

BAPTISM

Chapter Ten

Water Baptism and the Covenantal Connection to the Local Church

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to Jewish believers to establish the absolute superiority of the New Covenant under the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ within the context of local churches as the ministering priesthood of all believers. Although the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews establishes this superiority of the New Covenant over the Mosaic Covenant, Hebrews chapters ten through thirteen draws the believer out of the sacerdotal and sacramental shadows portrayed in the Mosaic Covenant and its old priesthood and sacrifices. Then the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews draws the believer to the realities of the New Covenant in its new priesthood within the spiritual dynamic of discipleship and their individual ministry through the local church. This is God's New Covenant order for the administration of all "born again" believers. They are to enroll in formal membership to a local assembly through which they can fulfill their vocational calling (Ephesians 4:1) "in Christ."

At the time of the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews (68 A.D.), the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was still standing with a ministering priesthood and with sacrifices still being offered (this Temple was destroyed by Rome in 70 A.D.). Professing Jewish Christians were being enticed back to the Temple and its sacrifices by the argument that Christ died only for original sin. They were being told that if they sinned after they were saved, they still needed to offer the same old Mosaic Covenant sacrifices to remove their defilement before God. Therefore, these Jewish believers were being enticed to "forsake" the local church assembly to return to the Temple and Mosaic Covenant practices.

“¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹ And *having* an high priest over the house of God; ²² Let us 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. ²³ Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised); ²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. ²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and

fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ²⁹ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:19-29)?

Hebrews chapters ten through thirteen give us considerable instruction regarding the New Covenant responsibilities to which water baptism connects the believer within the context of formal local church membership and with God consecrating believers to "the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12 and Romans 12:1-2) through the discipleship process ordained through the *organism* and *organization* of a local church. Water baptism is the ordinance (God's ordained methodology) for formal entrance into the discipleship process within the context of formal local church membership. The failure to teach that water baptism is the connecting link to culpability for discipleship through formal membership in a local assembly is the grossest of failures regarding this ordinance.

There are those who connect the statement "Let us 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" in Hebrews 10:22 as justification for baptism by sprinkling. This certainly is not the intent of the text. This statement in Hebrews 10:22 is merely an extension of what has been already said in Hebrews 9:8-14.

⁸ The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest {*unlimited access by all believers*}, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: ⁹ Which was a figure {*type or shadow*} 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; ¹⁰ Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings {*the confusion comes from the use of baptismos, here translated 'washings' referring to all the various water rituals for sanctification in the Old Covenant*}, and carnal {*typical, in that they touched only the flesh*} ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation {*used to refer to the setting of a broken bone, i.e. the intent is to the sacrifice of Christ fulfilling all Old Testament promises regarding the propitiation of God and the justification of sinners 'by grace through faith'*}. ¹¹ But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle {*the New Creation*}, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this {*earthly*} building; ¹² Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the

{*Heavenly*} holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.¹³ For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:¹⁴ How much more shall the {*sprinkling of the*} blood of Christ {*used in a metaphorical sense to refer to after salvation forgiveness for restoring a repentant, confessing sinner to 'fellowship' with God*}, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works {*the ongoing Old Covenant continual rituals, that by the very nature of their continuation revealed that the conscience could not be assured of the full propitiation of God*} to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:8-14)?

The context of *sprinkling* in Hebrews 9:13 relates to an Old Covenant ritual involving the ashes from the burnt carcass of a “red heifer” mingled with pure water and sprinkled upon an unclean *believer* for the purpose of sanctifying “to the purifying of the flesh.” This sprinkling was a physical ritual intended to portray typically, that which was necessary spiritually to restore a *believer*, who had defiled himself by contamination/contact with something, or someone that was unclean. Once the unclean person was restored to cleanness, he was restored to fellowship with God and his service and sacrifices were once again acceptable to God. This text is referring to the typology of purification rituals *for believers*. Every part of the slain “red heifer” was burnt to ashes outside “the camp.” This is not the same as New Covenant water baptism. The Morrish Bible Dictionary gives us considerable clarification regarding the *Red Heifer Offering*:

