

Song of Solomon 1: 7 and 8; "Where do you Feed Your Flock?", Sermon # 9 in the series - "I am my Beloved's", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 19th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The Bride, having spoken with the daughters of Jerusalem about herself and the predicament that she was in, as one who was married to the Shepherd-King; one who had great privileges by marriage, but one who her mother's sons are angry with; now turns her attention to seek to inquire of her King the place where he does his work among the flocks that he owns. She knows that it will do no good to dwell upon what others think of her continually. She has come to know her own inadequacies and insufficiencies well enough, without dwelling upon them continually. And since she would be faithful to her King, she does not want to be deceived by false doctrine or to be irresponsible through careless living. She must cultivate her relationship with the One who can make her darkness beautiful; the One who can change her heart so that she will be able to walk in paths of obedience to His commands. Her greatest desire is to be received not only into the privileges of the palace, but to be brought close to His side, to learn more about her husband and all that He does, and to be involved in His life and work, as much as she can. This is the indication of a good wife; when she wants to know the whole man, including his work, whatever that may be. "Tell me, O you whom I love, where do you feed your flock?" This is the indication of a faithful believer; he or she loves everything about Christ, and wants to know the whole Christ. This is a real show of her love to Him. It is not enough for them to be given the privileges of salvation; they want to know about their Lord's work and become involved in that work if they can. The Bride is seeking to know her husband, the Shepherd King.

In the Bible, you do not read at any time of Solomon's work as being described as a shepherd in Israel. You do read of David's having been a shepherd before he was raised up by God to be king, but not Solomon. The One who comes for the first time in this book, to speak to the Bride in verse 8, is the Shepherd King of His Church. He is her Bridegroom, and He is her King, but He is also a Shepherd. This can be none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. This is another reason to consider this book as being written from an allegorical perspective. The experiences spoken of here do not follow Solomon's life exactly, but they do set forth the life and experience of the believer in relation to the Shepherd King of their hearts. In order for the believer to be shepherded in a spiritual sense, they have to be willing and desirous to be a part of the life of the flock of the Shepherd King. This is the truth that is being set forth for us in these two verses. We want to look this afternoon at the 3 questions which the Bride asks her Shepherd King and hopefully we will learn very much about His work in our heart and life as a Shepherd in the process. The 3 questions are: Where do you feed your flock; where do you make it rest at noon, and why should as I be as one who is veiled? We will save the answer of the Shepherd King for the next time that I preach to you from this text.

First of all - Where do you feed your flock, O Shepherd King of Israel?

"Tell me, O you whom I love, where do you feed your flock...." This assumes that He has already been feeding them, and she, the Bride, would come and observe this process and participate in it. It is the work of a shepherd to feed his flock. I believe that by this word "feed" Solomon is describing for us all that the Shepherd will do to provide for all of the needs of the sheep under His charge; feeding being the primary work. But all that He does for them will help keep them alive. He will watch over them, for sheep are very needy creatures. Did you know that if you believe in Jesus Christ that you are one of the sheep of His pasture? Turn with me to Psalm 100, verse 1, and you will see this. Here the Psalmist tells us that all believers, both Old Testament and New, are Christ's sheep. "Make a joyful noise to Lord, all you lands!" "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." "Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." "Be thankful to Him, and bless His name." Becoming one of Christ's sheep happens spiritually by the Father's having chosen you before the foundation of the world, and giving you to Christ. When He chooses us, according to His eternal purpose, He also calls us in time, during our lifetime here upon the earth, to become part of His flock. By "flock" we should understand all those who are Christ's true followers, Old Testament and New. They are "the sheep of His pasture".

Turn with me over to Ezekiel Chapter 34. Here in this chapter we find a prophecy against the shepherds of Israel. It speaks of how those who had spiritually been shepherding Israel had not really cared for the flock. They had fed themselves and had not fed the flock. Verse 4 says, "The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and severity you have ruled them," God says. Verse 10 says, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.'" What is God's remedy for this sad condition of the Old Testament Church? Verse 11 tells us. "For thus says the Lord God: Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out." "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a dark and cloudy day. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country." "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel." "There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel." And verse 23 says, "I will establish one shepherd over them,

and he shall feed them--My servant David." "He shall feed them and be their shepherd."

This is all prophetic language for what God would do through our Lord Jesus Christ. You can see where it is that Christ feeds His flock. It would be on the mountains of Israel. The mountains of Israel is a pictorial representation of the Church, Mount Zion, and all the churches that she is made up of. The Lord Jesus through His teaching, His death, and His resurrection would bring into being a new and living way of teaching and worship for the covenant people of God. No longer would God's people, God's sheep be abused and neglected by the Pharisees and Scribes who fed themselves and not the people; who abused them and did not know how to care for them and bind up their hearts which were broken and wounded by sin. He Himself would seek them out. You see the fulfillment of this in Matthew Chapter 9, verse 35 and following. "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." "Then He said to His disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Here there are two picture words in use; the sheep having no shepherd and the laborers in the harvest. The harvest is the souls of men. The shepherd is one who would lead and guide, feed and protect the precious sheep of God's flock who are gathered through the preaching of Christ and His Apostles, and then later on throughout the Church age, through pastors and teachers given to the Church by Christ. You remember what Jesus says to Peter in John 21: 15 and following. "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' "He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.'" "He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" "He said to him again a second time, "Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me?" "He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know that I love You.'" "He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" "He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me?' "Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' "And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.'" "Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'" There is this most certain correspondence between loving Christ and feeding His sheep that is established by the Lord Himself to Peter. It is the relationship of the Bride saying to the Bridegroom that she loves Him. It is the relationship of the Shepherd King to His flock, and His saying to all those in His Church who have been called to be undershepherds, "Feed my sheep. Peter, in his own little epistle reiterates this truth for us when he says in 1st Peter 5: 1, "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd (or feed) the flock of God which is among you which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those

entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." So Christ is the Chief Shepherd who has entrusted His flock to the undershepherds who are to feed them. They feed them by preaching and teaching the word of God to them, and then watching over their souls to see that they are protected spiritually, and that they do not go astray spiritually.

