodies of individuals.” -J.B. Myers, The Church and its Elders

“(e) *episkepe* (RSV “office of a bishop”) is first used in I Tim 3:1 to designate a defined office to which one could aspire.” -New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology vol 1, p. 192

- 2. Word usually for overseer is “episkopos” (masculine gendered word), however, this word is “episkepe”, (a feminine gendered word). It is used 3 other times in the New Testament
 - a. Luke 19:44; I Peter 2:12 - “visitation”
 - b. Acts 1:20 - “bishoprick” (KJV) ; “office” (RSV); “place of leadership” (NIV) “his charge” (NEB) ; “office” (NASB)
- 3. Lexicon Definition (BAGD) - “1. *a visitation* of demonstrations of divine power mostly in the good sense. ... 2. *a visitation* of an unpleasant kind. ... 3. *position or office as an overseer*”
- 4. Elders occupy a specific “office”, but it is not just a position
 - a. It is referred to as a “work”
 - b. It is referred to as something he desires to “do” not just “be”

IV. A “council of elders” or "eldership"

- A. Modern connotation behind a council, or a board, or a committee
- B. The word presbuterion, “Council of elders” according to BAGD, is used 3 times in the New Testament
 - 1. Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5
 - 2. I Timothy 4:14