

THE COHERENT PATTERN OF LEADERSHIP REFLECTED  
IN THE UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SHEPHERD / FLOCK MOTIF WITHIN THE  
MILETUS SPEECH (ACTS 20:17–38), 1 PETER 5:1–11, AND JOHN 21:15–19

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## Abstract

The principle aim of this study is to discern how the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), Peter’s exhortation to the elders (1 Peter 5:1–11) and Jesus’ post-resurrection discourse with Peter (John 21:15–19) utilized the shepherd / flock motif to arrive at their common portrait of early church leadership. A secondary aim is to describe the characteristic elements of this common portrait.

Research on the shepherd / flock motif in the above passages has focused on three main lines of inquiry: 1) the OT antecedents for this leadership metaphor; 2) the literary use of the shepherd image in one or more of the gospels; 3) the literary use of the shepherd / flock motif within each work. There remains a need for an in-depth comparison of these three works. Specifically, can we identify a coherent pattern of leadership using the shepherd / flock motif that transcends each work? What does this pattern reveal about the way the early church understood various aspects of leadership? How do often neglected topics like the relationship between the shepherd / elder / bishop terminology (in two of our passages) and the importance of “the flock” fit into the early church’s larger leadership conception?

This thesis analyzes the appropriation of the shepherd / flock motif in the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), 1 Peter 5:1–11 and John 21:15–19 and argues that they are the culminating statements in a coherent pattern of sustained biblical reflection on early Christian leadership. Furthermore, this coherent pattern was consciously transmitted to the nascent Christian communities via the shepherd / flock motif and is rooted in five unique attributes of this motif: 1) a connection to important events in biblical salvation history where shepherd leaders are prominent; 2) the connection to Jesus’ ministry as both suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb, which becomes the ultimate example of Christian leadership; 3) the importance of the people of God, “the flock”, to the conception of early church leadership; 4) the predatory language of the metaphor which speaks to the vulnerability of God’s people and the need to protect them from spiritual attacks; 5) specific responsibilities for church leaders that are inherent to the shepherd / flock motif.

## Abbreviations<sup>1</sup>

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
<i>AEL</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i> . M. Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley, 1971–1980.
<i>AJPS</i>	<i>Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J. B. Pritchard. 3d ed. Princeton, 1969.
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
<i>ARE</i>	<i>Ancient Records of Egypt</i> . Edited by J. H. Breasted. 5 vols. Chicago, 2001.
AYBC	Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries
BDAG	Bauer, W., F.W. Danker, W.F. W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago, 2000.
BDB	Brown, F., S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Peabody, 1957.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary
<i>BI</i>	Biblical Interpretation
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
<i>BTM</i>	<i>Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature</i> . B. Foster. Bethesda, 2005.
<i>BS</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations cited in this study including citations of primary sources are taken from Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John Kutsko, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).

CC	Concordia Commentary
COS	<i>Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions, Archival Documents from the Biblical World - Volume I, II, and III.</i> Edited by William Hallo and K. Lawson Younger. Brill, 2003.
CJ	<i>Concordia Journal</i>
CurTM	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ERT	<i>Evangelical Review of Theology</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IECOT	International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament
INAN	<i>The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amel-Marduk and Neriglissar.</i> R.D. Riva. Boston, 2013.
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JLR	<i>Journal of Law and Religion</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
K&D	Kiel, C.F., and F. Delitzsch. <i>Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament.</i> Translated by J. Martin et al. 25 vols. Edinburgh, 1857–1878. Reprint, 10 vols., Peabody, 1996.

<i>MFM</i>	<i>Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others.</i> Stephanie Dalley. Oxford, 1989.
NAC	New American Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
<i>NERT</i>	<i>Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament.</i> Edited by W. Beyerlin. Philadelphia, 1978.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.</i> Edited by C. Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1975–1985.
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.</i> Edited by W.A. Vangemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTC	New Testament Commentary
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.</i> Edited by J.H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983.
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>RIMA</i>	<i>The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia - Assyrian Period.</i> 3 vols. A. K. Grayson, Toronto, 1987–1996.
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Sacra pagina</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>

- SWJT*     *Southwestern Journal of Theology*
- TDNT*     *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976.
- TDOT*     *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley, and D.E. Green. 15 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–2006.
- THNTC     Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
- THTO*     *The Harps That Once...Sumerian Poetry in Translation*. Thorkild Jacobsen. New Haven, 1987.
- TB*        *Tyndale Bulletin*
- TOTC     Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
- WBC        Word Biblical Commentary
- ZAW*     *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
- ZNW*     *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

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# 1 Introduction

How did the New Testament church think about leadership? What principles, roles, and responsibilities did it espouse for those who would lead God's people? As the church sought answers to these questions, there were many different Jewish and secular models of leadership that the early church had available. Of the many options, three NT authors, Luke, Peter, and John<sup>1</sup> selected the shepherd / flock motif as the most appropriate vehicle by which to reflect on this topic. In the image of the shepherd caring for his / her flock, these authors found the words, themes, and theological traditions that allowed them to articulate a pattern of leadership suitable for those charged with oversight for the church.

Within the NT, the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), 1 Peter's exhortation to the elders (1 Pet 5:1–11) and Jesus' post-resurrection discourse with Peter (John 21:15–19), uniquely utilized the shepherd / flock motif in their reflections on early church leadership. The primary aim of this study is to discern how these three passages utilized this motif to arrive at a common and consciously articulated pattern of leadership. A secondary aim of this study is to describe the characteristic elements of this pattern. Why did these authors choose the shepherd / flock motif to discuss leadership roles? Why did they use the motif at this point in their respective works? What elements in the motif did they wish to highlight for contemporary community leaders? These are a few of the questions we hope to answer in this study.

We chose these passages because they are unique in how they address leadership and because they use the shepherd / flock motif in a similar way. For example, these are the only NT passages where a prominent figure exhorts a leader or group of leaders of the post-resurrection communities toward responsible service utilizing the shepherd / flock motif. Two of our passages contain a confluence of similar leadership terms, *προεσβύτερος*, *ποιμαίνω* and *ἐπίσκοπος* / *ἐπισκοπέω* (Acts 20:19, 28; 1 Pet 5:1, 2) which does not occur

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<sup>1</sup> Our study will refer to the authors of Luke-Acts, 1 Peter, and the Gospel of John as Luke, Peter, and John, respectively, without making a claim to the historical authorship of these works. We will also treat Luke-Acts as one narrative that contains literary, thematic and theological unity. See section on Compositional Assumptions (1.5) for more details.

anywhere else in the NT.<sup>2</sup> Two of our passages contain a farewell scene (Acts 20:17–28; John 21:15–19) which represents an important genre for communicating information that is vital to a community’s future as we will see. These similarities among others suggest a pattern of leadership that emerges from these passages based on the shepherd / flock motif. It is our aim to discern this pattern and describe its characteristics.

The shepherd / flock motif has enjoyed a rich history as a symbol for ANE, OT and NT leaders and the communities they directed. As we will see, the title of a shepherd ruler is readily applied to ANE gods and kings; God, Moses and David in the OT; Jesus in the Gospels, and the leaders of the nascent Christian communities. The image communicates a greater range of ideas when compared to other leadership symbols. This includes the relational intimacy between a leader and those he oversees; the emotive aspects related to the community’s safety or threats against the group, which are signaled by the predatory language; the connection to leadership responsibilities which are more difficult to communicate with other leadership symbols including the metaphorical uses of feeding, guiding, protecting, healing, and self-sacrificing; and finally, Jesus’ example as both shepherd and sacrificial lamb which became the ultimate model for early church leaders.

Ironically however, given the symbol’s vast history and its decisive application to Jesus in the Gospels,<sup>3</sup> other NT writers appeared reluctant to use the symbol to describe the leaders of the early churches. For example, outside of our three texts, the NT writers do not direct a Christian leader to watch over a community using the verb form ποιμαίνω (“to shepherd”). Furthermore, the noun ποιμήν (“shepherd”) in reference to a Christian leader only appears once in Eph 4:11 within a list of other church representatives.<sup>4</sup> We will say more about this passage later when we discuss the Miletus Speech and the warnings against false teachers

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<sup>2</sup> The combination of πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος occurs once in Titus 1:5, 6 in reference to the same person. The combination of ἐπίσκοπος and ποιμαίνω / ποιμήν occurs only once in 1 Peter 2:25 in reference to Jesus. The combination of πρεσβύτερος with ποιμαίνω / ποιμήν does not occur anywhere in the NT except for our passages of study.

<sup>3</sup> See Matt 2:6; 9:36; 10:5; 15:24; 25:32; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; Luke 15:1–6; John 10:1–18; 21:16, 17.

<sup>4</sup> The term ποιμήν occurs 17 times in 18 verses in the NT. Twelve (12) are in reference to Jesus (Matt 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; John 10:2, 11, 12, 14, 16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25); Four are in reference to literal shepherds (Luke 2:18, 15, 18, 20); One is a reference to a Christian leader (Eph 4:11).

(Acts 20:29). For now, we simply highlight the paucity of direct applications of shepherding terminology to Christian leaders in the NT. By contrast, our three passages demonstrate a remarkable convergence of lexical, thematic, and theological reflection centered precisely on this topic. This convergence takes place across diverse literary witnesses and speaks to a developing pattern of early church leadership based on this important motif.

This thesis analyzes the appropriation of the shepherd / flock motif in the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), 1 Pet 5:1–11 and John 21:15–19 and argues that they are the culminating statements in a *coherent pattern* of sustained biblical reflection on early Christian leadership. Our thesis will argue that this pattern was consciously transmitted to the nascent communities via the shepherd / flock motif and was rooted in five unique attributes of that metaphor when compared to other leadership symbols including: 1) a connection to important events in biblical salvation history where the shepherd image is prominent; 2) a connection to Jesus’ ministry as both suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb, which becomes the example of Christian leadership; 3) the people of God, “the flock,” as an important element of the leadership equation for the early church; 4) the predatory language which often accompanies the metaphor and speaks to the vulnerability of God’s people and the need for protection from spiritual attacks; 5) specific responsibilities for elders / community leaders that are inherent to the shepherd / flock motif or which the motif suggests across the different passages of study.

As we will see, rather than adopting leadership models from the broader culture or having a vague sense that they should “lead like Jesus,” the early churches developed a coherent articulation of what leadership ought to be based on the shepherd / flock motif. This model was rooted in a sustained reflection of the OT’s use of this image and was reinterpreted in light of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Finally, this pattern of leadership was sufficiently widespread given its appearance in diverse witnesses of the NT. Our first task in discerning this common pattern is to review the pertinent literature in order to properly situate our study within previous scholarship.

## **1.1 Literature Review**

Research on the shepherd / flock motif in the NT has focused along three lines of inquiry: 1) broader biblical surveys on the shepherd / flock motif; 2) studies that focus on Jesus and the shepherd image in one or more of the Gospels; 3) studies that focus exclusively on the use of the shepherd / flock motif in each of our three passages. We will review the pertinent literature in each area.

#### 1.1.1 Broader Biblical Surveys on the Shepherd / Flock Motif

Our first set of studies provide a broad survey of the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the literature of the Bible and its surrounding literary context. Jack Vancil's study is a review of the development of the shepherd image within the ANE, OT, Intertestamental, NT and Greco-Roman literature.<sup>5</sup> The strength of Vancil's study is its comprehensive coverage of the shepherd motif and how it developed over succeeding time periods. Vancil concluded the following: 1) ANE gods and kings utilized the shepherd image to speak of the ideal rule; 2) the OT adopted its use of the shepherd image from the ANE and applied it to God; 3) Ezekiel 34 is the high point of the image in the OT where bad shepherds are denounced and a future Davidic shepherd is announced;<sup>6</sup> 4) shepherding imagery may be implied in passages where no explicit reference to the shepherd motif exists; 5) The NT makes particular use of Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 9–14 in reference to Jesus as the Davidic shepherd; 6) the NT adds the concept of a dying shepherd to the use of the image and makes Jesus the example for Christian leaders.

Tim Laniak's study is a survey of the shepherd motif as it pertains to leadership in the Bible.<sup>7</sup> As background for the OT, Laniak surveys the use of the shepherd image in ANE literature. For the OT, he focused on the use of the image in the Exodus and Davidic dynasty narratives where pastoral imagery is central and on the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah who reinterpret these traditions for their context. Laniak continues his survey

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<sup>5</sup> Jack Vancil, "The Symbolism of the Shepherd in Biblical, Intertestamental, and New Testament Material" (Ph.D. diss., Dropsie University, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> Fikes devoted an entire thesis to prove this point. Barry Alan Fikes, "A Theological Analysis of the Shepherd-King Motif in Ezek 34" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

through the Gospels, to highlight each author's use of the shepherd image in their presentation of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Laniak concludes his study with the use of the shepherd image in 1 Peter and Revelation, both chosen because they are addressed to marginalized communities whose leaders are called to make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their constituents.

Laniak's interest is biblical theology which traces major themes through the entirety of scripture. Thus, Laniak concludes his survey with several observations: 1) shepherd leadership is comprehensive in scope with a diverse and changing role set; 2) shepherd leadership holds tender care in tension with tough discipline; 3) there is a divine preference for human leadership which means that leaders derive their authority from God's benevolent rule; 4) shepherd leadership is integrally connected to the well-being of God's flock. In this way, the shepherd image is well suited to describe poor leadership; 5) shepherd leadership is connected to God's redemptive history which begins in the Exodus, carries through the exile and emerges as a New Exodus in the Gospels.<sup>9</sup>

Laniak's main concern is with the implications of the shepherd image for contemporary pastoral ministry. His emphases on the diverse role set of a leader or the benevolent use of authority reflect these concerns, but they are not important for our study. Laniak's observation on the integral connection between the shepherd and his flock is a welcome insight. Many studies on the shepherd image primarily focus on the leader and devote little space to the recipients of that care. This study will show that the "flock" plays a critical role in how our core passages perceive the roles and responsibilities of a leader.

These comprehensive studies provide an introduction to general themes connected to the shepherd / flock motif. In addition, they highlight the enduring impact of the shepherd image for describing the relationship and the contexts that surround shepherd leaders and their charges over a long period of time. Our study hopes to develop or add to these emphases showing their relevance for the leadership of the early churches.

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<sup>8</sup> For Mark, Jesus is the shepherd-king who ushers in a New Exodus; for Matthew, Jesus is the compassionate Davidic shepherd; for Luke, Jesus is the shepherd who seeks and saves, a reference to Luke 15 and 19 as important chapters in Luke's story of Jesus; for John, Jesus is both the self-sacrificial shepherd and the Passover Lamb. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 173–222.

<sup>9</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 247–51.

### 1.1.2 Jesus and the Shepherd Image in the Gospels

Several studies have focused on the use of the shepherd image in one or more of the Gospels and what the symbol contributes to Christology. Jonathan David Huntzinger's thesis looks more narrowly at the shepherd / sheep metaphor in the prophetic and synoptic literature.<sup>10</sup> Huntzinger proposes that the shepherd / sheep metaphor in the exilic texts like Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34 and 37, and Isaiah 40 and 49 evoke the dislocation of God's people in their actual exile. However, he also argues that the shepherd / sheep metaphor in these texts portrays God as one who brings the exile to an end through the judgment of bad shepherds and a restoration of his people to a prosperous land. After the exile, Huntzinger argues that the shepherd / sheep metaphor within Zechariah 9-14<sup>11</sup> and in the Synoptic Gospels<sup>12</sup> is a reminder of Israel's virtual exile. Furthermore, he states that at the time of Christ, the shepherd / sheep metaphor is used to portray how God sent Jesus to bring an end to Israel's virtual exile through his ministry of teaching and healing.<sup>13</sup>

Huntzinger is correct to focus on those specific exilic / post-exilic prophets. They communicate key OT theology related to the shepherd / flock motif including the failure of Israel's leadership, promise of a Davidic shepherd (Jeremiah, Ezekiel), New Exodus from exile to Jerusalem (Isaiah), and the striking down of the Davidic shepherd (Zechariah). They also provide the background by which Jesus fulfills these expectations (see review of Golding's study for more details). The connection to past events and to Jesus are the primary motivations for why our three passages utilized the shepherd / flock motif.

Thomas Golding's study presents Jesus as the divine shepherd-king who accomplished what was left unfulfilled by Israel's shepherds and return from exile.<sup>14</sup> This included the

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan David Huntzinger, "The End of Exile: A Short Commentary on the Shepherd/Sheep Metaphor in Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophetic and Synoptic Gospel Literature" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> This includes Zech 9:16; 10:2-12; 11:1-17; 13:7-9.

<sup>12</sup> Huntzinger analyzed the following Gospel narratives: sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:33-44; Matt 9:35-10:16); the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:10-14; Luke 15:3-7); the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-46); the shepherd who is struck (Mark 14:26-31; Matt 26:30-35).

<sup>13</sup> Huntzinger, "The End of Exile," 252-55.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas A. Golding, "Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004).

restoration of an ideal Davidic shepherd who would usher in a time of pastoral bliss and perfect justice, a spiritual renewal via a new covenant, and the worship of God by the nations. The Gospel authors also adjusted these expectations in light of Jesus' death and resurrection. Though Jesus was the fulfillment of the expected shepherd-king who gathered his people into one "flock," he was ultimately rejected by Israel's current shepherds causing the flock to scatter. After the resurrection, Jesus gathered his disciples and empowered them to act as shepherds with him as a model. Finally, at the end of time, Jesus would return as the shepherd-king to judge the nations.<sup>15</sup>

Golding's focus on Israel's "unfulfilled expectations" provides an insightful lens by which to view Jesus' role as the Davidic shepherd. For example, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had made bold promises regarding a coming Davidic shepherd who would replace Israel's failed leadership.<sup>16</sup> However, at the time of Jesus, these expectations had not come to pass. The gospel writers also had to grapple with the implications of a new covenant which had superseded the covenant at Sinai. Golding also emphasized Jesus' rejection by Israel's current leaders. This latter theme forms an important backdrop for our core passages. As we will see, all three passages show how Jesus, or his designated apostles appointed new shepherds to care for God's flock.

Young Chae's study focused on Matthew's use of the eschatological Davidic shepherd.<sup>17</sup> Chae credits Matthew's interaction with three specific sections of the OT including Micah 2–5, Ezekiel 34–37 and Zechariah 9–14 and for his portrait of Jesus as the Davidic shepherd.<sup>18</sup> These texts gather up similar themes: God is the eschatological shepherd who judges Israel's failed leadership and will restore a united Israel.<sup>19</sup> God's appointed Davidic shepherd will

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<sup>15</sup> Golding, "Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ," 377–81.

<sup>16</sup> We will analyze Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 and 37 in Chapter 2. These chapters represent some of the most critical passages in the OT's usage of the shepherd / flock motif and leadership.

<sup>17</sup> Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> On judgement over Israel's leaders (Ezek 34:2–16; Zech 10:1–6); on God's rescue of his people (Ezek 34:11–16); on the restoration of a united Israel (Ezek 37:19–22).



usher in a time of righteousness and renewed obedience.<sup>20</sup> In addition, God's Davidic shepherd will extend God's rule to all the nations (Mic 5:4; Ezek 37:28; Zech 9:10).<sup>21</sup> In Matthew, Jesus uniquely fulfills these Davidic shepherding expectations. Jesus' healing ministry in Matthew as the Son of David also forms part of God's restoration of his people.<sup>22</sup> Finally, Matthew's "Great Commission" (Matt 28:15–20) extends Jesus' teaching ministry as the basis for God's universal mission.

Wayne Baxter's study also uses the shepherd motif in Matthew, though Baxter's interest is in the "Parting of the Ways" question.<sup>23</sup> When did Judaism and Christianity part ways? Baxter believed that Matthew's shepherd Christology could be useful in determining a group's socio-religious location, that is, the relationship between Matthew and the Judaism at the time of Jesus. Thus, Baxter argued for distinct tendencies in how different authors appropriated the shepherd image in the OT, post-biblical Jewish, Roman and NT literature. He then argued that based on the usage of this image, the Matthean Christians were socio-religiously closer to Jews of the Second Temple Period than other groups. Matthew's use of the shepherd image incorporated nationalistic and political overtones unlike other NT authors. In summary, because of the use of the shepherd image in the first gospel, Baxter argued that Matthew's community could be called a Luke-centered Judaism, adhering to nationalistic desires and operating within the conceptual framework of Second Temple Judaism.

Finally, Sarah Harris' study focused exclusively on Jesus as the Davidic shepherd king in Luke-Acts.<sup>24</sup> She first analyzed the Davidic dynasty narratives in the LXX noting how

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<sup>20</sup> On God's appointed Davidic Shepherd (Mic 5:1–2; Ezek 34:23–25; 37:24–28; Zech 12:8–10); on the promised righteousness (Ezek 36:24–32; Zech 12:12–13:6).

<sup>21</sup> Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 90–94.

<sup>22</sup> Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30.

<sup>23</sup> Wayne Baxter, "Matthew's Shepherd Motif and Its Socio-Religious Implications" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Sarah Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

David's identity as a shepherd functions as a *Leitwort*.<sup>25</sup> She concludes that the shepherd image is central to David's identity as king.<sup>26</sup> Harris devotes two chapters to Luke's presentation of Jesus as the promised Davidic shepherd-king. In the birth stories, she draws attention to the *primacy effect* where an author introduces key ideas at the beginning of the narrative to signal his interests for the rest of the work.<sup>27</sup> Thus, Luke's interest in Jesus as the Davidic shepherd in the birth narratives carries forward across the entire work.<sup>28</sup> Harris then highlights Jesus as the Davidic shepherd in other narratives of Luke-Acts. In Luke 10:3, Jesus is the sending shepherd and his disciples in turn become under shepherds who bring God's salvation. In the parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1–7), Jesus is the faithful shepherd who searches for the lost, which reflects the core of Luke's gospel. In the Zaccheus story (Luke 19:1–10), Jesus brings salvation to one of his lost sheep, a proto-Gentile, as a pointer to his universal mission of salvation. Finally, in the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), Paul reflects Jesus as Ezekiel's Davidic shepherd who cared for the weak and sought the lost and sets the example for the elders to follow.

Harris' study makes an important contribution to Luke's Christology. There are few large scale studies that focus on the role of the Davidic shepherd motif in Luke-Acts. The motif underscores many Lucan themes including Christ as the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34 where God promised to send his Davidic shepherd to replace Israel's leaders and to seek out and restore his flock. The motif also incorporates Christ's inclusive mission to the marginalized of society and Christ's universal mission to both Jew and Gentile.

The Davidic shepherd motif, particularly its connection to Ezekiel 34, is an important source that feeds into the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38) as well as Jesus' commissioning of Peter via the "Good Shepherd" discourse (John 10:1–18). However, it is only one of many

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<sup>25</sup> Harris analyzes the following narratives: David as shepherd of his father's flocks (1 Kgdms 16.1–13); David in Saul's court (1 Kgdms 16:14–23); David and Goliath (1 Kgdms 17); David's rise and Saul's decline (1 Kgdms 18:6–16); David anointed as shepherd king (2 Kgdms 5:1–10); the Davidic covenant (2 Kgdms 7:1–17); David's first sin (2 Kgdms 12); David's sin over the census (2 Kgdms 24:15–17). Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> See especially Table 1 (p. 42), where Harris details the convergence between the Davidic dynasty narratives and Luke's gospel. Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*.

strands that nurture our core texts. Nevertheless, the application of this motif to Jesus lends theological importance to the use of the shepherd image in both passages. As we will argue, both Peter and the elders are to embody certain aspects of Jesus' shepherd role and responsibilities. As to precisely what roles these may be remains the focus of our study.

This survey of the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the Gospels also reveals the importance of 2 Samuel 7, Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 to the portrait of Jesus as the Davidic shepherd. This is particularly evident in Luke-Acts as Harris' study demonstrated. The survey also reveals the importance of Zechariah 9–14 in reframing Jewish expectations of the Davidic shepherd to account for Jesus' death. Our study will fully probe these OT connections and the implications for our core passages. However, our study moves beyond Jesus' identification as a fulfillment of OT promises. We want to know what does "leading like Jesus" actually entail? What aspects, roles, and functions of Jesus' shepherding ministry can we transfer to the elders? Stated differently, what pattern of ideas on leadership did the early church seek to communicate via the shepherd / flock motif with these OT passages in background?

### 1.1.3 Use of the Shepherd / Flock Motif in Individual Passages

Some full scale studies have focused on the use of the shepherd image exclusively within the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), John 10 and / or 21 or 1 Peter. Elena Bosetti provides an analysis of the shepherd motif in 1 Peter.<sup>29</sup> Bosetti affirms the Christological foundation of the shepherd image in 1 Peter. She explicitly links Jesus, the shepherd (τὸν ποιμένα) and overseer (ἐπίσκοπον) (1 Pet 2:25) with the pastoral work of the elders who are called to shepherd (ποιμάνετε) and oversee (ἐπισκοποῦντες) the flock in 1 Pet 5:2. In addition, Bosetti compares the shepherd image in 1 Pet 5:1–4 with the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17-38) and observes the following similarities: 1) the use of testimony and humility language; 2) the examples that both apostles set for the elders to follow; 3) linguistic connections including the ποιμήν and ἐπίσκοπος terms; 4) disinterest in ministry; 5) call to vigilance and suffering;

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<sup>29</sup> Elena Bosetti, *Il Pastore: Cristo e La Chiesa Nella Prima Lettera Di Pietro* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 1990).

6) eschatological hope.<sup>30</sup> Our study will expand on many of these parallels as part of a pattern of ideas connected to the shepherd / flock motif in our core texts. This includes the uniqueness of the humility language and the significance of the ἐπίσκοπος-ποιμήν pairing, which incorporates redemptive tendencies as we will argue.

Nicholas Cachia argues that John 10 and 21 set forth the principles of pastoral care, responsibility, and the spirituality of the ministerial priesthood. In his study, Cachia compares the Johannine texts with the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17-38) and 1 Pet 5:1–4 to arrive at a confluence of ideas based on the use of shepherd / flock motif.<sup>31</sup> This includes: 1) the connection with the historical / biblical tradition of the shepherd; 2) how shepherd leaders must be appointed; 3) sheep do not belong to the shepherd-leaders; 4) there is a need for disinterested service in ministry; 5) the preeminence of preaching the gospel to the flock (though this is only based on the Miletus Speech); 6) the coming of the Lord and 7) the relationship of the under-shepherds to Jesus who sets the example for leadership.<sup>32</sup>

Bernard Aubert's study is one of the few monographs that specifically treats the shepherd / flock motif within the Miletus Speech.<sup>33</sup> However, Aubert is not concerned with the implications of the motif for leadership. Instead, he makes two principle arguments. First, the shepherd / flock motif is the unifying factor within the Miletus Speech and has implications for the unity, structure and genre of the discourse. Secondly, the shepherd / flock motif can be correlated to Luke's broader concerns in Luke-Acts including his presentation of redemptive history. We can offer a few examples from each line of argument. In the former case, the shepherd / flock motif in the discourse integrates the watchman motif (via parallels to Ezekiel 33 and 34).<sup>34</sup> The shepherd motif also integrates the trinitarian elements of the discourse. God the Father is the owner of the flock, Jesus paid the price for the flock's acquisition and the Holy Spirit manages the care of the flock as the one who installs

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<sup>30</sup> Bosetti, *Il Pastore*, 175–77.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholas Cachia, *The Image of the Good Shepherd as a Source for the Spirituality of the Ministerial Priesthood* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997), 193–225.

<sup>32</sup> Cachia, *The Image of the Good Shepherd*, 221–25.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse (Acts 20:17-38) Against Its Historical Background" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse," 122–25.

overseers.<sup>35</sup> The second part of Aubert's thesis correlates the shepherd-flock motif with Luke's presentation of redemptive history in Luke-Acts. This includes the themes of the Exodus via parallels in Luke-Acts and the presentation of Moses as lawgiver;<sup>36</sup> Pentecost via Acts 2 and its connection to the events at Mount Sinai, and Conquest via the programmatic expansion of the church starting in Acts 1:8 and in conversation with Joshua.<sup>37</sup> Finally, in a comparison with two other pastoral texts (John 10 and 1 Peter 5), Aubert notes the distinct themes of humility, watchfulness, repentance and faith, building an inheritance, and the weak.<sup>38</sup>

We complete our review of pertinent literature with a summary of Peter Elliott's study on church order and ministry in the NT.<sup>39</sup> While the study is not specifically focused on the shepherd / flock motif, Elliott makes many important observations about leadership traditions and 1 Peter. Elliott analyzed the linguistic and conceptual parallels between 1 Pet 5:1–5 and the Gospels including the disputes over rank in Mark 10:35–45, Matt 20:20–28, and Luke 22:24–27; Peter's commission in John 21:15–23, and the upper room discourse in John 13–17. Elliott concluded that the numerous parallels pointed to a developing tradition of church order and ministry within the early Christian communities.

As a starting point, Elliott cites the *logia* from Jesus' own ministry and humble service, who "did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."<sup>40</sup> These words were then applied in the post-Easter communities to answer questions of leadership in the early church based on the disputes over rank. Thus, Christian leaders were not to imitate the Gentile rulers who lorded it over their subjects, but rather were to take on the roles of servant, slave or younger members.<sup>41</sup> Elliott argued for a later redacted stage of

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<sup>35</sup> Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse," 421–32.

<sup>36</sup> Aubert points to the following parallels for the Exodus in Luke-Acts: the Jubilee theme (Luke 4); Satan's oppression is comparable to Pharaoh's (Luke 10:8; 13:6); the expression "signs" and "wonders" by Jesus and apostles as comparable to Moses and Aaron's deeds; the Lord's supper at the time of the Passover (Luke 22). Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse," 94–100.

<sup>37</sup> Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse," 94–107.

<sup>38</sup> Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse," 126–33, 478.

<sup>39</sup> John Elliott, "Ministry and Church Order in the NT: A Traditio-Historical Analysis (1 Pt 5,1-5 & Plls.)," *CBQ* 32 (1970): 369.

<sup>40</sup> Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28; Luke 24:27.

<sup>41</sup> Mark 10:42–44; Matt 20:25–27; Luke 22:24–26; 1 Pet 5:1–5.

the tradition based on the different placements of the rank disputes in the Gospels. Mark and Matthew place the narrative in Jesus' Judean ministry (Mark 10:42–44; Matt 20:25–27) while Luke's placement occurs at the Last Supper (Luke 22:24–26). This later stage emphasized issues of discipleship, self-abnegation and the Eucharist. Finally, Elliott summarized the common elements of this leadership tradition across the various passages including: the use of the shepherd / flock metaphor, being an example, humility, and eschatological reward. In addition, the tradition brought together Christological with ecclesiological motifs where Jesus as servant / shepherd parallels church leaders as servants / shepherds.<sup>42</sup>

Elliott's study shows important connections between 1 Pet 5:1–4 and John's gospel based on the shepherd leader motif. In addition, Elliott demonstrates a plausible developing leadership tradition within the NT which is anchored in Jesus' words and actions as well as Jesus' instructions to his followers on servant leadership. Our study will suggest that many of these parallels can be traced back to a pattern of reflection on the shepherd / flock motif. Finally, we are less confident in Elliott's proposed stages of redaction though the rearrangement of the rank disputes in the Synoptics indicates the material was being adapted to fit the needs of the Christian communities.

The review of pertinent literature reveals several common elements around the shepherd / flock motif: 1) the motif is enduring and flexible enough to communicate a wide variety of leadership activities and characteristics; 2) the Gospel writers relied on a few key OT passages to understand and to present Jesus as the Davidic shepherd; 3) the coming of the Davidic shepherd also indicates that God is replacing Israel's current shepherds; 4) Jesus / the apostles are the examples for the church's shepherd leaders; 5) Jesus' shepherding role incorporates a universal mission; 6) humility, testimony and having a disinterested ministry are some of the responsibilities for leaders based on the shepherd image.

Our work falls between a more general survey of the shepherd / flock motif and a study that is focused on the shepherd Christology in a particular Gospel. The former is too broad, while the latter is too narrow. Both types of studies however, highlight the important OT

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<sup>42</sup> Elliott, "Ministry and Church Order in the NT," 390.

shepherding traditions and the way in which they flow concretely into the presentation of Jesus in the gospels. The studies on the use of the shepherd image exclusively within the Miletus Speech and 1 Peter are not concerned with the question of leadership per se. Cachia's study on John 10, is only a partial portrait for leadership but written from the perspective of the "Great Shepherd" discourse and not Jesus' commission of Peter. Our study anticipates the shepherd traditions in the OT and their use in the Gospels, but then turns to the question of how these OT / Gospel shepherd traditions informed the early church's understanding of leadership. At the same time, one of the strengths of this work is the depth of dialogue that is taking place between the Miletus Speech, 1 Peter 5 and John 21 around the question of leadership. With the exception of a few brief comparisons of these texts, no full-scale study has looked at the use of this important image across all three works. To reiterate, our thesis will argue that these NT writers chose the shepherd / flock motif because of its unique attributes when compared against other leadership symbols. The use of the shepherd image was purposeful and shows a conscious decision by the early church to pass on specific leadership ideas and responsibilities to the earliest Christian leaders.

## 1.2 Motifs and Metaphors

Before proceeding to discuss our methodological approach to our study, it will be useful to define the figures of speech we will use throughout. We will begin with the smaller units, metaphor, symbol and image and proceed to the larger unit of motif. According to Peter Macky, a metaphor is "that figurative way of speaking (and meaning) in which one reality, the Subject, is depicted in terms that are more commonly associated with another reality, the Symbol, which is related to it by Analogy."<sup>43</sup>

The following example explains these concepts. The Lord is my shepherd is a metaphor. A metaphor includes both Subject and Symbol as a complete figure of speech . The Subject

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<sup>43</sup> Compare to Soskice who defines a metaphor as a "figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms that seem to be suggestive of another," and Lakoff and Johnson who write that the "essence of a metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." Peter W. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 49; Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 15; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5.

is the reality about which the Psalmist writes, that is, his relationship with the Lord. The Subject is depicted in terms of another reality, that is, the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. The Analogy is that one is like the other. Leland Ryken adds that the comparison between the two elements can be validated by logic and observation.<sup>44</sup> In other words, the goal of metaphor is not to obscure the meaning. Here it is important that context determine what elements of the Symbol can be applied to the Subject in any given passage. The Lord as a shepherd will have a different correspondence in Psalm 23, where comfort and guidance are the primary concepts (Ps 23:2–4) than a passage like Ezekiel 34, where rescuing and gathering are primary (Ezek 34:11–16).

In our definition of metaphor, we also utilized another figure of speech, that of, the symbol. Macky defines a symbol as “one (usually common) reality, that stands for, or represents, and gives analogical insights into more mysterious realities.”<sup>45</sup> In the above case, the symbol of the shepherd (which is a common reality in the ANE) is providing insights into a deeper reality, that is, God’s relationship with the Psalmist. Though metaphor and symbol might be easily confused, we should simply keep in mind that a metaphor, contains two elements and in fact requires a symbol to produce its comparison. Finally, for the purpose of this study, symbol and image will be used interchangeably.

A motif by comparison speaks to a recognizable pattern or unit.<sup>46</sup> It is related to a theme insofar as we can trace a concept in any given literature. However, a motif is multi-faceted and more complex than a theme. Talmon Shemaryahu provides the most complete definition of motif and is worth quoting at length. He applies the definition to the OT, but it is applicable across different types of literature.

“A literary motif is a representative complex theme which recurs within the framework of the Old Testament in variable forms and connections. It is rooted in an actual situation of anthropological or historical nature. In its

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<sup>44</sup> Leland Ryken, “The Bible as Literature - Part 3 (of 4 Parts): ‘I Have Used Similitudes’: The Poetry of the Bible,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 263.

<sup>45</sup> Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought*, 54.

<sup>46</sup> Aubert, “The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse,” 26.



secondary literary setting, the motif gives expression to ideas and experiences inherent in the original situation and is employed to reactualize in the audience the reactions of the participants in that original situation.”<sup>47</sup>

We can make the following observations. First, a motif has many variable forms and connections. Janet Soskice uses the term “associative networks”<sup>48</sup> where core elements of a metaphor branch out to encompass subsidiary elements each having powerful descriptive capabilities and each capable of carrying the full weight of the image. In the case of the shepherd / flock motif this would incorporate subsidiary elements such as shepherding tasks, instruments and locales, actions related to the flock and predatory language. The most notable passage where this occurs is Ezekiel 34 which uses an extended shepherding metaphor to communicate Israel’s dismal spiritual and political climate before and during the exile.

Another observation is that a motif reflects an actual anthropological or historical situation. For ancient authors this meant utilizing an image from their daily context and one that was suited to communicate many facets of the leadership dynamic. A final observation has to do with the secondary literary setting. When a motif is used, it invites the readers or listeners to re-actualize the experiences of the original event. This is why a motif is better suited to describe patterns across time, particularly within the OT where the prophets invite their listeners into pastorally rich events like the Exodus or some aspect of the Davidic dynasty. The goal is to relive or experience these events in order to spur the audience to specific action.

In summary, both image and symbol represent greater insight into a particular reality. Both symbol and image may form part of a more complex figure of speech known as a metaphor, where the subject is depicted in terms of the symbol or image. All three, image, symbol and metaphor can appear in various ways and forms in the recurring pattern we know as motif. In the next section we will lay out our methodological process.

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<sup>47</sup> Talmon Shemaryahu, “The ‘Desert’ Motif in the Bible and Qumran Literature,” in *Biblical Motifs; Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 39.

<sup>48</sup> Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 49–50.

### 1.3 Methodological Issues

Our study will employ the tools of literary criticism which allow us to trace the shepherd theme within each work. For Luke-Acts and the Gospel of John, we will employ a compositional critical methodology in our analysis. Composition criticism is a variation of redaction criticism with a difference in focus. In redaction criticism, the goal is to understand an author's interests based on changes to a tradition. For composition criticism the goal is to understand the "theological purpose of an author"<sup>49</sup> based on the final arrangement of the material. This is especially helpful with Luke-Acts where we can detect Luke's editorial hand in the Gospel but lack any similar tradition in the book of Acts.<sup>50</sup> Composition criticism is also useful for analyzing a work like Luke-Acts where we assume a certain narrative unity between the two books. A final advantage to composition criticism is that it allows us to isolate individual themes across a whole work, which will be useful for analyzing the shepherd / flock motif.

In our analysis of narratives like the Exodus, the Davidic Dynasty and even Luke-Acts and John, it will also be useful to rely on some of the tools of narrative criticism. This includes the primacy effect, as we noted earlier, where an author introduces key ideas at the beginning of a narrative to signal his interests for the rest of the work.<sup>51</sup> We must also pay attention to *inclusio*, repeated words and phrases, patterns, previews and reviews and the repetition of OT quotes and allusions for keys to understanding an author's theological purpose.<sup>52</sup> In the case of Luke-Acts for example, the Jesus / Paul parallels are important to Luke's overall story and particularly for his reflections on early church leadership in the Miletus Speech.

Finally, our methodology will not embrace every aspect of narrative criticism. In this interpretive framework, the meaning of the text is located in the structure of the narrative and

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<sup>49</sup> Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1969), 65.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Moore, "Part 1 - Gospel Criticism as Narrative Criticism," in *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5; Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology*, ed. K. C. Hanson, trans. Mary Ling (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 34.

<sup>51</sup> Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 81.