“This was a unique offering. The red heifer was killed outside the camp, and its blood was sprinkled by the priest seven times directly before the tabernacle. The whole of the heifer was then burnt, and the priest cast cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet into the burning of the heifer. The ashes were gathered up and laid in a clean place outside the camp. When the ashes were used, a person that was clean mixed in a vessel some of the ashes with running water, then he dipped hyssop into the water, and sprinkled the person, tent, etc., that was unclean. **It was a water of separation — a purification for sin.**

The ordinance of the red heifer was an exceptional form of sin offering. **It had not atonement in view, but the cleansing by water of those who, having their dwelling and place in the camp, where Jehovah’s sanctuary was, had become defiled by the way:** cf. Nu 5:1-4. Upon the basis of sin being condemned in the cross, it corresponds to 1Jo 1:9. The washing of the feet of those that are clean, as taught by the Lord in John 13 has this character of cleansing with water. The Holy Spirit applies, by the word, the truth of the

condemnation of sin in the cross of Christ to the heart and conscience, to purify the believer, **without applying the blood again**. Nu 19; Heb 9:13. But John 13 goes further. The Lord applies the truth of His departure out of this world to the Father to the walk of His disciples.”¹ (bolding added)

The analogy of Hebrews 9:8-14 is that the *once-for-all* offering of the Blood of Christ to the Father in the literal Holy of Holies in Heaven eternally propitiates God’s wrath for the believer’s sins, eternally justifies the believer before God, AND provides perpetual cleansing of the saved sinner through the saved believer’s *moment-by-moment* repentance, and confession of sin. Therefore, to apply Hebrews 9:8-14 to justify the sprinkling of infants as some form of *baptism* is a complete misrepresentation of the text in that these purification rituals were only for believers and were never used in the way *infant sprinklers* try to apply them. Secondly, such an application denies the context of Hebrews 9:14 in that the *once-for-all* offering of the Blood of Christ is perpetually efficacious to cleanse (purify) the sinning believer and restore him to practical sanctification and fellowship with God (I John 1:7-9).

In seeking to separate themselves by degree from the Roman Catholic view of infant sprinkling, the Reformers sought numerous variations seeking biblical support for infant baptisms (some by immersion and others by sprinkling) by arguing that infant baptism replaced infant circumcision. After Calvin’s statements regarding rejecting Roman Catholic infant baptisms on the basis that they were not by immersion, or because defiled Roman Catholic priests administered the baptisms, we find numerous arguments seeking to justify sprinkling as an acceptable mode of these infant baptisms.

Two other texts are offered as *proof texts* by Reformed theologians to support baptism by sprinkling (which is a contradiction in terms) –Ezekiel 36:24-29 and the reference to the Ezekiel text in Hebrews 10:15-22. Again, the Reformers completely miss the typology in dispensational transitions. As we read Ezekiel 36:24-29, we must understand the Eschatological chronology (the *when*) to gain the context of *what* the prophecy is saying. The Eschatological timeframe is at the very beginning of the Kingdom Age and refers to the complete fulfillment of Joel 2:12-32, which was partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (for the Church) recorded in Acts chapter two. Therefore, this is a *Day of Pentecost* for national Israel.

“²⁴ For I will take you {*the New Covenant nation of Israel made up of ‘born again’ Jews saved during the Tribulation time and now entering the Kingdom*

¹ *Morrish Bible Dictionary, Red Heifer* (SwordSearcher Software 6.1)

Age} from among the heathen {*the Gentile nations*}, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land {*the Promised Land of the Palestinian Covenant*}.²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you {*no ashes of a red heifer are included because the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is 'finished.'* This 'clean water' refers to the 'renewing,' Titus 3:5 and Romans 12:2, of these believer's minds by the illumination of the 'water by the Word,' Ephesians 5:26, through the operations of the Holy Spirit}, and ye shall be clean {*pure or purified*}: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.²⁶ 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 an heart of flesh.²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.²⁸ And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.²⁹ I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.³¹ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations {*the Kingdom Age will be a time of shame for national Israel*}.³² Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.³³ Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded" (Ezekiel 36:24-33).

