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CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

BY A. NAISMITH M.A.

VI. The Good Shepherd

Just as different epithets used of the "Branch" in the Old Testament have been correlated to the several aspects of the four Gospels, so we might compare the epithets by which Jehovah addresses prophetically the Lord Jesus Christ with the presentation of our Lord by the four Evangelists.

Psa. 2:6.—"Yet have I set *My King* upon my holy hill of Zion":—*Matthew's* Gospel.

Isa. 42:1.—"Behold *My servant*, whom I uphold":—*Mark's* Gospel.

Zech. 13:5.—"Awake, O sword, against *My Shepherd*":—*Luke's* Gospel.

Zech. 13:5.—"Smite the man that is *My Fellow*":—*John's* Gospel.

One of the most familiar and beautiful titles of the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd. David could exclaim with confidence and exultation, "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want"; and myriads of the redeemed of every race have taken up the strain and reiterated the assuring words:

"The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never".

Isaiah predicted of Him, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd". The shepherd-patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph; and the great shepherd leaders, Moses and David, are all types of Him who is the Good, Great and Chief Shepherd. In the prophecy of Zechariah, in particular, the Lord Jesus is presented prophetically as the Shepherd in the fourfold aspect in which the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, portray Him.

1. *Zech. 9:9*. "Behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation: lowly and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass".

The daughter of Zion is addressed. It is significant that Zion's founder and first ruler, David, was a shepherd, called from following the flock to shepherd God's people Israel. The words of the prophet Zechariah are quoted by Matthew (21:5) when he records the triumphal entry of the King of the Jews into His capital. Micah who foretold where the Messiah should be born,

wrote hundreds of years before the event, "Thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, out of thee shall He come forth unto me who is to be ruler in Israel". Matthew, quoting this wonderful prophecy in connection with the birth of Jesus Christ, writes, "And thou, Bethlehem, land of Judah, out of thee shall come forth a governor which shall be *Shepherd* of my people Israel" (Matt. 2:6 R.V.).

The Gospel according to *Matthew* who, portrays our Lord Jesus as the SHEPHERD-KING, is the fulfilment of the prediction of Zech. 9:9.

2. *Zech. 11:12-14*. "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prised at of them".

In this passage prophecy is not only uttered but enacted by Zechariah. He asks his compatriots to whom he had ministered to set a value on his services, to give their estimate of what his pastoral care of them was worth. All is prophetic of the appraisal of the ministry of the Lord of Glory by Judas, one of His followers, and by the leaders of the Jewish nation.

"Thirty pieces of silver for the Lord of life they gave:
Thirty pieces of silver—only the price of a slave."

In Phil. 2:7, we read that Christ Jesus took upon Him the form of a servant; and the word the apostle uses is the Greek word *doulos*, a 'bondslave'. The patient, untiring ministry of the Lord Jesus, who "came unto His own" but was rejected by them, was reckoned as worthless as a menial's. He was the SHEPHERD-SERVANT: And this is the theme of *Mark's* account of His life on earth.

3. *Zech. 11:7-11*. The great objects of our Lord's prophetic ministry and teaching are seen under the figure of two staves, 'Beauty' and 'Bands,'—the worship of the Lord in the beauty of holiness and the manifestation of unity and harmony in the flock of God. In the Shepherd-Psalm David refers to the two staves or crooks which the Eastern shepherd carried: "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me". One of the staves was a weapon to ward off the enemy's attacks and protect the flock, the other a powerful aid in rescuing from danger sheep that had wandered away. The flock of Israel had been for centuries disrupted, and one of the objects of prophetic utterance and of our Lord's ministry while on earth was the re-establishment of

the brotherhood between Israel and Judah who had been rivals since Jeroboam's rebellion. Another aim was to make peace with God for sinful man, breaking down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile and forging links of harmony between man and man. The term "Bands" is derived from the Eastern custom of tying a cord as a symbol of confederacy. By the Jews this gracious ministry of our Lord Jesus was rejected, so "Bands" was broken in so far as the unification of Israel was concerned (v. 14); for "His own people received Him not". Luke is the evangelist who most emphatically recounts the division in Judaism between the hypocritically orthodox and the truly repentant. "Then drew near the publicans and sinners for to hear Him; but the Pharisees and scribes murmured" (Luke 15:1-2). This too, is, in the main, the message of the majority of the parables of our Lord recorded by Luke. The breaking of the 'Staves' was accompanied by deep anguish of spirit as the rightful Ruler of Jerusalem "beheld the city and wept, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace" (Luke 19:41-42). It is the pen of Luke that traces, not only in his Gospel narrative but more fully in the Acts of the Apostles, the operation of the Divine purpose in the glad tidings of peace for all men, Jew and Gentile alike, "through the blood of His cross". Thus *Luke's Gospel* presents our Lord in His gracious ministry on earth as Man amongst men, as the SHEPHERD-PROPHET.

4. *Zech. 13:7-9*. "Awake, O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones". Here is a prophecy quoted by the Lord Himself in Matt. 26:31. It contains three titles of Jesus, (1) His *Divine* title, "My Fellow", for He considered it not a prize to be grasped at to be on equality with God (Phil. 2:6). (2) His true *humanity*, "the man", for Christ Jesus was "made in the likeness of men" and "found in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:14). (3) His *official* title—"My Shepherd", for He was the Shepherd the Father had chosen to give life and leading to His people.

The title of God the Almighty here is "Jehovah Tsabaoth", the Lord of hosts, so frequently found in the prophecies of the captivity, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Its first occurrence is in 1 Sam. 1:3, where it signifies the relationship of the God of

Israel to the godly remnant in an era of woeful declension. Its second occurrence is in the same chapter to bring comfort and assurance to an afflicted daughter of Israel. Only twice is the title found in the New Testament, and with the same significance as in the Old Testament, namely, in Rom. 9:29, defining God's relationship to the devout remnant of Israel; and in James 5:4, for the encouragement of God's afflicted saints. The proximity of the title in Zech. 13:7 to "the man that is my fellow" suggests an emphatic contrast. The speaker, the eternal God, had innumerable hosts ever obedient and ready to fulfil His will and always enjoying His favour, but He had only one 'Fellow,' His well-beloved Son, whom He commanded His sword to smite and whom He forsook "in that dark hour on Calvary";

"We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,
That died for the sake of the flock".

The scattering of the sheep is prophetic of the dispersion of the Jewish people less than forty years after they crucified their Shepherd. The "little ones" are the lambs of the flock, Christ's humble followers, on whom He lays His hand in protection.

It is John's Gospel that the strong bond of fellowship between the Father and the Son, eternal as it is strong, is predominant. It is in that Gospel that Jesus asserts again and again, "I and the Father are one". John's is the Gospel of the SHEPHERD SACRIFICE.

VISION

BY HENRY F. MORGAN

As we study the Church of our time the conclusion is forced upon us that we are in one of those periods of the Church's history which can only be adequately described in the words of 1 Sam. 3:1, "*The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision*". In many circles people are saying, "We need a new vision". But what exactly is the new vision that we need? Of some new work of God? Or of some new aspect of Truth? We certainly do need a new vision in these things and in those moments of our life when the fires of our being burn feebly and we are inclined to think that God has reached the