<sup>52</sup> Robert C Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *JBL* 104 (1985): 69.

cannot be separated from this form.<sup>53</sup> The interest is in the author's story. In addition, narrative criticism tends to bracket historical questions. The narrative world of the author is valid whether or not it resembles the world of the historical Jesus for example or the world of the evangelist.<sup>54</sup> In compositional criticism, the primary meaning of the text resides in the theological content which can be separated from the narrative form.<sup>55</sup> This is our interest when analyzing our three passages. In the next section we will lay out the scope of our analysis.

#### **1.4 Establishing the Limits of our Analysis**

Our primary exegetical analysis will focus on the use of the shepherd / flock motif in Acts 20:17–38, 1 Pet 5:1–11 and John 21:15–19 and the historical and theological antecedents of this image in each passage. To aid in this task we will analyze three sets of primary texts: the OT (with ANE texts as the background), Jewish post-biblical literature and the NT.

We begin by touching on the question, how relevant are the ANE sources which are chronologically distant from our first century passages? We can answer in three ways. First, the appearance of the shepherd / flock motif in sources dating back to the ANE speaks to the enduring impact of the image as a symbol of leadership. In addition, it recognizes the longstanding human need for the type of leadership exemplified by the best of shepherd image. The second reason for starting with the ANE sources is to set the proper historical context for the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the OT. This is particularly the case with the Davidic Dynasty narratives where the concept of a shepherd king is prominent and mirrors the shepherd kings of the ANE sources. Our NT passages of study will interact with many of these shepherd related passages in the OT and understanding the historical context that stands behind them will enable us to make better sense of what they are communicating. The third reason for starting with the ANE sources is that some shepherd leadership patterns that we identify continue to reappear in the NT and even in our passages of study. This occurs most notably with the divine preference for human leadership. Human leaders are to

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<sup>53</sup> Moore, "Part 1 - Gospel Criticism as Narrative Criticism," 10.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, "Part 1 - Gospel Criticism as Narrative Criticism," 8.

<sup>55</sup> Moore, "Part 1 - Gospel Criticism as Narrative Criticism," 10.

be a reflection of the gods or God of the OT. This is a central idea in our core passages as we will see. Other patterns of the shepherd image in the ANE sources also have ongoing relevancy in the NT.

Assessing every element of the shepherd / flock motif in every primary source is a large task. Thus, we propose the following limitations. For the ANE sources, we will analyze a representative sample of texts that use the terms “shepherd,” “flock,” or “staff” in a metaphorical way.<sup>56</sup> Our analysis of these terms in their contexts will also incorporate subsidiary passages and elements of the shepherd / flock motif based on proximity to the original term (see OT breakdown below). Both the primary and subsidiary texts together will form a sufficient sample to develop a portrait of ANE shepherd leadership with its characteristic elements.

For the OT, we will begin by analyzing the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the Exodus and Davidic Dynasty narratives. Both are key pastoral texts<sup>57</sup> that exert a controlling influence over OT literature, history, prophecy and theology. In addition, both narratives are crucial for understanding the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels and for understanding shepherd leadership in our core passages of study. After our analysis of these traditions, we will analyze the use of the shepherd / flock motif in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Isaiah. These books are important for three reasons. First, they reinterpret the Exodus and Davidic Dynasty traditions for the exilic and post-exilic periods. Secondly, they are representative of the use of the shepherd image in the rest of the prophets. Finally, these books in particular form the substructure for the way the Gospels present Jesus in his role as the long-awaited

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<sup>56</sup> We will be using the English translations of these terms in the respective volumes of Mesopotamian and Egyptian ANE sources: James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature - Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Walter Beyerlin, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); A. Kirk Grayson, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*, 3 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once... Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001); William Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions, Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005); Rocío Da Riva, *The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amel-Marduk and Neriglissar* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

<sup>57</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 24.

Davidic shepherd and for the way our core passages of study understand and communicate about shepherd leadership. Thus, our analysis of the prophets will focus on key shepherding passages in these four books and bring in material from the other prophets where appropriate.

For the OT and the post-biblical Jewish literature<sup>58</sup> the overriding criteria that governs which passages we study are those passages that explicitly use shepherding terminology in a metaphorical way. This includes the terms: “shepherd (s)” (רעה in Hebrew / ποιμήν in Greek); “to shepherd” (רעה in Hebrew / ποιμαίνω in Greek);<sup>59</sup> “flock” (עדר in Hebrew / ποίμνιον in Greek); “sheep” (צאן in Hebrew / πρόβατον in Greek) and “lamb(s)” (שה in Hebrew / ἀρνίον in Greek). As with the ANE literature, an analysis of direct shepherding terms in their context will allow us to analyze secondary texts with other shepherd related words and concepts. Here, we refer again to Janet Soskice’s “associative networks.”<sup>60</sup> These secondary texts will incorporate subsidiary elements of the motif including: 1) shepherding tasks such as feeding, giving rest, leading, guiding, protecting and seeking; 2) shepherding instruments such as the shepherd’s rod or staff; 3) predatory language, figures and actions; 4) shepherding locales such as pastures or the wilderness; 5) various actions related to the flock such as being gathered, at rest or secure or their opposites, being lost, afraid, weak, scattered or lead astray.

Finally, within the NT, our focus will be on the use of the shepherd / flock motif in Luke-Acts, the Gospel of John and 1 Peter using the same criteria of core and subsidiary shepherding terminology . We will not touch upon the shepherd Christology in Matthew or Mark or seek comparisons between Luke and John except at the end of our study where we note repeating patterns in all three texts. We are not interested in a comparative study of the shepherd / flock motif in the Gospels or in the NT. As we stated in the beginning, there are no other passages in the NT (with the exception of Eph 4:11 as we have noted) that use the

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<sup>58</sup> English translations of shepherding language in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are from Charlesworth. English translations of Philo and Josephus are from the Loeb Classical Library. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983); *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

<sup>59</sup> The MT utilizes the Qal participle of רעה (“one who tends or pastures”) to signify both the verbal action of shepherding and the noun shepherd.

<sup>60</sup> Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 49–50.

shepherd / flock motif in the same way as our passages of study. For this reason, our interest will be on how these specific NT passages interacted with the shepherd motif in their respective works and the patterns of leadership that emerge from that interaction.

The criteria we have used for analyzing primary sources provides a basis for achieving our stated aim. We have tried to balance space considerations and having sufficient material to analyze in order to describe the important elements of the shepherd / flock motif both in the OT traditions and their influence on our three passages of study. Having established the limits of our analysis, we will now briefly describe our compositional assumptions.

## 1.5 Compositional Assumptions

Before beginning the thesis proper, it will be helpful to sketch out a few compositional assumptions for the three works in question, Luke-Acts, 1 Peter and John, which will influence the scope of our argumentation.

First, for the purposes of this study we will assume that Luke-Acts is a two-volume work composed by one author that contains literary, thematic and theological unity.<sup>61</sup> In terms of authorship and dating for Luke-Acts, there are two main viewpoints. The first is that Luke, a companion of Paul, wrote Luke-Acts prior to 70 C.E. This is based on church tradition, the identification of Luke as Paul's traveling companion in the "we" passages of Acts,<sup>62</sup> and Luke's omission of critical events in his work including the Neronian persecution (64 C.E.), the deaths of James, Peter and Paul (62-66 C.E.), the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (70 C.E.).<sup>63</sup> It is always risky to make an argument from silence, since Luke's final composition affirms many conflicting opinions. For example, the triumph of the gospel

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<sup>61</sup> See F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SP (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992); William Kurz, *Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation - Volume Two: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); For a perspective on how much narrative, thematic and theological unity Luke ever intended see: Andrew Gregory and C. Kavin Rowe, *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 3–21, 43–64; Mikeal Carl Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>62</sup> Acts 16:8–10; 17, 40; 20:3–5; 21:17; 27:1–28:16.

<sup>63</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 340–45.

in Rome makes sense of every theme Luke will develop as we will see. This includes the Jew / Gentile controversy, the Gentile mission, the gospel and conflict, Jesus as a Jewish messiah and many others. It would not serve Luke's purpose to report on the death of his protagonist. Likewise, if Luke was writing an apologetic to reach the Jewish population, and there is some indication he is doing that by his positive portrayal of the temple,<sup>64</sup> then reporting on its destruction would also not serve his literary purpose.

The other viewpoint is that Luke's gospel (and Acts which follows) is typically dated after 70 C.E. This is based on Luke's use of Mark (which is dated to 60-65 C.E.). It also considers Luke's more detailed descriptions of the destruction of the temple (Luke 13:34–35; 19:43–44; 21:20–24). Thus, the Book of Acts is typically dated sometime between 75–85 C.E.,<sup>65</sup> though F.F. Bruce indicates that it is hard to date more precisely than 69-96 C.E.<sup>66</sup> In this scenario, the author of Luke-Acts is unknown. Because our work relies mostly on literary criticism without the need to establish dependence between our passages, we will not argue definitively either way. For the purposes of this study, we will assume that Luke-Acts was written sometime after 70 C.E. We will refer to the author of Luke-Acts as Luke without making any assertions about the historical author.

The composition of 1 Peter incorporates the related questions of authorship, dating, and literary unity. If the apostle Peter or a secretary wrote the letter, then the date of composition is circa 62-64 C.E.<sup>67</sup> If the letter is pseudonymous, then a late first century or even early second century date of composition is possible.<sup>68</sup> Beare, for example, argued for a date of

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<sup>64</sup> The announcement and birth of John the Baptist, the announcement and birth of Jesus, Simeon's prophecy about Jesus, and Jesus in the temple at age twelve are all framed by the temple (Luke 1:8–23; 2:25–39; 2:40–52); Jesus has a lengthy, uninterrupted time of teaching in the temple (Luke 19–21) as do the disciples (Acts 3–5); the Gospel of Luke closes with the disciples worshipping in the temple (Luke 24:53); the early church continued to meet in the temple (Acts 2–3).

<sup>65</sup> John T. Carroll, *Luke* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2012), 4; Robert C Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 27.

<sup>66</sup> Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Horrell rejects the notion that 1 Peter was written by a "Petrine circle" long after the apostle's death. David Horrell, "The Product of a Petrine Circle? A Reassessment of the Origin and Character of 1 Peter," *JSNT*.86 (2002): 29–60.

composition of 112 C.E. based on the similarities between Pliny's correspondence with Trajan and the description of suffering in 1 Peter.<sup>69</sup>

The case for Petrine authorship rests on the apostolic self-identification (1:1); the mention of Babylon (5:12) standing for Rome<sup>70</sup> where tradition places Peter<sup>71</sup> and where tradition places Mark<sup>72</sup> as Peter's interpreter in writing the Gospel of Mark.<sup>73</sup> In addition, several references in the epistle are consistent with NT traditions about Peter including Peter's being a witness to "the sufferings of Christ" (5:1); Jesus' commission of Peter as a shepherd and its connection to shepherding language in 1 Pet 5:1-4; the connection to Jesus' Last Supper discourse where sacrificial leadership intersects with Jesus as a model for that leadership (cf. κατακυριεύω in 1 Pet 5:2 with κυριεύω in Luke 22:25). Arguments against Petrine authorship include a written Greek that is better than Paul's and cruder in style than 2 Peter;<sup>74</sup> the fact that the letter contains virtually no concrete auto-biographical data of events, miracles, or parables of Peter's time with Jesus<sup>75</sup> nor precise *dominical logia* based on Peter's experience with Jesus.

Based on these peculiarities, various secretary theories have been proposed including the most notable attempt by Edward Selwyn who argued for Silvanus as the author based on his

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<sup>69</sup> Downing also presupposed many of the same parallels between Pliny's correspondence and 1 Peter. His interest was not in the dating of the epistle, but rather, in showing that Trajan and Pliny were creating a new precedent against Christians. Francis Wright Beare, ed., *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 14–16; F. Gerald Downing, "Pliny's Prosecutions of Christians: Revelation and 1 Peter," *JSNT* 34 (1988): 113–16.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. use of "Babylon" in 1 Peter 5:13 with use in Rev 14:8 and 16:9; cf. use of "Babylon" for "Rome" in the Sibylline Oracles (5:143, 159–60, 434) and the Apocalypse of Baruch (10:1–3; 11:1; 67:7).

<sup>71</sup> Tertullian mentions that Peter ordained Clement of Rome while living in Rome (*Tertullian Marc. 32*); Irenaeus mentions that Peter and Paul preached in Rome and laid the foundations for the church in that city (*Irenaeus – Against Heresies 3.1.1*). Tertullian mentions that both Peter and Paul died in Rome (*Tertullian, Marc 36*) and that Peter was martyred in Rome (*Tertullian Scorpiace 15*; cf. *Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 2.25.8; 3.1.2–3*).

<sup>72</sup> Mark is mentioned in Colossians and Philemon (Col 4:10; Phlm 24), both likely written from Rome during Paul's imprisonment in 60–62 A.D.

<sup>73</sup> Papias, mediated through Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39, indicates that Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote down everything the apostle remembered (cf. *Irenaeus Heresies 3.1.1; 3.10.5* who appears to repeat what Eusebius has already claimed).

<sup>74</sup> We note, for example, that 61 terms in 1 Peter (representing 10% of all words) are *hapax legomena* in the NT. John Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYBC (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 41.

<sup>75</sup> Ernest Best, "1 Peter and the Gospel Tradition," *NTS* 16 (1970): 111.



“Silvanus Hypothesis.”<sup>76</sup> The use of secretaries and the wide latitude they were afforded in the composition of letters is well documented.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Silvanus’ authorship could account for some of the Pauline style of the letter given his extensive travels with Paul.

In the end, the arguments for and against Petrine authorship are not sufficiently decisive to settle the dispute. Thus, for the purposes of this study, we shall identify the author of 1 Peter as the apostle Peter who is mediated through the Gospels and early church literary traditions. Finally, we accept that 1 Peter represents a genuine epistle<sup>78</sup> written as an encouragement to the communities of Asia Minor who were undergoing various and diverse trials.<sup>79</sup> As we will see, this will become important given the way Peter connects the shepherd / flock motif throughout various parts of his letter.

Finally, on the question of the authorship and dating of John’s Gospel, we shall summarize C.K. Barrett’s lengthy treatment of this topic in his commentary on John.<sup>80</sup> Barrett first reviews several possibilities for the origin of John’s gospel. One viewpoint is that the apostle John, a disciple of Jesus, was the author based on the witness of Irenaeus (130-200 C.E.). Barrett also catalogues the internal evidence which refers to this same disciple (the so-called beloved disciple)<sup>81</sup> as the author (John 21:24). Another viewpoint is that a certain John the elder (ca. 100 C.E.) who knew the apostles wrote the gospel based on the witness of Papias (ca. 140 C.E.).<sup>82</sup> Barrett also reviews the reception of the gospel in the

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<sup>76</sup> Both Goppelt and Davids both accept Petrine authorship and believe that Silvanus was the most likely source for the composition of the letter. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 7; Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 14–15; Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1969), 9–27.

<sup>77</sup> See E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 59–80; William J. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 85.

<sup>78</sup> For the unity of 1 Peter as a letter see: Bosetti, *Il Pastore*, 13–18; M. Eugene Boring, “First Peter In Recent Study,” *Word & World* 24 (2004): 364; Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 11–14; Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 7–12; Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, 18–24; Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 1–6.

<sup>79</sup> Boring, “First Peter In Recent Study,” 364.

<sup>80</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 100–128.

<sup>81</sup> John 13:23; 19:26, 27; 20:2; 21:7, 20–23.

<sup>82</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 100–108.

second century and argues that it would be difficult to believe that it had been published with apostolic authority.<sup>83</sup> Finally, Barrett reviews more indirect evidence in the Gospel starting with the argument that the author was a Palestinian Jew and thus an eyewitness of what he records.<sup>84</sup>

After a considerable review of the origin of the gospel, Barrett concludes that while there appears to be impressive evidence for certain theories, they do not stand up to critical scrutiny and are thus inconclusive. As for the date, Barrett fixes a *terminus post quem* of 80 C.E. based on the fact that John knew and had absorbed Mark's material. Barrett fixes the *terminus ante quem* to 140 C.E., based on the Rylands papyrus. These are extreme limits and the traditional date of 100 C.E. is probably more likely.<sup>85</sup> For the purposes of this study we shall refer to the author of John's Gospel as John without making any assertions about the historical author.

The main focus of this study does not require showing a dependence of one work on the others, thus showing a chronology of dating is not crucial. However, all three works were likely composed before 100 C.E. This is important to note because it demonstrates that already by the end of the century, the primitive church had developed a well-articulated and fairly uniform way of speaking about leadership. It is the how and the why of this pattern of leadership based on the shepherd / flock motif which we hope to uncover in the rest of our study. We complete our introduction with an outline of our thesis.

## 1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis argues that our core NT passages, Acts 20:17–38, 1 Pet 5:1–11, and John 21:15–19, consciously articulated a vision of early church leadership based on the shepherd / flock motif. In order to discern the characteristic elements of this vision we will begin our study by analyzing the different shepherding traditions that inform our core passages.

The first part of our study (Chapter 2) will focus on the historical and theological antecedents of the shepherd / flock motif. This chapter will consist of two parts. The first

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<sup>83</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 115.

<sup>84</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 120–23.

<sup>85</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 123–28.

part is an analysis of the world of a literal shepherd and his / her flock.<sup>86</sup> Specifically, we want to describe a shepherd's primary motivations, tasks and instruments then delve into characteristic elements of the flock? Next, we will analyze two additional uses of the literal shepherd language in the OT including biblical figures as shepherds and as a sign of blessing / curse. Finally, we will analyze the affective elements which shepherding language evokes (security and fear) and note their impact throughout the rest of the literature. The goal of this section is to be immersed in the thought world and language of the shepherding context in order to understand the perspective of an ANE or OT reader encountering these texts. How would they have perceived the use of the motif in various contexts? This will allow us to better interpret passages where shepherding terminology is used metaphorically.

The second part of Chapter Two involves an analysis of the historical and theological antecedents of the shepherd / flock motif within the ANE, OT and post-biblical Jewish literature. As we noted, the ANE texts serve as important historical background for the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the OT, which forms the context for the Gospels and by extension our three passages. Our analysis of the OT will be specific to those shepherding contexts that influence how our passages of study treat the topic of shepherd leadership.

The second part of our study (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) will consist of a literary analysis of the shepherd / flock motif in the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), 1 Pet 5:1–11 and John 21:15–19. Our thesis argues that each passage represents the final statement in a sustained biblical reflection on leadership and the shepherd / flock motif. For this reason, we will analyze the literary context of each passage to determine how the shepherd / flock motif is functioning in its respective work. Can we discern a purposeful pattern of usage that transcends each work? What are the traditions of this pattern and what are some characteristics elements? Finally, in our sixth chapter, we will map out the patterns of leadership that each passage communicates using the shepherd / flock motif.

As mentioned, our first task is to trace the historical and theological antecedents to the shepherd image prior to the NT. This is the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>86</sup> The overwhelming majority of references to the shepherd image in the ancient world picture a male shepherd. There are a few references to a shepherdess in the ANE and OT literature. For the sake of style, all future references to the shepherd will only include the male pronoun.

## 2 The Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament and Post-biblical Jewish Literature

The portrait of a shepherd tending his flocks is long-standing image owing to the raising of animals and the nomadic herding of goats and sheep that formed an integral part of the ANE economy.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Israel's social, religious and economic history was steeped in the nomadic, semi-nomadic and pastoralist contexts of the ANE. The Book of Genesis, for example, whose roots likely extend to the end of the Bronze age (1200 B.C.E.),<sup>2</sup> records that Abel was "a shepherd of sheep" (ποιμῆν προβάτων) (Gen 4:2, 4 LXX)<sup>3</sup> In addition, some of Israel's most important leaders depended on the shepherding trade for their livelihoods or began as shepherds caring for their flocks (e.g., Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David).<sup>4</sup>

The universal nature of the shepherding task in the ANE, with its attendant responsibilities of feeding, guiding, and protecting and the vulnerabilities and dependencies of the flock itself, made it a ready symbol for communicating the type of care that gods and kings were to give their people. The biblical writers adopted these symbols to speak about Yahweh's compassionate care and those of his designated rulers over God's people.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the historical, literary and theological antecedents of the shepherd / flock motif in the ANE, OT, and Jewish post-biblical literature. Tracing the shepherd / flock motif's ancient background allows us to track the development of this image over time and provides us with a rich pattern of ideas that are associated with this important

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<sup>1</sup> Archaeo-zoological remains in Cyprus indicate that sheep were being herded for their production of milk and meat by the early 10<sup>th</sup> millennium and being bred for milk and wool by the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium in the Middle East. Jean-Denis Vigne et al., "The Early Process of Mammal Domestication in the Near East: New Evidence from the Pre-Neolithic and Pre-Pottery Neolithic in Cyprus," *Current Anthropology* 52 (2011): 262; Xavier Rognon, Emmanuelle Vila, and Etienne Verrier, "L'évolution Des Espèces Animales Suite à La Domestication, Conséquences Pour Les Ressources Génétiques," *Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie d'Agriculture de France* (2009): 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7–9.

<sup>3</sup> The construction in the LXX is distinct from the Masoretic text which typically uses the verbal participle רעה ("one who tends or pastures") where the LXX uses a noun (ποιμῆν). This will be a common replacement pattern for many shepherd related texts when comparing the Septuagint to the Hebrew text.

<sup>4</sup> Abraham (Gen 13:7–8); Isaac (Gen 26:20); Jacob (Gen 30:31, 36); Joseph (Gen 37:2); Moses (Exod 3:1); David (1 Sam 16:11).

leadership metaphor. These patterns and the narratives to which they point form the historical, literary, and theological backdrop for how our three passages of study utilize the shepherd / flock motif.

Our first task will be to delineate the literal uses of the shepherd / flock language in order to understand and appropriate its metaphorical uses. This is necessary in a modern culture, where the metaphor no longer has the same explanatory power as in the ancient world or no longer carries the rich level of associations inherent in the symbol. Ryken's advice is appropriate. He states, that "metaphors are images or pictures first of all. Their impact depends on letting the literal level sink into one's consciousness before carrying over the meaning to the figurative or second level. If this is not done, the whole point of speaking in metaphors evaporates."<sup>5</sup>

After looking at the literal level of the shepherd and his flocks, we will analyze the metaphorical uses of the shepherd / flock motif within the literature mentioned. What do these shepherd sources convey with respect to the function, roles and responsibilities of the gods / God / leaders over the people they led? What does the shepherd image convey in terms of the relationship between a leader and those he leads? How is the image changing or being adapted to fit new historical realities? How do these patterns of usage influence the use of the shepherd / flock motif in our three principal texts?

## **2.1 Literal Uses of the Shepherd / Flock Language**

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, animal husbandry and the herding of animals formed an integral part of the ANE economy as well as its social and religious life. This importance is enshrined in the laws, treaties, contracts, royal texts and correspondences of the ANE<sup>6</sup> as well as in Israel's sacred literature and later Jewish post-biblical texts. Given the

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<sup>5</sup> Ryken, "The Bible as Literature," 263.

<sup>6</sup> Beckman notes how herding formed a major constituent of the Hittite economy as enshrined in Hittite laws that dealt with the tariffs for and theft of animals and the production of wool; in ritual texts that mention animal sacrifices, products (milk, butter, hides) and temple herdsmen and flocks; in royal administrative correspondence that speaks of protecting sheep and granting access to pastures; in royal treaties for grazing rights among competing factions and in royal archives that mention cattle and herds as the spoils of war and as a measure of wealth. Gary Beckman, "Herding and Herdsmen in Hittite Culture," in *Documentum Asiae Minoris Antiquae: Festschrift für Heinrich Otten zum 75 Geburtstag*, ed. Erich Neu and Christel Rüster (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), 33–35, 41.

pervasive nature of the shepherding task in the ANE, the OT and the Jewish literature, it will be beneficial to map out a basic understanding of the literal level of the shepherd / flock motif in order to better appropriate its metaphorical uses.

### 2.1.1 The Task of Shepherding

The primary task of a shepherd was to care for the welfare of the animals that were placed under his care. A typical ANE “herding contract” gives a historical glimpse into this core shepherding function.<sup>7</sup> Through a series of penalties and rewards, the contracts protected the owners of the flocks which could be private individuals, a temple or even a state authority.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the contracts provided economic incentives for the shepherd to care for the owners’ flocks. In some cases, the shepherd was given a certain loss allowance if the flock were diminished via predators or diseases. At the end of his contract, he could be paid through a share of the profits from the flock, whether it was in produce from the animals (wool, meat or milk) or sometimes portions of the flock itself (Gen 30:32). In some cases, the shepherd was rewarded for the growth of the flock during the contract period.<sup>9</sup> Presumably, the same incentives would still apply even if a shepherd cared for his family’s flock (1 Sam 16:11) since the family’s economic welfare was often tied to the shepherding profession (Gen 30:43; 31:19; 46:32).<sup>10</sup>

Thus, one of the shepherd’s primary concerns was the well-being of his flock. This would include the dual tasks of adequate feeding (Exod 3:1) and watering (Gen 29:7) on the one hand and protection from diseases, elements and predators (1 Sam 17:34) on the other. When sheep wandered, became lost or were scattered, as sheep are prone to do, the shepherd’s task also included finding and gathering strays. Furthermore, when members of the flock became injured, ill or weak through malnutrition or pregnancy, the shepherd had a strong economic incentive to nurse them back to health since his compensation and his family’s economic well-being were directly tied to the size or growth of his flock.

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<sup>7</sup> J N. Postgate, “Some Old Babylonian Shepherds and Their Flocks,” *JSS* 20 (1975): 1–21.

<sup>8</sup> Postgate, “Some Old Babylonian Shepherds and Their Flocks,” 2.

<sup>9</sup> Postgate, “Some Old Babylonian Shepherds and Their Flocks,” 5–7.

<sup>10</sup> Gen 13:5; 21:28; 24:35; Deut 32:14; Ps 144:13.

These tasks were greatly influenced by the type of herding that was practiced: sedentary, transhumant or nomadic<sup>11</sup> with each one suggesting successively further distances that the shepherd had to traverse with his flock leading to greater risks in performing the primary duties of a shepherd. In a sedentary system, the animals were kept close to permanent settlements and grazing and watering were somewhat routine. We get a sense for the daily rhythm of sedentary herding when Jacob encounters the shepherds of Haran near a well and instructs them to water the sheep and pasture them before gathering them up (Gen 29:7). In transhumant or nomadic contexts, a shepherd encountered many more risks: grazing or watering holes could be scarcer, terrains could be more unfamiliar, weather could be more unpredictable, and animals had to travel farther for food and water increasing the risk of injury or illness. Being close to a permanent settlement was no guarantee of greater safety for the flock. David, being a close distance to his family that he could be called upon by Samuel, still encountered attacks by predators when tending his father’s flocks (1 Sam 17:34, 36).

The daily physical and emotional demands of the shepherd coupled with the vulnerabilities of the flock created a natural symbol for leadership. As Laniak notes, “the movement, the isolation, the variety, the adjustments, the demands — contributed to a knowledge and ‘skill set’ that distinguished shepherds as remarkably and broadly capable persons. They were known for independence, resourcefulness, adaptability, courage and vigilance. Their profession cultivated a capacity for attentiveness, self-sacrifice and compassion.”<sup>12</sup> Later we will note the way some ancient writers and even the Hebrew scriptures came to suggest that shepherding served as a type of apprenticeship for kingship / leadership.

### 2.1.2 The Tools of a Shepherd

The shepherd carried two primary instruments to complement his tasks: the “rod” (טֹבַעַת in the HB and ῥάβδος in the LXX) and the “staff” (מִשְׁעֵנָה in the HB and βακτηρία in the LXX)

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<sup>11</sup> Oded Borowski, *Every Living Thing: Daily Use of Animals in Ancient Israel* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 1998), 40–45.

<sup>12</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 57.

(note their distinct use in Psalm 23:4 where both are instruments of comfort). The shepherd also carried a leather bag or purse, in which he held smaller items, like rocks and food (1 Sam 17:49) as well as a sling which could be used in self-defense (1 Sam 17:40). For our purposes, we will only focus on the two primary instruments since they carry greater metaphorical weight.

The rod was a carved wooden club with a rounded head which was used for the protection, discipline and examination of the flock. In terms of protection, the rod could be thrown with great accuracy to ward off predators<sup>13</sup> or it could be used to defend the shepherd from attack. There is some indication that David used the rod when he described how he killed a lion and a bear who had attacked his flock (1 Sam 17:35). In this regard, the rod could also be seen as extension of the shepherd's arm to symbolize his strength, power and authority with which he protected himself and his flock.<sup>14</sup> When used metaphorically in this way, it is often translated as "scepter" and signifies political or national authority (Isa 14:5; Zech 10:11; Amos 1:5).

As an instrument of discipline, this same rod could be thrown, again with great accuracy, to stop a wayward sheep from wandering or entering into a dangerous situation. When Isaiah speaks of the Assyrians who strike with the "rod" and lift up their "staff" against Israel (Isa 10:24), he is talking about shepherding instruments that stand in for God's discipline of his people. Finally, the rod was used to count sheep and to examine them carefully (Lev 27:32). Periodically the sheep in the herd would be counted and scrutinized as they left the sheepfold. At other times, the shepherd would use the rod to part the sheep's thick wool as the shepherd carefully examined the skin for signs of wounds or disease.<sup>15</sup> In time, this process came to symbolize coming under authority of the Lord ("to pass under the rod") in order that he might carefully examine his people (Ezek 20:37). God did this to ensure that his people were ready to renew their covenant with him.

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<sup>13</sup> Keller notes how he often watched competitions among the younger shepherds as a way for them to hone the speed, accuracy and distance that the rod could be thrown. W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 93.

<sup>14</sup> Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 93.

<sup>15</sup> Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 95–96.



The staff was designed specifically for sheep. It was a long slender stick with a crook or hook on one end. It was used to guide sheep in a particular direction by nudging them with the tip or crook, to rescue sheep in difficult situations from brambles or crevices where they had strayed or to bring sheep close to the shepherd for examination.<sup>16</sup> With time, the staff came to represent the protection of a leader for God’s people. We see this in Psalm 23, where the shepherd’s staff is a source of comfort. The staff also came to represent a leader’s ruling authority (Gen 49:10). In Isa 14:5, the Lord breaks the staff of the wicked (the scepter of rulers as the verse continues) to signify that he is bringing an end to Babylon’s violent rule. Here, the staff symbolizes the authority of the king. In the case of Moses, who was a shepherd before he became a leader, his staff also symbolizes power and authority. It is infused with miraculous powers and is the instrument by which God brings about Israel’s release from bondage.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.1.3 Value of the Flock

As for the flocks, composed of sheep and goats, they were a valuable commodity. Indeed, the products of herds were extensive and included meat, cheese, milk, skins for clothing and other leather goods, bones for instruments, and wool (Gen 38:13 ; 1 Sam 25:4; Prov 27:23–27). In addition, the animals could be used as a form of barter or as part of ritual sacrifices and celebrations.<sup>18</sup> We note, for example, that the banquet list at the dedication of the royal palace by Ashurbanipal II (883–859 B.C.E.) included 1,000 calves, 10,000 stable sheep, 15,000 lambs, 1,000 *sihhu*-sheep, and 1,000 spring lambs among the smorgasbord.<sup>19</sup> At the dedication of Solomon’s temple, 120,000 sheep were offered for sacrifice (1 Kgs 8:63). This is why the flocks needed constant vigilance and protection particularly from thieves. Finally,

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<sup>16</sup> Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 99–102.

<sup>17</sup> Exo 7:17, 8:5, 9:23, 14:16.

<sup>18</sup> Beckman, “Herding and Herdsmen in Hittite Culture,” 33; Golding, “Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ,” 61–64; Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 51–53; Postgate, “Some Old Babylonian Shepherds and Their Flocks,” 5.

<sup>19</sup> ANET 560.

flocks reflected a person's economic status, a sign of divine blessing from God,<sup>20</sup> and even noted as part of the spoils of war.<sup>21</sup>

#### 2.1.4 Biblical Figures as Literal Shepherds

An important component of the shepherd / flock motif is that many of the Bible's most important leaders were portrayed as actual shepherds. Many of the patriarchs in Genesis including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's wife Rachel and Joseph, were shepherds.<sup>22</sup> Both Moses (Exod 3:1) and David (1 Sam 16:11, 19, 17:34–36) were also shepherds prior to their service to the Lord's people. This connection to the actual profession of shepherding created a natural link between the literal and metaphorical uses of the shepherd image. This is the case with Moses who is tending flocks in the wilderness (Exod 3:1) when he is called upon to lead God's people through another wilderness on their way to the Promised Land (Exod 3:10). It occurs in paradigmatic fashion in the life of David who dedicated himself to tending his father's sheep but whom God later took from the "pasture and sheep" to rule over his people Israel (2 Sam 7:8).

We see this similar pattern in a few places of the written record, whether before or after the OT. Thus, among Mesopotamia's first kings, both Etana and Lugalbanda (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium) are listed as shepherds.<sup>23</sup> The Qumran scribe who penned *midrash* of 1 Sam 16–17 for Psalm 151 (1Q11 28:3–13) used the same word, "to rule" (לְשׂוֹרֵת), to describe David's rule over the sheep (28:4) as well as David's rule over the children of God's covenant (28:11) suggesting the mixture between literal and metaphorical. In another case, according to Josephus, the shepherding profession meant Abel was more virtuous than his brother Cain who was a farmer.<sup>24</sup> Finally in the midrash to the Exodus (Shemot Rabah 2:2), Moses' tender care for a runaway lamb forms the divine criteria by which God makes him a shepherd

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<sup>20</sup> Gen 13:2 26:14; 30:30; 1 Sam 25:2; 2 Sam 12:2; cf. *Ant.* 2.263; *Ant.* 6.295.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Sam 27:9; 30:20; cf. *Ant.* 8.294, 295; 9.85.

<sup>22</sup> Gen 13:2; 26:13, 20; 30:29, 30; 29:9 and 37:2, 13.

<sup>23</sup> ANET 265, 266.

<sup>24</sup> *Ant.* 1.53–55.

of God's people.<sup>25</sup> As these examples demonstrate, the move from a literal to metaphorical shepherd may have been "a standard literary motif" whereby shepherding constituted an "apprenticeship for kingship"<sup>26</sup> or in the case of Moses, an apprenticeship for leadership.

#### 2.1.5 Covenant Blessings or Curses

A further literal use of the shepherd / flock language has to do with Israel's Deuteronomist history. Before entering the Promised Land, Moses reiterates the stipulations of the covenant for God's people so that they can remain in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 28). Thus, the presence or absence of shepherds or flocks within the Promised Land was a barometer of God's favor. An abundance of flocks was considered a sign of covenant blessing for Israel's obedience (Deut 28:4, 15). A decrease in flocks, which could occur through invasion as well, was considered a sign of disobedience and a covenant curse (Deut 28:18, 31, 51). In addition, the elimination or desolation of lands, where no sheep or goats could graze, also served as a sign of God's judgment over his people and land for their disobedience.<sup>27</sup> This was most prominent at the time of the exile.<sup>28</sup> By the same token, when the prophets spoke of the return from exile, the literal presence of pastures, sheep, goats and shepherds meant that peace, wealth and blessing had returned to the land and to God's people (Isa 65:10; Jer 33:12).

#### 2.1.6 Affective Elements

A final element in our survey of the literal shepherd has to do with the emotive impact of the image. Golding's study included several observations related to this topic, so I will summarize them here.<sup>29</sup> The first is a general comment about the emotive impact of figures of speech. In short, they often work to bypass a more rational appropriation of language and are thus able to elicit an emotional response. As we will see in our survey of literature,

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<sup>25</sup> Reuven Hammer, *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> Karl Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1458.

<sup>27</sup> Amos 1:2; Joel 1:18; Jer 25:36; Ezek 6:14.

<sup>28</sup> Jer 4:7, 20, 7:34; 8:13–14; 9:10–12; 14:2–6; 25:33–36.

<sup>29</sup> Golding, "Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ," 84–91.

ancient authors repeatedly utilized the shepherd image because it was uniquely suited to communicate relational intimacy, tenderness, love, peace, well-being, insecurity, fear and even terror in a leadership context. Isaiah's description of a God who promised to gather his people like lambs in his arms in order to comfort them (Isa 40:11) is a statement filled with pathos for the original readers.

Golding argues that the two primary emotions connected to the shepherding task are well-being on the one hand and fear on the other. Since the needs of the sheep are mostly physical, including the need for food, water, shelter and health, whatever inhibits the provision of these needs will produce fear and insecurity in the flock. By contrast, when these needs are met, the flock will experience a sense of peace, well-being and security.<sup>30</sup> The Biblical writers understood this instinctively and could describe fear and distress using the shepherd / flock motif. The prophet Jeremiah relays God's promise to raise up shepherds so that his people would no longer be afraid, terrified or missing because of their negligent leaders (Jer 23:4). Likewise, when God regathered Israel after exile he promised he would make them lie down and feed in rich pastures, give them peace, and eliminate the harmful beasts from the land so they could live securely (Ezek 34:13, 14, 25). The presence of predatory language in our passages of study, for example, also speaks to this emotive impact. 1 Peter's audience is to "be alert" for the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The emotional vulnerabilities of God's people, here represented as a flock, make the shepherd image unique in communicating important leadership traits.

This also ties in to another of Golding's observations, which is, that the figurative use of the shepherd image increases during crisis periods in the OT. This includes the Exodus (Exodus 12-15), the Assyrian crisis (Micah 5), the exile (Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 and 37) and post-exile (Zechariah 9-14). This is one of the reasons that we have chosen to study the use of the shepherd / flock motif within the prophetic books referenced above. They are central to what the OT writers sought to communicate about this image.

Finally, Golding notes the rhetorical shock when the biblical writers portray God acting contrary to a responsible shepherd. The same affect would occur when Israel's leaders

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<sup>30</sup> Golding, "Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ," 86-88.

behaved in this manner as well.<sup>31</sup> A high quality shepherd is mostly measured on one task. How well does he tend the flock given to his care? On many occasions leading up to an including the exile, it is God who is responsible for the negative emotions connected to the shepherding image. He is the one who scatters his flock, behaves as a predator, or allows predator nations to attack his people.<sup>32</sup> For modern readers, the emotional impact for such actions may barely register. For a formerly nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples where shepherding formed an integral part of the ANE economy and culture and whose greatest heroes were actual shepherds, these narratives would be devastating.

### 2.1.7 Summary of the Literal Uses of the Shepherd / Flock Language

The literature of the ANE as well as narratives of the OT reflect the importance of the shepherding task to the ancient world and to Israel's literary, social, religious, and economic contexts. In tracing the literal use of the shepherd language we noted that a shepherd's primary task concerned the feeding, watering, and protecting of the sheep placed under his care. The shepherd used two instruments to help in this task of discipline and protection: the rod and staff. In addition, we highlighted the value of the flock based on the by-products of food and clothing, their use in bartering and ritual celebrations and even as part of the spoils of war. Furthermore, we noted that many important biblical figures were literal shepherds creating a natural connection between the literal and metaphorical uses of the shepherd / flock motif. Also, in our literal analysis of the shepherd image, we noted how the presence or absence of shepherds and flocks in the Promised Land signaled a covenant blessing or curse for God's people. Finally, we noted that the primary emotions connected to the flock included peace, well-being, and security when the shepherd was properly caring for the sheep and fear, stress, and insecurity when the shepherd failed in his primary tasks.

## 2.2 Patterns in the Use of the Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Ancient Near Eastern Literature

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<sup>31</sup> Golding, "Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ," 89–91.