The Reformers' beliefs regarding the Church (Ecclesiology) caused them to see all of God's promises to national Israel transferred to the Church. They viewed the Church as a universal (worldwide) Theonomic entity that would one day govern the world (Amillennialism). Therefore, they viewed themselves already in the Kingdom Age and their reformations as advancing their *Theonomic Universal State Church* to its appointed place of ultimate authority and rule over the whole earth. From that false perspective, they viewed the prophecies of Ezekiel chapter thirty-six as already fulfilled and they viewed themselves as the reformers who were *sanctifying the Name of God* in the world. In this view, they saw themselves justified in killing people that opposed their divinely appointed authority in that they were merely *purging the kingdom of reprobates*.² Bad theology leads to the grosses of offenses against our fellowman and then justifies those offenses.

² Calvin, John, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Third, chapter 23, paragraph 1, page 582

The trouble with using Hebrews 10:22 to justify sprinkling as a form of baptism is that to do so one must take it out of the context of the previous verses in Hebrews chapter nine. The statement of Hebrews 9:15-28 also clarifies Ezekiel's prophetic statement regarding *sprinkling* with pure water without customary mingling of *sacrificial ashes* for *sanctification* (this sprinkling was not for salvation). In Hebrews 9:24-28, Jesus is presented as the Perfect Offerer and His Blood as the Perfect Offering for sin. To understand this, we must look at Hebrews 9:15-28.

“¹⁵ And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. ¹⁷ For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. ¹⁸ Whereupon neither the first *testament* {*Mosaic Covenant*} was dedicated without blood. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ Saying, *This is the blood of the testament* {*Mosaic Covenant*} which God hath enjoined unto you. ²¹ Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. ²² And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. ²³ *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true*; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ²⁵ **Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;** ²⁶ **For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.** ²⁷ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸ So Christ was **once offered** to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:15-28).

This then leads us to the introductory statements in Hebrews chapter ten regarding the perfect, *once-for-all* sacrifice of Jesus.

“¹⁰ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. ¹¹ And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: ¹² But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; ¹³ From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. ¹⁵ *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, ¹⁶ This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷ And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. ¹⁸ Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:10-18).

The fact that Jesus has offered His Blood as the final, *once-for-all* perfect sacrifice explains why God says through Ezekiel, “²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶ 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 an heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*” (Ezekiel 36:25-27). This text does not teach baptism by sprinkling. This text teaches that Kingdom Age *sanctification* (as is Church Age sanctification, I John 1:7-9) is available based upon a finished work of redemption in the complete propitiation of God by the one offering of Jesus Christ (I John 2:2).

CONTEXT-CONTEXT-CONTEXT!

“¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹ And *having* an high priest over the house of God; ²² Let us 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” (Hebrews 10:14-22).

The “house of God” (Hebrews 10:21) is not a physical structure such as a church house or a church meeting place. The “house of God” in the New Covenant is a living organism of “living stones” united together in a particular locality (local church) with definitive structure (congregational government), administrated by God gifted men (pastors/bishops/elders), and sharing common doctrine, purpose, and practice. This is not a contractual union in formal

membership. This formal membership is a covenantal union. The first aspect of this covenantal union is the acknowledgement of, and submission to, the new High Priest who is Jesus Christ. This *headship* or *Lordship* of Christ as the only High Priest over local churches is represented by numerous metaphors:

Metaphor: “a figure of speech containing an implied comparison in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another.” It is important that when we understand the use of these metaphors, that we make application to the local assembly or “general assembly” based upon the context of Scripture. In almost all cases, the metaphors are used of the local church, not the “general assembly.” Spirit baptism unites a believer to the “general assembly.” Water baptism formally unites a believer to a local assembly.

