

## The Church-part 4

# Shepherding the Congregation

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Unlike under a hierarchy which, attempts to force people into compliance to its dictates, under God's rule the people must learn to **voluntarily** comply with His instruction. It is a choice. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose** life, that both you and your seed may live: that you may love the LORD your God, and that you may **obey His voice**, and that you may cleave to Him: for He is your life, and the length of your days..." (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20).

Ultimately each person is responsible for his own salvation through the choices that he makes. You cannot be forced to make the correct choice, because if it isn't voluntary, then it really isn't a choice, **and is therefore not acceptable to God**. You must voluntarily "...present your bodies **a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God**, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by **the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2). This requires self-governance, i.e. taking personal responsibility for one's own actions.

We are going to examine how God leads His people. Ultimately it comes down to the relationship that each individual has with the Eternal God; therefore anything that blocks your personal relationship with Him must be removed, and that includes a hierarchical church. You do not need to look to the headquarters of your church for your salvation, but you do need to look to God.

### Personal Responsibility

Cain and Abel brought offerings to God, and Abel's offering was accepted, but Cain's was not. Cain became downcast because his offering was not accepted, "And the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why do you look sad *and* depressed *and* dejected? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin crouches at **your door**; its desire is for you, **but you must master it**" (Genesis 4:6, 7).<sup>1</sup> It was within Cain's power to make the choice not to

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture taken from The Amplified Bible, Old Testament copyright © 1965, by the Zondervan Corporation.

murder his brother, Abel. Cain did not gain mastery over sin, but he allowed sin to gain the mastery over him, and he murdered his own brother.

The “door” represents the mind. Man must learn to control his own thoughts, for “[E]very man is tempted, when he is drawn away of **his own lust, and enticed**. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin, and when it is finished it brings forth death” (James 1:14, 15). It is not the external temptations that cause us to sin, but rather our own internal thoughts, which dwell on sin.

Satan does not force man to sin any more than he forced Eve to eat of the forbidden tree. Satan played on the woman’s pride by lying to her, and saying, “You shall not surely die: for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4, 5).

The woman’s vanity took over and she saw the tree as “...a tree to be **desired** [2530, *to covet, lust*] **to make one wise**, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat...” (Genesis 3:6). The tenth commandment says, “You shall not **covet** [2530]...” (Exodus 20:17). It was Eve’s own vanity, her human nature, that was the ultimate culprit. Satan put the thought into her head by his salesmanship, but she did not have to **dwell** on his lies.

The antidote to Satan’s lies was for her to turn her attention to the Word of God. God had said, “...You shall not eat of it, neither touch it, lest you die” (Genesis 3:3). However, her idolatry had blinded her to the truth, for “...covetousness... is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Idolatry is turning away from God, which results in spiritual blindness, for “...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:5, 6).

When the man and the woman saw “...that they were naked...they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7). Nakedness represents the “...sinful flesh...” (Romans 8:3). The man and the woman attempted to cover their sinful flesh by their own righteousness, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our **iniquities** [5771, *perversity, depravity*], like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

The man and the woman attempted to hide from God “...among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8). When they were discovered, they did not accept responsibility for their sin. The

man blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent (vv. 12, 13). Each individual is ultimately responsible for his own salvation. “Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in [*the land*]...they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness” (Ezekiel 14:20).

Each one is responsible for his own choices in working out his salvation. Therefore, “[W]ork out your own salvation with fear [5401, *reverence*] and trembling [5156, *awe, self-distrust*] . For it is God which works in you to will [2309, *to give you the desire*] and to do [1754, *the energy, the activity*] of His good pleasure....That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world; holding forth [1907, *observing, attending to*] the Word of Life...” (Philippians 2:12, 13, 15, 16).

The church cannot give us salvation by forcing us into compliance with its doctrines. It is the Eternal who gives us the desire and the strength to do His will. We must put our trust in God, and not in man.

### **Put Your Trust in God**

The Eternal does use men to lead and teach His people, but He did not establish a hierarchical church system to do it. Jesus said, “...You know that the princes [758, *ruler, magistrate*] of the Gentiles [1484, *people, nations*] exercise dominion [2634, *to master, overcome, dominate*] over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. **But it shall not be so among you:** but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [1249, *servant, attendant*]: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [1401, *slave*]: Even as **the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many**” (Matthew 20:25-28).

A minister is **not** to be one that we are to give obeisance to just because of his “position,” but he is appointed to serve the flock, as a shepherd. He must remember that **it is not His flock**. Jesus Christ is the Anointed One, “And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And **He is the head of the body, the [*congregation*]:** who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all things He might have the preeminence**” (Colossians 1:17, 18).