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 44:11, 12; Hos 5:14; Ezek 22:15; Zech 10:9.

Up to this point, we have immersed ourselves in the world of the shepherd and his flock in order to better understand the correspondence between the literal and figurative use of the shepherd image. In this section, we will begin to correlate some of these elements to the way that ANE writers represented their gods and kings. As we stated briefly in the introduction to our study, the ANE forms the literary and historical background for the use of the shepherd image in the OT, particularly for how God and Israel's kings are portrayed. In addition, some of the patterns that are established in the ANE's use of the shepherd / flock motif carry right through the OT and into the NT. We shall begin with analysis of the shepherd image as applied to ANE gods, before moving to how the image is applied to ANE kings.

### 2.2.1 Gods as Shepherds

“Well-tended is mankind, god's cattle . . . they are his images who came from his body.”<sup>33</sup>

Most of the major deities of the peoples of the ANE bore the title of shepherd.<sup>34</sup> In their various roles, the deities were responsible for the benevolent care and protection over creation and humanity. These tasks were often described with pastoral imagery and terminology and included the provision of rain, crops, and fertility; a righteous rule which did not tolerate evil, impure speech or injustice; a compassionate rule especially toward the weak and mistreated; and protection of the people from invasion or enemies.

The description of Enlil, the chief deity of the Mesopotamian pantheon in the Sumerian *Hymn to Enlil* (late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium) is typical. Enlil is called “heaven and earth's august leader-goat,”<sup>35</sup> “noble shepherd of the land”, the “shepherd of the teeming multitudes, the herdsman, the leader of all living creatures”<sup>36</sup> and “the good shepherd”<sup>37</sup> who is sovereign

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<sup>33</sup> AEL 1:106.

<sup>34</sup> Laniak lists 19 Mesopotamian gods with shepherd titles in Appendix A of his work, while Golding lists 16 at the end of his study. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*; Golding, “Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ,” 387.

<sup>35</sup> In an interesting turn of the shepherd image, the hymn refers to Enlil as a ‘leader-goat.’ As Jacobsen notes, goats were customarily used in leading flocks because of their higher intelligence. Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once...*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> THTO 105, 107.

<sup>37</sup> THTO 110.

over creation and the gods. Enlil is a provider and a source of fertility<sup>38</sup> and without Enlil, there would be no cities, settlements or sheepfolds. Neither the animal world or nature would function properly without Enlil's rule.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Enlil's city, Nippur, is a place where unseemly speech, malice, distortion, arrogance, breaches of contract, begging, and idleness are not tolerated. It is also a place of great abundance as well as civic and relational harmony.<sup>40</sup> Finally, Enlil is praised as a judge and a decision-maker for the whole universe. His word brings forth rain, grain, and plants, indeed the very life of the land.<sup>41</sup>

A hymn to the sun god Shamash (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium), strikes a similar tone. "O illuminator...(in) the heavens, who makes the darkness bright...you protect all the people of the lands, all that Ea, king of princes has created is entrusted to you. You shepherd all that is endowed with the breath of life, you are its shepherd above and below."<sup>42</sup> The hymn also portrays Shamash as a wise judge who pronounces order, promotes justice and does not tolerate usury, bribery, and dishonest judges or merchants. Shamash also intercedes to protect the weak, the mistreated, and the poor and is always ready to hear a supplication from anyone who is in need.<sup>43</sup>

This pattern continues regardless of god or time period. For example, as Babylon's city-god, Marduk is described as a "faithful shepherd" and as a "shepherd" of all the gods.<sup>44</sup> He provides grazing and places to drink, rich rains and vegetation. Marduk also has a sympathetic heart who turns wants into plenty.<sup>45</sup> Finally, Marduk is described as a just and wise god, who frustrates the plans of the enemy, and who blots out those who do evil.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Ishtar is a "shepherdess of the weary people" who hears the plight of the

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<sup>38</sup> THTO 110.

<sup>39</sup> THTO 110.

<sup>40</sup> THTO 102–104.

<sup>41</sup> THTO 110.

<sup>42</sup> NERT 102.

<sup>43</sup> NERT 103.

<sup>44</sup> ANET 72.

<sup>45</sup> ANET 69, 70.

<sup>46</sup> ANET 70.

oppressed, sick, suffering, and mistreated, decides on behalf of her people in truth and righteousness, and protects them from their enemies.<sup>47</sup>

We see similar usages of the shepherd / flock motif among the writings that depict Egypt's gods. The *Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re* lauds the Egyptian deity as creator of all living things and "mankind."<sup>48</sup> The hymn goes on to praise Amun-Re's care and protection over his people in shepherding terms. He "spends the night watchful, while everyone sleeps" and "seeks what is useful for his flock." He "rescues the fearful from the hand of the brazen" and "judges the weak and the injured."<sup>49</sup> He is the "lord of grain" and the "lord of truth" and overthrows his enemies so that peace might reign in the land.<sup>50</sup>

The *Hymns to the Gods as a Single God*, begins with praise for "Amun-Re-Atum-Harkhti", the "four names depicting aspects of the sun god"<sup>51</sup> who spoke and created all things including animals, men and fields. He created the banks and meadows to support all living things. The hymn continues: "You are mighty as a herdsman, tending them for all eternity," presumably speaking about all the living things that the sun god has created in the earlier paragraphs.<sup>52</sup> In a poignant section, everyone declares, "we are yours" which includes the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor. For widows and children, Amun-Re is a husband and a father. For the prisoner and the sick, Amun-Re will deliver them and hear their petitions.<sup>53</sup> He does this because he is "a shepherd, who loves his flock."<sup>54</sup>

### 2.2.1.1 *Shepherd and Destruction*

The shepherd image was also used to depict scenes of tragedy, death, loss, and destruction, which were largely caused by the absence of the shepherd-god. The *Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur* is a bitter lament over the fall of Ur and its dynasty (2112–2004 B.C.E.).

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<sup>47</sup> ANET 484.

<sup>48</sup> COS 1:37–39.

<sup>49</sup> ANET 365.

<sup>50</sup> COS 1:38–40.

<sup>51</sup> NERT 26 (In a footnote).

<sup>52</sup> NERT 26.

<sup>53</sup> NERT 26.

<sup>54</sup> NERT 27.



The devastation is a result of the gods having abandoned their temples, here pictured in shepherding terms:

His byre [stable] he was abandoning,  
and his sheepfold, to the winds...  
at the temple close Enlil was abandoning Nippur,  
and his sheepfold, to the winds...  
...at its temple close Nininsina was abandoning Egalmah  
and her sheepfold to the winds.<sup>55</sup>

This abandonment is compared to herders who forsake their temporary living quarters to the winds at the end of the grazing season. In the poet's scenario, the gods are shepherds, the temples are the huts and the cities are the sheepfolds, which have been left unattended to the mercy of the invaders.<sup>56</sup> This refrain of desertion is repeated twenty-five (25) times to depict each god and temple. It appears quite monotonous to a modern mind, but to an ancient one, each repetition of a god, temple and city would have felt like the blow of a hammer destroying the harmony, social order and human destiny that the gods supposedly maintained.<sup>57</sup>

Further descriptions incorporate the results of this abandonment, "O my city, from you, as from a faithful ewe, your lamb was cut off. O Ur, from you, as from a faithful nanny-goat, your kids have perished,"<sup>58</sup> and again, "Like a trusty ewe, my city has been driven out, its trusty shepherd has been led off captive."<sup>59</sup> In a personal portrait of the impact of a careless shepherd, the goddess Ningal states, "For me, Ningal - as with an uncaring shepherd boy - weapons have been hurled at the ewes."<sup>60</sup> This leads to her personal lament, "In her byre, in her sheepfold, the queen was uttering cries of pain, the city is being destroyed by the storm."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> THTO 448, 449.

<sup>56</sup> THTO 448.

<sup>57</sup> THTO 448.

<sup>58</sup> THTO 452.

<sup>59</sup> THTO 464.

<sup>60</sup> THTO 467.

<sup>61</sup> THTO 463.

In a similar lament, the *Lamentation Over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, the poet describes Enlil as follows:

Enlil, the shepherd of the blackheads,  
this is what he did -  
Enlil, in order to destroy the righteous houses  
to decimate the righteous, the noble -  
On that day Enlil brought down the Guita from the mountain land  
Whose coming is the Flood of Enlil, that none can withstand.<sup>62</sup>

Here, the shepherd image is used to describe one of destruction and judgment by the god Enlil. Instead of protection and care, he has unleashed a violent army on city after city. Sumer's means of production and commercial exchange are wiped out and families, temples and kingship violently perish from the land...<sup>63</sup> After Ur's destruction, Nanna-Sin pleads with Enlil for the city's restoration, to which Enlil responds favorably with a blessing upon

the city. The lamentation ends with hope that in the city of Ur its people may one day "lie in pastures."<sup>64</sup>

#### 2.2.1.2 *Shepherd's Staff*

The shepherd's crook or staff is also an important element depicting divine and royal rule. In a Sumerian hymn of praise to Enlil, he is called "shepherd of the blackheads" who sleeps lightly. Enlil is exalted for his powers to make rain, apparently via his shepherd's crook, "Mighty one, the rain of heaven, the water of the earth is under your care, Enlil, the shepherd-crook of the gods is under your care." Enlil is also one who makes the plants and grain grow.<sup>65</sup> Finally, in *The Disputation Between the Hoe and Plow* the shepherd's staff is described as an instrument of divine destruction, "For when An had ordered his punishment, and the bitterness had been ordained over Sumer, and the waters of the well-built house had

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<sup>62</sup> ANET 613.

<sup>63</sup> ANET 613.

<sup>64</sup> ANET 619.

<sup>65</sup> ANET 576.

collected in the swamp, and Enlil had frowned upon the land, even the shepherd's crook of Enlil had been made felt, when the great Enlil had acted thus, Enlil did not restrain his hand."<sup>66</sup>

### 2.2.2 Kings as Shepherds in the Ancient Near East

“People without a king are (like) sheep without a shepherd.”<sup>67</sup>

For the people of the ANE, life without a king was inconceivable. Kingship was “the very basis of civilization” as only a king could promote the values necessary for a secure, peaceful and just society.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, “only savages could live without a king.”<sup>69</sup> This notion was based on the belief that kingship descended directly from heaven as the will of the gods and reflected their just and benevolent rule. The kings used the image of the shepherd, indeed that of the righteous shepherd, to express their divinely elected care and protection over human flocks in the same manner as the gods.<sup>70</sup>

#### 2.2.2.1 *Kingship Descends from Heaven*

The notion of divine royal election is reflected in the Ancient Near Eastern literature that purports to go back before the dawning of civilization. For example, the Sumerian King List, which catalogues the various prehistorical and historical royal dynasties begins with the words, “when kingship was lowered from heaven, kingship was (first) in Eridu...”<sup>71</sup> Likewise, *The Legend of Etana*, an Akkadian myth of legendary antiquity, reveals that before the world or temples had been created “the scepter and crown, tiara and staff (shepherd's crook) still lay before Anu in heaven. Because there was no king, the people lacked counsel.”<sup>72</sup> The Neo-Assyrian version of this myth adds that the goddess Ishtar was looking

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<sup>66</sup> COS 1:580.

<sup>67</sup> BTM 424.

<sup>68</sup> Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Foster, *Before the Muses*, 81.

<sup>71</sup> ANET 265.

<sup>72</sup> ANET 114.

for a shepherd. She searched high and low for a king.<sup>73</sup> At last, kingship descended from heaven and Etana of Kish was chosen.<sup>74</sup> These representative texts reveal that kingship is conceived and promulgated from heaven, that kingship is vital to an ordered society (indeed that without him the people lack proper counsel) and that the shepherd image (also symbolized by the shepherd's crook) is integrally connected to ANE leadership under a king.

#### 2.2.2.2 *Kings as Divine Shepherds*

Virtually every ANE king claimed divine authority in shepherding terms. The ANE writings reveal a pattern for this divine calling regardless of dynasty, time period or king. The *Sumerian Hymn to Nanshe* during the Akkadian dynasty (2350–2150 B.C.E.) is typical. It is Nanshe, the goddess of social justice who hears the plight of widows and orphans who gave king Gudea, “the shepherd, the mighty scepter. She perfected Gudea with her precious powers. Her shepherd whom she had called to the holy heart, Gudea, the governor of Lagash.”<sup>75</sup> Nearly 1,000 years later in the Neo Assyrian dynasty, it is Asshur who chose Shalmaneser and gave to him the “scepter, weapon and staff to (rule) properly the blackheaded people...”<sup>76</sup> In the Neo-Babylonian empire, Neriglissar (560–556 B.C.E.) continues to appeal to the gods for his divine legitimacy. “In order to carry out forever the shepherd-ship of the people he [Marduk] verily gave me for my kingship a just scepter, enlarger of the land; he verily entrusted (to) me to exercise my rulership with the rightful staff, protector of the people; he let my hands hold an *usparu*-staff, which subdues the hateful one; he had me wear the legitimate crown.”<sup>77</sup> Here

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<sup>73</sup> MFM 190.

<sup>74</sup> ANET 114. Cf. to the Sumerian myth entitled *The Deluge*, which states that after flood, people and animals are created and kingship, tiara and throne are lowered from heaven (ANET 43).

<sup>75</sup> COS 1:526, 527.

<sup>76</sup> RIMA 183.

<sup>77</sup> INAN 16–17. Cf. to Nin-Isina who gave king Sin-Iddinam (1849–1843 B.C.E.) “the shepherdship over the nation” (COS 1:533); the gods who chose the king Tiglath-Pileser (1115–1077 B.C.E.) as the “attentive shepherd” and “chief herdsman” in the steadfastness of their heart to be sovereign over the land of the god Enlil (RIMA 2:13. Cf. 2:27–28); Ishtar who established Assurnarsipal’s reign (1050–1032) granting him the “shepherdship of the land” (BTM 331); Enlil who chose Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.E.) as the king of Assyria, a “shepherd of all mortals” (ANET 558); Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.E.) who is introduced by the will of the gods as the legitimate king and “the true shepherd” (ANET 289); Nabopolossar (658–605 B.C.E.) who states that he is “the true shepherd” designated by Nabu and Marduk and to whom the gods entrusted with a “mighty staff to subdue the unsubmitive” (INAN 75) and Nebuchadnezzar who is described as “the loyal shepherd, permanently selected by Marduk” and “the one beloved by Nabû” (COS 2:309).

we also note the appearance of the staff (see later section), as an important component of kingship rule.

We find a similar divine determination when it comes to the kings of Egypt. For example, Sesostris I (1943–1898 B.C.E.) declares that “He (Re-Harakhti)<sup>78</sup> begat me to do what should be done for him, to accomplish what he commands to do, he appointed me shepherd of this land, knowing him who would herd it for him. He gave to me what he protects...He destined me to rule the people.”<sup>79</sup> A temple inscription describes Amenhotep III (1411–1374), the ninth king of the 18th Egyptian Dynasty as “the good shepherd vigilant for all people, whom the maker has placed under his authority.”<sup>80</sup> Finally, in the *Divine Nomination of an Ethiopian King*, the army asks the god Amon-Re to grant them a king who will revive them and build the temples of the Upper and Lower regions.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, without this king the army concedes that they are “as a herd, which has no herdsman.”<sup>82</sup>

This pattern of divine legitimization regularly appears in the OT such as when God chooses Moses or David to lead his people like a shepherd would his flock or when God replaces Israel’s cruel shepherds in the prophetic literature.<sup>83</sup> It also appears in our three texts as when we see Jesus conferring the shepherd-leader’s mantle on Peter in our John 21 passage and God’s divinely appointed apostles doing the same for the elders in the Miletus Speech and the 1 Peter 5 passage. Already, we can see a pattern that is captured within the shepherd image, which is that right or legitimate leadership is divinely conferred and reflects heavenly leadership. This pattern will take on a new twist in the NT since the shepherds over the church will be asked to reflect the sacrificial leadership after that of the good shepherd who dies for his sheep.

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<sup>78</sup> Egyptian god of the morning sun often depicted as a falcon.

<sup>79</sup> AEL 1:116 cf. NERT 28.

<sup>80</sup> ARE 2:365.

<sup>81</sup> ANET 448.

<sup>82</sup> ANET 447.

<sup>83</sup> See Exodus 3; 1 Samuel 16; 2 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34.

### 2.2.2.3 Responsibilities of the King

Beyond a mere divine calling however, there is a long list of attributes, responsibilities or positive benefits associated with a king's rule that trace back to the shepherd image. This is in keeping with our prior observation in the ancient world that shepherding prepared one for good leadership. The responsibilities of the king, which connect the shepherd / flock motif to his rule, are manifested in three integrally related ways in the ANE writings: a concern for justice, especially for the weak and oppressed; abundance, prosperity, and well-being for the people; peace and security in the land through a subduing of the king's enemies.

For example, In the preamble to the *Lipit-Ishtar Law Codes*, the gods Anu and Enlil call the "wise shepherd" Lipit-Ishtar (ca. 1934–1924 B.C.E.), to rule over Sumeria so that he might establish justice, turn back rebellion and bring well-being to the Sumerians and Akkadians.<sup>84</sup> Lipit-Ishtar then speaks as "the pious shepherd", who does not forsake the city of Eridu and who has established justice according to Enlil's word.<sup>85</sup> Here we can see the divine source of kingly justice. As Erwin Goodenough argues, the king was an embodiment of the law received from the gods. He was the νόμος ἑμψυχος.<sup>86</sup> In this way, the gods are the source of the king's wisdom, his hatred of evil, his desire for righteousness and justice and his concern for the poor, widow and oppressed. This is what the HB anticipated, starting with Moses who acted as God's sole representative for dispensing the law.<sup>87</sup>

We see a similar emphasis on justice in close proximity to the shepherd image in many ANE inscriptions and writings. For example, a self-laudatory hymn extols king Shulgi as a "herdsman, shepherd of the blackheads" who is wise, a lover of justice and a hater of evil.<sup>88</sup> A Sumerian hymn of praise to Iddin-Dagan exalts the king as "shepherd over the land of Sumer"<sup>89</sup> who put righteousness into every mouth.<sup>90</sup> The god Nabu grants Neriglissar a

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<sup>84</sup> COS 2:411

<sup>85</sup> ANET 159.

<sup>86</sup> Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, "Kingship in Early Israel," *JBL* 48 (1929): 169; Foster, *Before the Muses*, 80.

<sup>87</sup> Goodenough, "Kingship in Early Israel," 173, 179.

<sup>88</sup> ANET 585–586.

<sup>89</sup> NERT 107.

<sup>90</sup> NERT 107.

“kingship of justice”<sup>91</sup> and Marduk grants the same king “the just scepter” and “the rightful staff” in order that he might be able to carry out his kingship.<sup>92</sup> In the code of king Hammurabi (1728–1686), which uses the shepherd image extensively and connects it to the responsibilities given to the king, the gods Anum, Enlil and Marduk elevate Hammurabi, the wise “shepherd” in order that, among other things, justice would prevail in the land and the strong would not oppress the weak.<sup>93</sup> As Marc Ven De Mieroop argues, the code of Hammurabi isn’t so much a law code as much as it is a written record that presents Hammurabi “as an exemplary king of justice.”<sup>94</sup>

The ANE writings naturally combine the shepherd image with terms that depict the abundance, prosperity and well-being of the people. Once again, the gods are ultimately the source of this blessing. This is why many ANE writings depict the kings undertaking the construction or the rebuilding of temples, restoring temple / cult elements and offering the proper sacrifices and prayers to the gods, which in turn yield a rich source of blessings for the king, the people and the land. For example, the *Cylinders of Gudea* describe the building and dedication of a temple for Ningirsu, the patron deity of Lagash, sometime during the reign of king Gudea. As the king consults the god Ningirsu for advice the god replies, “faithful shepherd Gudea”, I will cause rain for you when you pray, people will receive abundance with Gudea, there will be plenty in the land, wool, oil and water if Gudea builds the temple.<sup>95</sup> After the dedication of the temple the gods promise to lead through the righteous king, to put a stock on one who does evil and “to put into the hand the scepter of prolonged days, for Gudea the shepherd of Ningirsu.”<sup>96</sup> Similarly, after the restorations of the temples for Enlil and Ninlil, both gods “looked favorably upon Ur-Nammu the shepherd” and blessed him. They promised he would have victory over his enemies and also rid the city of those who would do evil and pervert justice.<sup>97</sup> The reverse is also true. *The Curse of Agade* seeks to

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<sup>91</sup> INAN 16.

<sup>92</sup> Da Riva, 16, 17.

<sup>93</sup> ANE 178.

<sup>94</sup> Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 121.

<sup>95</sup> COS 2:423.

<sup>96</sup> COS 2:431

<sup>97</sup> ANET 584.

explain the invasion of the city by hostile forces. It is because Naram-Sin desecrated the holiest shrine that the gods have removed their favor and only famine and death remain.<sup>98</sup>

Other ANE writings simply describe how the king maintains a bountiful social order. Thus, King Shulgi is described as a “shepherd of prosperity” under whom the land is a “peaceful pasture.”<sup>99</sup> The Code of Hammurabi, which describes the king as a wise shepherd records Hammurabi as the one who promotes the welfare of the people and the land, provides water in abundance for his people, fixes the pastures and watering places of the cities he conquers,<sup>100</sup> makes the people rest in friendly habitations and prospers them under his protection.<sup>101</sup> Under King Iddindagan (Isin) (1916–1896 B.C.E.) the roads and paths are made straight, the land of Sumer is filled with joy and men increase and enjoy days of abundance.<sup>102</sup>

In the same way in the Egyptian writings Amenhotep III “the good shepherd vigilant for all people”<sup>103</sup> is one who loves truth, protects the fearful and whose decree is “...prosperity and health.”<sup>104</sup> The inscriptions in king Seti I’s (1313–1292 B.C.E.) Temple of Redesiyeh deal with the construction of a road, well, settlement and temple between the Red Sea and certain gold mines to make them easier to explore. The people express their gratitude to the gods for the well and the road: They praise Horus for king Seti I, “the good shepherd” who “opened the way” for them to march in where it was once difficult and who has brought the water supply close where it was once far.<sup>105</sup> *A Prayer to Amun* describes Amun as one who “early in the morning” cares for his flock and drives “the hungry to pasture.” In a personal note, the writer also states, “ Amun, you drive me, the hungry one, to food, for Amun is indeed a shepherd, a shepherd who is not idle.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> ANET 648.

<sup>99</sup> COS 1:553.

<sup>100</sup> ANE 165.

<sup>101</sup> ANE 177–178.

<sup>102</sup> NERT 107.

<sup>103</sup> ARE 2:365.

<sup>104</sup> ARE 2:366.

<sup>105</sup> ARE 3:86.

<sup>106</sup> NERT 40.



The well-being of the people, which the ANE writings extol can only occur if the king is able to maintain the peace and security over his kingdom. This means he must be capable in battle, able to protect his city and people from invasion and able to subdue hostile enemies. This protective aspect is also naturally combined with the shepherd image since one of the primary tasks of a literal shepherd is to protect the herd from predators. The annals of Tiglath-Pileser (1115–1077 B.C.E.) are replete with the language of war, protection and conquest in the service of his people. For example, Tiglath-Pileser is the “attentive shepherd”, the “strong king” and “the chief herdsman” whose weapons are sharpened and who boasts of superior military personnel and equipment, adding territory, subduing various districts and receiving their booty and butchering the enemies’ troops and warriors “like sheep.” All these activities bring contentment to his people and in a nod to the shepherd image provide them with a “secure abode.”<sup>107</sup> Likewise, Shalmaneser I (1274–1245), is described as the “shepherd of all the settlements”<sup>108</sup> and a “merciless crusher of criminals”, “the weapon which crushes enemies”, the one who “destroys those who do not submit” and who “tramples rebellion.”<sup>109</sup> Indeed, it is the god Asshur who chose Shalmaneser and gave to him the “scepter, weapon and staff to (rule) properly the blackheaded people...”<sup>110</sup> Of curious note here is the juxtaposition of war and shepherding instruments. Finally, Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.E.)<sup>111</sup> is described as a “heroic warrior” and “shepherd of all mortals”<sup>112</sup> who is not afraid of battle and who subdues the unsubmissive.<sup>113</sup> This is similar to the description for Nabopolossar (658–605 B.C.E.), the “true shepherd” designated by Marduk who was entrusted with the “scepter” and “a mighty staff to subdue the unsubmissive.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> RIMA 1:27.

<sup>108</sup> RIMA 1:182.

<sup>109</sup> RIMA 1:192.

<sup>110</sup> RIMA 1:183.

<sup>111</sup> Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 558.

<sup>112</sup> ANET 558.

<sup>113</sup> ANET 559.

<sup>114</sup> INAN 75.

We see similar depictions in the Egyptian writings. Amenhotep III (1411–1374) is described as “the good shepherd vigilant for all people” who “protects the fearful”, whose hands “hold might”, who is “a leader of his soldiers,” a “victorious archer” and whose word “bears victory.”<sup>115</sup> An inscription in the great temple of Karnak, documents the victory of Merneptah (1225–1215 B.C.E.) over Libyan forces. Merneptah is a ruler “who shepherds” his troops and protects them like a father his children.<sup>116</sup> In addition, Merneptah has arisen as king “to protect the people”<sup>117</sup> and to cause them “to be care-free, sleeping while the terror of his strength is in.”<sup>118</sup>

All of the king’s responsibilities enumerated above reflect the belief that a king was responsible for preserving the social order. Indeed, in the *Lament for Ur-nammu of Ur* disaster has come upon Sumer because King Ur-nammu, the “righteous shepherd” has been snatched away prematurely.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, *The Curse of Agade* paints a portrait of life with and without a king as it seeks to explain the invasion of the city by hostile forces. When Naram-Sin, “the shepherd” is present and pleasing the gods, the people are happy and live in security, trade is active, and the temples are open.<sup>120</sup> However, when Naram-Sin angers the gods by desecrating a holy shrine the gods unleash an invasion. The city is devastated. There is wailing and famine, fields are abandoned, and death and corpses piled up. Agade is cursed as a place that will remain uninhabited.<sup>121</sup> In *The Admonitions of Ipu-Wer* of Egyptian origin, the writer places the blame for the social chaos on the actions of the king. There is violence, barrenness, mourning and despair in the land, distrust among the people and a lack of grain, gold, wood and revenues.<sup>122</sup> Ipu-Wer states his denunciation this way: “Does the herdsmen desire death?” referring to the king and to his people that are dying.

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<sup>115</sup> ARE 2:365–366.

<sup>116</sup> ARE 3:243.

<sup>117</sup> ARE 2:242.

<sup>118</sup> ARE 2:241.

<sup>119</sup> NERT 143.

<sup>120</sup> ANET 648.

<sup>121</sup> ANET 650–651.

<sup>122</sup> COS 1:95.

#### 2.2.2.4 *Staff as Symbol*

Finally, we should mention that the shepherd's staff is a formidable symbol in the ANE royal ideology. We have already mentioned the Neo-Sumerian royal hymn the *Birth of Shulgi in the Temple of Nippur*, where the god Enlil gives Shulgi (ca. 2095–2048 B.C.E.) the “lead-rope and the staff” so that henceforth he would be known as the “shepherd of all lands.”<sup>123</sup> The royal inscription of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser I (1274–1245 B.C.E.) describes how Assur gave to Shalmaneser the “scepter, weapon and staff to (rule) properly the blackheaded people...”<sup>124</sup> In a hymn, Tikulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 B.C.E.) states that Assur “gave me the scepter for my office of shepherd, (presented) me in addition the staff for my office of herdsman...so that I might subdue my enemies.”<sup>125</sup> In a later inscription, Nabopolassar (658–605 B.C.E.) states that he is “the true shepherd” designated by Nabu and Marduk who entrust the king with a “mighty staff to subdue the unsubmissive.”<sup>126</sup> A building inscription of the neo-Babylonian empire Neriglissar (560–556 B.C.E.) describes how Marduk gave to him “the just scepter” and “the rightful staff” in order that he might protect the people and destroy the hateful one.<sup>127</sup> Finally, in the *Myth of Innana and Enki*, the goddess Innana wishes to increase her city's influence by establishing a set of cultural norms that form the basis for all of Sumerian civilization and order.<sup>128</sup> The cultural elements necessary for a proper administration of society include: the priesthood, crown, scepter, staff, kingship and shepherdship.

#### 2.2.3 Summary of Gods and Kings as Shepherds in the ANE

The preceding representative examples reveal how ancient peoples used the shepherd image as one lens by which to view their gods and kings. As mentioned, most of the major gods of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian pantheon bore the title of shepherd. In their various

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<sup>123</sup> COS 1:553.

<sup>124</sup> RIMA 1:183.

<sup>125</sup> RIMA 1:234.

<sup>126</sup> INAN 75.

<sup>127</sup> Da Riva, 16, 17.

<sup>128</sup> William Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions, Archival Documents from the Biblical World - Volume I* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 523.

capacities, this image was directly associated with the gods' sovereign rule over humanity and creation and their protection of their people, whether through military force or protection from invasion. Indeed, the abandonment of the gods from their temple or city, which left the population without protection and at the mercy of invaders could be compared to shepherds who left their flocks vulnerable to being scattered. Likewise, the gods could decree divine judgment and here too, the shepherd's role and crook are displayed as elements of destruction. In a broader sense, however, the responsibilities of the gods mirrored those of a faithful shepherd, whether this image was prevalent or not. The gods were attentive to the pleas of the weak, infirmed, imprisoned and destitute. They brought rain and provided places to graze and drink. The priority on justice in civic, economic and domestic life reflected a concern that the gods would uphold truth and righteousness in all of mankind's affairs.

The preceding representative examples also reveal the centrality of the shepherd image to the presentation of the kings in the ANE. In the first place, the kings were divinely authorized to rule over the people *in the same manner* as the gods. Indeed, much of the kings' actions and responsibilities including the focus on justice, prosperity and protection from enemies actually reflected these same concerns in the gods of the ANE. In addition, the shepherd's staff became a powerful symbol of royal ANE ideology. It was preserved in heaven until a time when kingship could be established, and it was used to communicate the protection and rule that only a king could provide to his people. The divine legitimization and the specific responsibilities of a king such as justice, prosperity and protection, which all coalesced around the shepherd image, were carried through to the Old and New Testaments with varying degrees of conformity. David is the most notable example of the shepherd king in the OT, while Jesus fulfilled that central role in the Gospels.

### **2.3 Patterns in the Use of the Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Old Testament**

Our study of the shepherd / flock motif in the ANE literature demonstrates the pervasive nature of this metaphor in the ancient world to describe leadership roles and responsibilities. Beyond that, however, the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the ANE serves as an important background to its use in the OT. As we will see, the image is applied in similar

ways to God and to his designated leaders particularly in the Davidic monarchy. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to analyze the most important uses of the shepherd / flock motif in the OT literature. Specifically, we are interested in how the biblical literature utilizes, develops and / or transforms the patterns of usage we have already summarized. A survey of the shepherd image in the OT is familiar ground as it forms the historical and theological framework for many shepherd related studies.<sup>129</sup> Our survey will naturally overlap with these studies. Where it differs is on the specific narratives we choose to analyze and on patterns of usage that we identify which are carried through and are reworked by our central NT passages of study.

To survey the shepherd / flock motif within the OT is essentially to summarize Israel's theological history. This is because there are two controlling narratives in the OT, which feature the shepherd / flock motif, and which exert a significant influence upon the thought, history, prophecy and theology within its pages. These narratives are the Exodus and the Davidic dynasty traditions. Most of what the OT says with respect to the shepherd / flock motif either describes or comments upon these narratives. Where the OT introduces innovation in the shepherd / flock motif, for example in Isaiah's sacrificial lamb or Zechariah's dying shepherd, the NT takes special interest in applying those descriptions to Jesus' life, death and resurrection and to the leaders of the nascent church to a lesser extent. Keeping these two primary points in mind will allow us to account for most of the OT's shepherd related passages. We will now examine the shepherd / flock motif within the Exodus and Davidic dynasty traditions, their influence in the rest of the OT including the prophetic literature, and the two innovations that Isaiah and Zechariah provide. The former is a reference to the sacrificial lamb, while the latter refers to the dying shepherd.

### 2.3.1 The Exodus Tradition

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<sup>129</sup> Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse," 183–211; Elena Bosetti, *Yahweh, Shepherd of the People: Pastoral Symbolism in the Old Testament* (Slough: St Pauls, 1993); Fikes, "A Theological Analysis of the Shepherd-King Motif in Ezek 34"; Jonathan Gan, *The Metaphor of Shepherd in the Hebrew Bible: A Historical-Literary Reading* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007); Golding, "Jewish Expectations of the Shepherd Image at the Time of Christ," 116–80; Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 75–172; Vancil, "The Symbolism of the Shepherd," 128–250.

The Exodus tradition represents Israel's founding story as God liberates his people from slavery in Egypt and installs them as a nation in the Promised Land. It incorporates God's leading Israel through the wilderness, the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (the Mosaic Covenant) and the impact of that covenant for the rest of Israel's history within the OT. Michael Fishbane properly noted the paradigmatic impact of the Exodus on Israel's written history. It formed part of the *mythos* for the beginning of Israelite religious consciousness as a people and nation; it was a permanent record of God's beneficent acts toward Israel; and it also became the archetype for all future redemptions.<sup>130</sup> For NT writers, particularly 1 Peter, the Exodus provided ample vocabulary to describe the redemption of believers through Christ.<sup>131</sup>

As one of the two defining narrative traditions in the OT, it is also filled with pastoral overtones. We can discern the shepherd imagery in the following ways: 1) Moses as a literal shepherd and the shepherding context of his calling as it relates to his mission; 2) God / Moses performing the primary shepherding tasks of feeding, guiding and protecting God's people within a wilderness context and 3) the use of the Exodus traditions in other writings with more explicit ties to the shepherd / flock motif.

The first place where shepherding imagery appears in the Exodus narrative is with Moses himself. Moses was a shepherd by occupation under his father-in-law (Exod 3:1, 4:18, 19).<sup>132</sup> Douglas Stuart points out how Moses had now completely identified with his own people since no Egyptian with their distaste for shepherding would have undertaken this role (Gen 36:32–34; 37:1–6).<sup>133</sup> More importantly, the circumstances of Moses' calling suggest a literary connection to his eventual mission: he is in the wilderness, pasturing a flock which he leads to Horeb, the mountain of God. This is a scene he would later repeat with God's people by leading them to the same or similar spot to receive the law (Exod 3:1, 12; 19:2; Deut 4:2). Thus, God's initial appearance on this mountain is likely prefiguring God's later appearance

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<sup>130</sup> Michael A. Fishbane, "The 'Exodus' Motif: The Paradigm of Historical Renewal," in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Texts* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 121.

<sup>131</sup> 1 Pet 1:4, 16, 18, 19; 2:5, 9.

<sup>132</sup> The author of Acts would later indicate that Moses spent 40 years in Midian most likely as a mirror to the 40 years that Moses spent leading God's people through the wilderness (Acts 7:30).

<sup>133</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 94.

to deliver the law in front of the people.<sup>134</sup> We should mention that God tells Moses to bring his “staff” for the signs he will perform (Exod 4:17). It is the final statement that closes out the narrative of Moses’ call and encounter with God at the burning bush (Exod 3:1–4:17).

A more direct indication of the shepherding context of the Exodus narrative occurs toward the end of Moses’ ministry (Num 27:12–23). Moses pleads with God for a leader to replace him, someone who could go out and in before the people so that they would not be “as sheep without a shepherd” (Num 27:17). This passage encapsulates many principles of leadership embedded within the shepherd / flock motif. First, there is a divine legitimization for leaders over God’s people (as we saw within our ANE sources and will see in our three passages of study). Secondly, as we will see, the notion of a leaderless people forms the conceptual backdrop to Israel’s moral decline and eventual exile under her corrupt shepherd kings (1 Kgs 22:17; Ezek 34:5; Zech 10:2). We should also mention that this passage became a source within the Davidic dynasty tradition. For example, Moses’ reference to this leader’s movement (he is to “lead out” (ἐξάγω) and “lead in” (εἰσάγω)), is repeated in one of David’s anointings (2 Sam 5:1–2) and may also suggest military leadership (cf. 1 Sam 18:13).<sup>135</sup> Finally, both Peter and John utilize this motif in their reflections on shepherd leadership that directly influence our passages of study (1 Peter 2:25; John 10:3, 4).

The Exodus traditions also suggests a shepherding context based the fact that both God and Moses performed the primary shepherding functions in the wilderness on behalf of God’s people. For example, the totality of the Exodus narrative represents the living God who guides his people via Moses from slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness and into the Promised Land.<sup>136</sup> It is a long and treacherous journey in hostile territory, where food and water are scarce and where the dangers from sickness, the elements, enemies or predators requires shepherd-like vigilance. This task of guidance is captured through a fairly generic term *הלך*, which is translated as “leading” or “guiding” in the NASB. This term appears in other important shepherd related texts: “the Lord, ‘guides’ me in the paths of righteousness”

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<sup>134</sup> Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52; Thomas Joseph White, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 37.

<sup>135</sup> Vancil, “The Symbolism of the Shepherd,” 138.

<sup>136</sup> Exo 13:17, 21, 15:13, 32:34.

(Ps 23:3); David “shepherded them [God’s people] according to the integrity of his heart and ‘guided’ them with his skillful hands” (Ps 78:72) and in the Exodus related text “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Ps 77:20; cf. 78:52).

The term *נָהַל* also appears in contexts where God provides safety and protection to his people as would a shepherd. This is the case after God liberated his people and did not “lead” them through the land of the Philistines because he did not want them to lose heart (Exod 13:17). The narrative also states that God “led” his people in a pillar of cloud by day showing the way and in a pillar of fire by night to shield them from their enemies (Exod 13:21). As we saw in our review of ANE texts, protection from one’s enemies was a hallmark of shepherd leadership for both ANE gods and kings. Indeed, as we will later see, the removal of Israel’s enemies represents the ideal state for God’s people in the Promised Land (Deut 12:10, 25:19). Finally, in the Song of Moses we read how the Lord defeated Israel’s enemies and in loving kindness “led” the people whom he redeemed (Exod 15:13). Carol Meyers points out that in the account of Moses parting the Sea of Reeds, God instructs him to lift up his “rod” (*טַבַּעַת*) to effect the miracle (Exod 14:16). Now in the Song of Moses, it is God’s “right hand” which is responsible for the victory over Pharaoh (Exod 15:6, 12). As we noted in our review of the literal shepherd, both the rod and staff came to symbolize power and authority.<sup>137</sup> The writer completes the parallelism synthetically adding two additional shepherding terms, “In your strength you have “guided” them (*נָהַל*) to your “holy habitation” (*נוֹהַל*). Here the term *נָהַל* means to “guide to watering place” or “bring to place of rest”<sup>138</sup> while the word “habitation” can also mean a “habitation for flocks” as in the Masoretic text.<sup>139</sup>

During the wilderness wanderings, both God and Moses provided sustenance to the people in the form of meat (Exod 16:8; Num 11:31), bread / manna (Exod 16:12–15, 35) and water.<sup>140</sup> In every case, these were miraculous provisions without which the people would have perished. This is the case with the conversion of bitter water to one that was drinkable

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<sup>137</sup> Meyers, *Exodus*, 119.

<sup>138</sup> *BDB*, 624.

<sup>139</sup> *BDB*, 627.

<sup>140</sup> Exo 15:23–27; 17:4,6; Num 20:11, 21:16.