A Body of Which Jesus Is the Head

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

“¹⁹ And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: ²² And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23).

Obviously, a “body” is formally united with its other parts. To consider one’s self part of a local church without formally uniting to the “body” destroys the metaphor.

A Building of Which Jesus Is the Cornerstone

“¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; ²¹ In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto

an holy temple in the Lord: ²² In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

A local assembly is built with converts to Jesus Christ. Therefore, the primary requirement for formal unity with a local assembly is the *living testimony* of having been “born again.” It is upon the truth of the gospel and His commandments that the local assembly/congregation is built. The building blocks of the local assembly are saved sinners who build their lives through discipleship within the local assembly on the truths for living given by the Lord. Obviously, a “building” is formally united with its other parts. To consider one’s self part of a local church without formally uniting to the “building” destroys the metaphor.

A Bride of Whom Jesus Is the Bridegroom

“²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. ²² Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ²⁴ Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: ³⁰ For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³² This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband” (Ephesians 5:21-33).

This is one of the strongest metaphors for formal local church membership. I am sure every wife would agree. God has a word for a man who wants to join with his wife without first formally uniting with her through the marriage covenant. That word is adultery.

The theological significance of this metaphor is that it details the intimate relationship between Jesus Christ and local assemblies of believers. However, that intimacy does not exist apart from formally uniting through the ordinance of water baptism. Obviously, a “marriage” is formally uniting two partners together. To

consider one's self part of a local church without formally uniting to the "marriage" destroys the metaphor.

Within the context of the marriage metaphor, we find the obligation of the "bride" to keep herself doctrinally and morally pure until the "bridegroom" returns to take her home. The corruption of a local church by false doctrine or moral impurity is equal to spiritual adultery.

¹ Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me. ² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. ³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*" (II Corinthians 11:1-4).

An Inheritance of Which Jesus Is the Heir

¹ God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ² Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; ³ 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; ⁴ Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1:1-4).

The Church Age believer's inheritance is to rule and reign with Christ as a kingdom of priests during the Kingdom Age. This is stated in Revelation 2:25-29. Understand, as we read this text, that it is Jesus speaking. Therefore, the personal pronouns "he" and "him" are referring to individual faithful believers.

²⁵ But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. ²⁶ And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:25-29).

Another important factor in these verses is that there are conditions to receiving this “rule.” Every “born again” believer from the Church Age will inherit a position as a priest under the Lord Jesus Christ during the Kingdom Age. However, ONLY faithful believers from the Church Age will be consecrated by Jesus Christ to “rule” with Him during the Kingdom Age. Those who are saved, but unfaithful, during the Church Age will inherit the Kingdom, but not the “rule” (Matthew 25:14-30). Water baptism is intended to connect the believer to a life of faithfulness. Therefore, in a believer’s formal membership in a local assembly he accepts accountability for the faithfulness through congregational government and pastoral administration. Uniting to a local assembly is the FIRST STEP in faithful obedience to our High Priest.

“¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. ¹⁵ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. ¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creature {*creation*} waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creature {*creation*} was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, ²¹ Because the creature {*creation*} itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. ²³ And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:14-23).

Part of the Church Age believer’s inheritance is to be glorified with Christ as a kingdom of priests. However, that position does not automatically translate into being allowed to minister during the Kingdom Age as priests.

A Flock of Which Jesus Is the Shepherd

“¹ 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. ² But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by

name, and leadeth them out. ⁴ And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. ⁵ And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. ⁶ This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. ⁷ Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 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. ¹⁰ The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ¹² But 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. ¹³ The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. ¹⁵ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd” (John 10:1-16).

Those whom Jesus has redeemed are His possession. He knows each one personally and promises to care for each one by leading them to a local church where He has called and is directing a pastor to feed them, watch over them, and care for them.

“¹ The elders {*presbuteros*} 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: ² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; ³ Neither as being lords over *God’s* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Peter 5:1-4).

The *undershepherd* that is responsible for “feeding” the Shepherd’s sheep is the pastor of each local church