The leaders of the people are not to draw a following after themselves or their church, but

they are to serve the people by leading them to Christ. The apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians, “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor the Gentiles, nor to the [congregation] of God: even as I please all men in all things, **not seeking my own profit**, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Paul was not asking the people to follow him, but rather his example of following the teachings of Christ. His purpose was to lead men to Christ. “Be you therefore **followers of God** as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor” (Ephesians 5:1, 2). No man died for you other than Jesus Christ, therefore no man can give you salvation, except for Christ.

All men are flawed; therefore we cannot put our trust in man for our salvation. “Thus says the LORD; **Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm [i.e. *his strength*], and whose heart **departs from the LORD**” (Jeremiah 17:5). When we put our trust in a man or a church, then we have departed from God, because “No man can serve two masters...” (Matthew 6:24). You cannot allow the church to become your master. You cannot look to headquarters as your guiding light, for “You are bought at a price; **be not you the servants of men**” (1 Corinthians 7:23).**

If you put your trust in man, then you “...shall be like the heath [6176, *barren brush*] in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited. Blessed is the man **that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is**. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:6-8).

You do not produce fruit by abiding in a church. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches: **he that abides in Me, and I in him**, the same brings forth **much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing**” (John 15:5).

### **The Chief Shepherd**

The word congregation means: a congregating, a gathering of people or things. Congregate means: to gather into a flock. Jesus is the “...Chief Shepherd...” (1 Peter 5:4). This

title is used only of the Messiah, because He is the head of the congregation, and **no man has a right to use this title**. Jesus said, “I am the door: **by Me if any man enter in**, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, **and find pasture**....I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep....I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known by My own” (John 10:9, 11, 14).

How do we know Him? The shepherd of the sheep “...calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: **for they know his voice**. And a stranger [245, *foreigner, alien*] they will **not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers** [245]” (John 10:3-5).

The voice of the Shepherd is the Word of God. Foreigners are those who bring a message that is contrary to the Word of God; therefore we are not to follow after their words. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Be not carried about by diverse and strange [3541, *foreign, alien, novel*] doctrines...” (Hebrews 13:8, 9).

The Word of God is not continually morphing into something new. The New Testament message was hidden within the Old Testament from the beginning. It began to be revealed at the coming of Jesus Christ. The teachings of the apostles and of Jesus Christ were from the Old Testament, because the New Testament was not yet written. The apostle John wrote the final books contained in the New Testament somewhere around the 90’s A.D.

Jesus said, “...[W]hosoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house upon the rock” (Matthew 7:24). The Word of God is a firm foundation, and that is what we build on. The exhortation of Jude is “...that you should earnestly contend [1864, *battle, fight for*] for the faith [4102, *conviction of the truth*] which was **once** [530, *one time*] delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

### **Watering the Flock**

Pure water symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “...If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believes on Me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39). The water for the flock is provided by the Chief Shepherd. No man can provide the living water.

In ancient times, wells were covered by a large stone, “And there were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well’s mouth [6310, *a hole, commandment, word, the voice*] and watered the sheep...” (Genesis 29:3). The well and the stone symbolize Jesus Christ. “And [*Israel*] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

The stone can also symbolize the stony heart of man, which must be rolled away through repentance in order for him to drink in of the living water. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 37:26, 27).

**God rules from within instead of from the top down.** “...I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people” (Hebrews 8:10). Change must come from the inside. “...[T]hough our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

This renewal is not automatic. We must make the choice to “...not be conformed to this world: but be you transformed [3339, *to change into another form*] by the renewing [342, *renovating*] of your mind that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). This is a radical change that must take place from within us, through the Holy Spirit and the choices that we make. It requires man and God to work together, as partners, in the reconstruction process.

### **Feeding the Flock**

The sheep belong to the Chief Shepherd, but He uses men to take care of the flock. Jesus said to Peter, “...Feed [1006, *nourish, pasture*] **My** lambs [721, *a young lamb*]...Feed [4165, *to shepherd, to tend*] **My** sheep [4263, Gr. probaton, “*to go forward*,” i.e., *of the movement of quadrupeds*] ....Feed [1006] **My** sheep [4263, diminutive, i.e. *a little sheep*]” (John 21:15-17).

The food is the Word of God, and great care must be taken in “...rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The Word of God is precious. No man understands every word of scripture. If we find that we are in error on some point of doctrine, we must be willing to change. If something isn’t true, then there is no profit in keeping it. It requires humility to admit

that you are wrong. "...God resists the proud, but gives grace [5485, *favor*] to the humble. Submit [5293, *render obedience*] yourselves therefore to God" (James 4:6, 7).

The shepherds must take great care to ensure that the flock is getting proper nourishment. In any flock there are sheep at various stages of development, from newborn lambs to mature sheep. The newborn lambs need milk. "As newborn babes desire the sincere **milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby: if so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious [5543, *virtuous, good*]" (1 Peter 2:2, 3).