(Exod 15:25), the water that flowed from the stones that Moses struck<sup>141</sup> and the manna that came from heaven (Exod 16:12–15). In the latter case, God’s provision for manna lasted during the entirety of Israel’s forty years in the desert (Exod 16:35). Finally, there is Moses’ “staff” (ῥάβδος), which occurs 22 times in Exodus alone and accounts for nearly 20% of its uses in the OT. As we saw with our analysis of the ANE sources, the staff was a symbol of rule, authority and divine power. We see this on display in the Exodus narrative where the staff features prominently in initiating the plagues,<sup>142</sup> parting the Sea of Reed so that Israel could pass through (Exod 14:16), delivering water to a thirsty crowd (Exod 17:5) and protecting God’s people in a time of war (Exod 17:9).

All of these shepherding tasks of feeding, guiding and protecting are present when Moses reviews God’s history with his people prior to entering the Promised Land (Deut 8:1–20). He states that God has “walked” (הלך) with his people for forty years in the desert. It is likely that the generic term הלך is also a shepherding term in this context and that the whole concept of “walking” in God’s ways (Deut 8:6) (i.e. not walking away from the shepherd) in contrast to idolatry, owes to this image as well. We see something of this use later in Jeremiah 2 (a text replete with Exodus imagery) when Israel once “walked” after God in the wilderness but now has walked after emptiness and idolatry (2:5, 8, 25). In all, God has led his flock through a wilderness of snakes and scorpions where there was no water or food but where the Lord provided both protection and sustenance (Deut 8:15–16). Finally, Moses points to the richness and abundance of the Promised Land (where there is no scarcity) to round out the pastoral imagery (Deut 8:7–10). It is these narratives which likely led the Psalmist to make an explicit connection between the Exodus and shepherding language: “But he led forth his own people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock” (Ps 78:52; cf. 77:20).

The Exodus traditions also incorporate the so-called Deuteronomist outlook, which hinges on the Mosaic covenant, its restatement in Deuteronomy and Israel’s relationship to the Promised Land. Every element is infused with shepherding language. For example, all

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<sup>141</sup> Exo 17:4, 6; Num 20:11; cf. Deut 8:15.

<sup>142</sup> Exo 7:20; 8:5; 8:16; 10:13.

throughout the Exodus narrative, Canaan is described as a land flowing with milk and honey<sup>143</sup> a description Laniak denotes as a “pastoralist’s dream.”<sup>144</sup> Prior to Israel’s entry into Canaan, the land is also described as abundantly fertile and verdant: it is a land of fountains and springs, wheat and barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates and oil and honey where God’s people will be able to eat without scarcity (Deut 8:6–9). This is in stark contrast to the wilderness, where food and water are scarce and where God must provide both in miraculous ways lest the people perish.

These same images and terms appear as part of the Mosaic covenant. If Israel remains faithful to her covenant with God, she will dwell in peace, security and abundance in the Promised Land. Israel will have peace from her enemies (Deut 12:10, 25:19) and she will be able to “lie down” without trembling because God will eliminate harmful beasts and the sword from the land (Lev 26:6). She will also have plentiful harvests (Lev 25:19, 26:5). Indeed, Moses’ final blessing on Israel foreshadows their days in the Promised Land under the divine shepherd’s blessing. God will drive out Israel’s enemies from before her and she will now dwell in security in a land of new grain and wine where the rain is plentiful (Deut 33:27–29). By contrast, if Israel is disobedient to the covenant, she can expect to live in fear, insecurity and with scarcity. God’s people will suffer many illnesses and diseases (Deut 28:21–22) and the land will not yield its produce, nor the sky its rain (Deut 28:15, 23–24, 30). Both descriptions point to the quintessential emotions connected to the shepherd and his flock: security on the one hand and fear on the other. The Deuteronomist outlook frames the rest of Israel’s sacred history, particularly within the writings of Israel’s prophets. We will have much more to say about the appropriation of the Exodus narrative in that section.

We can now summarize the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the Exodus narrative. As we noted, Moses was depicted as an actual shepherd, whose calling while he was pasturing a flock in the wilderness seemed to point to a recapitulation of this incident in leading God’s people to Sinai. In addition, both God and Moses performed all of the standard shepherding tasks in the wilderness: feeding, directing and protecting. God’s people (as a flock) show their utter dependence on God during their trying years in the desert. Moreover, other writers

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<sup>143</sup> Exod 3:8, 13:5, 33:3; Num 14:8, Deut 11:9, 31:20.

<sup>144</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 84.

made the connection between the Exodus and the shepherd image more explicit (Pss 77:20, 78:52). Furthermore, Moses' staff becomes an important instrument of God's power and provision. The shepherd image also extends into Israel's Deuteronomist vision and in her association with the Promised Land. In this way, Canaan is often called "a land flowing with milk and honey" to suggest that verdant fields, plentiful harvests and rest awaits the flock of God after the wilderness. Finally, the Mosaic covenant applies the shepherd image to enumerate its blessings and curses. If Israel maintains covenant faithfulness she can expect to live in peace, security and abundance. Likewise, if Israel is disobedient to the covenant then fear, insecurity and scarcity will be her lot. This is in keeping with the primary emotions connected to the shepherding task both positively and negatively.

### 2.3.2 Davidic Dynasty Tradition

The shepherd / flock motif makes a prominent appearance in another of Israel's most important narratives, that is, the Davidic dynasty tradition. Moses had already anticipated the Israelite monarchy in his recital of the Mosaic law and the need for the king to "observe all the words of the law" (Deut 17:14, 19). Indeed Hannah's song also looked forward to a king (1 Sam 2:10). The high point of that monarchy came in the story of David, the shepherd boy who became Israel's king as narrated in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Specifically, there are two central stories that form the literary backdrop by which the shepherd image is joined with royal ideology: 1) David's anointing as king in 1 Sam 16 and 2) God's promise of a perpetual Davidic dynasty in 2 Samuel 7. We shall look at both narratives in turn to see what they reveal about the patterns related to the shepherd image. These in turn will be critical for the way the gospel writers understood Jesus as a Davidic messiah.

We begin by stating that 1 Samuel 16 is a turning point for Israel's monarchy.<sup>145</sup> Chapters 1–8 focused on the transition to the monarchy, of which Israel's demand for a king was the pivotal point (1 Sam 8:1–22). Here, the narrator already strikes an ambiguous (and somewhat discordant) note between divine and human rulers. The people have rejected God ruling over them (1 Sam 8:7; cf. 10:19) and furthermore their kings will abuse them (8:11–18). These twin themes are fully realized in the prophets where God denounces wicked shepherds and promises to personally shepherd his people (Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34). The focus of chapters 8–15 is on Saul's rise and fall with Chapter 15 providing the pivotal moment where God rejects Saul as king (1 Sam 15:23). Finally, Chapter 16 forms the transition to the Davidic monarchy, which essentially frames the rest of Israel's history first as a kingdom then as a disbursed and regathered people in and out of the Promised Land in the exilic and post-exilic periods.

In the first narrative, God is searching for king Saul's replacement among Jesse's sons (1 Sam 15:26, 28; 16:1). He sends his prophet Samuel to inquire after Jesse's sons, but none of those present pass God's first inspection. This leads Samuel to inquire whether Jesse has other sons. Jesse replies, "there remains yet the youngest, and behold he is tending the sheep" (1 Sam 16:11; cf. 16:19). Samuel calls for David after which he anoints him as king over Israel (1 Sam 16:13). We note here that the narrative does not provide a biography of David, though the focus on his character is a major theme in his story (1 Sam 16:7; cf. 1 Sam 13:4; 1 Kgs 14:8). Instead, the narrative is "theologically driven by the need to demonstrate Yahweh's choice" (1 Sam 16:1, 13).<sup>146</sup> If the people had impetuously demanded a king like Saul, whose physical appearance was impressive (1 Sam 9:2), God was now setting forth his own candidate and focusing on his heart.

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<sup>145</sup> Bergen begins David's narrative at Chapter 15 with Saul's rejection. His section is titled, "The Lord Gives Israel a King 'After His Own Heart'" and incorporates 1 Sam 15:1–2 to 2 Sam 1:27. Oddly, Jensen begins David's story at 15:34 with God's regret over having made Saul a king. He titles his section "David's Rise" and incorporates 1 Sam 15:34 to 2 Sam 4:12. Auld begins David's story at 14:36 with Saul's rejection and completes his section with David's anointing (1 Sam 14:36 – 16:23). A. Graeme Auld, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 159–90; Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 191; David Jensen, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 100.

<sup>146</sup> David Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, AOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 180.

The seemingly insignificant detail about David “tending sheep,” becomes a major literary motif in the rest of the Davidic dynasty. It is the initial thrust that combines the shepherd image with royal ideology. We have already noted the following factors, which support the combination of these elements: 1) the identification of some of Sumeria’s oldest kings as literal shepherds; 2) the importance of the shepherd title as applied to all ANE kings and 3) the identification of Israel’s greatest leaders as literal shepherds. Beyond that however, the story of David and Goliath in the next chapter continues to highlight David’s identity as a shepherd: 1) he tends his father’s flocks; 2) leaves the flock to bring food to his brothers; 3) emphasizes his ability to protect his flock; and 4) utilizes the instruments of a shepherd to defeat Goliath.<sup>147</sup> At the conclusion of this narrative (1 Sam 17:46), David Firth notes the reference to Gen 12:1–3 and perhaps David’s greater awareness for Israel’s role before the nations.<sup>148</sup> This is an intriguing insight and it is a theme that will grow in Isaiah’s presentation of the Servant (Isa 49:6).

The second important Davidic dynasty narrative occurs in 2 Samuel 5:1–3, which narrates the northern tribes’ anointing of David as their king and the unification of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. 2 Samuel 5:2 is the central text: “Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.’” In this narrative, all of the tribes pledge their allegiance to David and then remind him of two important historical details: 1) Though Saul was formally their king, it was David whom they actually followed and 2) God himself had previously anointed David saying, “You will shepherd my people Israel and you will be a ruler over Israel.” This latter statement is clearly a reference to David’s first anointing (1 Sam 16:13), with one notable difference. There is no previous reference to God telling David he would “shepherd” (ποιμαίνω) God’s people. Nevertheless, here again we see how shepherding terminology is concretely joined with royal ideology and the way in which David’s first anointing forms a key literary backdrop for another important Davidic narrative.

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<sup>147</sup> 1 Sam 17:15, 20, 34–37, 40, 49.

<sup>148</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 181.

We should also note that the wording at verse 5:2 “you were the one that led Israel out and in” (ἐξάγω and εἰσάγω in the LXX) prior to David’s anointing (cf. 1 Sam 18:16), mirrors the important shepherding phrase we noted in Num 27:17 where Moses asks God for a replacement. This reaffirms the critical role of a shepherd leader in God’s economy and links the ministry of Moses (and / or Joshua) with that of David over God’s people. This appears to be part of the thought behind Psalm 78, which covers Israel’s sacred history from the Exodus into the Promised Land and ends with the Davidic covenant: “He [God] chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds...to shepherd Jacob his people” (Ps 78:71). But there may also be a sense of divine legitimization in the Numbers reference. As Joshua was approved of God, so too must David be. Later, in the “Good Shepherd” discourse, the author of John will once again return to Num 27:17 to announce Jesus as Israel’s legitimate ruler over against her false leaders (John 10:3, 9).

The third and most important Davidic dynasty narrative, which also joins the shepherd image with royal ideology, is the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:1–7; cf. 23:5). This narrative frames the rest of OT history and becomes a critical aspect of Jesus’ ministry in the NT. In the Davidic covenant narrative, Nathan the prophet acts as the mediator between God and King David. The discussion centers around David’s desire to build a temple for the Lord. God responds with a play on words, “are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?” he inquires of David (2 Sam 7:5). The conversation also makes a reference to God’s mobile tabernacle during the Exodus (2 Sam 7:6) and thus joins Israel’s founding event and covenant with the Davidic covenant. Next, God promises to build David’s house forever, here a reference to David’s royal dynasty in perpetuity. In the exchange, the transition from a literal to a metaphorical shepherd is made explicit. Speaking through his prophet Nathan, God says to David, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be a ruler over my people Israel.”<sup>149</sup> Once again, we have a reference to David’s first anointing. In addition, there is a probable reference to our earlier passage in 2 Sam 5:2 (“You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.”)

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<sup>149</sup> Compare to Amos 7:15, where the Lord took Amos from “following the flock of the Lord” to prophesying to Israel.

We can make two additional observations in this final narrative. First, of the seven references to “my people” in 2 Samuel, in reference to God’s covenant community, four occur in this narrative (2 Sam 7:7, 8, 10, 11) with one additional reference in 2 Sam 5:2. This speaks to God’s ownership over his flock. This extends into the next observation, which is that God is portrayed as a shepherd in this final narrative through the patterns we highlighted in the section on the Exodus: 1) God reminds David of his presence (“I have been with you wherever you have gone”); 2) God has protected David (by eliminating David’s enemies (cf. 2 Sam 22:1)); 3) God promises to plant his people so that they might live without fear and anxiety (positive emotions associated with shepherding) and 4) God promises to give David rest, which not only communicates the vanquishing of David’s enemies but also presents the idyllic state that every shepherd desires for his sheep.<sup>150</sup>

Here then, we have the literary conclusion to a three-act play. David is “tending sheep” when God calls him and anoints him king. David unifies both kingdoms as the people acknowledge that God has called David to “shepherd” Israel. And now at the critical juncture of God establishing a perpetual Davidic kingdom, God returns to that first pivotal moment of taking David from the pasture to rule over Israel to affirm his decision. Throughout these narratives and going forward, David is portrayed as Israel’s ideal king. He is a “man after God’s own heart”, that unlike Saul or Solomon kept the Lord’s commandments (1 Sam 13:4, 1 Kgs 14:8). When David fails, as with Bathsheba and in taking the census, it is as Israel’s shepherd who fails to protect his flock (2 Sam 12:7; 24:17). Finally, despite his personal weaknesses, David is held up as the model for all future Israelite kings, whether negatively or positively<sup>151</sup> and is the mold for the promised messianic king during and after the exile.

We are now in a position to summarize our findings of the Davidic Dynasty traditions. First, it is important to note the way in which these narratives combine the shepherd motif with royal ideology. Indeed, kingship is a major theme in the books of Samuel (but it is never conceived independently from God’s authority).<sup>152</sup> In the Davidic covenant, that

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<sup>150</sup> Firth once again notes the reference to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 15:7–21) as a component of the Davidic dynasty narratives. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 385.

<sup>151</sup> 1 Kgs 11:4, 33, 14:8, 15:3, 11; 2 Kgs 14:3, 16:2, 22:2.

<sup>152</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 43–44.

transition to a royal shepherd is made explicitly (2 Sam 7:8), while in the other two narratives this combination is prominent (1 Sam 16:11; 2 Sam 5:2). In addition, David's identity as a shepherd is prominent in many other important narratives including: 1) David and Goliath;<sup>153</sup> 2) confrontation with Nathan regarding his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:1–7) and 3) his taking of the census (1 Chron 21:17).

Secondly, in the Davidic narratives, we have another instance of divine legitimization. It is God who chooses David to be king (and before that God who rejects Saul) and it is God who creates an everlasting covenant with David. In addition, the reference in 2 Sam 5:2 to Num 27:17 and God's choosing of Joshua to replace Moses adds to this legitimizing concept. Shepherd leadership is always authorized and reflective of divine leadership. Both these ideas, royal shepherd ideology and divine approval, are in keeping with the practices of the surrounding ANE cultures as we already noted. Third, David becomes the ideal shepherd-king not because of his lack of sin, but because he submits to God's reign in his life.<sup>154</sup> Finally, in the Davidic dynasty narratives we learn that David's line will extend into perpetuity laying the groundwork for the prophetic narratives that anticipate the coming of a messianic shepherd, in the mold of King David. This is the subject of the next section.

### 2.3.3 The Prophetic Tradition

The prophets of the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods used the shepherd image to express theological truths connected to Israel's leaders and their rule over God's people. The prophets reformulated the Exodus and the Davidic dynasty traditions in order to apply God's redemptive acts in the past to a new context. This included: 1) calling God's people back to an earlier idyllic period as symbolized in the Exodus and the original Mosaic covenant; 2) denouncing Israel's corrupt and morally bankrupt leadership as bad shepherds; 3) utilizing the concepts of scattering / gathering to symbolize the exile / restoration of God's people to / from the Promised Land and 4) promising a future messianic shepherd who would rule in the

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<sup>153</sup> 1 Sam 17:15; 20, 34–37, 40.

<sup>154</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 45.



mold of King David (the original shepherd king of Israel).<sup>155</sup> In addition, both Isaiah and Zechariah were innovators around the shepherd / flock motif, which were crucial themes that flowed into the NT and specifically surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. We will analyze these prophets in succession.

### 2.3.3.1 *Jeremiah the Prophet*

Jeremiah prophesied over a period of 40 years (626–586 B.C.E.). He described Israel's unfaithfulness toward God and the coming judgment due to the nation's infidelity. In the tradition of Israel's prophets, it was the Mosaic covenant that stood behind many of Jeremiah's pronouncements and warnings.<sup>156</sup> Early in his work, Jeremiah reworks the Exodus tradition to signal Israel's previous betrothal to the Lord in the wilderness (2:2). References to the shepherd image are latent based on the Exodus motif and other signals. For example, Jeremiah reminds his audience that it was God who brought Israel out of Egypt and planted her in a "fruitful land" (2:7, 2:21). Indeed, it was for obedience that God redeemed his people from Egypt (7:22–23; cf. 11:3–8). In one metaphor, God is a shepherd who has been abandoned by his flock. Thus, God remembers a time when Israel "walked (הלך) after" him in the wilderness but now they have gone far from him and have "walked (הלך) after" emptiness, unprofitable things and strangers in her idolatry (2:5, 8, 25). This is all the more distressing because the nation has forgotten that it was God who "walked" (הלך) them through the wilderness, which was dark, desolate and dangerous (2:6).

The concepts of feeding and watering are also important elements in this chapter. God is the one who led his people through a land of drought (2:6). He brought her into a fruitful land so that Israel might eat good things (2:7). But Israel forsook the "fountain of living waters" (God himself) and has hewn cisterns that can hold no water. Moreover, she is now determined to drink the waters of the Nile and Euphrates, which are bitter because of her abandonment of God. The reference to the rivers is likely a way to refer to Egypt and

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. to Liebengood's summary of the exilic and post-exilic prophetic literature. Kelly D Liebengood, "Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter's Eschatological Program" (Ph.D. diss., 2011), 29.

<sup>156</sup> As Breuggemann notes, "the governing paradigm for the tradition of Jeremiah is *Israel's covenant with Yahweh, rooted in the memories and mandates of the Sinai tradition*" [*Italics original*]. Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3.

Babylon as places of slavery or exile. Finally, predatory language completes the use of the shepherd image in Jeremiah 2 and announces judgment on Israel. She has become the prey (2:14) and the young lions have roared at him and turned her cities desolate (2:15).

Within this context of moral and spiritual corruption, Jeremiah levels a severe critique against Israel's leaders using shepherding terminology. The key passage is Jer 23:1–6. It reads like an extended metaphor on the shepherd image. The passage can be divided into three main ideas: 1) God pronounces judgment on Israel's leaders for failing to tend his flock; 2) God promises to gather his flock from the nations where he has driven them and 3) God promises a future messianic king who will ensure that Israel “dwells securely” in her land.

Jeremiah begins by pronouncing judgment on Israel's leaders, “Woe to the shepherds . . .” Earlier, Jeremiah had condemned priests, shepherds and prophets (2:8). Later in this chapter he critiques prophets who have led God's people astray (23:9). In the previous chapter he mentions Judah's king (22:1, 3, 17, 21). Thus, it is likely that the shepherd image is being applied more widely to all of Israel's leaders. In quick succession, Jeremiah lays out the multitude of sins that Israel's pastors have perpetrated against the Lord's people. They have “destroyed” (דָּבַח), “scattered” (פָּרֵץ) and “driven away” (נָדַח) the sheep of God's pasture (Jer 23:1, 2) and they have not “visited” or “attended” (פָּקַד) them to ensure their safety. For this reason, the prophets will eat wormwood and drink poisonous water (Jer 23:15).

The term “destroy” (דָּבַח in Hebrew and ἀπόλλυμι in the LXX) can also be translated as “to lose.” Thus, later in Jeremiah, God's people have become “lost sheep” (ἀπόλλυμι in the LXX) because their careless shepherds have lead them astray so as to forget their “resting place” (Jer 50:6). In a related text, the prophet Ezekiel denounces Israel's false shepherds for failing to seek out the “lost sheep,” a task God himself will have to undertake (Ezek 34:4, 16). The Gospel of Luke will highlight this theme of Jesus searching for lost sheep with the parable of the same name in Chapter 15 of his Gospel (using ἀπόλλυμι).

The concepts of “scattering” (פָּרֵץ or διασκορπίζω in the LXX) and “driving away” (נָדַח or ἐξωθέω in the LXX) signify the exile. It is metaphorical predators (invading nations) as well as inattentive shepherds (Jer 23:2; cf. Num 27:17, 1 Kgs 22:17) that scatter God's

people (cf. Jer 50:17). The prophet Zechariah develops this theme when he states that it is the absence of a shepherd, which causes the sheep to scatter (using διασκορπίζω) (Zech 13:7). In a dramatic development, we see that it is God himself, acting contrary to the normal practice of a good shepherd, who is also responsible for driving away his flock into exile (Jer 23:3). Similarly, the term “astray” (πλανάω in the LXX) becomes a shepherding description of what occurs when God’s people stray from his covenant purposes (cf. Ps 119:176, Isa 53:6, Jer 50:6). The prophets who speak in Baal’s name, for example, are responsible for leading God’s people “astray” (v. 13). Indeed, it is precisely because the shepherds have not sought God’s counsel that the sheep are scattered (10:18). The word πλανάω can also be translated as “to wander” and it paints an apt description of a wayward flock over whom the shepherd has lost control. This is the state of God’s people as Jeremiah describes their idolatry and disobedience due to their leaders’ corruption (cf. Jer 50:6).

God continues speaking through Jeremiah and in a play on words, promises that because the shepherds did not “visit” or “attend” (ἑπισκέπτομαι) to his people, that he himself will “visit” or “attend” (ἑπισκέπτομαι) to the shepherds for their evil deeds (Jer 23:2). The Hebrew term  $\text{בָּקַר}$  becomes ἐπισκέπτομαι in the LXX. It signifies to inspect, to visit, to attend or give attention to something, all of which the false shepherds failed to do for God’s people. It is typically applied to God in a context of redemption or judgment. The term appears in many other shepherding contexts (and as a derivative later in our passages of study). Thus, it is important to define it in greater detail.

The term ἐπισκέπτομαι appears 150 times in the LXX. The most common meaning has to do with God’s visitation of his people typically in a time of difficulty for the purpose of blessing or redemption. Thus, Joseph promised his brothers that God would one day “visit” (ἐπισκέπτομαι) them and bring them to the land he swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen 50:24, 25; cf. Exod 13:19). Also, when God “visited” his people in Egypt and looked upon their affliction, the people rejoiced because their time of suffering was coming to an end (Exod 3:16; 4:31). Naomi’s return to Judah is prompted when she hears that God had “visited” his people to provide them with food (Ruth 1:6) and during the exile, God promises to “visit” his people after 70 years to bring them back to the Promised Land (Jer 36:10; 39:41; cf. Zeph 2:7). But God’s visitation also has negative consequences and often appears

in a context of judgment. Thus, God “visits” his people and judges them for the golden calf incident (Exod 32:34), rising up against Moses (Num 16:5) and for their disobedience leading to exile.<sup>157</sup>

In Jer 23:2 the term ἐπισκέπτομαι appears in close proximity to shepherding language (as it does in several other shepherding contexts). Thus, God judges the shepherds because they have not “visited” or “attended to” his sheep (Jer 23:2). In a similar passage, God indicates that he himself will seek out and “visit” his sheep since Israel’s leaders had failed to do so (Ezek 34:11; cf. Zech 11:16). Likewise, God states that he will “visit” his lambs because of his anger against the false shepherds (Zech 10:3). Finally we should mention that in Moses’ request for a leader so that the people would not be “as sheep without a shepherd” he requests that God would “look carefully” (ἐπισκέπτομαι) for a man to place over the congregation (Num 27:16 LXX).

This continual pairing of ἐπισκέπτομαι with shepherding language or in a context of God’s redemption has important implications for our study. The term ἐπισκέπτομαι is a derivative of ἐπίσκοπος, which becomes a critical leadership term in the NT. As we will later elaborate, there is a close relationship between the ἐπίσκοπος and ποιμήν (“shepherd”) language in our passages. We suggest that “overseeing” or “closely inspecting” came to signify a functional task within the overall act of shepherding God’s people. More importantly, we also suggest that this term incorporates redemptive overtones. Two of our primary texts, the Miletus Speech and 1 Peter 5, combine the ἐπίσκοπος terminology with shepherding language in this way suggesting a coherent pattern of reflection on early church leadership based on these two terms.

Jeremiah’s prophecy continues as God promises to restore his people from the nations to which he has exiled them (23:2). God will gather his flock and return them to pasture so they can multiply. He also promises to appoint good shepherds over them to feed and shepherd them so that they would no longer be afraid (23:2, 4). The promise includes safety and freedom from fear or getting lost (23:4). In verse 4, God promises that sometime in the

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<sup>157</sup> Jer 5:29; 9:25; 11:22; 51:13.

future (“the days are coming”) he will raise up a wise and just king in David’s mold in order that Israel might dwell securely (Jer 23:5–6). This is a critical reformulation of the Davidic shepherd-king narratives, which we studied earlier. Now, however, they are applied to a future messiah. Finally, in these verses, we once again see the positive pastoral emotions of living without fear (v. 4) and dwelling securely (v. 6). We also note that the term “to dwell” (κατασκηνώω) in the above verse signifies “to pitch a tent” as some shepherds would do for a season. Since both Yahweh and a human Davidide are presented as shepherds in these verses (vv. 3–5), Brueggemann suggests there is a tension in the post-exilic community on the need for a restored monarchy.<sup>158</sup> However, it is just as likely that the prophets are reformulating the Davidic covenant as a way to provide hope and identity to an exiled community. In addition, I would argue that the ambiguity provides a purposeful blurring between Yahweh as shepherd and his appointed under shepherd, something which the Gospel of John repeats in the “Good Shepherd” discourse (John 10) with God the Father and Jesus.

In summary, Jeremiah’s use of the shepherd image in many cases reformulates previous traditions. The use of the Exodus motif reminds Israel of God’s previous care and guidance through the dark and desolate wilderness and contrasts sharply with their current corrupt condition. But the most dramatic use of the shepherd image arises in the form of judgment against Israel’s leaders. They have utterly failed in their primary responsibilities of caring for God’s flock. It is for this reason, that God must now take matters into his own hands. The fate of Israel’s shepherds has been sealed and only a future messianic shepherd, in the mold of king David can redeem the situation.

### 2.3.3.2 *Ezekiel the Prophet*

By far, the richest text to exploit the shepherd imagery in the prophetic literature is Ezekiel 34. Barry Alan Fikes’ study argues that Ezekiel 34 is the apex of theological development of the shepherd-king motif in the OT and that Ezekiel applies the motif primarily to Yahweh as

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<sup>158</sup> Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 206–7; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1970), 1.

a symbol of hope during Israel's exilic crisis.<sup>159</sup> In many ways, Ezekiel's text is a much more detailed elaboration of the themes in Jeremiah 23.<sup>160</sup>

Before proceeding in our analysis, it is useful to consider the place of Ezekiel 34 in the overall outline of the book. Ezekiel 34 serves as a kind of resolution (via judgment) to Israel's corruption, particularly against the corruption of its leaders, which dominated the first 24 chapters of the book. This judgment was all the more dramatic and painful given the false sense of security, which Judah had established prior to her exile. This was based on four elements of "official orthodoxy": 1) God's covenant with Israel; 2) God's eternal covenant with David; 3) God's presence with this people in the Jerusalem temple and 4) Israel's possession of the land.<sup>161</sup> Chapter 34 also serves as a fitting transition to the promises of restoration and the vision of a restored Jerusalem / temple in the remainder of the book. Finally, the chapter presents a vision of Israel's future history with the promises of a messianic shepherd who would rule as a Davidic monarch. In one sense it becomes a microcosm of Israel's pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic existence, which is reframed using the shepherd image.

Chapter 34 can be divided according to the following outline: 1) denunciation of Israel's false shepherds for their sins against God's flock (vv. 1–6); 2) judgment on the false shepherds so they can no longer injure the flock (vv. 7–10); 3) God as shepherd restores Israel (vv. 11–22) and 4) the promise of a future messianic shepherd and a covenant of peace (23–31).<sup>162</sup> We should note that it is Yahweh who speaks throughout the chapter ("the word of the Lord", "thus says the Lord", "hear the word of the Lord", "as I live...", "declares the Lord God").<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Fikes, "A Theological Analysis of the Shepherd-King Motif in Ezekiel 34."

<sup>160</sup> Block notes that the linkages in style, theme, structure and vocabulary between Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 are far too numerous to be a coincidence. According to Block, Ezekiel presents an exposition of Jeremiah's address, which he likely had before him. Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel - Chapters 25-48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 275–76.

<sup>161</sup> Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel - Chapters 1-24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 8.

<sup>162</sup> Block structures the unit into three sections (vv. 2–10; vv. 11–22 and vv. 23–31) with the following divisions: preamble (v. 1); formal accusation (vv. 2–6); announcement of judgment (vv. 7–10); rescue from external enemies (vv. 11–16); rescue from internal exploiters (vv. 17–22); David re-installed as shepherd (vv. 23–24); covenant of peace (vv. 25–29); oracle proof (vv. 30–31). Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 274.

<sup>163</sup> Ezek 34:1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 17, 20, 30.

Ezekiel's initial pronouncement is a denunciation of Israel's false shepherds with a catalog of their injuries against God's people using an extended shepherding metaphor, "Woe shepherds of Israel . . ." (v. 2).<sup>164</sup> Israel's leaders have only been taking care of themselves at the expense of the people. They have fed themselves, fleeced the flock and slaughtered the choice animals when they should have been feeding the flock (vv. 2, 3).<sup>165</sup> Readers will remember that it was customary for literal shepherds to receive some type of compensation from their flocks. Here, however, Israel's shepherds have abused this privilege. The reference to slaughter may suggest judicial murder.<sup>166</sup> Also, instead of providing careful oversight for God's people they abandoned their duties. They did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick or bind the injured. They did not search for or go after sheep who had strayed or had gotten lost. Here again the LXX utilizes the term ἀπόλλυμι to signal the flock's "lost" condition. As we will see later, both Luke (chs. 15 and 19) and John (ch. 10) rely on this term in their presentation of Jesus as God's ultimate shepherd who seeks after his lost sheep.

Ezekiel continues denouncing the false shepherds of his day. They ruled the flock harshly and brutally (v. 4). It is precisely because the people lacked a shepherd that they were scattered and have become food for wild beasts of every kind (v. 5). Predatory language is one of the unique characteristics of the shepherd / flock motif. This is why, in a graphic description, Amos could compare the northern kingdom's exile to the few limbs that remained after a lion had eaten a sheep (Amos 3:12). Ezekiel repeats these charges in this section as God's people are said to have wandered over every mountain and high hill, perhaps a reference to the ease with which Israel practiced idolatry (cf. Ezek 6:13 and 20:28) and to having been scattered over the whole earth where no one searched for them (vv. 5, 6).

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. to Ezek 13:3ff and 18ff where the same woe oracle is directed at the prophets / prophetesses of Judah.

<sup>165</sup> This theme of denouncing Israel's shepherd leaders is most pronounced in Ezek 34, but it is a common enough refrain that it appears in other prophets as well. In Isa 56:9–12, the prophet highlights the watchmen of the city who are blind (cf. to Ezek 33) and the shepherds who look the other way. Isaiah compares these irresponsible leaders (who are careless, slothful, greedy and gluttonous) to lazy dogs who fail to bark thus failing to announce the arrival of predators or danger. For this reason, all the beast of the field can have their fill of the flock (56:9).

<sup>166</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 283.

Ezekiel is speaking of the exile using the common shepherding refrain of “scattered sheep.”<sup>167</sup>

The denunciation of the false shepherds is devastating. Robert Jenson believes that the entire monarchic structure is being criticized, that is, all of the kings of both the northern and southern kingdoms based on Ezekiel’s plural notation of “shepherds” and the use of the term “prince” later in the text as their replacement (34:24).<sup>168</sup> Daniel Block believes the shepherds are limited to Judah’s former kings based on the appointment of a Davidic shepherd-king to replace the bad shepherds.<sup>169</sup> It is difficult to adjudicate on which kings are being implicated though we can assume that some number of the monarchy are coming under judgment. However, I believe that these shepherd rulers can also incorporate other types of leaders based on the description of different sins in the book, which has led to Israel’s demise.

In one vision for example, Ezekiel is taken to the temple where he sees the carvings of idols covering the walls of one of the rooms in the temple. In the room are elders and priests sacrificing to foreign gods (8:11–12) and the people worshipping the sun (18:17, 18). Ezekiel had also denounced the city’s wicked counselors (11:2). For one thing, these counselors believed that they were immune from the Babylonian attack so long as they remained in Jerusalem (11:3). Ezekiel also denounces the princes who devour people and widows; priests who do violence to the law and who do not teach the difference between clean and unclean things; prophets who follow their own hearts and preach lies, false divination and a message of peace to God’s people instead of warning them about impending judgment (13:3–13); prophetesses who sew magic charms on their sleeves and profane God’s name amongst the people for food (13:17, 19, 20) and city officials who shed blood (22:25–28). Indeed, in a scathing judgment on the total corruption of the nation, the Lord seeks high and low in Jerusalem for someone to stand in the gap so that God might not destroy the city, but God could not find a single person (22:30, 31). God promises to deliver his people from

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. Jer 30:11, 40:15, 50:17; Joel 3:2; Zech 7:14.

<sup>168</sup> Robert Jenson, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 264.

<sup>169</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 282.



the hands of these leaders (13:21), which essentially becomes the major promise and content of Ezekiel 34.

After cataloguing the injuries caused by these false shepherds, God has had enough. He intends to remove the shepherds from tending the flock (34:7–10). So grievous are the false leaders' sins, that God compares them to predators. He will deliver his flock from the leaders' mouths so that they will no longer be food for them (34:10). The next part of the chapter reverses the plight of the beleaguered flock under the false shepherds' care. God, as eschatological shepherd, will search for and gather his flock from the nations where they have been scattered and establish them in their land where food, water and rest await them in rich pastures (34:13, 14). In addition, whatever the false shepherds failed to do, God himself will do for his people. God will feed his flock. He will bind up the broken and strengthen the sick. In all, the contrast to the false shepherds is clear as is God's personal promise that he will restore the fortunes of his people.

Wedged within God's commitment to restore his people, there is another important and related promise that occupies Ezekiel 34, which is the promise of a future Davidic shepherd who will usher in a covenant of peace. He is "David, my servant."<sup>170</sup> The "covenant of peace" is characterized by idyllic pastoral imagery. God will eliminate the "harmful beasts" from the land so that they will no longer devour God's people and so that the people will no longer be a "prey for" enslaved by or insulted by the nations (vv. 25, 27, 28). God will cause showers to come down in season and the tree and the earth to yield its abundance so that his people will no longer have famine in their land (vv. 26, 27, 29). This will allow Israel to live securely in her land without fear.

Ezekiel 37 repeats similar ideas and expands on them. God will restore the two kingdoms (Ezek 37:1–14, 22), God's servant David will be king over them as one shepherd (Ezek 37:24, 25) and he will make a covenant of peace with his people (Ezek 37:26). God's people will live in the land once again, they will follow God's decrees and the Lord will establish his sanctuary among them (Ezek 37:23, 25–27). This is covenant language and is the primary motivation for the restoration of God's flock in Ezekiel 34.<sup>171</sup> This is also the reason for the

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 3:18, 7:5, 8, 1 Kgs 11:13, 32, 34, 36, 14:8; 1 Chron 17:7.

<sup>171</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 301.

insertion of the divine formula, “Then they [my people] will know that I, the Lord their God am with them, and that they, the house of Israel are my people” (v. 30). It is only fitting that Yahweh repeats this divine formula, with the shepherd imagery, “my sheep, the sheep of my pasture...I am your God” (34:31).

A final and important aspect of this chapter is the personal relation of God to his flock. God refers to his people sixteen times (16) in this chapter with the designation: “my flock”, “my sheep” or “my people.” This points to some unique elements of the shepherd / flock motif when compared to other leadership metaphors. First, the flock belongs to God and he is its ultimate shepherd. The relational aspect stands out clearly which is reflected in God’s compassionate care and loving discipline over his people. Finally, discussions of leadership that use the shepherd / flock motif should always include the flock as well. What is its condition? What is the quality of care that God’s under shepherds provide? To whom does the flock belong and how does that impact how the shepherds are viewed / judged? Ezekiel 34 provides penetrating answers to each of these questions and concerns. The flock is battered under the bad shepherds and will be restored under God’s shepherding rule.

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were prophets for the exilic period. Their message was one of judgment for Israel’s leaders for having led God’s people astray as false shepherds. Israel’s leaders were to blame for the low spiritual and political condition of God’s people, the flock. But God as eschatological shepherd will one day restore his flock and then his appointed Davidic shepherd will rule over the flock. This is the vision of two of Israel’s most important prophets. Both Isaiah and Zechariah fill out the portrait considerably, the one focused on the Suffering Servant, the other on the shepherd whom God strikes down. We shall turn to these prophets next.

### 2.3.3.3 *Isaiah The Prophet*

The prophet Isaiah ministered during a tumultuous period in Israelite history (740–680 B.C.E.).<sup>172</sup> In the long tradition of Israel’s prophets, his warnings of judgment and exile formed the bulk of his message in the first half of the book (Chapters 1–39). In the latter half

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<sup>172</sup> Though critical scholarship now recognizes Isaiah as a composite of two or three authors, 1<sup>st</sup> century NT authors would have read Isaiah as a unified work.

of his book (Chapters 40–66), Isaiah’s messages turned to those describing the restoration and the return of God’s people to Jerusalem via a New Exodus and via the Lord’s suffering servant.<sup>173</sup>

The shepherd / flock motif in Isaiah is concentrated within three verse clusters: 9:4–7 (and related); 40:1–11 (and related) and 52:13–53:12. As a start, we read the following in verse 9:3 (Masoretic text):

For you shall break the yoke of their burden  
And the “staff” (שֵׁבֶט) on their shoulders  
The “rod” (מִשְׁעֶנֶת) of their oppressors  
As at the battle of Midian

The “rod” and “staff” are shepherding instruments (cf. Ps 23:4), however, in this text they represent instruments that Assyria has utilized to punish God’s people. In 10:5, Assyria is called the “rod” of God’s anger and the “staff” of his indignation against the northern kingdom (cf. 10:24). This introduces an ambiguity in the use of these terms. Do these instruments represent the rule, might and authority of an Assyrian king whom God used to mete out his punishment? Or is it the case that these instruments belong to God himself and that he is using them (Assyria in this case) to punish his people? If it is the latter case, it would be similar to an ancient Near Eastern text we saw earlier, where the god Enlil brought divine destruction via his shepherd’s crook. In addition, it would be a shocking reversal of what we would normally expect from a shepherd and would no doubt be used for rhetorical impact.