In order for the undershepherds to be able to feed the sheep and care for them spiritually, Christ had to die to establish these blessings. The whole ministry of feeding the sheep rests ultimately upon Christ, even though it takes place through undershepherds. I want you to turn with me to John Chapter 10 and we shall see this. In verse 14, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own." "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." Jesus lays down His life for the sheep; He lays it down in order that they might hear His voice. Hearing His voice comes to them through the preaching of the word by the undershepherds and other preachers, in all the generations of the Church age. Jesus brings His sheep to Himself through the preaching of the word, the hearing of His word, the feeding upon His word by reading it, and even the reading of it, in private. But that all this exists at all, is due to what Christ did in His going to the cross to die for all of those chosen by the Father.

2ndly - The Bride asks, where does her Shepherd King make His flock to rest at noon?

Noon is the point at which the sun is highest in the sky; it is the point where the heat of the day is really coming on. I have already mentioned to you that the sun's scorching our Bride and making her dark, back in verse 6, is referring to the persecutions and tribulations which come to the believer as a result of holding fast to the word of God and the gospel of Christ as the only means of salvation. The sun had tanned her. She endures all of these things for the sake of her King with patience, trusting that she will bear fruit unto God through them. But it doesn't mean that she doesn't need rest from her labors and the blessing of rest from her Lord in order to continue on. God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, has His good ways of giving His beloved ones rest. May God bless you and keep you; may He make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." "So shall they put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them," God says in Numbers 6: 24-26. The Lord Jesus says in Matthew Chapter 11, verse 28, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Let me ask if you who are weary and heavy laden, with the burdens of trying to follow Jesus, are doing this? This rest that is spoken of here is not simply for the one first coming to Jesus to find salvation. It is meant for the believer at every stage of his

pilgrimage to the heavenly city. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul." Do you know the reality of this dear believer, this afternoon? The reality of having your soul restored when you are so very worn and weary is a blessing that Jesus died for. It is spoken of prophetically in Jeremiah 31: 23 and following. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity: 'The Lord bless you, O home of justice, and mountain of holiness!' And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all its cities together, farmers and those going out with flocks." "For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." "After this I awoke and looked around, and my sleep was sweet to me." Where does the Lord cause His flock to rest at noon? He causes it to rest at noon wherever and whenever she meets together to hear the word preached, whenever the Bible is opened and read by any person looking for the rest which only Jesus can give. Rest from sin's troubling and molesting the heart; rest from the many labors, difficulties, distresses, persecutions, and sorrows that come to the believer in this fallen world; refreshment, nourishment, strength, comfort, and blessing which comes to the one who is looking to Jesus. "The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband," Naomi said to Orpah and Ruth. Orpah went back to her people and to her gods and didn't find that rest. But Ruth clung to Naomi and the promises of Christ with her and her people, and she found that rest. What about you? Have you found that rest? Is Christ your husband? Is He your Shepherd King? Does He refresh and satisfy your soul?

Then 3rdly - The Bride asks, "For why I should I be veiled beside the flocks of your companions?"

The King James Version says, "For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" In the margin of my Bible it says, "For why should I be as one who wanders?" The veil is the symbol in this case of one who acts as though she does not have a husband when she does; the one who wanders away when she should draw nearer. Tamar, in Genesis 38, was looking for her father-in-law Judah to give her his son Shelah to be a husband to her when her husband died because of his sin. But since one of his other sons died for attempting this mission to marry her and raise up children to his brother, Judah refused to do it. So it says in verse 14, "So she took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife." "When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face." Judah should not have withheld Shelah from her, but neither should she have used treacherous means to accomplish a righteous end. She should have waited the Lord's time and the Lord's ordering of events without taking matters into her own hands. Why should we as Christians act like those who are veiled beside the flocks of Christ's companions. Why should we wander away from our heavenly Bridegroom, our Shepherd King, when all that

we need to do is to ask Him to feed us with good spiritual things which will satisfy our soul and allow us to bear fruit for Him? A Christian who will not pray and inquire of Christ where He feeds His flock, will fall into this situation in their heart, their life, or their actions. They will be one whose soul is drawing back from their heavenly Bridegroom when they ought to be drawing closer. Oh dear believer; do not let anything come between you and Christ. Do not let your heart be drawn away to the world and its gaudy show, and its entertainments when you could be dining with Christ and being held in His strong arms. The reason that some Christians are drawn away is because they do not seek to find where Christ feeds His flock, and where He makes it to rest at noon. I pray that each of us will find the answers to these questions that we have discussed this afternoon and realize the greatness of the love of our husband, the Shepherd King.