As the lambs grow, they leave the milk behind and they begin to eat solid food, i.e. pasture. This symbolizes the spiritual growth process. "For everyone that uses milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use [1838, *habit, practice*] have their senses exercised [1128, *train to use, discipline*] to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

Sheep will naturally move forward as they graze. If the sheep do not keep moving forward, then the pasture will become overgrazed, and it will not provide sufficient nourishment for them, and they will become weak and sickly. It would be like being in school, but never advancing beyond the first grade. Milk represents the basics of the Word, which is the foundation upon which we build, but we do not stay there. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on [5342, *to proceed, make progress*] to perfection [5047, *maturity of knowledge and practice*]; **not laying again the foundation** of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permit" (Hebrews 6:1-3).

If the flock is being fed good spiritual food, then it is being equipped to be able to discern between what is good and what is evil. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy [5385, *pursuit of wisdom*] and vain [2756, *empty, devoid of truth*] deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Sheep that are well fed are able to resist the temptations of the world.

The problem with a church hierarchy is that the shepherds teach and the sheep are supposed to shut-up, listen, and be unquestionably obedient. Churches do not like to have **their doctrines** questioned by **their** sheep. That attitude does not allow for the spiritual growth of the

sheep. The sheep become stunted and sickly, because **they are kept penned up by the church's doctrines**. The sheep must be allowed to chew the cud, i.e. they must be allowed to openly discuss doctrines and ask questions, without being accused of heresy.

A congregation has local autonomy, and therefore it is not subservient to the leadership of a headquarters church, and the people should be allowed to openly discuss the Word with one another. This follows the principle of, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Therefore each member of the congregation needs to "...search [350, *to investigate, examine, inquire into, scrutinize, sift, question*] the Scriptures daily..." (Acts 17:11). This is a way of serving the congregation, because each can edify the other.

In a church this is not necessary or allowed, because the church provides you with the food of its choice. This ensures that the sheep will become lazy and lethargic, just as people do under the utopian hierarchical socialist system of government that churches love. There is no real incentive, because the people **think** they are "...rich and increased in goods, and **have need of nothing**, and do not know that [*they*] are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). They are sick sheep, but they do not recognize that they are.

### **Shearing the Sheep**

It is necessary for the health of the sheep that they are sheared. Excess wool impedes the ability of the sheep to regulate their body temperatures. They can become overheated, which can lead to death. Various materials such as feces, urine, etc. can become trapped in the wool, which attracts flies, maggots, and various pests. This can cause infections that endanger the health of the animal. Dirty wool that is full of crud symbolizes sin. This must be removed.

If the sheep are not sheared, then large amounts of wool can build up to the point where the sheep can become immobilized by obstacles, which makes him more susceptible to attacks by predators. Sin immobilizes the Christian, and prevents them from moving forward toward the goal of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said of the Pharisees, "...[T]hey bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:5). In their own self-righteousness the Pharisees added their own interpretations to the word, which were a burden to others. "Wherefore if you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the



world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) **after the commandments and doctrines of men?** Which things have indeed a show [3056, *mere talk, wordy show*] of wisdom in **self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglecting of the body**, but they are of no value against fleshly lusts” (Colossians 2:20-23).

The apostle Paul admonished Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant [2186, *urgent, earnest*] in season, out of season; reprove [1651, *to correct, admonish*], rebuke [2008, *reprimand, warn*], exhort [3870, *persuade, encourage, comfort*] with all longsuffering [3115, *patience, fortitude*] and doctrine [1322, *instruction*]” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The Word of God is used to cleanse and purify the congregation, “That He might sanctify [37, *purify, set apart as holy*] and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious [1741, *in unsullied array, splendid*] congregation, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish [299, *blameless*]” (Ephesians 4:26, 27).

Shearing is a type of purification, much like pruning. “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away [142, *to lift, raise, carry, remove, destroy*]; and every branch that bears fruit, He purges [2508, *to cleanse from filth, impurity, prune*] it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:1, 2).

Regular shearing will produce clean, high quality wool, much like the proper pruning of a vine brings forth a higher quality fruit. Clean wool produced by the sheep represents the good fruits that are produced by walking in the light of the truth. .

### **The Good Shepherds**

“And He gave some apostles [652, *a messenger*]; and some prophets [4396, *a spokesman for a deity*]; and some evangelists [2099, *one who declares good news*]; and some pastors [4166, *a shepherd, guardian*]; and teachers [1320, *an instructor*]” (Ephesians 4:11).

These are not titles of authority in a church hierarchy, but represent the various responsibilities given to them “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry [1248, *labor, service*], for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the **unity of the faith**, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect [5046, *complete, entire*] man, to the

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we **be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight** [2940, *deception*] **of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive**; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, **which is the head, even Christ**” (vv. 12-15).