The surrounding context of 9:3 is one of coming liberation as God will lift the gloom from his people (9:1), break the yoke of oppression, shine a light in the darkness (v. 2) and increase the nation’s joy (9:3). The reason for this “gladness” is because a child will one day be born who will govern “on the throne of David” in peace, justice and righteousness (9:6, 7). Later, Isaiah will also speak of one “from the stem of Jesse”, an obvious reference to a descendant of David (11:10).<sup>174</sup> This eschatological king will slay the wicked with the “rod”

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<sup>173</sup> Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:40–9; 52:13–53:12.

<sup>174</sup> The word for “child” in 9:3 in the LXX is παιδίον, a term that connects to the fourth Servant’s Song and the messiah’s suffering (Isa 53:2). The term “root” in 11:10 is ῥίζα in the LXX and is also found in the fourth Servant’s Song to describe the suffering servant (Isa 53:2).

of his mouth, usher in a time of righteousness and a new world order where the wolf will dwell with the lamb (11:1–9). Here again, the shepherd’s “rod” is used to mete out punishment this time on the wicked (cf. 14:5) . In this first cluster of related verses, shepherding instruments stand in for kings or for God’s personal instruments that bring punishment or righteousness and peace often within the context of a restored Davidic monarchy.

Chapter 40 begins with words of comfort, “‘Comfort, yes, comfort my people’ says your God, ‘Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her that her warfare has ended...’” (40:1; cf. 51:3). God is forgiving his people’s sins, returning to Jerusalem and restoring the fortunes of his people to great fanfare and joy (40:9). Isaiah also introduces the Exodus motif, “clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness, make smooth in the desert a highway for our God” (40:3). In the return from exile, God will reveal his glory (40:5; cf. Exo 16:10, 24:16). Also, as in the Exodus, God will feed his flock and gather the lambs in his arms (40:11).

Th. C. Vriezen argues that there is an almost total absence of appeal to the Exodus in Isaiah in contrast to the other prophets.<sup>175</sup> While Isaiah’s re-use of the Exodus tradition is not as prolific as Jeremiah or Ezekiel, it is not absent. Earlier, Isaiah had encouraged a remnant not to fear the Assyrians who had lifted up a “rod” against them in the manner of Egypt (10:24). In a scene of restoration from exile, God calls his people to flee from Babylon, but Isaiah recalls a time when God led his people through the desert and caused water to flow from the rock (48:21–22). Finally, in a prayer of restoration later in the book, Isaiah explicitly recalls the Exodus, when God led his people through the wilderness via Moses, divided the waters and brought his people out of the sea with the shepherd of the flock (63:7–14).

The last shepherd / flock motif cluster in Isaiah centers around the fourth Servant Song.<sup>176</sup> His identify as a historical figure is hard to discern, however, in his messianic role, the Lord’s servant will restore God’s people and bring the light of God’s justice to the

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<sup>175</sup> Th. C. Vriezen, “Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Walter Harrelson and Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 128–29.

<sup>176</sup> Isa 52:13–53:12; cf. 42:1–4; 49:1–6, 50:4–9.

Gentiles (42:2, 4, 6; 49:6). Indeed, through the servant, God’s salvation will extend to “the ends of the earth” (49:6; cf. 40:5). In this regard, the reference to the servant’s “sprinkling” (זָרַק) of “many nations” may indicate this universal atonement (52:15 cf. Lev 16:19 and Aaron “sprinkling” the blood on the altar to atone for the people’s sins). As we will see, this dual and universal mission of the servant will be critical to Luke’s presentation of Jesus (and Paul) in Luke-Acts paving the way for the elders to imitate both in their role as leaders of the church.<sup>177</sup>

The fourth servant song innovates in the use of the shepherd / flock motif. The servant becomes the sacrificial lamb that is led to the slaughter (53:7–12).<sup>178</sup> While there were hints that the servant would suffer in the earlier songs (Isa 42:2, 3; 50:6) this level of sacrifice calls for death. The exalted position of the Servant, which stands at either end of the song, contrasts sharply with his humiliation in the center section (52:13, 53:12). God lays the sins of the people on his servant. This is described in many ways: the servant is “pierced” for the people’s transgressions (cf. Zech 12:10), crushed for their iniquities, chastened for their well-being and scourged for their healing.<sup>179</sup> We also note that the people come in for condemnation in this text in contrast to the leaders who were mostly to blame in the earlier passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>180</sup> The people have gone “astray” like sheep (תָּעָה in the MT; *πλανάω* in the LXX). In the prophetic literature, this shepherding term describes what happens when God’s people listen to false prophets or practice idolatry or in the case of the Psalms when they abandon his law.<sup>181</sup> Finally, it is the servant’s death by which God’s people are able to find healing (53:4–6). Here we see the same term “healing” (רָפָא) that appeared in Ezek 34:4 when God promised to heal his flock.

We can make a few final observations on Isaiah’s fourth servant song and the shepherd image. First, this passage introduces an unusual twist whereby the servant of the Lord

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<sup>177</sup> Luke 2:32; Acts 3:13, 4:27, 13:47.

<sup>178</sup> Lessing notes the 15 passive verbs in this fourth Servant Song, which highlight the servant’s obedience and submission to the Lord’s will. R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 40-55*, CC (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2011), 581.

<sup>179</sup> Isa 53:5; cf. Isa 53:6, 8, 10, 11, 12.

<sup>180</sup> Vancil, “The Symbolism of the Shepherd,” 195.

<sup>181</sup> Jer 23:13, 50:6, Ezek 44:10; Hos 4:12; Amos 2:4; Mic 3:5; Ps 119:176.

becomes a sacrificial lamb. The OT is fairly consistent in its application of the under-shepherd title for Israel's leaders as an extension of God's authority and care. In the lone case of Zechariah, the shepherd dies, but not in any sacrificial sense. But here in Isaiah 53, the leader takes on the image of the sacrificial lamb (53:7). The second observation is the well documented application of Isaiah's servant and particularly the fourth song to Jesus' ministry in the Gospels and elsewhere in the NT.<sup>182</sup> In our 1 Peter passage, this key text will become a pattern for the way the shepherd elders are to exercise their leadership roles (1 Pet 2:21–23; 5:2).

#### 2.3.3.4 *Zechariah the Prophet*

The Book of Zechariah was written to address the needs of a post-exilic community and to provide the much needed admonition and encouragement to complete the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4:28–5:2, 6:14). Chapters 1–8 contain a series of visions that demonstrate God's concern for his people and city, a place where God promises to build his house and dwell once again (Zech 1:16; 2:11). This promise requires a restored and cleansed priesthood, people and temple. Chapters 9–14 are different in style<sup>183</sup> and we can trace a narrative unity whereby God's eschatological program seeks to restore both Judah and Israel via a Davidic shepherd, defeat Judah / Israel's enemies, replace the people's bad shepherds and finally bring about a purified Jerusalem resulting in the worship of the Lord by the nations (Zech 14:16).<sup>184</sup> Zechariah picks up the shepherding themes and language from Jeremiah and Ezekiel in our previous discussions, but they are reworked in a decidedly

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<sup>182</sup> One notable example for our study in Acts is Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–40. Other noteworthy citations include: Matt 8:14–17; Mark 15:12; Luke 22:35–38; John 12:37–41, 19:37; Acts 8:26–35; Phil 2:6–11; Rom 10:11–21; 1 Pet 2:19–25; Rev 1:7.

<sup>183</sup> For a summary of critical views on the unity of Zechariah see Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Donald J. Wiseman, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2009), 65–73.

<sup>184</sup> Liebengood argues for a unified reading of Zechariah 9–14 based on: 1) how disparate portions of this section rework Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34 and Isaiah 40–66; 2) how early Christians viewed Zechariah 9–14 as a coherent unit based on its prefiguration of Jesus' passion; 3) the way in which 1 Peter's theology of suffering depends on Zechariah 9–14 (which is Liebengood's main thesis). Schellenberg argues for a unity based on the Divine warrior motif, which acts as an *inclusio* in chapters 9 and 14. Liebengood, "Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter's Eschatological Program," 23–24; Angeline Schellenberg, "One in the Bond of War: The Unity of Deutero-Zechariah," *Didaskalia* 12.2 (2001): 101–15.

negative way. The Davidic messiah will be stricken (13:7) and the promised reunification of the kingdoms does not come to fruition. These expectations provide the substructure for Jesus' passion in the Gospels and established an important model for meditating on Jesus' death in those writings.<sup>185</sup> For our purpose, we will briefly analyze the four key passages where the shepherd / flock motif makes an appearance in Zechariah 9–14 including 9:16, 10:1–3, 11:4–17 and 13:7–9.

Chapter 9 speaks to the restoration of God's people (both kingdoms (9:10, 13)) via the conquest of Judah / Israel's enemies (9:5–6). God's conquering king will ride in victoriously on a donkey. Thus Jerusalem is commanded to rejoice (Zech 9:9). The image denotes solidarity with the people (he is humble and afflicted) and is a traditional sign that war has ended (9:10).<sup>186</sup> The conquering king is an unknown figure but the reference to the Jebusites (2 Sam 5:6–7) and Zechariah's use of Psalm 78 (a remembrance of David's reign) suggests a future Davidic king. The Lord promises to "save" (שׁוּׁ) (σώζω in the LXX) the "flock" of his people (9:16). The flock motif hearkens back to Ezek 34:22, where both terms are used and where God had promised to deliver his people from their corrupt leaders. Of note is the warrior motif embedded in virtually every verse of this chapter, which provides the context for the use of the flock motif in this verse.

Chapter 10 continues the overall theme of restoration. The chapter begins with judgment against Israel's shepherds and "male goats", the latter a likely designation for another type of leader of the flock (10:1; cf. Ezek 34:17). God's anger is directed toward Israel's leaders here extending beyond the kings. Indeed, it is their lack of shepherding, which has caused the people to "wander like sheep" (Isa 10:2, 3). Idolatry has taken root "the teraphim speak iniquity and the diviners see lying visions" (10:2). As with Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34, it is God who takes the initiative to "attend to" or "visit" his flock (10:3). Here again we see the ἐπισκέπτομαι term in close proximity to the shepherd image, not only denoting an important

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<sup>185</sup> Black documents the extensive use of Zechariah 9–14 as the eschatological substructure of the passion narratives in the gospels as well as Jesus' return in Revelation 21–22. Mark Black, "The Rejected and Slain Messiah Who Is Coming with His Angels: The Messianic Exegesis of Zechariah 9-14 in the Passion Narratives" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1992).

<sup>186</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 164.

function of the shepherd, which is oversight but also communicating God's intention to rescue his people from oppressive leaders.

Zechariah now mixes the shepherd image with military metaphors as well as Exodus and restoration motifs. The Lord's "flock" will become God's "horse" and "bow in battle." God's people will fight for the Lord and overcome Israel's enemies (10:3, 5). God intends to save both Judah and Joseph (hinting at reunification of the previously exiled northern and southern kingdoms) (10:6). Zechariah strengthens this thought as he describes the Lord whistling like a shepherd for his people to return them from where he has "scattered" them, that is, from the land of Egypt and Assyria. In their return, they will pass through the sea of distress, the Nile will dry up and Assyria's pride will be broken.

Chapter 11 is enigmatic, but the shepherding imagery is indebted to Jeremiah and Ezekiel albeit with some inverted elements. The prophecy is an extended allegory (Mark Boda suggests a sign-act that communicates an allegory)<sup>187</sup> where the prophet Zechariah stands in for a good shepherd who is called to pastor a doomed flock (11:4, 5, 7). Zechariah attempts to pastor in earnest, using two staffs (favor and union) and quickly replacing Israel's failed leaders (11:8). But the relationship deteriorates into mutual hatred (11:9) and Zechariah breaks his two staffs and prematurely requests his shepherding wages (11:12–14). Joyce Baldwin suggests the staffs represent the principles for shepherding ("grace" and its result "union). Laniak points to the Mosaic covenant ("favor") and the unity of the two kingdoms ("union").<sup>188</sup> The latter is more likely. The breaking of a "covenant" and the dissolution of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel suggests as much (11:10, 14). Now Zechariah is asked to take up the implements of a foolish shepherd and pastor in the most cruel and careless way possible (11:15, 16). It is at this point that judgment falls once again on the worthless shepherd who abandons his flock (11:17).

One possible and fruitful approach to this text (and that of Zech 13:7–9 as well) is as a commentary on the eschatological expectations found in Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34.<sup>189</sup> There, God judged the bad shepherds and promised to rescue his beleaguered people (the

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<sup>187</sup> Mark Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 649–48.

<sup>188</sup> Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 194; Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 167.

<sup>189</sup> Liebengood, "Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter's Eschatological Program," 35–36.



flock) by being their personal shepherd and by sending a future messianic shepherd in David's mold. That vision was on the whole quite hopeful in its outlook and God's ire was mostly directed at the shepherds. In Zechariah 11 however, many of the elements of that vision are inverted. The outlook is not hopeful. There is nothing Zechariah can do to avert the suffering of God's people. The flock is "doomed to slaughter" and they are partly responsible for the premature departure of the good shepherd whom they "abhorred" (11:8). The vision of a restored and united monarchy alluded to in Jer 23:6 and more fully developed in Ezek 37:15–28 does not come to fruition in Zechariah's prophecy. Zechariah breaks the staff called "Unity" and breaks the bond "between Judah and Israel" (11:14). And in the final reversal, God does not send a good shepherd as he promised, but one who is careless and cruel (11:16, 17).<sup>190</sup> These latter verses are virtually the opposite of the quality of care God would provide his flock using identical or synonymous terminology to that in Ezek 34:11–17. This shepherd will not care (using ἐπισκέπτομαι) for those perishing, seek the scattered or heal the broken. Yes, there is a judgment on the bad shepherds (11:8, 17) since they feel no "mercy" and they have enriched themselves at the flock's expense (11:5). This suggests the possibility that Jeremiah and Ezekiel's vision may yet come to pass.<sup>191</sup>

The final and most important shepherding passage in Zechariah occurs in 13:7–9. It forms part of Zechariah's final oracle, which began at 12:1 with "the burden of the word of the LORD against Israel" and ends with a great battle of God against the nations on the "day of the Lord" (14:1–15). The entire section begins with judgement against the nations that attack Jerusalem (12:1–9) followed by a cleansing of the people and the land (13:1–6). It is in this context of cleansing that the Lord states:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd...  
strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (13:7).

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<sup>190</sup> Boda shares a similar interpretation using Ezekiel 34:1–31 and 37:15–28. To quote Boda, "Zechariah 11:4–16 reverses the hope expressed in these two Ezekielian passages. Whereas Ezekiel 34 promises the judgment of the shepherds and care by God, Zechariah 11 promises God's judgment of the flock by the abandonment of the flock by good shepherd, and the appointment of an inadequate evil shepherd. Whereas Ezek 37 promises the union of the tribes, Zechariah 11 promises disunity." Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 650–51.

<sup>191</sup> Liebengood, "Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter's Eschatological Program," 37.

The passage goes on to state that God will punish “the little ones” (presumably a reference to his people, the sheep). However, a remnant will remain that will be tested as if by fire and will then renew their covenant with God. Each one will say, “the Lord is my God” (13:9). Once again, seeing these verses through Jeremiah and Ezekiel’s eschatological expectations is one possible interpretive approach. In this way, the shepherd of 13:7 represents the expected good shepherd of Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34. However, instead of a Davidic reign of justice, peace, prosperity and a full restoration, there will be a time of testing. The shepherd will first be struck down before God’s full eschatological program in Jeremiah and Ezekiel can prevail.<sup>192</sup> We should also note that the term “strike” (נכה) in Zech 13:7 is also found in Isaiah’s fourth Servant Song whereby God smites the servant suffering on behalf of the people’s sins (Isa 53:4).

In his work on the Jewish expectations of the shepherd image, Golding notes how Ezekiel’s promises were never fully realized. Israel did not experience a renewed spiritual heart or a time of righteous rule under a Davidic shepherd. Golding also notes that this unfulfilled expectation did come to fruition in Jesus’ life and ministry. I would agree with this assessment. The Gospels in particular (and even our three passages of study) appropriate many of the concepts embedded within Ezekiel 34 as well as Zechariah 9–14 and apply them to Jesus’ life. As such, they agree in their critique of bad shepherding and in their understanding that in Jesus, God was bringing about many of his eschatological promises that had gone unfulfilled.

#### 2.3.4 Summary of Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Old Testament

We are now in a position to summarize the use of the shepherd / flock motif within the OT literature. We noted two paradigmatic narratives that exerted the most influence on the thought, history and theology of the OT: 1) The Exodus tradition and 2) the Davidic dynasty traditions. The Exodus tradition represents Israel’s founding story when God liberated his people from slavery in Egypt and installed them as a nation in the Promised Land. These narratives are rich in shepherd related associations. It was God after all who led his people

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<sup>192</sup> Liebengood, “Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter’s Eschatological Program,” 40–44.

“like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Ps 77:20; cf. 78:52). This guidance incorporated protection, direction, feeding and watering through a parched and desolate wilderness. It also incorporated the promise of pastoral rest in a land of abundant rain and vegetation. The Deuteronomist incorporated the Exodus tradition to speak of Israel’s covenant with God. If Israel were to maintain covenant faithfulness she could expect to live in peace, security and abundance in the Promised Land (all elements having shepherding overtones). Likewise, if Israel were disobedient to the covenant then fear, insecurity and scarcity would be her lot. The prophets reworked many elements of the Exodus tradition as they 1) sought to call a sinful Israel back to a time when she used to “follow after God” in the wilderness and 2) used the language of scattering / gathering of a flock to speak of Israel’s exile / restoration in a New Exodus.

The Davidic dynasty tradition presents David as the ideal shepherd-king whose reign over God’s people would be perpetual. The prophets reworked this tradition to promise a future messianic shepherd who would restore God’s peaceful rule over God’s people in contrast to Israel’s false shepherds who failed in their primary task of ruling. To this end, Jeremiah was the first prophet to articulate these ideas in full as a way to simultaneously explain God’s judgment and future redemption (Jer 23). Indeed, the Hebrew term *פָּקַד*, which is *ἐπισκέπτομαι* in the LXX, denotes God’s divine visitation for the purposes of judgement and redemption and is an adequate term for describing the context. The prophet Ezekiel added onto Jeremiah’s vision of the shepherd by cataloguing the sins of Israel’s leaders over the flock and pointing to how God, as shepherd, would reverse these actions for his people. Two prophets introduced major innovations to these portraits: Isaiah spoke about the Lord’s suffering servant, as a lamb who would sacrifice his life for God’s people to take away their sin. Zechariah took over Jeremiah and Ezekiel’s prophecies of a promised royal messianic shepherd and advanced the notion that he [God’s shepherd] would die for his flock prior to God’s eventual eschatological restoration of his people. Every one of these traditions formed a critical part of the Christology of the Gospels, which in turn became a central idea of the use of the shepherd / flock motif in our three passages.

## 2.4 Patterns in the Use of the Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Post-biblical Jewish Literature

We now turn to the use of the shepherd / flock motif within the post-biblical Jewish literature. These passages are important because they demonstrate the development of the shepherd image from its use in the OT and into the NT. Perhaps as important, these writings help us to understand different facets of early Judaism which had a conceptual, theological and literary influence upon the writings of the NT. This section will survey the use of the shepherd / flock motif within the following post-biblical Jewish literature: the Apocrypha<sup>193</sup> and Pseudepigrapha,<sup>194</sup> the Dead Sea Scrolls as well the works of Philo and Josephus.

### 2.4.1 Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

The Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach) is an apocryphal book dated around 170 B.C.E.<sup>195</sup> It references God as a shepherd: “The mercy of man is toward his neighbor; but the mercy of the Lord is upon all flesh: he reproveth, and nurtures, and teaches, and brings again, as a shepherd his flock. He has mercy on those that receive discipline, and that diligently seek after his judgments” (Sir 18:13–14). The chapter speaks to God’s compassion and mercy toward humanity because of its frailty and penchant for evil. The writer utilizes the shepherd image in two ways. First, shepherding (or mercy through discipline) is extended to “all flesh” and not simply to God’s people or flock. This is in keeping with the mission anticipated by Isaiah’s servant (Isa 40:5; 49:6). Secondly, shepherding incorporates both teaching and reproveth (or discipline) and not just the typical roles of guiding, feeding and protecting that were so readily identified in the OT. Sirach is wisdom literature whose purpose is to argue for the fear of the Lord and obedience to the Mosaic law as the source of

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<sup>193</sup> Includes the following books preserved in the Greek OT: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, 1 Baruch, Letter to Jeremiah, Prayer of Azariah with the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon and 1 and 2 Maccabees. See James H. Charlesworth, “Old Testament Apocrypha” in *ABD* 1:292–294.

<sup>194</sup> Includes the 52 documents and supplement in Charlesworth’s two-volume set on the OT Pseudepigrapha. James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 1* (New York: Doubleday, 1983); James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 2* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985).

<sup>195</sup> Richard J Coggins, *Sirach* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 18–20.

true wisdom. Thus, it is only fitting that God would be seen as a shepherd who teaches and rebukes and who has compassion on those “that diligently seek after his judgments” (Sir 18:14).

The use of the shepherd image as a teacher or as someone who reproves diverges from its typical uses both in the ANE and OT literature. There are perhaps indirect references to these concepts in the use of the term “rod.” For example, the “rod” of discipline of which the wisdom literature is so fond<sup>196</sup> is the same term as that of the shepherd’s rod (שֵׁבֶט) (cf. Ps 23:4; Mic 7:14). In addition, allusions to the shepherd as a teacher may be embedded in the OT concepts of a life lived according to God’s “way” or “path”, דרך in Hebrew and ὁδός in the LXX (Jer 31:9). This is the context in Isa 40:1–11 where the “way in the wilderness” is joined with God as a shepherd. However, the concept of the shepherd as a teacher in such a direct way is an innovation in the intertestamental literature. It is of curious note that in describing Jesus’ encounter with the crowd, the Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus had compassion because they were as sheep without a shepherd, to which Jesus responds by “teaching” them many things (Mark 6:34). Finally, in the Miletus Speech it is Paul’s ministry of preaching and teaching which serves as the antidote to the perverse teachings of the grievous wolves (Acts 20:20–24, 27, 31).

Judith is an Esther-like story, of a young woman using her wits and charm to save God’s city and people from imminent destruction. In a dramatic scene, Judith pretends to help Nebuchadnezzar’s general, Holofernes, take the city of Jerusalem. She states, “And I will lead you through the midst of Judea, until you come before Jerusalem; and I will set your throne in the midst thereof; and you shall drive them as sheep that have no shepherd . . .” Judith (11:19). This is the language of Moses’ plea to God for a replacement leader, so the people would not be as a sheep without a shepherd (Num 27:17; cf. Ezek 34:5). Clearly, without a leader, as Holofernes is led to believe, the general can easily conquer Israel and carry away her people.

1 Enoch is a Jewish apocalyptic text from the Pseudepigrapha. The so-called Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 89:1–90:42) contributes to our understanding of the shepherd image in

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<sup>196</sup> Prov 10:13, 13:24, 22:15, 29:15.

the intertestamental period, though the date of authorship ranges from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. to the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.<sup>197</sup> The Animal Apocalypse retells Israel's theological history from Adam to the Maccabean period with an extended animal allegory. Jacob, Joseph, Moses and the twelve tribes are called sheep (or the flock) as are God's people (who stray) in the retelling of the Exodus story.<sup>198</sup> God leads his people through the desert, gives his sheep pasture, grass and water and destroys the wolves who are following them (89:17, 20, 24–27, 28). Israel's enemies in Egypt and Canaan are depicted as predators. God raises up several judges (rams) to attack and kill the wild beasts (89:13, 14, 43, 46, 49). The recalcitrant northern and southern kingdoms are depicted as going astray (89:51) and killing the prophets (the sheep) whom God sent to testify to them (89:54). Finally, God sends his people into exile as lions, leopards, wolves, foxes and hyenas devour the sheep (89:55, 66). Many sheep perish in exile, but three sheep return from the exile to rebuild the Lord's house (89:72). Afterward, both shepherds and sheep became dim-sighted and were disbursed to be eaten by dogs (89:75–76). God hands his people over to be ruled by Gentile shepherds in succession (90:1) until he finally raises up a snow white sheep, which sprouted a great horn and who opens the eyes of the other sheep (90:10). This is a reference to Judas Maccabeus. The animal Apocalypse ends with the “Lord of the sheep” sitting on his throne and judging the pre-flood angels, Israel's bad shepherds and Israel's blind sheep. The Lord of the sheep rebuilds the temple and invites all those sheep who could see (both Jews and Gentiles) to worship there. Finally, Enoch foretells the coming of the Messiah as a “snow-white cow . . . with huge horns.” (90:37).

The use of the shepherd image in 1 Enoch is unusual and more explicit. God is specifically called the Lord of the sheep who leads his people to pasture and water unlike the OT Exodus narrative where its application to God or Moses is more circumspect (though in the case of Moses he was an actual shepherd). Israel's enemies are described as predators. Virtually all of Israel leaders including Moses, the prophets and those who rebuild the temple are described as sheep. In the case of Moses, it is all the more noteworthy because this

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<sup>197</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 1*, 5.

<sup>198</sup> 1 Enoch 89:13–15, 17, 20, 24–28, 32–34.

application occurs in the context of God using Moses as an instrument of redemption and salvation of his people (cf. Isa 53:5–7).

The Psalms of Solomon were written by a group of pious Jews in the first century B.C.E. as a response to the Roman occupation of Jerusalem (Pss 1:8, 2:2, 19, 8:11).<sup>199</sup> As Wright notes in his introduction to the Psalms of Solomon in Charlesworth’s volume, it is “crisis literature” seeking to find an answer to why Jerusalem and the covenant have been overrun and the righteous are now suffering (8:27–32).<sup>200</sup> There is a streak of Qumran running through the Psalms as only the righteous can please God (3:5–8, 13:1–12). The ultimate solution is the coming of the eschatological king, “the son of David” and the “Lord Messiah” (17:21, 32, 36). He will purge Jerusalem of its sinners and destroy the unrighteous rulers (17:22–25, 30). He will gather his holy ones (17:26) and lead them in justice and holiness. His reign will extend to all nations (17:31, 34). Finally, he will shepherd the Lord’s flock and not let anyone stumble in their pasture (17:40). This text follows many of the themes we have discussed in the prophets, particularly Zechariah’s universal eschatological program (Zech 14)

4 Ezra comprises chapters 3–14 of a larger Apocryphal work known as 2 Esdras in many English Bibles.<sup>201</sup> In 4 Ezra 2:34, we see the prophet Ezra who has been sent to preach to God’s people. Israel, however, rejects the Lord’s message, which prompts Ezra to take his message to other nations. He proclaims, “O nations that hear and understand. Await your shepherd; he will give you everlasting rest, because he who will come at the end of the age is close at hand.” This text combines several motifs: messianic shepherd, shepherd image (“everlasting rest”) and the end of the world but applies them not to Israel but to the secular nations.

In 4 Ezra 5:17, Ezra dreams of coming judgment on the land. When Ezra awakens, one of the captains implores Ezra not to leave at this time. “Do not forsake us as a shepherd leaves his flocks at the hands of cruel wolves.” Ezra fasts for 7 days and inquires why God is going to judge his people and why he is going to scatter them. Like Job, God answers that

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<sup>199</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 2*, 639.

<sup>200</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 2*, 643.

<sup>201</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 1*, 517.

until Ezra can answer a series of questions about things only the creator can do, then Ezra has no business questioning how God judges people. God loves his people more than the concern that Ezra demonstrates for them. Here we see that Ezra, a scribe, is compared to a shepherd.

2 Baruch was written in the late first century in response to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.<sup>202</sup> It utilizes the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 587 B.C.E. as the lens by which to examine the crisis precipitated by that event. In one section before his departure Baruch addresses his countrymen and lays out the reason for their exile. They have failed to keep the Lord's commandments. The people respond with the following affirmation: "For the shepherds of Israel have perished and the lamps which gave light are extinguished and the fountains have withheld their stream whence we used to drink" (2 Bar 77:13, 14). Baruch responds by giving priority to the law in ordering their world. Shepherds, lamps and fountains find their source in the law and if the people intently seek wisdom from the law then they will always be guaranteed light, sustenance and guidance as embodied in the metaphors of a lamp, fountain and shepherd.

The Baruch passage is indebted to Deuteronomic theology and history whereby adherence to the Mosaic covenant was the guarantee of God's divine protection and sustenance of his people. This is typical of the prophetic material of the OT, which sought to explain the tragedy of the exile based on the stipulations of the Mosaic law. However, the use of the shepherd image is noteworthy. Whereas Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 used shepherding imagery to describe the carelessness and exploitation of Israel's shepherds toward God's people, the passage here in 2 Baruch pinpoints the source of the problem: the lack of attention to God's law. The failure to keep the law is obviously stated elsewhere in the prophetic material but the connection between Israel's shepherds and the law is not made as explicit in those pertinent shepherding passages.

The literature we have reviewed repeats many of the same themes as the OT use of the shepherd image. Three noteworthy distinctions include the shepherd as a teacher, the

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<sup>202</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha - Volume 1*, 615–17.



connection between the shepherd and keeping the law and the portrayal of Moses and other leaders as sheep in a redemptive context.

#### 2.4.2 Dead Sea Scrolls

It is now time to trace the uses of the shepherd image through the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>203</sup>

The Damascus Document (CD) lays out extensive instructions for the “overseer” (מבקר) of the camp. Among other things he is to teach and instruct the members (13:7–8). The overseer must also settle disputes among members including legal matters (9:18, 14:11). Given that the Damascus Document is so centrally focused on laws for the community, the latter two responsibilities seem quite appropriate. He is to ensure that no member is harassed or oppressed, and he must watch out for them as a shepherd does his flock (13:7–10). If someone wants to join the community the overseer is to “inspect” (פקד) them carefully to ensure they have the right character, ability and wealth (13:11). Finally, he is also responsible for receiving two month’s salary from every member in order to take care of the needs of orphans, poor, elderly and economically vulnerable (14:13–14).

There is a notable convergence of terms and roles in the description of the “overseer” in these texts. First is the already noted pattern of the term פקד “to visit” or “to inspect” (ἐπισκέπτομαι in the LXX) in conjunction with the shepherd terminology. Secondly, the “overseer” as a noun (מבקר) is based on the verb בקר which figuratively means to inquire or to seek in order to care for or consider.<sup>204</sup> Finally, the list of enumerated responsibilities in the DSS passages bear a remarkable semblance to the responsibilities of the Christian elder / “overseer” in the NT and which we are yet to delineate in our passages. Wolfgang Nauck argued that the function of the Qumran “overseer” (מבקר) was the traditional source behind the Christian overseer based on his analysis of our 1 Pet 5:2 passage, which contains both the

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<sup>203</sup> We will be using the designations in Martínez’ compilation of the Qumran texts in English. For the Hebrew background, we will be using the Qumran module of the Accordance Software, which has been edited by Martin Abegg and mirrors his publication of the Qumran literature. Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Emanuel Tov and Martin Abegg, eds., *Discoveries in the Judean Desert - 40 Volumes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002).

<sup>204</sup> *BDB*, 133.

shepherd and overseer terminology.<sup>205</sup> Here we are probably dealing with a common tradition rather than a direct source. The shepherd and overseer parallels between 1 Pet 5:2 and the CD text can also be found between 1 Pet 5:2 and Ezekiel 34 for example.

In another instance of the shepherd image in the Damascus Document, the writer presses Zech 13:7 into service, “Wake up, sword, against my shepherd and against the male who is my companion - oracle of God - wound the shepherd and scatter the flock, and I shall return my hand against the little ones” (Zech 13:7). “But those who give heed to God are the ‘poor of the flock’ (Zech 11:7) they will escape in time of punishment” (CD 19:6–11). There are some notable differences in how Zechariah is being used in the DSS passage above, when compared against its use in the book of Zechariah. First, unlike in the OT, the focus here is on those who break the covenant (19:5–6, 13, 14). In addition, the flock is protected instead of judged (19:9, 10) and the shepherd is not the messiah, but rather one who precedes him (19:11). This passage also uses the term פקד (“to visit” or “to punish”) in 19:10, 11 and 15 similar to its previous use in CD 13:11. In this context, however, God does not come to “visit”, “inspect” or “oversee” his flock as we would normally expect, but rather to punish the disobedient. We should also mention that in this passage, we have a joining of two texts from Zechariah that touch on the shepherd image (Zech 11:4–17 and 13:7–9).<sup>206</sup> In the latter verse in the OT, the flock is doomed to slaughter and handed over to a worthless shepherd. In the DSS text, ‘the poor of the flock’ who give heed to God will be rescued from punishment. Finally we should mention that the DSS text references the end of time whereas the gospel writers appropriate Zech 13:7 to speak of Jesus’ passion.

In 11Q5 – Col XXVIII, we have a commentary on four narratives connected to David: his first anointing as king, his service before Saul, the establishment of the Davidic covenant and his battle with Goliath. The most important part of the commentary recounts the story of David tending his father’s flocks, the inability of the prophet Samuel to find a suitable candidate for king among Jesse’s sons and the sending for David and his subsequent anointing as king. The use of the shepherd image mirrors that of the Davidic narratives, that

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<sup>205</sup> Wolfgang Nauck, “Probleme Des Frühchristlichen Amtsverständnisses: 1 Ptr 5:2f.,” *ZNW* 48 (1957): 200–220.

<sup>206</sup> Liebgood, “Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter’s Eschatological Program,” 56.

is, that the transition from a literal shepherd to a metaphorical one is once again affirmed and made explicit.

### 2.4.3 Philo<sup>207</sup>

Philo's view of shepherds and the shepherding task are positive, even as he applies the image more allegorically. Philo sets out some of his views in his work *On Husbandry*. For Philo, the mind and the outward senses are like "sheep"<sup>208</sup> and if a man fails to govern them, through gluttony, sexual immorality or indifference,<sup>209</sup> then that man is only a "tenderer of sheep" (κτηνοτρόφος) and not a true shepherd.<sup>210</sup> He is what Philo would call an indifferent manager of the "flock"<sup>211</sup> who only brings evil to the flock.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, in another treatise, Philo quotes Num 27:17 to suggest that when right reason departs, the sheep have no shepherd, and great loss even of life can occur.<sup>213</sup> This is why Philo also differentiates between feeding and tending flocks. Feeding is the overindulgence of the senses. But tending is like the power of a governor or king that can check the appetite.<sup>214</sup> However, if a man is a good and faithful manager of his "flock" (here a reference to the senses again), providing discipline to the flock, guiding them to virtue<sup>215</sup> and protecting them from diseases (want, injustice, wickedness and indolence)<sup>216</sup> then he can be called a "shepherd" (ποιμήν).<sup>217</sup> Thus, as long as reason obeys it shepherd everything is prosperous and just. When it does not, anarchy reigns.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Niehoff provides an excellent study for the development of Philo's thinking based on a comparative analysis of his works starting with his mature period (historical treatises) and working backward to his allegorical treatment of scripture in Alexandria. Maren Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

<sup>208</sup> *Agr.* 31, 32, 66.

<sup>209</sup> *Agr.* 32, 66.

<sup>210</sup> *Agr.* 27, 28, 29, 39, 124.

<sup>211</sup> *Agr.* 29.

<sup>212</sup> *Agr.* 31.

<sup>213</sup> *Post.* 66–69.

<sup>214</sup> *Det.* 25.

<sup>215</sup> *Agr.* 44.

<sup>216</sup> *Agr.* 39, 44.

<sup>217</sup> *Agr.* 29, 40, 41, 66; cf. *Post.* 98.

<sup>218</sup> *Somn.* 2.152, 153.

Philo seems to hold the shepherd in high esteem. He states that it is a respectable and profitable employment. It is a title that is applied to wise men, kings, Moses and even to God.<sup>219</sup> Indeed, God's sovereignty over creation is compared to a shepherd who rules over the elements of the world as a flock.<sup>220</sup> Philo also argues that the craft of shepherding prepares one for leadership. When Philo discusses Joseph's business and political acumen, he credits Joseph's experience as a shepherd. "He who is skillful in the business of a shepherd, will probably be a most excellent king."<sup>221</sup> After all, he has gained the skills of overseeing flocks, which will be useful in overseeing men. Shepherding is a prelude to any type of government just as hunting is valuable to anyone wanting to conduct a war. Philo used the same logic when speaking about Moses' abilities to lead. He states, "the care and management of tame animals is a royal training for the government of subjects; for which reason kings are called shepherds of their people, not by way of reproach, but as a most especial and pre-eminent."<sup>222</sup> From a later work, this appears to be emperor Gaius' reasoning. He stated that if a shepherd is capable of caring for animals and yet has a much higher constitution than the animals, how much more someone like him who has charge of the best men.<sup>223</sup>

Finally, in his treatise on Moses, Philo recounts Moses' request for God to choose a leader for God's people so that they would not be "as a sheep without a shepherd" (Numb 27:17). Philo adds to the biblical account stating that even though Moses had eaten, slept and ministered with Joshua, Moses still saw fit to allow God to choose Israel's next leader. Just as he himself had been selected by God to govern God's people, so too must God be allowed to choose the next one instead of Moses choosing one from his friends or family.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, Philo places these important words into Moses' mouth, "It is proper to make God the judge

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<sup>219</sup> *Agr.* 41, 43, 50.

<sup>220</sup> *Agr.* 51, 52.

<sup>221</sup> *Ios.* 2; cf to Jacob's being perfected because he was a shepherd (*Agr.* 42).

<sup>222</sup> *Mos.* 1.60–62

<sup>223</sup> *Legat* 77; cf. *Legat* 44.

<sup>224</sup> *Mos.* 1.55–61

in everything, and most especially in those things in which the acting well or ill brings innumerable multitudes to happiness, or on the contrary to misery.”<sup>225</sup>

#### 2.4.4 Josephus

Josephus’ use of the shepherd image is much in keeping with the OT particularly in his retelling of the history of the Jewish nation. Though he writes that he has neither added or omitted anything,<sup>226</sup> Josephus does amplify several narratives. In the case of those that employ the shepherd image, his modifications betray the positive regard that he has for the profession or the desire to elevate certain biblical figures. For example, in his retelling of the narrative of Cain and Abel, Josephus appears to equate certain virtues to the brothers’ professions though the MT makes no such commentary. Thus, Abel, as a shepherd, had respect for justice (δικαιοσύνην) and he was virtuous because he believed that God was present with him at all times. “He led the life of a shepherd.”<sup>227</sup> Later, in his retelling of David’s anointing, Josephus will add that “justice” is an indispensable quality for kingship. But this advice is missing in the MT version.<sup>228</sup> Cain, on the other hand was depraved and he only had an eye for gain (κερδαίνω). Cain, you see, was a farmer.<sup>229</sup> As a side note, in our 1 Peter passage where Peter exhorts the shepherd-elders, he warns against “sordid gain” (αἰσχροκερδῶς) from the same root word as in the Cain passage above. As to their respective offerings, Abel gave the first of his flocks, which was a product that was naturally created. Cain gave only part of his fruits, but these were products that were forced from nature by the ingenuity of grasping man.<sup>230</sup>

Josephus makes other additions to the biblical narratives involving the shepherd image. In the story of Hagar’s expulsion, Josephus adds that Hagar met some shepherds in the desert who helped her to escape her miseries.<sup>231</sup> Genesis 21 does not mention the presence of

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<sup>225</sup> *Mos.* 1.62

<sup>226</sup> *Ant.* 1.17

<sup>227</sup> *Ant.* 1.53.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. *Ant.* 6.167 and 1 Sam 16:13.

<sup>229</sup> *Ant.* 6.167.

<sup>230</sup> *Ant.* 1.53–55.

<sup>231</sup> *Ant.* 1.219.

shepherds. Presumably Josephus added the detail of the shepherds because of the well from which Hagar drew water (Gen 21:19). Alternatively, he could have been adding his own positive opinion of shepherds as those who care for people as they do their flocks, especially one in need as Hagar. In the telling of the burning bush episode, Josephus relates that no shepherd had ever ventured to Mount Sinai even though it had good pasturage because people believed that God was living there. Josephus then highlights Moses' intimacy with God and how God commends Moses for coming precisely to that area.<sup>232</sup> Other examples paint a similar positive view of the shepherd image.<sup>233</sup>

Josephus also makes a few modifications to the Davidic dynasty narratives.<sup>234</sup> For example, in recounting Samuel's anointing of David, Josephus adduces the qualities that God desires in a king of which the MT is silent. God says: "I make not of the kingdom a prize for comeliness of body, but for virtue of soul, and I seek one who in full measure is distinguished by this, one adorned with piety, justice, fortitude and obedience, qualities whereof beauty of soul consists."<sup>235</sup> Josephus greatly shortens David's reaction to the Davidic covenant and adds in a peculiar detail. In Josephus' account, David thanks God that he was raised from such a humble (ταπεινός (LXX)) station of a shepherd to so great a height of power and glory (cf. 2 Sam 7:12).<sup>236</sup> In the MT, God is the one who makes a reference to David being raised from shepherd to king in the midst of Nathan's charge to David (2 Sam 7:8). Furthermore, there is no mention of David's "humble" origin. In addition, David's reaction in the MT is a lengthy prayer of worship to God for God's greatness and for Israel's redemption as a nation while in Josephus' version, David responds with one verse (cf. 2 Sam 7:18–29). Finally, when Josephus recounts David's sin by the taking of a census, he refers to David as a "shepherd"

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<sup>232</sup> *Ant.* 2.264–65.

<sup>233</sup> For example, Josephus emphasizes Moses as the "overseer" of Laban's flocks (*Ant.* 2:264); he leaves out Egypt's disdain for shepherds (Gen 46:34) and instead indicates that Egyptians were forbidden to pursue pasturage (*Ant.* 2.185, 188); he places an exhortation for David to be righteous and to obey God's commandments in Samuel's mouth after David's anointing. In this way, his kingdom would prosper (*Ant.* 6.163). The MT reports no advice from Samuel to David after his anointing (2 Sam 6:13).

<sup>234</sup> See Avioz for an example of Josephus' "Rewritten Bible" based on the Saul / David narratives. Michael Avioz, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Books of Samuel* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

<sup>235</sup> *Ant.* 6.160.

<sup>236</sup> *Ant.* 7.95

(ποιμήν (LXX)), though the Masoretic text only refers to the “sheep” (the people) whom David is hurting by his actions and makes no mention of David as a shepherd (1 Chr 21:17).

In the encounter with king Jehoshaphat and king Ahab, Micaiah exaggerates his false prophecy regarding Israel’s defeat. Instead of a direct quote from Num 27:17, “I saw all of Israel scattered on the mountains ‘like sheep that have no shepherd,’” Micaiah adds that God showed him Israel running away with Syria in pursuit and they dispersed Israel on the mountain “like sheep when their shepherd is slain.”<sup>237</sup> This is an interesting detail as only Zechariah from among the OT prophets has ever ventured into the territory where a shepherd suffers or dies.

We can mention a few more important uses of the shepherd image in Josephus’ writings. In *Against Apion*, Josephus is perturbed by criticisms that the Jewish nation is young given that no famous Greek historians mention it.<sup>238</sup> Thus, he goes back to Egyptian history to explain his nation’s origin. He states that the Egyptian dynasty was styled HYCSOS, which means “king-shepherds” or “captive-shepherds” based on different translations.<sup>239</sup> After some time, an insurrection arose and a group (about 240,000) left Egypt and built a city in Judea called Jerusalem (this is pre-Abraham apparently). Josephus then appeals to scriptures for proof of this wherein they refer to the Patriarchs as shepherds and to the Hebrews as captives (prior to the Exodus). This is even confirmed by the Egyptian historian Manetho.<sup>240</sup> Here then, Josephus’ apologetic provides a royal dimension to Israel’s founding. In addition, Manetho’s Egyptian history refers throughout to the whole Israelite nation as shepherds.<sup>241</sup>

Finally, Josephus mentions several uprisings during a tumultuous time in Palestine. He describes a certain Athrongeus, who rebelled against the crown. Athrongeus was not distinguished by position, heritage, character or wealth. He was merely a shepherd known for his great stature and feats of strength.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> *Ant.* 8.404.

<sup>238</sup> *Ag. Ap.* 1.1, 2.

<sup>239</sup> *Ag. Ap.* 1.82–83.

<sup>240</sup> *Ag. Ap.* 1.94, 1.103, 1.230.

<sup>241</sup> cf. *Ag. Ap.* 1.251, 1.260.

<sup>242</sup> *J.W.* 2.60; *Ant.* 17.278.

In all of Josephus' comments on scripture or on Jewish history that we have analyzed, there is an unmistakable tendency to elevate the portrait of a shepherd or the profile of biblical figures who are shepherds. His praise of Abel and Moses, of the shepherds who help Hagar and of the qualities that God requires for kingship in the Davidic narratives are but a few examples. Israel's origin story of hailing from kings or captive shepherds is another example. He adds two peculiar details to David's story, which are, Samuel's call for righteousness and David's humble state. These are key features of the biblical shepherd image, one as a quality of the messianic shepherd and the other as a general quality of shepherd leadership (cf. Acts 20:19; 1 Pet 5:5, 6). Likewise, Josephus adds the detail of a "slain" shepherd in his reference to Number 27:17.

#### 2.4.5 Summary of the Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Post-biblical Jewish Literature

The use of the shepherd / flock motif in the post-biblical Jewish literature maintains much continuity with the use of the image in the OT with a few innovations. First, we note that there are more direct references to God as shepherd in comparison to those in the OT (and specifically the Exodus narrative), where the title is applied in a more circumspect way. We see this in the Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach) and 1 Enoch passages. Secondly, the concept of a shepherd as a teacher is an innovation in the intertestamental literature. In the Wisdom of Ben Sira, God teaches and reproves and has compassion on those "that diligently seek after his judgments" (Sir 18:14). In 2 Baruch, if the people intently seek wisdom from the law then they will always be guaranteed light, sustenance and guidance as embodied in the metaphors of a lamp, fountain and shepherd. This "innovation" is essentially a return to Deuteronomic history where keeping the law becomes an important element in this time period. Whereas Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 used shepherding imagery to describe the carelessness and exploitation of Israel's shepherds toward God's people, the passage here in 2 Baruch pinpoints the source of the problem: lack of attention to God's law. Finally, apart from caring for his members as a shepherd would his sheep, the "overseer" of the Qumran community was also tasked with teaching them the law.

A third observation is that in 1 Enoch, all of the patriarchs, Moses, the twelve tribes, prophets, and people are referenced as sheep. In the case of Moses, it is all the more



noteworthy because this application occurs in the context of God using Moses as an instrument of redemption and salvation of his people. Fourth, there is a universal streak in some of the uses of the shepherd image. In the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, God's shepherding is extended to "all flesh" (cf. Isa 40:5; 49:6). In the Psalms of Solomon the reign of the coming eschatological king, "the son of David," will extend to all nations (17:31, 34). In 4 Ezra, the announcement of the messianic shepherd comes to all the nations. He will provide them with everlasting rest.

Finally, as we have already demonstrated, Philo and Josephus have a fairly positive view of shepherding. Philo holds shepherding in high esteem, noting how Moses, kings and even God have used the title. In addition, Philo believes that the craft of shepherding prepares one for leadership, something for which he argued in the case of both Joseph and Moses.<sup>243</sup> Likewise, Josephus adds to Abel's virtues seemingly based on his profession of shepherding. His retelling of the Hagar story adds the shepherds who cared for her. He also finds in Israel's origin story the titles of king-shepherds and captive-shepherds, which are applied to the Jewish nation. Finally, Josephus adds the details of a "righteous" king, a "humble king" and a slain shepherd to his recounting of David's stories and his quoting of Num 27:17.

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<sup>243</sup> *Mos.* 1.60–62

### **3 The Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38)**

In keeping with our outline, in the next three chapters, we will analyze the use of the shepherd / flock motif within our three passages starting with the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17-38), then 1 Peter 5:1-11 and then John 21:15-19. In this chapter, our interest is in how Luke employed the shepherd / flock motif in the discourse. What was he trying to communicate about leadership by his appeal to this important image? What characteristic elements of the shepherd / flock motif appear in the speech? How do these elements relate to his overall purpose for Luke-Acts.

In order to answer these questions, we will progress through the chapter as follows. Our first task will be to determine the place of the speech within Luke-Acts. How does it function in Luke's larger narrative? This is important because, as we stated in our thesis, we believe each passage represents the culminating statement on shepherd leadership by each author. Thus, it is critical to establish how the speech and the shepherd image are connected to Luke's overall purpose and themes within Luke-Acts. Said differently, how do Luke's broader themes feed into the Miletus Speech and how do they inform Luke's reflection on early church leadership?

After our study of the speech's literary context, the next part of our study will focus on the genre of the speech. Specifically, we will argue that the Miletus Speech fits the farewell genre and that Luke was purposeful in utilizing it within the speech. The farewell form is typically used to convey critical information to the audience being addressed based on the import of a speaker's last words or by utilizing the speaker as an example for the audience to emulate. Thus, if Luke purposefully used the form as we hope to demonstrate, then it shows his conscious intent to communicate specific shepherd leadership concepts via the discourse. Finally, we will devote the last part of this chapter to an exegetical analysis of the shepherd / flock motif within the Miletus Speech. Specifically, we want to discern what attributes of the motif Luke is highlighting and how that contributes to Luke's overall conception of early church leadership. We will begin this chapter by analyzing the broader literary themes within Luke-Acts and their connections to the discourse.

### 3.1 Literary Themes in Luke-Acts and Their Connection to the Miletus Speech

#### 3.1.1 The Function of the Miletus Speech in Luke-Acts

The placement of the Miletus Speech is important for Luke's overall program in Luke-Acts and for what Luke has to say about early church leadership. Luke has a very specific story that he wishes to narrate about the nature of Jesus' life and ministry, the apostolic ministry, and the faith communities in relationship to both. The story begins in the "days of Herod, king of Judea" with the birth announcements surrounding Jesus the Messiah (Luke 1:5), incorporates the movement that Jesus began via his appointed apostles in Jerusalem after his resurrection (Acts 1:8) and ends thirty years later with the movement's most prolific herald preaching about this Messiah in the shadow of Cesar's Rome (Acts 28:31).

The Miletus Speech represents the geographical and literary end point of this story at the institutional level. All official missionary activity and church planting cease at this point in the narrative of Acts. While Paul continues with the gospel to Rome, the ecclesial chapter comes to a close. Indeed, the term *ἐκκλησία* never appears in Acts again. Under this narrative scenario, the discourse takes on added importance. It serves as a passing of the institutional torch from Paul to the elders, particularly given the farewell nature of the speech. Farewell speeches, as we will see, provide an author with a powerful way to communicate with the needs of the next generation in mind. Paul is leaving the scene. Who is going to be responsible for the churches he has planted? What final words can Paul provide that will help these leaders going fulfill their oversight responsibilities?

Given this type of literary closure, it is important to understand the larger themes within Luke-Acts, how the Miletus Speech connects with these larger themes and how both inform what Luke has to say about leadership.

#### 3.1.2 Establishing Lucan Themes: The Birth Narratives

The Lucan birth narratives (Luke 1–2) anticipate several major themes in Luke-Acts which flow into the Miletus Speech. Indeed, many scholars have highlighted the importance of the infancy narratives (including the so-called *primacy effect*) and the important theological

themes they telescope in the gospel and / or in Luke-Acts.<sup>1</sup> These include the Jewish nature of Jesus' messiahship; Jesus' universal mission to the Gentiles; the reformulation of the ἐκκλησία ("God's flock") as a Spirit-filled community of Jew and Gentile; the conflict caused by the gospel; and Jesus' mission which continues through his apostles and sets the example for carrying out this task. We will cover each of these in order. In terms of content, these first chapters thrust Luke's readers back through the great stories of Israel's history and to God's dramatic activities on behalf of his people. In addition, the shepherd / flock motif and its related themes are important in this section.

### 3.1.2.1 *Jesus is a Jewish Messiah*

At the outset of his story, Luke takes great literary care to establish Jesus as a Jewish messiah who fulfills God's promises to Israel. For example, the birth narratives are framed by temple scenes (1:9, 27, 37, 46);<sup>2</sup> the narratives paint every figure with varying degrees of Jewish piety or pedigree, obedience to the law, humility and submissiveness to God's will;<sup>3</sup> the miraculous birth announcements echo the OT birth announcements of Abraham and Sarah, Hannah, and Manoah.<sup>4</sup> Mary's *Magnificat* has many parallels with Hannah's song;<sup>5</sup> the songs by Mary and Zacharias testify to God's great actions of the past including God's

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Edward Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 39–45; Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 81–82; Paul Minear, "Luke's Use of the Birth Stories," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 111–30; Harold H. Oliver, "The Lucan Birth Stories and the Purpose of Luke-Acts," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1964): 215–26; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation - Volume One: The Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994), 15–44; Joseph Tyson, "The Birth Narratives and the Beginning of Luke's Gospel," *Semeia* 52 (1990): 103–20.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting note is that the last verse in Luke's gospel has the disciples worshipping in the temple (Luke 24:53).

<sup>3</sup> Zacharias is a priest, Elizabeth is a daughter of Aaron and both are righteous and walk blamelessly in all of the Lord's commandments (1:5, 6, 59). John the Baptist is the second coming of Elijah (1:17). Joseph is from David's house (1:27; 2:4) and Mary is submissive and favored of God (1:25, 30, 38, 48). Jesus' parents are law abiding Jews (2:21–25, 27, 41). Simeon is a prophet who is righteous before God and has been waiting for the consolation of Israel (2:25). Anna is a prophetess who serves night and day in the temple continually fasting and praying and who has been waiting for the redemption of Israel (2:36–38).

<sup>4</sup> Compare to birth announcements in Gen 18:1–15, Judg 13:2–7 and 1 Sam 1:1–20.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Table XII (pp. 358–60) in Brown's discussion of the *Magnificat* for a comparison of the parallels. Sanders states that Mary's *Magnificat* is "but a bare reworking of the song of Hannah" (1 Samuel 2). Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 357–65; James Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*, ed. Craig Evans (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 17.

covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:55, 73); and Luke presents Jesus as the Davidic messiah and Isaiah's servant. Given this cluster of elements and Gabriel's miraculous appearance (recorded only one other time in biblical history (Dan 8:16, 9:21)), the Lucan birth narratives demonstrate that God is doing a new and dramatic thing in Israel's salvation story.

The Jewish context of the gospel can also be seen in Luke's focus on Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Jerusalem plays an important role in the birth narratives (e.g. Zechariah, Simeon), Jesus' last week in the temple and the final place of Christ's mission. Indeed, Luke incorporates a lengthy Jerusalem "travel narrative" in his Gospel complete with geographical markers to highlight Jesus' approaching passion.<sup>7</sup> After his resurrection, Jesus tells the disciples to stay in Jerusalem instead of traveling to Galilee as in Matthew and John (Luke 24:49). The mission to the nations begins in Jerusalem with 8,000 Jews who accept their messiah as the first influx into the Christian church (Acts 1:8, 2:41, 4:4). The Holy Spirit first falls upon the Jewish-Christians (Acts 2) and every move of the mission is affirmed by the Jerusalem church including the preaching of salvation and the giving of the Spirit to the Samaritans (Acts 8) as well as affirming Cornelius' conversion and baptism of the Spirit (Acts 10 and 11). Finally, it is the Jerusalem church which deliberates upon and authorizes Paul's mission to the Gentiles (Acts 15). For Luke, Jerusalem is the center of everything God is doing in / through Jesus and his designated apostles.

### 3.1.2.2 *Jesus is the Promised Davidic Shepherd*

In the birth narratives, we see that Jesus is the fulfillment of the long-awaited Jewish messiah in the mold of King David. As Francesca Murphy notes, in Jesus' birth, David "became something he had not been before . . . the ancestor of the world's redeemer. Israel's first king became the progenitor of the Messiah of Israel."<sup>8</sup> Zacharias anticipates this event

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<sup>6</sup> Bachman argues for the equation that in Luke's mind Jerusalem equals the temple and vice versa. Michael Bachmann, *Jerusalem und der Tempel: Die Geographischtheologischen Elemente in der Lukanischen Sicht des Juedischen Kultzentrums* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson notes the carefully constructed Jerusalem "travel narrative" that takes up the central portion of Luke's gospel (Luke 9:51, 53, 56, 57; 10:1; 13:22, 31, 33; 14:25; 17:11; 18:31, 35–36; 19:1, 11 and 28). Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SP (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Francesca Aran Murphy, *1 Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 160.

proclaiming that in Jesus, God has “raised up a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David” (1:69), a statement that Raymond Brown deems a “free interpretation” of the Davidic covenant narrative (2 Sam 7:8–16).<sup>9</sup> Sanders noted the strong connection to the Davidic covenant in Luke 1 saying, “the new kingdom being announced by God in the first century, to be fully understood, has to be seen in light of the kingdom introduced by God through Samuel and culminating in David.”<sup>10</sup>

Luke also highlights Joseph’s Davidic lineage (1:27; 2:4) and Jesus’ Davidic royal credentials (1:32, 33). Most importantly for our study, Luke adds shepherding imagery to the Davidic motif in the angelic announcement of Jesus’ birth (2:8–20). The appearance of shepherds may be in keeping with Luke’s focus on the marginalized within his Gospel;<sup>11</sup> however, the juxtaposition of shepherds and the repeated references to David (or to David’s city Bethlehem) again suggests that Luke has in mind the Davidic dynasty traditions from 1 and 2 Samuel and the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7). As Israel’s original shepherd king was given a perpetual reign, so too Jesus will now inherit the “throne of his father David” and his “kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:32, 33).

Harris’ study focused exclusively on Jesus as the Davidic shepherd king in Luke and its background in the Davidic dynasty narratives of the LXX.<sup>12</sup> Harris devoted an entire chapter to the birth narratives highlighting Jesus’ Davidic lineage. She notes the following. The six references to David in the birth narratives<sup>13</sup> function as a *Leitwort* for Luke. There are several lexical connections to the Davidic covenant in the annunciation to Mary.<sup>14</sup> There are several lexical and thematic connections between Mary’s song and Hannah’s song. Here, it is the prophet Samuel who is the link to David given his importance to the Davidic monarchy.

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 310.

<sup>10</sup> Sanders, “Isaiah in Luke,” 147.

<sup>11</sup> Some unique and notable examples of the poor and marginalized in the Gospel of Luke include: Jesus raising of the widow’s son (7:11–17); Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37); Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) Parable of the Importunate Widow (18:1–8); Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (18:9–14) and the story of Zacchaeus (19:1–10). Certainly, Mary’s reversal as a woman and a “lowly handmaiden of the Lord” to “favored of God” would also qualify (1:26–56).

<sup>12</sup> See especially Table 1 (p. 42), where Harris details the convergence between the Davidic dynasty narratives and Luke’s gospel. Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4 (2 times), 11).

<sup>14</sup> Harris noted the phrase / terms υἱὸς ὑψίστου, μέγας, θρόνος, οἶκος, βασιλεία and δούλος in Luke 1:32, 33, 38 with parallels in 2 Sam 7:4, 8, 12–16.

Finally, the combination of shepherds, David and Bethlehem are a reference to the Davidic dynasty narratives<sup>15</sup> with echoes of Micah 5:2. Harris' analysis of the parallels between the Luke's presentation of Jesus in the birth narratives and Davidic Dynasty narratives is impressive. However, it is not just kingship which the Lucan infancy and the Davidic Dynasty narratives emphasize, but rather, shepherd kingship. This is a characteristic which we noted in our discussion of David in the previous chapter. As Harris notes, "talk of David must include an understanding of him as shepherd king of Israel."<sup>16</sup>

In the focus on Jesus as the Davidic shepherd, we also see the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies. God promised to replace Israel's bad shepherds with a shepherd like his servant David (Ezek 34:23; cf. Jer 23:5). In the larger context of Luke's story, this focus on removing Israel's leaders will become progressively clearer culminating in Paul's farewell speech where the elders are given charge over God's flock (Acts 20:28). A possible allusion to Ezekiel 34 is a portion of Zechariah's song where he mentions that God "has visited" (ἐπισκέπτομαι) his people and accomplished "redemption" (λύτρωσις) for them (Luke 1:68). The following verse mentions the "horn of David." The term ἐπισκέπτομαι as we have previously discussed appears in many critically important shepherding texts specifically where God had promised to rescue his people via a shepherd in David's mold (Ezek 34:11; cf. Jer 23:2 and Zech 10:3).

Ezekiel 34 is also the background for the Parable of the Lost Sheep, which culminates in the Zaccheus story (Luke 15 and 19). Luke 15 begins a series of interconnected stories centered on elements that have been "lost" (ἀπόλλυμι) (15:4, 6, 8, 9, 24, 32). The context of the lost sheep parable has to do with "tax collectors and sinners" who are drawn to Jesus but whom the religious leaders disdain (15:2).<sup>17</sup> Jesus will later relate a parable about a tax collector and a Pharisee drawing out the spiritual state of these two men and the one whom God favored (18:10–14). These "sinners" are apparently the "lost sheep" in Jesus' story and he defines his mission as one where he leaves the entire flock to bring this kind of person

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<sup>15</sup> Luke 2:3, 8, 11, 15; cf. 1 Sam 16:11; 17:15.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Tannehill suggests that Luke 15 is a much longer reply to the Pharisees' earlier question of why Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners (5:30). Tannehill, *Luke*, 237.

back into the fold (15:4–6). In Ezekiel 34, God promised to rescue his “lost” (ἀπόλλυμι) sheep via his shepherd David after their faithless shepherds had left them defenseless against predators (Ezek 34:11, 12, 23 LXX).

The reference to tax collectors is precisely what joins Luke 15 to the Zaccheus story in Luke 19 since Zaccheus is a chief tax collector (19:2). Now, Jesus comes to dine in Zaccheus’ home (again, showing himself to be a friend of tax collectors and sinners), which results in Jesus’ climactic proclamation of his mission: “for the Son of Man has come to seek (ζητέω) and to save (σώζω) that which was lost (ἀπόλλυμι)” (19:10). We can make several important observations at this point: 1) Jesus’ pronouncement is the fulfillment of the promise God made in Ezekiel 34 where all three terms appear saying he would “seek out” and “save” his “lost” sheep (Ezek 34:16, 32); 2) Jesus’ pronouncement represents the very heart of the gospel, particularly in Luke 19, where he highlights the marginalized as special recipients of God’s grace. And here, that message of grace is wrapped in a shepherding action (“seeking and saving the lost”). It is all the more noteworthy since it appears in one of Luke’s final narratives before the passion stories; 3) Luke joins the Zaccheus story to the infancy narratives as Jesus declares to Zaccheus that, “salvation (σωτηρία) has come to this house as he too has become a son of Abraham” (19:9) echoing the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis*.<sup>18</sup> The promises made to Zacharias and Mary, both pious Jews, have now been applied to Zaccheus, an outcast and tax collector. The promised Davidic shepherd of Ezekiel 34 (and Jeremiah 23) had finally arrived in the person of Jesus.

### 3.1.2.3 *Jesus is the Servant of Isaiah*

The birth narratives also present Jesus as the servant of Isaiah 40–66. Here, Luke’s interest is in Christ’s dual mission which incorporates salvation for Jews and Gentiles. Later, Luke will also incorporate the portrait of Jesus as a “lamb led to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7), which is subtly adapted by Luke as part of his reflection on shepherd leadership (Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32; 13:47) and more overtly referenced in our 1 Peter and John contexts (1 Pet 2:25; John 1:29, 36).

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 1:55, 69, 71, 73, 77; 2:32.



As the servant of Isaiah, Jesus is the one who brings “comfort” (παράκλησις) to those who have been waiting for Israel’s redemption (Luke 2:25, 38). The reference is to Isa 40:1 (παρακαλέω) where God announces comfort to his people as a signal that their exile has ended.<sup>19</sup> Though Israel was no longer in exile at the time of Jesus, many of its political, religious and social dynamics pointed to a virtual exile.<sup>20</sup> Now, Isaiah’s servant had arrived, in whom God’s glory would be revealed and by whom Jacob and Israel would be regathered (Isa 49:3–5). Thus, in the *Nunc Dimittis*, the prophet Simeon announces that Jesus is God’s “salvation” (σωτήριος) and “a light (φῶς) of revelation to the Gentiles (ἔθνος) and the glory of [God’s] people Israel” (Luke 2:32). This is a reference to Isa 49:6 (LXX) and the second Servant Song,

“He says, ‘It is too small a thing that you should be my Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
I will also make you a light (φῶς) of the nations (ἔθνος)  
So that my salvation (σωτήριος) may reach to the end of the earth.’”

The context in Isaiah is the hope of Jewish restoration with the offer of universal salvation. John is the herald of this restoration, a “voice of one crying in the wilderness” who is preparing the way for the Lord so that “all flesh will see the salvation (σωτήριος) of God.”<sup>21</sup> In Jesus, Jewish election and God’s universal offer of salvation come together and become a major highlight of Luke-Acts as the chart below demonstrates.

Text	Priority of Israel	Inclusion of the Gentiles	Salvation is offered	Salvation’s reach
Isa 49:6	Israel’s restoration	Light for the nations (εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν (LXX))	salvation (σωτηρίαν (LXX))	Ends of the earth (ἔσχατου τῆς γῆς (LXX))
Luke 2:32 (Infancy narratives)	Glory of Israel	Light for the nations φῶς εἰς . . .	Your salvation σωτήριόν σου	

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Isa 49:13, 51:3, 52:9, 66:13.

<sup>20</sup> Huntzinger, “The End of Exile,” 174–78.

<sup>21</sup> Luke 3:4–6, 7:27; 28:28, cf. Isa 40:3–5.

		ἔθνῶν		
Luke 24:47 (Jesus' commission)	Beginning from Jerusalem	to all the nations πάντα τὰ ἔθνη	Forgiveness of sins proclaimed	
Acts 1:8 (Summary of Acts)	In Jerusalem		You will be my witnesses	The ends of the earth (ἔσχατου τῆς γῆς)
Acts 9:15 (Paul's mission)	To the sons of Israel	before the Gentiles ἐνώπιον ἔθνῶν	He will bear my name	
Acts 13:46–47 (Turn to the Gentiles)	Spoke to Israel first	Light to the nations εἰς φῶς ἔθνῶν	Salvation σωτηρίαν	Ends of the earth ἔσχατου τῆς γῆς
Acts 26:20 (Trial before Agrippa)	First to Jerusalem	Then to the Gentiles	Repent and turn to God	
Acts 28:17, 28 (A last effort to Jews)	First to Jews	Sent to the Gentiles ἔθνεσιν ἀπεστάλη	God's salvation σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ	

These are not inconsequential events in Luke-Acts. Simeon's prophecy sets the dual mission in motion. Clearly, in Luke's Gospel, the priority is Jesus' offer of salvation to the Jews. However, in Jesus' paradigmatic announcement of his ministry, the focus is already on those outside of Israel (4:25–27) a theme, which continues with the healing of the Roman centurion's slave (7:1–10) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30–37). The ending of the Gospel connects to the beginning of Acts where the focus is once again on Jesus' dual mission. The disciples will preach repentance in 'Christ's name' to all the nations but "beginning in Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The dual mission occupies twenty chapters of Acts, starting with a primarily Jewish church (Acts 1–7) and expanding out into a Gentile world (Acts 10, 11, 13–20). Finally, Paul's conversion also incorporated this dual ministry (9:15) even as he identified with the servant's mission to be a "light for the Gentiles" (Acts 13:47; cf. 28:28). Simeon's prophecy, which began as a prophecy in Isaiah, announced to the world that Christ was a savior to both Jew and Gentile.

### 3.1.3 The Gospel Invites Conflict

Simeon's prophecy also anticipates the conflict that will arise as a result of the gospel. Mary's son is appointed as a "sign to be opposed" primarily from his own people (Luke 2:34). Jesus' ministry begins in conflict with the Jews (4:23–29), ironically enough because he extends the Isaianic blessings to the Gentiles<sup>22</sup> and the conflict continues through Luke's Gospel right through Jesus' rejection and crucifixion (20:17, 19). The apostles experience almost identical persecutions.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Stephen's martyrdom and last words are connected to Jesus' last words on the cross (Acts 7:59, 60; cf. Luke 23:34, 46). The apostle Paul also experienced fierce opposition for the entirety of his ministry, mostly from his compatriots, including incarceration, blasphemy, beatings and literal plots on his life.<sup>24</sup>

Holly Beers sees in Simeon's warning to Mary a possible allusion to Isaiah's suffering servant who was rejected and caused a division among his own people (Isa 50, 53).<sup>25</sup> While the echo is faint in the birth narratives, Beers notes that the suffering servant appears later in the themes of rejection, suffering and vindication found in his passion predictions (Luke 9:22, 18:31–33). Beers notes the terms *παράδιδωμι* ("betrayed"), *ἐμπτύω* ("spit upon) and *μαστιγώω* ("scourged) as Jesus speaks about being handed over to the Gentiles to be killed (Luke 18:31–33; cf. Isa 50:6, 53:6). In addition, Beers argues that the use of the term *παράδιδωμι* ("delivered" or "handed over") in many other Lucan texts<sup>26</sup> suggests that Luke is applying the servant motif to Jesus as well as to his followers throughout his work. This is an intriguing detail for our study. As we will argue later, there does appear to be a correlation

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 73–78.

<sup>23</sup> We see this opposition and the literary connections in two encounters in the temple: Luke 19–21 and Acts 2–5. Both times Jesus and apostles are "teaching" (*διδάσκω*) in the temple (Luke 19:47; 20:1; 20:21; 21:37 compared to Acts 4:2; 5:20–21, 25, 28, 42). This was directed at the "people" (*λαός*) and the reaction was very positive (Luke 19:48; 21:38 and Acts 5:13). This generated opposition from the religious leaders and they "confronted" (*ἐφίστημι*) Jesus and the apostles (Luke 20:1; Acts 4:1) and attempted to "lay hands" on them (*ἐπιβάλλειν ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας / ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας*) (Luke 20:19; Acts 5:18). They also questioned by what authority they taught (Luke 20:2; Acts 4:7). Finally, the leaders were afraid of what the people's reaction would be if they mistreated Jesus or the apostles (Luke 19:47; 20:19 and Acts 4:21; 5:26).

<sup>24</sup> Acts 9:22–25; 15:19, 23:13, 25:3.

<sup>25</sup> Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the Servant: Luke's Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts* (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 96–97.

<sup>26</sup> Luke 18:32, 22:4, 6, 21, 22, 48; 23:25, 24:7, 20; Acts 3:13, 8:3, 12:4, 15:26, 21:11, 22:4, 27:1, 28:17. Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the Servant*, 112.

between Jesus as the sacrificial lamb of Isaiah 53 and the elders' role as somehow embodying this vulnerability and sacrifice as leaders.

Finally we note that Luke does rely on Isaiah for his overall program. As Peter Mallen notes, there are five extended quotations of Isaiah, nine explicit quotations, and over 100 verbal allusions to Isaiah in Luke-Acts, many of these in passages that deal with the ministries of key figures (John, Jesus, the disciples and Paul for example).<sup>27</sup> In addition, Luke shows his familiarity with the servant's vicarious suffering during Jesus' arrest, where there is a direct quotation from Isa 53:12, "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Luke 22:37)<sup>28</sup> and in the encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch, where Philip preaches salvation from Isa 53:7–8. In the birth narratives, Luke telescopes the conflict that would engulf Jesus and his designated apostles throughout the whole of Luke-Acts. In addition, it would highlight the work of the suffering servant of Isaiah who took on the form of a sacrificial lamb. This conflict also appears in the Miletus Speech, as does the apostle Paul who identified with Jesus in this important sacrificial role (Acts 13:47) and who now passes on this identity to the elders in their roles as shepherd leaders.

### 3.1.3.1 *The Importance of the Spirit*

Finally we note how the Lucan birth narratives anticipate the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts. It is the Spirit who is the agent of the incarnation (Luke 1:35), inspires Zachariah's song (Luke 1:67) and leads Simeon to the temple to prophecy (Luke 2:25). Likewise, it is the Spirit who baptizes Jesus, leads him to the desert to be tempted and forms a crucial aspect of Jesus' mission as he quotes Isa 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me..." (Luke 4:18). In Acts, it is the Spirit who directs the mission,<sup>29</sup> empowers the apostles' preaching (Acts 4:8, 31, 6:10), affirms that preaching through signs and wonders and baptizes distinct groups

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<sup>27</sup> Extended quotations include: 1) Luke 3:4–6 (Isa 40:3–5); 2) Luke 4:18–19 (Isa 61:1–2); 3) Acts 7:49–50 (Isa 66:1–2); Acts 8:32–34 (Isa 53:7–8); and 5) Acts 28:26–27 (Isa 6:9–10). Isianic passages where key figures are highlighted include John the Baptist (Luke 3:4–6); Jesus (Luke 4:18–19); the disciples (Luke 24:44–49 / Acts 1:1–11; and Paul (Acts 13:44–52). The 100 verbal allusions are cited from NA<sup>27</sup>, Appendix 4. Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*, 2–3.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη (Luke 22:37) with καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη (Isa 53:12)

<sup>29</sup> Acts 8:29, 10:19, 11:12, 13:2, 4, 16:6, 19:21.

including Jews, Samaritans, God-fearers and Gentiles so as to make them one community.<sup>30</sup> While we can only briefly sketch this important theme in Luke-Acts, it is relevant for Luke's conception of leadership. This is because, in the Miletus Speech, it is the Spirit who establishes overseers over God's flock (Acts 20:28). We will say more about this in our exegetical analysis of the discourse.

#### 3.1.4 The Literary Connections Between Jesus and Paul

Luke's use of the servant motif also connects Jesus with Paul in a purposeful literary pattern within Luke-Acts.<sup>31</sup> First, as the servant of Isaiah, Jesus had a dual mission to Jew and Gentile which is repeated for Paul in his conversion. He is to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles and "the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). This is why the apostle Paul always went to the synagogue first when evangelizing any new city.<sup>32</sup> Even the close of Acts shows Paul's attempts to reach his Jewish compatriots once more (Acts 28:17). Paul also appropriated the servant motif directly. In Pisidian Antioch, he states that God has directed his mission, "I [the Lord] have placed you as a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth" (Acts 13:47; cf. Luke 2:32). It is noteworthy that Luke ends the book of Acts with Paul once again identifying with Isaiah's servant (Acts 28:28).

Luke uses the rejection,<sup>33</sup> suffering and the vindication of Isaiah's suffering servant to connect Jesus and Paul via the opposition they encounter. This opposition frames the whole of Luke-Acts (Luke 2:34; Acts 28:27, 28). Jewish opposition is particularly evident in the temple where the Pharisees and scribes sent spies, used trickery and watched Jesus scrupulously in order that they might trap him in his words and have sufficient grounds to

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<sup>30</sup> Acts 2:4, 8:17, 10:44, 19:6.

<sup>31</sup> Beers dedicates an entire study to demonstrate that Jesus *and* the disciples embody Isaiah's servant in Luke-Acts. Beers also notes that Jesus' vicarious atonement (characterized by the fourth Servant Song of Isaiah 52–53) is not as prominent in Luke since this was not a quality that could be easily transferred to the disciples. Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the Servant*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 13:14, 43, 14:1, 17:1, 10, 17, 18:4, 19, 19:8.

<sup>33</sup> Moessner's study focused primarily on the Jews' rejection of Jesus as a "prophet like Moses" and the pattern of rejection of Jesus' prophet-apostles, Peter, Stephen and Paul. He concluded that it was via this rejection by the Jewish nation and the subsequent fact that Peter, Stephen and Paul stand in for a repentant Israel that "the glory of Israel" becomes "the light to the Gentiles." David P. Moessner, "The Christ Must Suffer": New Light on the Jesus-Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts," *NovT* 28 (1986): 220–56.

turn him over to the authorities (Luke 20:20; cf. Acts 9:24). It is also evident during Jesus' trial where the religious leaders blasphemed Jesus (Luke 22:65) something to which Paul was accustomed (Acts 13:45; 18:6). Finally, opposition to Jesus led the Pharisees to conspire with Judas to put Jesus to death (ἀναυρέω).<sup>34</sup> In Acts, it was οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι who sought to put Paul to death (ἀναυρέω) on several occasions.<sup>35</sup>

These scenes are also connected conceptually by the forethought and planning that is taking place in order to eliminate both Jesus and Paul. Jesus predicted he would be mistreated (ὕβρις) at the hands of the Gentiles (Luke 18:32) which is what the Gentiles did to Paul in Iconium (Acts 14:5). Jesus predicted he would be “handed over” (παραδίδωμι) to the Gentiles (Luke 18:32), and Agabus predicted that Paul would be “handed over” (παραδίδωμι) to the Gentiles (Acts 21:11). Jesus spoke of how Jerusalem “stoned” (λιθοβολέω) the prophets sent to her, which is what Paul's opponents did to Paul.<sup>36</sup> Jesus often defined his mission as one destined for suffering (πάσχω)<sup>37</sup> which is the destiny that the risen Lord promised to Paul at his calling (Acts 9:16). Within the Miletus discourse, Paul will summarize the difficulties in his ministry by saying that he has served the Lord with “tears” and also with “trials” because of the “plots of the Jews” (Acts 20:19).

Finally, Luke makes other literary connections between Jesus and Paul. For example, both: 1) raise someone from the dead; 2) form part of a lengthy travel narrative to Jerusalem for a deadly / potentially deadly fate; 3) defend themselves before Gentile magistrates; and 4) give a farewell speech with the topic of leadership (which is unique since only Luke places the disputes about rank at the Eucharist).<sup>38</sup> In summary, Jesus becomes the model for Paul's mission, particularly in the trials the Lord endured and in the sacrificial manner in which he

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<sup>34</sup> Luke 22:2; cf. to Mark 14:1; Matt 26:4 and John 11:53, which use the terms ἀποκτείνω instead. Not surprisingly, the Jewish council sought to kill Peter and John using the same term (Acts 5:33).

<sup>35</sup> Acts 9:23, 24, 29; 23:15, 21, 27; 25:3.

<sup>36</sup> Luke 13:34; cf. Acts 14:5, 19, 2; Cor 11:25.

<sup>37</sup> Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26; 24:46.

<sup>38</sup> Walton provides a detailed analysis of the conceptual, thematic and lexical similarities between Jesus' Last Supper discourse (Luke 22:14–38) and the Miletus Speech. Steve Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100–116.

gave his life. In the Miletus Speech, as we will see, it is Paul who becomes the model for the elders and their sacrificial shepherding responsibilities toward the church.