The requirements of an elder are: “If any be blameless [410, *beyond reproach*], the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot [810, *loose living*] or unruly [506, *disobedient, disorderly*]. For a bishop [1985, *overseer, guardian*] must be blameless, as the stewards [3623, *the manager of a household*] **of God**; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre [146, *greedy, eager for base gain*]; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of goodness, sober [4998, *sound mind, sane*], just [1342, *upright, equitable*], holy [3741, *pure*], temperate [1468, *self-controlled*]; holding fast the faithful word in teaching, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince those who contradict” (Titus 1:6-9).

The apostle Peter admonished, “The elders [4245, *older, advanced in years*] **which are among you** I exhort, **who am also an elder**, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **feed** [4165, *shepherd*] **the flock of God which is among you**, taking the oversight [1983, *to look upon, inspect, look after, care for*] thereof, not by constraint [317, *compulsion, unwillingly*], but willingly; **not for filthy lucre** [147, *for the sake of base gain*], but of a ready mind; **neither being lords** [2634, *to bring under one’s power, subdue, master*] **over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock**” (1 Peter 5:1-3).

An elder was not to be “...a novice [3504, *new to the faith*], lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). The **elders** were not to be twenty-two year old Bible College students who may be well versed in church doctrines and practice, and trained in how to give a sermon, but not much of anything else. The advantage, for the church hierarchy, of using young men is that they are more easily moldable than a mature individuals. The young ones make good bricks.

The Levites began training for their service in the tabernacle at the age of twenty-five (Numbers 8:24), but they were not given their full responsibilities until the age of thirty (Numbers 4:3, 23, 30). Jesus began His ministry at age thirty (Luke 3:23). It is called maturity, which is gained through experience. Using men who are too young can lead to....

## The Bad Shepherds

“...Woe to the shepherds of Israel that **do feed themselves!** Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? **You eat the fat, and you clothe you with the wool, you kill** [2076, *to sacrifice an animal for an offering*] them that are fed: but **you feed not the flock**” (Ezekiel 34:2, 3). These shepherds (ministers) take from the people. “The leech has two daughters, crying, **Give, give...**” (Proverbs 30:15). The Church must have more money to do the work, so give, give, and give some more until it hurts! No matter how much money is taken from the sheep it is never enough to feed the leeches, just like higher taxes are never enough for the big government leeches.

They take, but they do not feed the sheep the spiritual food that they need. “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts. **But you are departed out of the way; you have caused many to stumble** [3782, *to waver, to totter, to stagger*] **at the law; you have corrupted** [7843, *to destroy, to ruin*] **the covenant of Levi...**” (Malachi 2:7, 8). These ministers are not fulfilling their God given responsibility of caring for the flock.

Three times Jesus told Peter, “**Feed My sheep.**” The **work** that God has given to the shepherds is to feed the flock. If the shepherds do not feed the sheep, **then they are not doing** the work. Without the proper spiritual food the people do not grow in knowledge, but become spiritually weakened and sick. “The diseased you have not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again [7725, *to turn about*] that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; **but with force** [2394, *might, violence*] **and with cruelty** [6531, *oppression, tyranny*] **have you ruled** [7287, *to tread, subdue*] **them**” (Ezekiel 34:4).

## Social Stratification

Social stratification is a system by which people are ranked in hierarchies. Social stratification along economic lines has been a natural element of societies throughout time. In churches the ordinary members are considered to be inferior to those holding some title. The ministers “...love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues [4864, *assembly*], and greetings in the markets [58, *an assembly of men*] and to be called of men, Rabbi,

Rabbi [4461, *master, doctor*]” (Matthew 23:6, 7).

The elders, since they were chosen from the local congregation, were known by the people and they knew the people. I really doubt that an elder went from being called Larry to having to be called by the title Pastor, or Mr. Larry. The word “Mister” is a weakened form of the word “master.” Some churches insist that the ministers must be called “Mister Smith,” Mister Jones,” etc. This is done to make a clear distinction between the superior ministry and the ordinary slobs who are merely members that pay their salaries. There are many other titles that churches use to create the separation between the ministry and the people.

However, the Word says, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:27-29). **A title does not make one person of greater worth than another person in the sight of God.**

The concept of social stratification is condemned by the scriptures. “For if there come to your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a man in vile [4508, *filthy, dirty*] raiment; and you have respect to him that wears the gay [2986, *splendid, magnificent*] clothing, and say to him, Sit you here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand you there, or sit here under my footstool: **are you not then partial** [1252, *make a distinction, confer superiority*] in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (James 2:2-4).

**Conclusion:** In his Gettysburg address, Abraham Lincoln said, “[T]hat this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” God’s government is not of the people, or by the people, but **it is certainly government for the people**, and when it is established on the earth, **it shall never perish**. Shouldn’t we be practicing God’s form of government now? “And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away” (1 Peter 5:4).