### 3.1.5 Summary of the Literary Themes in Luke-Acts and Their Connection to the Miletus Speech

We can now summarize our analysis of the literary context of the Miletus Speech in Luke-Acts. First, we noted that the Miletus Speech represents an important literary endpoint to the story of Jesus' mission and its continuation via his appointed apostles. Church planting has stopped at the level of the narrative and now the Lucan Paul must make arrangements for the leadership of the church in his absence. Secondly, virtually all of the important literary themes in Luke-Acts flow directly into the Miletus Speech, and as we will see, will inform Luke's reflection on early church leadership. This includes Jesus' Jewish identity, his dual mission, the gospel and conflict, the importance of the Spirit and the literary connections between Jesus and Paul.

First, Luke places Jesus fully within his Jewish religious context. He is the fulfillment of Israelite expectations in the OT including the Davidic shepherd of Ezekiel 34 and the Servant of Isaiah 40-66, but particularly Isaiah 53. This also means that Luke makes an important ecclesiological affirmation: the church does not replace Israel but rather is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. However, the door has now been opened to the Gentiles based on Isaiah's promise (Isa 49:6). This means that the *ἐκκλησία* or "the flock of God" (Acts 20:28) is now comprised of Jew and Gentile as a response to Christ's universal mission. Another important theme is the conflict the gospel engenders. This appears throughout Luke-Acts and is an important thread that connects Jesus and Paul. Luke takes great literary pains to connect Jesus' mission, identity and opposition to the apostle Paul's life and ministry. As we mentioned, Jesus is the Davidic shepherd who replaces Israel's failed leadership and who seeks and saves the lost sheep. He is the servant of Isaiah who has a dual mission to Jews and Gentiles. He is the suffering servant who is rejected but who is ultimately vindicated. All of these coalesce around Paul and his ministry. These lexical connections continue in the Miletus Speech as Paul now serves as the example for the elders of how to minister to the flock through tears and trials.

### 3.2 Miletus Speech as Farewell Genre

The Miletus Speech falls within the testamentary or farewell genre.<sup>39</sup> This is hermeneutically important because a farewell form typically communicates information that is critical to the long-term health and survival of the group being addressed. In a typical farewell speech, a speaker who is close to death summons a group of people to convey important final instructions. The proximity of the speaker's death lends his words greater urgency, moral clarity, significance and even divine authority if the speaker has received prophetic insight prior to his death.<sup>40</sup> Joshua's farewell speech is a notable OT example (Josh 23:1-24:30) but we could add many others from the OT,<sup>41</sup> Jewish post-biblical literature,<sup>42</sup> and the NT.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The following scholars categorize the Miletus Speech as a farewell speech and have established varying lists of characteristics of the farewell form: Thomas Craig Alexander, "Paul's Final Exhortation to the Elders from Ephesus: The Rhetoric of Acts 20.17-38" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1990); Enric Cortès, *Los Discursos de Adios de Gn 49 a Jn 13-17: Pistas Para La Historia de Un Género Literario En La Antigua Literatura Judía*. (Barcelona: Herder, 1976), 62–64; Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "The Literary Genre 'Testament,'" in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert Kraft and George Nickelsburg (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 262–63; William S. Kurz, *Farewell Addresses in the New Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990); Hans-Joachim Michel, *Die Abschiedsrede Des Paulus an Die Kirche APG 20, 17-38: Motivgeschichte Und Theologische Bedeutung* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1973).

<sup>40</sup> Von Nordheim does not share the same opinion. A translation from the "The Origin of Genesis" that references Von Nordheim's work states the following: "This definition [that death serves to legitimize behavior] excludes at the same moment a widespread view that the state of the dying is the appropriate moment for prophecy, the so-called *divinare morientes*. The prediction is based on the experience of the speaker. This experience enables him to foretell what will happen. Kolenkow, "The Literary Genre 'Testament,'" 259; Raymond de Hoop, *Genesis 49 In Its Literary and Historical Context* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 48.

<sup>41</sup> Michel listed the following speeches from the OT in his study of the farewell form: Jacob (Gen 47:29–49:33); Moses (Deut 31–33); Joshua (Josh 23:1–24:30); Samuel (1 Sam 12:1–25); David (1 Kgs 2:1–9; 1 Chr 28–29); Tobit (Tob 14:3–11); Mattathias (1 Macc 2:49–70); Note: Michel includes the last two speeches under the section of OT examples. Michel, *Die Abschiedsrede Des Paulus*, 36–39.

<sup>42</sup> Michel listed the following speeches from the intertestamental literature in his study of the farewell form: Noah (Jub 7:20–29); Abraham (Jub 20:1–10; 21:1–25; 22:7–30); Isaac (Jub 31:4–29; 36:1–18); Jacob (Jub 45:14f); Jacob's sons (T. 12 Patr.); Isaac (T. Isaac 4:14–5:13); Abraham (T. Ab.); Adam (Life of Adam and Eve); Moses, Joshua, Deborah (Pseudo-Philo); Moses (As. Mos.); Ezra (4 Ezra 14:9–50); Baruch (2 Bar 31–4; 44–46; 78–87); Enoch (2 Enoch 55–66). Michel, *Die Abschiedsrede Des Paulus*, 40–47.

<sup>43</sup> Farewell speeches are far less common in the NT, perhaps because of the principal genres that comprise the writings (gospel, one narrative, epistles, apocalyptic). Some examples include: Jesus' upper room discourse (John 13–17); Jesus' speech to his disciples prior to his arrest (Luke 22:14–30) and the Miletus Speech. Munck lists Tim 4:1–16, 2 Tim 3:1–17 and 2 Peter (and the Miletus Speech) as farewell speeches to underscore his thesis that this generic form points to a post-apostolic period where institutional offices ("elders") have arisen in response to different heresies. Johannes Munck, "Discours d'adieu Dans La Nouveau Testament et Dans La Littérature Biblique," in *Aux Sources de La Tradition Chrétienne: Mélanges Offerts à M. Maurice Goguel à L'occasion de Son Soixante-Dixième Anniversaire*, ed. J.J. Von Allmen (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950), 155–70.



One of the primary functions of a biblical or Jewish farewell discourse is to preserve the integrity, purpose and heritage of the community that is being left behind.<sup>44</sup> The focus is on the audience and not on the person who is departing.<sup>45</sup> This means leaving successors who can carry on after the speaker's departure. Another important characteristic element of the farewell form is an appeal to the speaker's moral behavior as a model for the audience to follow. We believe this is one of the reasons Luke utilized a farewell form at this juncture since it allowed him to use Paul's ministry as an example for the shepherd elders.

We offer two arguments that demonstrate Luke's purposeful use of the farewell speech within the discourse at Miletus. First, in his Gospel, Luke placed the dispute about rank among Jesus' disciples at the Eucharist unlike in Jesus' Judean ministry in the other Synoptics (Luke 22:24–27; cf. Mark 10:42–44; Matt 20:25–27). In addition, like the Miletus Speech, the discussion about leadership takes place in a farewell context as Jesus approaches his crucifixion. Walton notes the following parallels between Jesus and Paul's farewells. Both reference the suffering to come (Luke 22:15; Acts 20:22–24); efficacy of Jesus' death (Luke 22:19; Acts 20:28); leadership (Luke 22:24–30; Acts 20:28); and money (Luke 22:32–35; Acts 20:33–35).<sup>46</sup> We believe this is another literary parallel between Jesus and Paul in Luke-Acts and one that shows Luke's intention to communicate important leadership concepts based on Jesus' example. In the Gospel, the Eucharist sits in the background as does Jesus' service (Luke 22:15–20; 25, 26). In the Miletus Speech, it is Paul's sacrificial service modeled after Jesus.

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<sup>44</sup> As Eckhard notes, in a testament, "It is not the dying person but the listeners and their behavior on which their future will be decided that is of interest." Eckhard von. Nordheim, *Die Lehre Der Alten: I. Das Testament Als Literaturgattung Im Judentum Der Hellenische-Römischen Zeit* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 237.

<sup>45</sup> According to Kurz, Greco-Roman farewell addresses differ substantially in "tone, situation, vocabulary, and rhetoric" from their biblical / Jewish counterparts. The former show a concern with suicide, death and its meaning, even life after death, which is completely foreign to biblical farewells. In addition, Greco-Roman farewells demonstrate no concern for theodicy, for how God has worked in history, nor do they show interest in the revelation of God's plan, the people of God or his covenant. William S. Kurz, "Luke 22:14–38 and Greco-Roman and Biblical Farewell Addresses," *JBL* 104 (1985): 261.

<sup>46</sup> Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 100–117.

The second reason we believe Luke purposefully utilized the farewell form is because he departs from its normal use. Paul does not die as in a typical farewell.<sup>47</sup> Instead, Luke crafts the speech and its surrounding context in such a way that he leaves open the possibility of Paul's death. For example, Paul is headed to Jerusalem via divine constraint (Acts 20:22, cf. 19:22) similar to Jesus and his journey to Jerusalem where he was crucified as we have noted (Luke 9:51). Chains and affliction await, which Agabus repeats later (Acts 21:13). The Lucan Paul even states that he does not despair of his own life (20:25) and that he is not afraid to die for the Lord's sake (21:13). In the Miletus Speech, Luke "all but places the crown of martyrdom upon Paul's head."<sup>48</sup> Obviously, having Paul die at this juncture would not have suited Luke's literary purpose since Paul's journey to Rome was already divinely intended (Acts 23:11); however, by including this form, Luke was able to use the function and the characteristic elements of the form in order to relay critical information about leadership. Other typical elements of the farewell form include exhortations and teachings, which can often turn to terse warnings about future crises for certain negative behaviors. Within the intertestamental period, these warnings often take on eschatological or apocalyptic overtones.<sup>49</sup> Emotionally intimate parting scenes are also standard elements of many farewell contexts in the post-biblical Jewish literature.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See Gen 47:29; Deut 31:14; 1 Kgs 2:2; Tob 14:3; 1 Macc 2:49; 4 Ezra 14:9; 2 Bar 44:1-2. Sometimes death is intimated through other language having to do with age or the fact that the speaker is no longer continuing in leadership (See Deut 31:2; Josh 23:1-2; 1 Sam 12:2; 1 Kgs 2:1; Tob 14:3).

<sup>48</sup> Dibelius, *The Book of Acts*, 62.

<sup>49</sup> Kolenkow's study treats the "two major viewpoints on the contents of testaments," that is, ethical and apocalyptic. Both Cortes and Munck highlight the prominence of apocalyptic language within farewell speeches. Cortes argues for the appearance of both apocalyptic and pseudonymity of speaker (placing prophecies in mouth of well-known figures) based on the *Sitz im Leben* of the author. God's promises have not yet come true, hope must be offered, and the prophets have already spoken. Thus apocalyptic language serves a viable purpose and using Moses and Enoch as mouthpieces legitimizes the prophecy. Kolenkow, "The Literary Genre 'Testament,'" 259; Cortès, *Los Discursos de Adios*; Munck, "Discours d'adieu Dans La Nouveau Testament."

<sup>50</sup> Cf. T. Reu. 1:5; T. Dan 7:2; T. Benj. 3:7; Jub. 22:26; L.A.E. 46:1-3.

We see most of these concerns and elements within the Miletus Speech.<sup>51</sup> The focus is on the elders and on ensuring a transition of leadership. Paul’s self-apologetic, covering nearly half the speech, is more readily understood as an element of the farewell form. Paul is not seeking praise. He is teaching and instructing the elders by his example of what it means to be a true shepherd of souls. His most important aim is the preservation or the vigilance of the community under the elders’ care. Paul’s words even have an eschatological overtone with his warning to, “watch out” (γρηγορέω), a term often used to speak of Christ’s *parousia*.

The Miletus Speech falls squarely within the farewell genre. This allows Luke to utilize the purpose and function of the farewell form and adapt it to fit his reflection on leadership.<sup>52</sup> These are, as it were, the Lucan Paul’s last words for church leaders. There is eschatological trouble on the horizon with men who would pervert his teachings. Paul’s main concern is with the churches that he is leaving behind. And given this urgent context, the Lucan Paul utilizes the shepherd / flock motif to convey important leadership concepts to the elders.

### 3.3 Analysis of the Shepherd / Flock Motif in the Miletus Speech

How does Luke appropriate the shepherd / flock motif within the Miletus Speech? How does the shepherd / flock motif relate to other topics within the speech? What attributes of the motif does he utilize to communicate his reflections on leadership? To answer these questions, we will provide an exegetical analysis of the shepherd / flock motif in the Miletus Speech. We will begin with an analysis of the immediate context, occasion and audience for

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<sup>51</sup> Michel catalogued thirteen (13) farewell elements from his analysis of various OT and post-biblical Jewish farewell speeches. I have mapped the pertinent verses from the Miletus Speech beside each element: 1) Proximity of the death of the speaker (implied in vv. 22–25, 38); 2) a specific audience, typically among whom the speaker lived and / or worked and often the very leaders of the community (vs. 17); 3) paraenetic teachings often accompanied by a historical review (vv. 28–31, 35); 4) prophecies of imminent tribulations concerning Israel and found mostly in later, post-biblical Jewish farewells (vv. 29–31); 5) speaker’s self-defense wherein the dying person is a model of uprightness for those left behind (vv. 26, 27, 34); 6) appointment of successors (vs. 28); 7) blessings, which can take the form of an extended prayer including a blessing (vs. 32); 8) prayers including thanksgiving (vs. 36); 9) final instructions often with a historical remembrance (vs. 35); 10) funeral instructions for the speaker to be buried in a special place (typically near ancestors or family) (none); 11) promises and oaths taken by hearers; 12) exaggerated farewell gestures including kissing, embraces and weeping and wailing (vs. 37); 13) death of the speaker, though it does not need to take place directly after the speech (implied in vv. 22–25, 38). Michel, *Die Abschiedsrede Des Paulus*.

<sup>52</sup> Cortès believes a genre takes us to the very “soul of the author.” While this description may place too great a hermeneutical burden on the form, it nevertheless highlights the potential significance of genre to the interpretive task. Cortès, *Los Discursos de Adios*, 52.

the speech? Afterward, we will study the place of the shepherd / flock motif in relation to the entire discourse. Finally, we will provide an exegetical analysis of the shepherd image to ascertain what it reveals about leadership.

### 3.3.1 Context, Occasion and Audience of the Miletus Speech

Within Acts, the Miletus Speech represents a critical literary shift for the apostle Paul as he transitions from being a missionary to the Mediterranean world (Acts 13–20) to being a prisoner of Rome (Acts 21–28). There is no further planting or visiting of churches as we mentioned earlier. The speech summarizes Paul’s ministerial career and its high point in Ephesus (Acts 20:17–21). At the same time, it anticipates Paul’s chains and trials in the remainder of Luke’s story (20:23–25). As for the speech itself, it forms the most crucial part of a longer Jerusalem travel narrative (Acts 20:1–21:16).<sup>53</sup> Paul gave only nine speeches in Acts, and the discourse at Miletus is the only one given to a Christian audience.<sup>54</sup> This also gives the speech an epistle-like situation and heightens its paraenetic function.<sup>55</sup>

Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, having finalized his Ephesian ministry (Acts 19:1-41). He is arriving with a collection for the saints and a plan to go to Rome (Rom 15:24–26, 28).

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<sup>53</sup> Paul was the principal figure in five travel narratives within Acts: 1) Galatia (Acts 13 and 14); 2) Corinth (Acts 16–18); 3) Ephesus (Acts 19); 4) Jerusalem (Acts 20) and 5) Rome (Acts 21–28). These travel narratives also contain a major speech to a distinct audience: Jew (Acts 13:16–41); Gentile (Acts 17:22–31); Christian (Acts 20:17–38) and Roman magistrate (Acts 24:10–21). This suggests a literary ordering of the material to emphasize particular points.

<sup>54</sup> Both Dibelius and Foakes-Jackson enumerate twenty-four speeches in Acts with nine speeches by Paul: 1) evangelistic to Jewish audience (13:16–41); 2) evangelistic to Gentile audience (14:15–17); 3) evangelistic to Gentile audience (17:22–31); 4) exhortation to Christian audience (20:18–35); 5) apologetic to Jewish audience (22:1–21); 6) apologetic to Gentile magistrate (24:10–21); 7) apologetic to Gentile magistrate (26:2–23, 25–27); 8) exhortation to Gentile ship crew (27:21–26); 9) evangelistic to Jewish audience (28:17–20)). Soards’ definition of a speech (“a deliberately formulated address to a group of listeners”) is too broad and balloons the speech count to 36 including: Jesus’ commission to the disciples (Acts 1:4–8) which includes dialogue, the disciples prayer for boldness (Acts 4:24–30) and various one verse “speeches”: the angel telling the disciples that Jesus will return (Acts 1:11); Paul’s denunciation of the Jews in Corinth (Acts 18:6) and Agabus’ prophecy in Caesarea (Acts 21:11). Martin Dibelius, “The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography,” in *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology*, ed. K. C. Hanson, trans. Mary Ling (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 57, 174; F.J. Foakes Jackson, Kirsopp Lake, and Henry J. Cadbury, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I - The Acts of the Apostles - Vol. IV, English Translation and Commentary* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 402–3; Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 20–22.

<sup>55</sup> The unique audience prompted Walton to study the relationship between Pauline tradition and Lucan redaction within the speech. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*.

Paul does not evangelize during his journey to Jerusalem but instead visits several churches on his way (Acts 20:6–12; 21:4, 5, 7–16). When Paul arrives in Miletus, he summons an audience, which is a characteristic element of the farewell form. He “calls for” (μετακαλέω)<sup>56</sup> the elders of the Ephesian church, a group with whom Paul is intimate and among whom he lived and ministered for three years (Acts 20:31). This intimacy is also characteristic of the speaker and his audience in a typical farewell scene.

In terms of the audience for the speech, there are at least two. On one level, it is the Ephesian church elders with whom the Lucan Paul spent three years (Acts 20:31). On another level, Luke’s audience likely extended beyond this small group of leaders. Bruce argues that the speech is intended for the leaders of all churches that Paul had established<sup>57</sup> while Dibelius and Jacques Dupont believe that Luke intended to reach the whole church of this time period.<sup>58</sup> If we accept that Luke had intentions of being published based on his prologue,<sup>59</sup> then the case for a much bigger audience is even stronger. The combination of the Lucan Paul delivering his final words in a direct ecclesial setting, the use of the shepherd flock motif and the large audience suggests a conscious intent by Luke to impart his understanding of leadership to the early church. It is this pattern of thought which we will unpack in the rest of this chapter.

The elders play a prominent leadership role in Acts mostly in connection with the Jerusalem church.<sup>60</sup> In the NT, elders appear in the Pastorals, 1 Peter, James, 2 and 3 John as

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. to the LXX and its use of καλέω or συγκαλέω: “Jacob ‘called’ his sons . . .” (Gen 49:1); “Moses ‘called’ Joshua . . .” (Deut 31:7); “Joshua ‘called’ for all Israel . . .” (Josh 23:2; 24: 1); “he ‘called’ his son . . .” (Tob 14:3-11).

<sup>57</sup> Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 387.

<sup>58</sup> Dibelius, “The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography,” 61–62; Jacques Dupont, *Le Discours de Milet: Pastoral Testament de Saint Paul (Actes 20, 18-36)* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1962), 20.

<sup>59</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson believes the prologue indicates “an explicit literary self-consciousness” and the possibility that Theophilus was Luke’s financial patron for the publication of Luke-Acts. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 29.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:4, 6, 22–29; 16:4; 21:18.

well as Revelation.<sup>61</sup> Their roles included oversight for the churches (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), preaching and teaching role, and pastoral care (1 Tim 5:17; Jas 5:14). They were required to be of high moral character (Titus 1:6–10) and it appears that in Ephesus and Crete, they were being appointed as a counteracting force against the false teachers.<sup>62</sup>

Both Burtchaell and Campbell devoted entire studies to the historical antecedents and development of the elders within the early Christian church;<sup>63</sup> however, they reached different conclusions. Burtchaell argued that elders were a carryover from the synagogue structures of the Jews and that the early church would have adopted this form of leadership. In other words, the elders functioned in a semi-official to official capacity within the primitive Christian church from its earliest inception. Campbell argued that the elders in the NT church were rooted in the ancient family or household since the church met in homes at its outset. The elders were the senior men of the community or the heads of the leading families.<sup>64</sup> Elders did not represent a formal “office” but rather were those who bore a title of honor that was “imprecise, collective and representative” (i.e. on behalf of others).<sup>65</sup>

We cannot settle the dispute here, but we can make the following observations. It is likely that the early church adopted some of the leadership structures of their Jewish forebears. As we noted in the larger themes for Luke, the church’s self-identity was wrapped in the continuous people of God based on God’s promises to Abraham, Moses and David. In addition, the church was primarily Jewish in its infancy and still regularly met in the temple (Luke 24:52, 53; Acts 2:5, 46). Whether it was a formal office, or an imprecise leadership title is not important for our purposes. The elders had an important role in the decisive

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<sup>61</sup> The fact that Paul’s undisputed epistles do not mention elders has led to postulating a kind of dichotomy of leadership within the early church. One type is connected to James and the Jerusalem church led by elders along the model of the synagogue and having Judaizing tendencies. This is more evident in Acts 21 where James and the elders compel the apostle Paul to undergo a Nazarite vow in order to appease his Jewish-Christian brothers. The other type of leadership is connected to the Pauline churches which operated in a more charismatic, free-form style and had less of a discernible leadership structure. But this reduces a complex process of development. Paul does mention “overseers” and “deacons” in his Philippians correspondence (Phil 1:1), which suggests a formal leadership structure.

<sup>62</sup> Titus 1:9, 11, 13–16; 2:1, 7, 8; 3:9–11.

<sup>63</sup> James T. Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority Within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

<sup>64</sup> Campbell, *The Elders*, 247.

<sup>65</sup> Campbell, *The Elders*, 246.

direction the church undertook in the Jew and Gentile controversy (Acts 15), and wherever they are featured, they have financial, pastoral, teaching, preaching and leadership obligations that extend beyond those accorded to the regular members of the church. This is why the shepherd image was critical as the leadership model they were exhorted to undertake.

### 3.3.2 Basic Structure of the Miletus Speech

Before we begin our exegesis proper, it will be helpful to have an outline of the Miletus Speech. This will bring out important thematic emphases in the discourse. It will also be useful in highlighting the prominence of the shepherd / flock motif as we progress through the speech. Though the shepherd image only occupies four verses (Acts 20:28-31), the motif can be felt throughout the discourse as we will reveal.

To begin, we can divide the Miletus Speech into five components based on thematic unity, sentence structure and grammar.<sup>66</sup> The speech is bounded by introductory and closing formulas (Acts 17–18a; 36–38). The five components of the speech include a review of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (18b–21); Paul’s divine compulsion to go to Jerusalem (22–24); Paul’s declaration of his absence and innocence (25–27); Paul’s charge to the elders to guard the flock (28–31); and a blessing and commendation (32–35).<sup>67</sup>

Already we can see that much of the focus of the Miletus Speech is on the apostle Paul. This is a characteristic feature of the farewell form as the speaker is often a notable figure who becomes a model for the audience to emulate. We should remember that Paul is also a shepherd of churches. In addition, Paul’s ministry is patterned after that of Jesus as we have noted. If the charge to the elders is to shepherd the church (Acts 20:28), then there is no better example than the apostle Paul. But what exactly are the elders to emulate? There are three answers according to the Miletus Speech. The elders are to have a certain approach to

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<sup>66</sup> Acts 20:26–27 represents a complete grammatical sentence and is joined to v. 25 by the presence of the coordinating conjunction “therefore” (διότι). The grammatical markers “and now behold” (καὶ νῦν ἴδου) in verses 22 and 25 as well as “and now” (καὶ τὰ νῦν) in verse 32, indicate a clear break in tone and theme. Below, we can see the presence of the grammatical markers in bold, which affirms our division into seven syntactical units: 17a–18a; 18–21b; **22–24**; **25–27**; 28–31; **32–35**; 36–38.

<sup>67</sup> See Walton’s helpful table of the different divisions of the speech Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 66.

ministry, they are to face their task with courage, and finally, their central focus should be on the ministry of proclamation. We shall treat these items in our first three exegetical sections.

### 3.3.3 Paul's Approach to Ministry (Acts 20:18b-21)

In the first part of the speech, Paul describes his work as “serving the Lord” (δουλεύω) using a term reserved for slaves or servants who are commanded by others (Acts 20:19; cf. Luke 16:13; 1 Tim 6:2). The historical Paul often referred to himself and his colleagues as “bond-servants” (δοῦλος) of Christ,<sup>68</sup> taking over the Hebrew term עַבְד, which was often used to describe the Lord's servants in the OT.<sup>69</sup> This work is undertaken with “humility”, “tears” and despite the “plots of the Jews.” Καὶ joins the three elements and suggests that all form part of serving the Lord (Acts 20:19).

The term ταπεινοφροσύνη (“humility”) means “lowliness of mind” and presumes a modest or unassuming opinion of oneself. It does not appear in the LXX or secular literature<sup>70</sup> and is a *hapax legomenon* in Acts. The term appears 6 other times in the NT often within sections of Christian teaching.<sup>71</sup> There are two noteworthy details in this respect. First, the term appears in the great hymn of Philippians in which Paul encourages believers to “do nothing out of selfish conceit” but rather with “humility of mind” (ταπεινοφροσύνη) (Phil 2:3). The apostle then goes on to exhort the church to “have the same mind” (φρονέω) which was in Christ who “humbled himself” (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν) even to the point of death. Here, both parts of our term are repeated and the attitude they enjoin, the *imitatio Christi*, are concretely captured in Paul's difficult ministry. The appearance of this rare term in the Philippians texts suggests more than one tradition developing around Christ as an example, though the shepherd motif is more directed to leaders.

The second noteworthy detail about ταπεινοφροσύνη is its appearance in our 1 Peter 5 passage. As we will later detail, both the Miletus Speech and our 1 Peter 5 text incorporate similar leadership terminology (“elder,” “overseer” and “shepherding”). This factor, coupled

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<sup>68</sup> Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 2:24; Titus 1:1.

<sup>69</sup> Gen 26:24; Josh 1:2; 2 Sam 7:8; Isa 42:1 in anticipation of Jesus.

<sup>70</sup> Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 75–76.

<sup>71</sup> See Col 2:18, 23, 3:12; Eph 4:2; Phil 2:3, 1 Pet 5:5.



with Paul's self-sacrificial example of ministry suggests that "humility of mind" is an important aspect of leadership in the church modeled after Jesus himself, and perhaps even representative of the shepherd image.

"Tears" are used in both a literal and figurative sense (Acts 20:19). They can suggest the real pain that the Lucan Paul experienced in planting and sustaining his churches<sup>72</sup> or the great anguish, effort and sacrifice that is mirrored in the historical Paul on behalf of the churches (1 Thess 2:7–11; 3:1, 5). But in another sense, these "tears" could also mirror the historical Paul's pain of the church straying away from its calling (2 Cor 2:4) or suffering betrayal at the hands of false teachers (Gal 1:6–9; 2 Cor 11:5–15). This is why "tears" frame the speech (Acts 20:19, 31), appearing again when Paul warns against the "savage wolves" who will ravage the flock. In the truest sense of the word, "tears" represent the sacrificial vigilance needed to care for God's people, a concept that is greatly developed using the shepherd imagery of the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:28–31).

The "plots of the Jews"<sup>73</sup> (ταῖς ἐπιβουλαῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων) can be taken literally or made to represent the whole of Jewish opposition to Paul's work. For example, Acts describes three carefully orchestrated "plots" (ἐπιβουλή) where Paul's detractors attempted to take his life (Acts 9:24, 20:3, 23:30).<sup>74</sup> However, Luke describes a wider inner-Jewish conflict that spills out across his two-volume story. This is partially visible through the use of the phrase οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, which appears seventy-nine (79) times in Acts, often in a negative sense, and accounts for 40% of all occurrences of the phrase within the NT.<sup>75</sup> This theme is more broadly visible in the great persecution that Paul suffered from his countrymen as narrated in Acts and his epistles. In every major city where Paul ministered he was harassed and beaten

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<sup>72</sup> For example, being stoned by his compatriots or punished by the Roman empire (Acts 14:19; 16:22–24; 17:1–10; 18:12–17).

<sup>73</sup> Mason shows that the translation for Ἰουδαῖος should be "Judean," with all of its attendant religious, geographical, cultural and political attachments. In other words, it is an *ethne*, like Greek or Arab. This is the sense we get from Acts 2:5, "Jews from every nation." (cf. Acts 2:11, 14; 10:22, 28, 39; 13:5, 43.) Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512.

<sup>74</sup> Barrett points out how the term ἐπιβουλή only appears in Acts and always in relation to Jewish opposition to Paul. C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles: Volume II - Introduction and Commentary on Acts XV-XXVIII* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 967.

<sup>75</sup> The phrase "the Jews" (Ἰουδαῖος) appears one hundred and ninety-four (194) times in the NT. Not surprisingly, the term also appears with similar frequency in the Gospel of John (sixty-eight (68) times), a book which is quite polemical vis-à-vis "the Jews."

by his opponents. He engendered their jealousy, suffered their blasphemy, and they relentlessly followed him to poison the crowds and turn them against Paul and his message.<sup>76</sup> No truer words were spoken by the Lord than when he indicated at Paul's conversion that he [Paul] would "suffer" for his [Christ's] name's sake (Acts 9:16).

Thus, a certain attitude or approach should characterize the elders' work. They must be humble minded and expect tears and trials as they execute their tasks.

#### 3.3.4 Paul's Courage in Ministry (Acts 20:22–24, 25–27)

The second quality that the elders should emulate in Paul is his courage in the face of conflict and adversity. Within the speech, the Lucan Paul shares how he is bound (δέω) for Jerusalem under the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:22). The term δέω is grammatically related to the chains (δεσμός) that await him there (20:23). In other words, he is already a prisoner to the Spirit. Later, the prophet Agabus will use the physical emblem of a belt to bind (δέω) Paul's own hands and feet and to declare that the Jews in likewise manner will bind (δήσουσιν) Paul and "deliver him to the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11, 12).

The sense of foreboding is heightened by Paul's destination which is Jerusalem. Paul had previously purposed (τίθημι) in the Spirit to travel there (19:21) something Jesus had also done in the Gospel (Luke 9:51). These elements make of Paul's Jerusalem journey a kind of passion patterned after Jesus. Indeed, Paul is ready to die for the gospel if need be (Acts 20:24). He repeats the claim later in the Jerusalem travel narrative (Acts 21:13) and in fact rebukes the disciples in Caesarea who are trying to discourage him from his divine destiny (21:13–14).

This second element of Paul's ministry, courage, will become vital for the elders, particularly as they face the challenge of wolves who will infiltrate their communities (Acts 20:29).

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<sup>76</sup> The terms that Luke used to describe opposition to Paul included: "to put to death" (ἀναιρέω (9:22–25)); "jealous" (ζήλος and ζηλώω); "contradicted" (ἀντιλέγω), "blasphemed" (βλασφημέω) and "resisted" (ἀντιτάσσω) in relation to Paul's message (13:45; 17:5; 18:6); "incited" (παροτρύνω) and "embittered" (κακόω) people and "persecution" (διωγμός) (13:50; 14:2); they attempted to "mistreat" and "stone" (λιθοβολέω and λιθάζω) Paul and succeeded on one occasion (14:5, 19); they set the city in an "uproar" (θορυβέω), "dragged" (σύρω) Paul's companion before the authorities and "stirred up" the crowds (ταράσσω and σαλεύω) (17:5, 8, 13); they rose up (κατεφίσταμαι) against Paul (18:12); and they "spoke evil" (κακολογέω) (19:9).

### 3.3.5 Paul's Proclamation in Ministry (Acts 20:19–27)

The third aspect of Paul's ministry that the elders should emulate has to do with his ministry of proclamation. We have bracketed Acts 20:19–27 to highlight this theme because it appears throughout the first half of the discourse. Thus, the speech shows Paul “declaring” (ἀναγγέλλω), “teaching” (διδάσκω), “preaching” (κηρύσσω), “admonishing” (νουθετέω), and “testifying” (διαμαρτύρομαι). The latter term is also an important theme in Acts.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the things that Paul proclaims are “profitable things” (συμφέρω), “repentance” and “faith” (μετάνοιαν καὶ πίστιν), “the gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον), “the kingdom” (βασιλεία) and “the purpose of God” (βουλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>78</sup> These activities and messages stand in sharp contrast to the behavior of the “savage wolves” who will arise after Paul's departure “speaking perverse things” in order to draw others away.

Paul emphasizes that he has not held back (ὑποστέλλω) in this important task (Acts 20: 20, 27). In the middle tense, ὑποστέλλω carries the sense of withdrawing oneself, cowering or shrinking back from declaring something because of timidity.<sup>79</sup> This is what Peter did when he stopped eating with the Gentiles because of his fear of the Judaizers (Gal 2:12). When it came to delivering everything “that was profitable” for the Ephesians (Acts 20: 20, 27), Paul did not even despair of his own life as he stated. What truly mattered was executing the ministry he had received from the Lord Jesus (20:24).

The penalty for holding back on this ministry is “the blood of all men” (Acts 20:26). This is a common Jewish expression whereby the speaker absolves himself from the guilt associated with the death or bloodshed of another person. Thus, Pilate proclaims his innocence before the people for Jesus' “blood” having just capitulated to their demands to put Jesus to death (Matt 27:24; cf. Matt 23:35; Acts 5:28). For Paul, the ministry of proclamation is a matter of life and death and one in which Paul will be held mortally responsible should he refuse to speak out.

Lövestam argues that the source of the phrase “innocent of the blood of all men,” (Acts 20:26) is found in Ezek 33. In that text, the prophet is appointed by God as a watchman to

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<sup>77</sup> Acts 2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21, 23, 24; 23:11; 28:23.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 20:20, 21, 24, 25, 27.

<sup>79</sup> *BDAG*, 1041.

warn Israel of her impending judgment. These warnings become a matter of life and death (“if I bring a sword upon the land) and they are for the purpose of causing the people “to turn” (ἀποστρέφω) from their ways. In addition, if the watchman fails to warn the people, their blood will be demanded of him.<sup>80</sup>

These concepts are similar to what we find in the Miletus Speech. Here, Jesus has appointed Paul for the ministry of proclamation. Paul’s message of “repentance toward God” and “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21) also has life and death implications and emphasizes a conversion (μετάνοια) or a change of mind. Failure to sound the alarm will result in Paul being held accountable for the lives of those who are lost. Finally, Lövestam connects the “watchman” terminology (σκοπός) (Ezek 33:2) to that of the ἐπίσκοπος in the Miletus Speech whose task it was to shepherd the flock. The elders were to be vigilant shepherds in response to the faulty example of shepherds in Ezekiel 34.

Lövestam’s thesis has merit especially given the conceptual and lexical connections and when we consider that Paul later exhorts the elders to care for those “who are weak” (ἀσθενέω), the very thing the false shepherds in Ezekiel failed to do (Ezek 34:4). The shepherd imagery in the discourse also lends weight to this thesis. The presence of the ἐπίσκοπος language in the Miletus Speech, however, is related to the shepherding language and God’s own intent to “visit” (ἐπισκέπτομαι) his flock in the Ezekiel 34 passage as we noted earlier (Ezek 34:11 LXX).

As Barrett points out, it is not courage in Paul’s proclamation which Luke is drawing out but rather its completeness.<sup>81</sup> The two qualities are not mutually exclusive. The historical Paul often prayed for “boldness” (παρρησία) in his preaching of the gospel, a term perhaps better translated as “confidence” (Heb 4:16 (NASB)). Indeed, in a context of persecution, παρρησία is exactly what Paul (and the apostles) needed to continue preaching Christ.<sup>82</sup> The description of Paul’s ministry of proclamation is thorough in terms of audience, method and message and it forms a major thrust of the Miletus Speech. This too the elders should emulate.

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<sup>80</sup> Ewald Lövestam, “Paul’s Address at Miletus,” *ST* 41 (1987): 4.

<sup>81</sup> Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 968.

<sup>82</sup> Acts 4:31, 2 Cor 3:12, Phil 1:20, 1 Thess 2:2.

In summary, the picture we draw of Paul from the speech is of a tireless and dedicated servant of the Lord who allows no obstacle to stand in the way of his service, ministry and proclamation.<sup>83</sup> As suggested, the high degree of self-apology, which begins the speech, is meant to serve as an example of the way in which the elders are being asked to carry out their ministries. This is a characteristic element of the farewell form but also corresponds to the written testimony of the historical Paul's own letters. Paul's approach to ministry (humility, tears and courage in the face of trials) and Paul's focus on preaching should serve as a model and a priority for the elders' own ministries, particularly in keeping the church safe from the "savage wolves" (Acts 20:29).

### 3.3.6 The Shepherd / Flock Motif (Acts 20:28–31)

We arrive at perhaps the most critical juncture in the speech, which involves Paul's exhortation to the elders using the shepherd / flock motif.<sup>84</sup> The image is framed by the rhetoric of warning (20:28, 31) and tightly integrates four overlapping elements connected to the image of the shepherd: 1) The strong rhetoric of warning; 2) comparison of the false teachers to "savage wolves"; 3) comparison of the elders' task of vigilance with the work of the shepherd; and 4) introduction of the ecclesial image of "the flock" to represent God's church that is in need of protection. As mentioned, the influence of the shepherd / flock motif can be felt indirectly in other sections of the Miletus Speech.<sup>85</sup> This includes the whole of Paul's comportment as an example of a "good shepherd" and the need for gospel proclamation to oppose the "savage wolves."

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<sup>83</sup> Walton suggested that "faithfulness to ministry," as exemplified by Paul's own work, was one of the four major themes connecting the Miletus Speech to 1 Thessalonians leading to a similar portrait of Paul between Acts and his epistles. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*.

<sup>84</sup> Barrett calls this verse the "practical and theological center" of the entire discourse. It is obviously practical given that Paul's primary desire is for the elders to effectively fulfill their leadership responsibilities. It is the theological center because the death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the elders are both highlighted. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 974.

<sup>85</sup> Aubert argues that the shepherd / flock image is the unifying factor for the whole speech. 1) It integrates other motifs (watchman, farewell, philosopher and pastoral ministry), themes (humility, repentance and faith, building an inheritance and the weak) and redemptive-historical concepts in Luke-Acts (Exodus, Pentecost, Conquest) that are present in the speech; 2) It agrees with Luke's presentation of spiritual history, which is that the church is as an alternative to the Roman empire. Aubert, "The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse."

### 3.3.6.1 *The Rhetoric of Warning*

We begin by noting that this unit is framed by the rhetoric of warning and the only two imperatives in the speech: “Be on guard for yourselves and for the church” (προσέχω) (20:28) and “be on the alert” (γρηγορέω) (20:31). Both terms appropriately communicate the urgent need for vigilance, for the integrity of the elders and their doctrine and for the protection of the church in their care. The warning is more intense given Paul’s imminent and permanent absence from the elders (v. 25). The language of warning or of an impending crisis is a characteristic element of the farewell form<sup>86</sup> as would be the deep pastoral concern that Paul expresses for the churches he has planted. As we mentioned, the Lucan Paul’s missionary career is over. As the Lucan Paul has dealt with treachery and with distortions of the gospel, he now seeks to prepare a new generation of leaders from the threats that would destroy the church under the elders’ care.

The term προσέχω in the imperative can be translated as “beware”, “take heed”, “be on guard”, “give / pay attention to” or “attend to.” It is a word of warning against an unpleasant or destructive element, circumstance or outcome. Jesus uses this term to warn his disciples to “beware” against false prophets in sheep’s clothing (Mat 7:15) echoing Paul’s concern in the Miletus Speech. Likewise, the writer of Hebrews exhorts his audience to “pay attention” to the testimony they have been given lest by their negligence they would fall away from the faith (Heb 2:1). This latter usage accurately captures the importance of giving determined and focused attention to a situation so as not suffer a painful outcome because of neglect.

The term γρηγορέω in the imperative can be translated as “watch”, “be awake” or “be alert”. It directly follows the description of the “savage wolves” (20:29–30) and is connected to that phrase by the term διό (“for this reason”) (20:31). The reason for vigilance is the imminent threat that these false teachers represent. Peter issues a similar warning to the congregation (in the imperative with the same terminology) against the “roaring lion” who prowls about seeking whom to devour (1 Pet 5:8). The term γρηγορέω is also eschatologically charged. Of its twenty-two (22) uses in the NT, twelve (12) occur in a context to warn God’s people to remain alert as they await the Lord’s return (Matt 24:42;

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. Deut 31:16–17; Luke 22:31–34; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1–5.

25:13; Mark 13:35, 37). The term γρηγορέω can be found in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew's apocalyptic discourse (Matt 25:13; cf. Mar 13:35). We must also note that in many of these apocalyptic passages, Jesus' unexpected return is compared to a "thief in the night" (e.g. 1 Thess 5:2, 6; Luke 12:37, 39), a very appropriate description that captures the dangers associated with a word like γρηγορέω. The elders are to "stay awake" and not sleep for the threats against the church are real and forthcoming.

Conzelmann argues that Luke took a term originally used for an eschatological context and converted it to one for an ecclesiological context to better express his own view of history. Offices, persecution and heresy have replaced the expectation of the imminent *parousia*<sup>87</sup> This is a false dichotomy. The church has always expressed itself as living within an inaugurated eschatology ushered in through Christ's death and affirmed by the giving of the Spirit to "all flesh" (σάρξ) in the "last days" (Acts 2:17 cf. Heb 1:2). This is what it means to have dark skies, earthquakes and resurrections accompany Christ's death on the cross. The historical Paul certainly lived and taught his churches to live eschatologically (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) something that later NT writers never stopped emphasizing (2 Tim 3:1; 1 Pet 5:4; 2 Pet 3:10; Jude; Revelation)

### 3.3.6.2 *The Predatory Language*

The strong rhetoric of warning that these terms convey is further intensified by predatory language ("savage wolves") (20:29). The church will be attacked both internally ("men from among you") and externally ("wolves will come in") here painted with vivid imagery of wolves ravaging a flock or separating some from the group for easier destruction. The OT sometimes describes corrupt and destructive leaders as "wolves" (λύκοι) (Zeph 3:3; Ezek 22:7 LXX). In the case of the Miletus Speech, Paul warns against infiltrators from the elders' own number (20:30).

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<sup>87</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald Juel, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 175.

As previously mentioned, several scholars have argued that in the Miletus Speech Luke is fighting opponents (Gnostics?) of his own day using Pauline language and tradition.<sup>88</sup> This is based on a redaction critical approach to the Miletus Speech that envisions Luke writing in a post-apostolic time period. Thus, the urgent warnings, references to predators and the emphases on Paul's complete ministry of proclamation in the Miletus Speech are meant to counteract actual opponents of the church at the time Luke wrote.<sup>89</sup> Talbert's work is the most detailed in suggesting that Luke is fighting Gnostics of his own day. He makes this argument from the principle emphases within Luke-Acts. These include: 1) The theme of "witness" in Acts, which testifies to the corporeal resurrection of Jesus Christ; 2) exegesis of the OT by Jesus and the apostles to prove that Jesus and his mission, death and resurrection were all foretold in the OT; 3) the passing of apostolic tradition, first from the apostles in Jerusalem to Paul and then from Paul to the elders in the Miletus Speech; 4) The fact that Luke-Acts purposely avoids connecting Jesus' death with the forgiveness of sins (as the other Gospels do) and instead chooses to view Christ's death as a martyrdom.<sup>90</sup> In a similar way, Munck analyzed four farewell speeches in the NT (Miletus Speech, 1 Tim 4:1–16, 2 Tim 3:1–17 and 2 Peter) and noted their similar concerns / predictions of false teachers and the attendant persecution. From these he concluded that the farewell form of the NT indicated that the post-apostolic period had come to an end, that heresy had arisen and that institutional offices ("elders") had to be created to protect the church from error.<sup>91</sup>

In response to both Munck and Talbert (and more generally to placing the Miletus Speech in a post-apostolic context), we note that already within Paul's lifetime, the church had come under doctrinal attack both from within and without. Paul vigorously defended against an

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<sup>88</sup> Jan Lambrecht, "Paul's Farewell-Address at Miletus (Acts 20,17-38)," in *Actes Des Apôtres* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1979), 334–35; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 968; C.K. Barrett, "Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders," in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, ed. Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 111; Pius-Ramon Tragan, "Les 'Destinataires' Du Discours de Milet: Une Approche Du Cadre Communautaire d'Ac 20:18-35," in *A Cause de l'Évangile* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985), 784–85; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 173–74.

<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Barrett states that the whole of Acts is the application of the virtues of the apostolic age to the needs of the post-apostolic period. Barrett, "Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders," 119.

<sup>90</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics: An Examination of Lucan Purpose* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966).

<sup>91</sup> Munck, "Discours d'adieu Dans La Nouveau Testament."



adulteration of the gospel in Galatians, Colossians and 2 Corinthians 11–13 and repeatedly warned the church against those would try to deceive the faithful and teach what was contrary to sound doctrine (Rom 16:17–20; Phil 3:2, 18–19). In the Philippian correspondence, Paul refers to such men as “dogs”, “evil workers” and “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil 3:2). Indeed, it is not surprising that many of Paul’s doctrinal battles had to do with a strain of Judaism that sought to impose an OT straitjacket on the new work that God had wrought through Christ.<sup>92</sup> An inside group of Jewish Christians who seemed to be everywhere would certainly qualify for Paul’s admonitions. Thus, Paul’s own historical and ministerial contexts are sufficient to account for the urgent warnings against false teachers that Paul gives in the Miletus Speech.

One of our arguments is that the ministries of teaching and proclamation, which are so pronounced in the Miletus Speech are related to the warnings against the savage wolves. These men are “speaking perverse things” (20:30), which may perhaps indicate a teaching role. In Eph 4:11, Paul speaks to the church about several gifted ministers, among whom are pastors (literally shepherds) and teachers. These men are to equip the saints for service. This way, the church might grow up to be mature in Christ and not be tossed around by every wind of doctrine or deceit. In the Pastorals, it appears that the very purpose for the election of “elders” has to do with combatting the false teachers and correcting the false doctrines, which have arisen in Crete and Ephesus.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, one of the few skills mentioned in Paul’s long list of requirements is that the elder candidate is able to teach and exhort in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2). As we can see, the predatory language in the Miletus Speech is centered around perverse speech (Acts 20:30). The antidote as we have suggested is the ministry of proclamation.

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<sup>92</sup> This is most evident in the Galatians, Colossians (Col 2:16, 21–23; 3:11) and Philippians (Phil 3:2, 3) correspondence but could also be extended to the Pastorals (1 Tim 1:7; Tit 1:10, 14; 3:9) if we believe that Paul authored those letters.

<sup>93</sup> Some of the various requirements for elders, which are contrasted to the characteristics of false teachers are: 1) free from the love of money or not fond of sordid gain (1 Tim 3:3, 8; Tit 1:7) compared to those who think that godliness is a means of gain, who love money) or teach for dishonest gain (1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:11); 2) above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7) contrasted with those who bring reproach on the church (1 Tim 1:11–14); 3) not quarrelsome or quick-tempered (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 1:7) and teaching that produces quarrels (2 Tim 2:23, Tit 3:9); 4) faithful to one wife (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Tit 1:6) and someone who seduces women (2 Tim 3:6); 5) Able to teach or exhort in sound doctrine (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9) compared to someone teaches strange doctrines (1 Tim 1:3; cf. 4:7; 5:3; 6:4, 20; 2 Tim 4:3–4).

### 3.3.6.3 *Elders as Shepherds*

Within the Miletus Speech, Paul exhorts the elders “to shepherd” the “church of God.” This concrete imagery represents the third overlapping shepherd element, which Luke utilizes in this section. The elders are to perform the work of ancient shepherds. Here, Luke is drawing from different strands of the biblical tradition. One strand comes through the exilic prophets, the promise of a Davidic shepherd and its fulfillment in Jesus as we have noted. The image encompasses everything that Paul has modeled (sacrifice, trials, preaching, not coveting, caring for the weak). It incorporates Paul’s ministry as patterned after Jesus’ and the shepherd elders’ ministry as modeled after the Davidic shepherd.

Furthermore, in the Miletus Speech, the elders are also called “overseers” (ἐπίσκοπος). The term denotes someone who watches over, protects, guards or superintends the affairs of others. As we have repeatedly highlighted, this term is related to ἐπισκέπτομαι in the LXX which is used in many important shepherding contexts<sup>94</sup> to denote the care and concern of the metaphorical shepherd (leader) for his flock. Within the context of the Miletus Speech, the term ἐπίσκοπος is applied to elders (πρεσβύτερος). Both terms identify the same person as they do in Titus 1:5–7; however, πρεσβύτερος may be describing ministers from a sociological angle, that is older members of the church exercising leadership over younger members,<sup>95</sup> while ἐπίσκοπος may be a functional term. In other words, because the term is joined to the shepherding task here, in our 1 Peter passage (5:2) and other shepherding texts in the OT, ἐπίσκοπος may be more descriptive of the tasks that elders are to perform within the congregation. Their role is to include careful and vigilant oversight for the church in their care. Barrett affirms another dimension, which we previously noted in our OT section. The term ἐπίσκοπος, which is related to the verb ἐπισκέπτομαι in the LXX suggests “the saving act in which God ‘visited’ and redeemed his people”<sup>96</sup> (Cf. Luke 1:68). Thus, the elders’ task is not merely a function of age but rather closely connected to the work of the shepherd in which this redeeming visitation is repeatedly applied and brought to bear upon

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<sup>94</sup> Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:12; Zech 11:16.

<sup>95</sup> Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 975.

<sup>96</sup> Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 975.

the congregation. This is a critical idea and one which the NT authors appeared to purposefully communicate to the early church via their use of the shepherd motif.

The list of requisites for the ἐπίσκοπος / πρεσβύτερος in the pastorals (Titus 1:5,7; 1 Tim 3:1 (the latter likely in reference to elders (1 Tim 5:17)) adds a moral dimension to this role. Elders / overseers are to have the highest personal moral standards which incorporate domestic and social ethics of outstanding conduct. Paul had already stated as much when he warned the elders to “guard” themselves. Theirs was an important task which required intense personal vigilance for their character and behavior. The apostle Peter likewise warned the elders to avoid greed and to be an example to the flock which they were to shepherd (1 Pet 5:1–4).

#### 3.3.6.4 *The Flock of God*

The fourth concrete element of Luke’s shepherd / flock motif within the Miletus Speech has to do with the concept of the church (ἐκκλησία) as the metaphorical “flock” (ποιμνιον) (Acts 20:28). Luke had previously referenced the disciples as the “little flock” to whom God would hand over the kingdom (Luke 12:32). Our 1 Peter text also uses the term ποιμνιον in reference to the church (ἐκκλησία) and our John 21 text utilizes πρόβατον (“sheep”) and ἀρνίον (“lambs”) to express a similar concept of God’s people whom leaders are to shepherd.

For Luke, the “flock” or the ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ is the continuation of the people of God in the OT now comprised of Spirit-filled Jew and Gentile believers. The servant was to be a “light to the Gentiles” and both Jesus and Paul took on that role. Furthermore, it is the ἐκκλησία, which the Holy Spirit builds via baptism in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 and via directed church planting missions in the first 20 chapters of Acts. The technical definition of the term ἐκκλησία is “assembly” or “congregation.” Unfortunately, it is typically translated as “church” in most English versions of the NT, which not only unduly weighs it with historical and theological accumulations, but also, severs it from its OT counterpart via the LXX.

In the Septuagint, ἐκκλησία is the Hebrew equivalent of עֵבֶד, which is the name for the assembly of Israel, especially when gathered together for a sacred purpose. We see this sacred assembly gathered in the presence of Moses to receive his final words (Deut 31:30), before Joshua in the renewal of the covenant (Josh 8:35) and before David prior to his

confrontation with Goliath (1 Sam 17:47). Finally, the sacred assembly of Israel gathered before Solomon in the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:14, 22, 55).<sup>97</sup> Swete notes that the “audacity of faith implied in the selection of the word [by the Jesus communities] escapes us.”<sup>98</sup> The early church did not want to be considered a mere sect like the Pharisees, or the Sadducees, nor a synagogue, like the synagogue of the Libertines. Rather, they were an ἐκκλησία, the ἐκκλησία of God, the chosen people, the people in whom and with whom the power of God was operative and in full continuity with the people of God in the OT.<sup>99</sup>

The image of the flock also captures the concept of lost sheep seen most concretely in Ezekiel 34. As mentioned, God promised a shepherd, his servant David, who would gather his people from the places they had been scattered and feed and care for them (Ezek 34:11–16, 23–24, 28–31). This was the flock that the elders were charged with protecting. And lest they lose sight of how precious a task this was, Paul reminds them of the price of the flock’s “purchase” (περιποιέω), the blood of God’s own son.<sup>100</sup> This is similar to 1 Peter, where the audience is redeemed not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of the lamb (1 Pet 1:18, 19).

Finally, in an intriguing study, we can see an example of prioritizing the element of the flock over that of the shepherd.<sup>101</sup> Gaventa argues that the Miletus Speech is less about a farewell address and the imitation of Paul’s leadership, than it is about the church and its relationship to the triune God. Gaventa notes how in the immediate context of the Miletus Speech, Paul’s mission has now faded and is replaced by three portraits of believing

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<sup>97</sup> It is of curious theological import that the LXX translators used συναγωγή to translate *qahal* (assembly) in the first four books of the Law and that starting with Deuteronomy they began to use ἐκκλησία when referring to the assembly of the Lord. Hort points out the tragic irony of two terms that were so closely connected in their original context συναγωγή and ἐκκλησία but which later would come to symbolize the deep division between Judaism and the Christian church. See John Anthony Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia: A Course of Lectures on the Early History and Early Conceptions of the Ecclesia and Four Sermons* (London: Macmillan and Company), 4.

<sup>98</sup> H.B. Swete, ed. *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry*. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1918), 7.

<sup>99</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1918), 6–7..

<sup>100</sup> 1 Cor 6:20; cf. 1 Cor 7:23; Rev 5:9.

<sup>101</sup> Beverly R. Gaventa, “Theology and Ecclesiology in the Miletus Speech: Reflections on Content and Context,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 36–52.

communities (Troas, Miletus, and Caesarea) that reflect many of the characteristics of the early Jewish community in Acts 2.

Within the speech, she notes that Paul's self-defense should be viewed as less about himself than about God's will working through him. The exhortations to the elders are less about a transfer of authority than a warning about the dangers of leadership. Finally, the speech is infused with the varying contributions of the triune God in bringing the church into existence and sustaining it for the future. This includes how God purchased the church with the blood of his own son, how it is the Holy Spirit who institutes leaders, and the way that Jesus is the principle message of Paul's preaching.

Gaventa's study perhaps swings the pendulum too far in the other direction. Luke is highlighting both the shepherd and the flock motif. Each plays a critical role in the discourse and in Luke's vision for leadership. In addition, we should remember that the purpose of a farewell speech is to impart lasting knowledge to the speaker's audience, which in this case is the elders. Admittedly, discussions about the shepherd often treat only the leader, but that is only because good or bad leadership is a major thematic emphasis whether in the ANE, biblical or post-biblical literature. Our study has tried to bring some attention to the flock as an important element of the leadership equation. Gaventa deserves credit for doing the same particularly in highlighting the work of the triune God in building and sustaining the church.

It is now time to summarize the concrete and prominent use of the shepherd / flock image within the Miletus Speech. In connection we note that Acts 20:28–31 is perhaps the most critical juncture of the speech precisely because of this intense use of this image. Here in this section we have the only two imperatives representing Paul's final charge which the elders are to carry out. In addition, the shepherd image is felt throughout the speech most keenly in Paul's example of what it means to "shepherd the flock." The unit tightly weaves four overlapping elements connected to the image of the shepherd. These include the strong rhetoric of warning; the comparison of the false teachers to "savage wolves"; the comparison of the elders' task of vigilance for the church with the work of the shepherd, and the introduction of the ecclesial image of "the flock" to represent God's church. These four elements bring a sense of urgency and intensity to Paul's commands as they represent an existential threat to the integrity of the community Paul is leaving behind. In this regard we

also noted briefly how many commentators perceived an actual target within the Miletus Speech, that of gnostic teachers / teachings who had appropriated Paul's name or doctrine as their own. However, as we argued, already within Paul's life and non-disputed letters, Paul had dealt extensively with a threat to the integrity of the gospel (e.g. Galatians, Philippians). Thus these warnings (eschatologically sounding as they were) were based more on Paul's own experiences with his detractors than they were in a supposed target which Luke was battling in his own day.

### 3.3.7 Blessing, Commendation and Farewell (Acts 20:32–38)

The final part of the speech contains Paul's blessing and prayer for the elders and two additional ways in which Paul serves as an example of the elders. We will not analyze every part of this section, but only those that add to Luke's use of the shepherd / flock motif in the discourse.

First, Paul "commends" (παραιτίθημι) the elders to God and to his "word" (Acts 20:32). The pathos, content and placement of this blessing (near the end of his remarks) are very Pauline (cf. Rom 15:13; 1 Thess 5:23–24). Paul invokes God in order to impart a spiritual blessing on his audience after his departure. Furthermore, as Gaventa notes, it is not the "wolves" or even "the shepherds" who have the ultimate care for the church. It is God himself.<sup>102</sup> This ties back into God's divine care for his flock as a pattern in the Miletus Speech. As we noted, it is the Holy Spirit who appoints leaders over the church and it is God himself who has paid the ultimate sacrifice to redeem his flock (20:28).

The term "commend" (παραιτίθημι) means to "set before" someone or something (as you would a meal (cf. Mark 6:41; Luke 11:6; Acts 16:34). In the middle tense it communicates an "entrusting" or a "committing over to one's charge" something that is of value (cf. Tob 4:1; 1 Pet 4:19). As Paul is leaving the missionary scene now and because he does not know what awaits in Jerusalem, Paul, in a manner of speaking, is handing over responsibility for the elders (and the church) to God himself (20:25, 38) (cf. Acts 14:23).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Beverly R. Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 289.

<sup>103</sup> Alexander, "Paul's Final Exhortation to the Elders from Ephesus," 213–16.

Furthermore it is by the “word of grace” that this occurs. The latter phrase is not found in the Pauline corpus and appears only one other time in Acts (14:3). Typically in Acts, the “word”, “word of God”, “word of the Lord” or “word of the gospel” is a reference to the message of salvation, which is proclaimed or preached and leads variously to its being rejected or accepted (Acts 2:41; 6:7; 13:44). Indeed the context of 14:3 is precisely one of proclamation. However, in 20:32, perhaps it is the “word of grace” spoken in the context of exhortation or encouragement that will result in the elders being built up together with the church.

Acts 20:33–35 forms a single thought unit related to the manner in which Paul sustained himself during his ministry among the Ephesians. Paul begins by once again stating his innocence before the Ephesians and calling upon them as witnesses to his conduct. “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes” and “you yourself know that these hands ministered to my own needs.” His previous self-defense occurred in 20:25 where he claimed innocence for the blood of another person.

Within the Pauline corpus, there always seemed to be a familiar undertow on the issue of money (or self-support) in relation to Paul’s ministry.<sup>104</sup> In this regard, his first correspondence with the Thessalonians is representative as he vigorously defended his conduct among the church claiming purity in his motives and an absence of “greed.” In the same way as the Miletus Speech, Paul highlighted his sacrificial labor among the church (day and night), so as not to unnecessarily burden them (cf. 1 Thess 2:11).

The early church appears to have developed some paraenetic teaching on the issue of Christian leaders and their use of money. Our 1 Peter 5 text exhorts elders to perform the work of shepherds not based on “sordid gain.” The Pastorals enumerate a list of qualities to look for in prospective church leaders, one being that they not be “fond of sordid gain” (αἰσχροκερδής) (1 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:11). These qualities were critical to contrast against so many greedy and destructive men who abused their positions of leadership for unseemly gain.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> 1 Thess 2:5, 11; 2 Thess 3:7–12; 2 Cor 11:7–9.

<sup>105</sup> Titus 1:11; 1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:2; 1 Pet 2:3, 14.

Paul completes his speech with a final appeal to his own example. The selfless work he performed so as not to burden the Ephesian church, he did so that he could show the elders in what manner they were to take care of “the weak” (ἀσθενέω). The previous term can connote those who are less fortunate economically (as it appears to be doing in the Miletus Speech) or the sick (Phil 2:26). Even here at the end of the speech, the image of the flock is visible via Ezek 34:4 (LXX), which uses the same term ἀσθενέω to speak of corrupt shepherds who did not strengthen “the sick” among the flock or heal those sheep that were diseased. Luke closes the Miletus Speech with a final parting scene that is filled with extreme pathos.

### **3.4 Conclusion and Summary**

We are now in a position to summarize the thematic emphases that have arisen from our analysis of the Miletus Speech. As we have argued in our thesis, the discourse at Miletus represents the culminating statements in a coherent pattern of sustained biblical reflection on early Christian leadership, which was consciously transmitted to the nascent Christian communities via the shepherd / flock motif.

To support this thesis, we noted the placement of the Miletus Speech as the literary end point for Jesus’ mission / the apostle’s mission that began in the birth narratives (Luke 2:32). We demonstrated how Luke purposefully linked Jesus’ mission to Paul’s via their journeys to Jerusalem, suffering, opposition, tribunals and farewell speeches on leadership. More importantly, both Jesus and Paul took on the role of the servant of Isaiah, both have a dual mission to Israel and the Gentiles (Isa 49:6) and both suffer on behalf of the people they serve. Jesus thus becomes the model for what sacrificial ministry represents, something that Paul passes on to the elders via his example in his farewell discourse. Finally, Luke’s presentation of Jesus as the Davidic shepherd who came to seek and to save the lost provides a direct example from Jesus to the elders in their roles as shepherds of God’s flock.

The shepherd / flock motif also encapsulates the identification of the church as God’s “flock.” Within Luke-Acts, this was most concretely felt as a Spirit-filled community of Jew and Gentile. This ecclesial image of the flock also helped to affirm various relationships between God, the elders and the church. First, the church belonged to God as the *ἐκκλησία* of



God and as his people whom he had purchased through the blood of his own son. This meant the church did not belong to the elders. They were merely under-shepherds who had oversight privilege. The Spirit had placed them there and, if history was any indication, they would remain there so long as they did not bring or allow harm to God's flock.

In the Miletus Speech it was false teachers acting as "grievous wolves" who would seek to undermine Paul's work once he has departed the ministerial scene. The predatory language reflects an ongoing existential threat to God's people. In Paul's ministry, it was most concretely felt in the heresies which attacked the communities he founded in Galacia, Corinth, Colossae and Philippi and which would later attack the congregations in Ephesus and Crete. Finally, the predatory language gives rise to the rhetoric of warning, with terms that are typically reserved for "the last days" and to the call for extreme vigilance by the shepherds of God's church.

Finally, the image of the shepherd was suggestive of various tasks which the elders were expected to perform. One obvious task was careful vigilance against false teachers. For Paul and the elders, shepherding incorporated the ministry of proclamation. Another characteristic element of the shepherding task involved suffering for the flock as a pattern of leadership modeled after Jesus and Paul. Within the Miletus Speech we identified the importance of the term ταπεινοφροσύνη "humility of mind" as a component of right shepherding. Paul modeled this quality and the early church also took its cues from the great Christ hymn of Philippians where Paul enjoins the congregation to imitate Christ in his attitude of humility (Phil 2:3). Finally, Paul's indifference to money and his example of helping the weak were meant to highlight aspects of the shepherd's care over the flock. This is especially the case with Ezekiel 34 as the backdrop and the false shepherds who enriched themselves at the expense of the flock and who did not strengthen the weak and infirm in their midst.

#### **4 The Shepherd / Flock Motif in 1 Peter 5:1–11**

In the previous chapter, we analyzed the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17-38), both in its wider context in Luke-Acts and in its immediate context within the speech. We then argued that the motif was central to the speech and that many Lucan themes flowed into the speech and were reflected in Luke's conception of leadership.

In this chapter, our purpose is to replicate this kind of analysis for 1 Pet 5:1–11. Specifically, we are interested in how Peter utilizes the shepherd image to reflect upon leadership in this passage. Secondly, what characteristic elements does Peter highlight? Finally, how does Peter connect the wider themes in 1 Peter to his conception of early church leadership?

We will proceed with an analysis of the shepherd / flock motif in 1 Peter in the following manner. Our first task will be to analyze the structure of the letter. This will allow us to situate our passage as the final portion of a complete epistle. At the same time, it will be helpful for our literary analysis of the whole letter. This task involves an analysis of the socio-historical context of suffering for 1 Peter's audience and the rhetorical responses to that issue. We have chosen to focus on the theme of suffering for a few reasons. First, it is a major emphasis of the letter and touches virtually every other theme in the epistle. Secondly, as we will see, Peter's rhetorical responses to the audience's suffering flow directly into Peter's reflections on shepherd leadership in 1 Peter 5. After studying these preliminary topics, we will provide an exegetical analysis of 1 Pet 5:1–11 in order to ascertain what attributes of the shepherd image Peter is highlighting. We begin with a structure / outline for the whole letter.

#### **4.1 Structure of 1 Peter**

Before proceeding to a literary analysis of the theme of suffering in 1 Peter, it will be helpful to map the larger sections of the letter as well as the divisions within those sections. Highlighting the structural division will emphasize the connections between Jesus' suffering and those of the community leaders. In addition, it will allow us to situate our passage as the concluding portion of the letter.

We propose the following structure for 1 Peter: 1) 1:1–2:10 - Christian identity in a hostile society; 2) 2:11–4:11 - Christian conduct and suffering in a hostile society; 3)

4:12–5:11 - Suffering intensified and the ecclesiastical code.<sup>1</sup> The letter begins with a standard epistolary greeting (author, audience, blessing (1:1–2)). Afterward, Peter lays out the biblical, theological and historical foundations for his audience’s Christian identity (1:3–2:10). The section is replete with descriptions of the believers’ status in Christ (1:3–12). In addition, those who have been redeemed through the blood of Christ (1:18–19) or the imperishable word (1:23) now constitute God’s spiritual abode and his chosen and holy nation (2:3–5, 9–10). These latter verses point to the Exodus story, which Peter now recapitulates and applies to the elect scattered across Asia Minor (1:1). Christian identity, therefore, should be reflected in holy living which is in keeping with God’s holy character (1:15; 2:1–3). This exhortation is greatly expanded in the second major division of the letter (2:11–4:11). We should mention that the theme of suffering appears early in 1 Peter and in this division (1:6, 7). 1 Peter’s audience is experiencing temporary trials, but they are being tested, so that the church might be ready at Christ’s appearing (1:7, 8).

The second major division represents the ethical and paraenetic center of the letter (2:11–4:11). There is a major thematic and literary break at 2:11 (cf. 4:12), which also begins to lay out specific instructions for Christian conduct within a hostile and pagan society. This behavior is further illustrated in the domestic codes, which governs the Christian’s responsibility in society, marriage, the master-slave relationship and within their personal relationships (2:13–3:12). This model comportment, however, may come at a price as slaves may be called upon to suffer unjustly (2:19) and Christians may be called on to “suffer” for the “sake of righteousness” (3:13, 16; 4:4). Despite these societal conflicts, Peter exhorts his audience to the holy lifestyle which should characterize God’s people. They should continue to be sober and alert, to remain free from the dissipation, which characterizes the Gentile’s way of life and to be zealous in love for one another (4:1–11). This section once again

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<sup>1</sup> Selwyn divides the letter into six sections alternating between doctrine and hortatory: 1) implications of believers’ new life (1:3–12); call to Christian holiness (1:13–2:3); 3) nature of the church (2:4–10); 4) social and domestic codes (2:11–3:12); 5) renunciation of former ways (3:13–4:19); 6) pastoral office and call to humility (5:1–11). Bosetti identifies a three-part structure: 1) identity and responsibility of those regenerated (1:3–2:10); 2) Christian behavior within a pagan society (2:11–4:11); 3) present and future of God’s house (4:12–5:11). Elliott divides the letter into four major components: 1) believer’s identity as the household of God (1:3–2:10); 2) respect for order in civil and domestic affairs (2:11–3:12); 3) Doing what is right despite suffering (3:13–4:6); 4) Suffering as opportunity for joy and glorifying God and unity (4:12–5:11). Bosetti, *Il Pastore*, 30–39; Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 80–82; Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, 20–21; Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 4–6.

highlights the topic of suffering, first as the inevitable part of the Christian life and secondly, as a call to continue living righteously no matter the costs.

The third major division stretches from 4:12–5:11 and the conclusion of the letter. Apart from the doxology at 4:11,<sup>2</sup> Peter signals the transition to a new section with his use of the vocative (“beloved”) (cf. 2:11). The third division intensifies the likelihood of suffering “as a Christian” (4:12–19) and reaffirms the godly response to persecution. It then lays out the responsibilities of Christian leaders over the rest of the church. They are to act as shepherds overseeing the “flock” (5:1–4), but they are to be distinct from the Gentile model of lording it over people. Peter finishes the letter by instructing the whole church to practice humility and patient perseverance in the face of suffering.

The structure of 1 Peter establishes a set of themes which are fundamental to how Peter handles the shepherd / flock motif and the theme of leadership in our passage. The first section treats the source of the audience’s identity. It is rooted in the Exodus story and the significance of being God’s holy and chosen covenant community by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice as the true Passover lamb (1 Pet 1:2, 19). Another name for this covenant community is the “flock of God” (5:2). As we will argue, this title picks up some of the historical strands of the Exodus and joins them with the shepherd to give a fuller picture of the leadership equation.

In the second section (2:11–4:11), practical living connects with the audience’s identity. The audience must be distinct from the surrounding culture. However, the outcome of holiness in a hostile and pagan world leads to an identification with the sufferings of Christ in his role as a shepherd and in his passion in his role as Isaiah’s sacrificial lamb (2:25). This dynamic of suffering is further intensified in the next section (1 Pet 4:12–19). In our 1 Peter 5 passage, Peter concretely joins all of the elements and applies them to the shepherd elders (1 Pet 2:25, 5:2). The elders are to identify with the sufferings of Christ in his roles as a sacrificial lamb and suffering shepherd. In the next section, we will return to the structure of the letter as we work our way through the topic of suffering.

## **4.2 Socio-Historical Context of Suffering in 1 Peter**

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<sup>2</sup> This pattern of using a doxology or praise to close out one section and begin another can be seen in other NT epistles (cf. Rom 11:36; Eph 3:20–21; 1 Tim 1:17).

Suffering is a major thematic focus of 1 Peter. This topic flows into Peter’s reflection on leadership in our passage, which is modeled and mediated through the lens of Jesus’ sacrificial suffering as the lamb as well as the Davidic shepherd who suffers on the cross. In this section we shall look at the nature of suffering and Peter’s rhetorical strategy for encouraging his audience in the midst of this conflict.

#### 4.2.1 Local or State-Sanctioned Persecution

We begin by noting that it is now commonly accepted that the “suffering” described within 1 Peter can be more adequately described as local, sporadic, and social in nature rather than an official persecution of the Roman state toward Christians.<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that Christians were only and simply mocked for their faith or treated as social outcasts. Even a localized persecution, such as what occurred under Nero in 64 C.E., could have life or death consequences for those bearing Christ’s name.<sup>4</sup> And Pliny the Younger’s correspondence with Trajan, where he sought precedents for dealing with legal cases against Christians suggested something more than mere ostracization.<sup>5</sup>

In his study of suffering in 1 Peter, Travis Williams offered a more nuanced description for the experience of 1 Peter’s audience. Williams spoke of the inevitability of conflict,

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<sup>3</sup> Selwyn’s commentary on 1 Peter paved the way for this shift. Selwyn analyzed various passages where suffering was prominent and noted the following: 1) two terms which communicate a more severe form of persecution in the NT (διωγμός and θλίψις) are not used anywhere in 1 Peter. 2) In 1:7, the term *πειρασμός* refers to opposition and slander; 3) The contingents “if it is necessary” (1:6–7), “if you should suffer” (3:14) or “if God should will it” (3:17) suggests the possibility of trials is remote or at least rare; 4) the reference to the “fiery ordeal” (4:12–19) may easily be connected to the earlier reference of testing by fire (1:7). Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 53–54; See also Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, 36–41; Paul Achtmeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 28–36; Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 97–103.

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus describes how Nero blamed the Christian population for the fires that ravaged Rome in 64 A.D. The result was an outbreak of violence against Christians, which included being crucified, burned alive at the stake and wrapped in animal skins to be torn apart by dogs. Tacitus’ also remarked on various negative perceptions by the Roman state and the population toward Christianity, which contributed to the “official persecution” theory. *Ann. 15.44*; cf. Suetonius, *Nero 16.38*.

<sup>5</sup> In his letters to Trajan, Pliny inquired as to the nature and extent of the penalties to be imposed, whether he should discriminate by age or physical condition, the procedure to follow if someone recanted their beliefs, and most notably, whether the mere “name” (*ipsum nomen*) [of being a Christian] was sufficient grounds to charge someone of a crime. At other times, Pliny described how he personally punished (or tortured) those who held to their Christian faith after repeated questioning. Finally, Pliny’s correspondence also spoke of informers turning over Christians for trial and his concern that this “contagious superstition” was spreading to people of all ages and both sexes as well as the surrounding villages and country. See *Pliny Ep. 10.96 and 10.97*.

which could erupt at any time, in any part of the empire and toward any believer.<sup>6</sup> This is because localized pogroms such as Nero’s invariably had an influence over the general population and Roman officials. They formed a kind of precedent which could issue in threats / harassment of Christians to further the population’s or a Roman official’s social or political goals.<sup>7</sup> In addition, while the Roman government did not actively pursue Christians as Ramsay claimed,<sup>8</sup> local governments were forced to act against Christians when accusations of wrongdoing were brought before them by the local population.<sup>9</sup> This is the case with the informers who brought Christians to Pliny’s attention as mentioned earlier. In summary, though the suffering encountered by 1 Peter’s audience was not empire-sanctioned violence, it nevertheless represented an existential social threat by local governments and the populace. This is why Jesus’ story of suffering as both shepherd and lamb became so critical to Peter’s rhetorical strategy. Christian leaders had to care for God’s people in a climate of persecution and they themselves could suffer as shepherds or persecuted lambs.

#### 4.2.2 Types and Sources of Persecution

Peter’s general term to describe the audience’s suffering is πάσχω (“to suffer”) though we could expand the list of terms of considerably.<sup>10</sup> The term πάσχω describes the mistreatment of slaves by their masters (2:19–25); opposition to Jesus and his message (2:21–23); general

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<sup>6</sup> Travis Williams, “Suffering From a Critical Oversight: The Persecutions of 1 Peter Within Modern Scholarship,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 10 (2012): 279–80.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, “Persecutions of 1 Peter in Modern Scholarship,” 279.

<sup>8</sup> Ramsay argued that Christians were actively pursued by Roman officials for trial (1 Pet 3:15; 5:8) and were persecuted to the death simply for professing the Christian faith (4:15–16) in the mold of Pliny’s trials against Christians. In addition, Ramsay argued that this persecution extended over the whole church (5:9) and formed part of a “fixed policy of the empire toward Christians.” William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170*. (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1893), 280–81.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, “Persecutions of 1 Peter in Modern Scholarship,” 280; Goppelt also argued this point in his analysis of the suffering in 1 Peter. Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> We get a sense for the social opposition that 1 Peter’s audience faced by the variety of terms that Peter utilizes in the letter: These include: πειρασμός (“trial”), (1:6; 4:12); λυπέω (“to grieve” or “to cause distress”) (1:6); πάσχω (“to suffer”) (2:19–21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1, 15, 19; 5:10); πάθημα (“sufferings”) (1:11; 4:13; 5:1, 9); κολαφίζω (“to mistreat”) (2:20); λοιδορέω (“to revile”) (2:23); ἀντιλοιδορέω (“to revile in turn”) (2:23); ὀνειδίζω (“to suffer reproach”) (4:14); καταλάλέω (“to slander”) (2:12; 3:16); ἐπηρεάζω (“mistreat” or “revile”) (3:16) and βλασφημέω (“blaspheme” or “malign”) (4:4). The final six terms can be categorized as verbal abuse and could include such hostile behaviors as taunting, insults, disparagement, mockery, verbal slander and abuse, ridicule, threats, intimidation, mistreatment and harassment. Finally, these terms are widely distributed throughout 1 Peter though there are verse clusters where the descriptions of suffering become more intense (1:6, 11; 2:19–21, 23; 3:14, 16–18; 4:1, 4, 12–15, 19; 5:1, 9, 10).

mistreatment and intimidation by the population (3:13–14); and possible legal action against Christians (3:14–15; 4:15).<sup>11</sup> This term is typically connected to the Lord’s passion in the gospel traditions.<sup>12</sup> Within 1 Peter it appears in two key texts describing the Lord’s passion (2:23; 4:1) and in the case of 2:23, Peter adds an extended commentary on the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. As we will see later, this identification with Christ is an important rhetorical strategy that the author of 1 Peter utilizes to help his audience cope with their afflictions.

#### 4.2.3 Sources of Social Persecution

There were various reasons for why 1 Peter’s audience was experiencing social conflict. In various passages, the opposition was occurring because of the audience members’ behaviors, which identified them as “Christian” and set them in ethical contradistinction to their Gentile neighbors.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps some of the hostility toward Christians derived from the same sources described within the Acts narratives. There, the apostles were relentlessly pursued via verbal, physical and legal opposition from the Jewish leadership, secular mob-inspired violence, and because of the economic threat of the Christian faith in particular places (Acts 16:19; 19:24).<sup>14</sup> Another type of suffering in 1 Peter came about as a result of certain members’ social status, in this case, that of being a slave (2:19–25). This could include mistreatment and “physical abuse” (κολαφίζω). Williams notes how this mistreatment was an accepted part of Greco-Roman culture and could include sexual assault, branding, flogging and even mutilation.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2.4 1 Peter’s Rhetorical Strategy for Dealing with Suffering

Much of Peter’s rhetorical strategy is concerned with encouraging his audience to bear up under social conflict while providing a divine explanation for the audience’s difficulties.

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<sup>11</sup> Travis Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 303–16.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Matt 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31; Luke 17:25; 22:15; 24:26.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Pet 2:12; 3:14–17; 4:4, 16.

<sup>14</sup> The book of Acts singles out the hostility to the Christian message that accompanied Peter (Acts 4:1–4; 5:17–25; 26–32); Stephen (7:58–60; 8:1) and Paul (9:22–25; 13:45; 14:2; 15:19; 17:5; 18:12; 20:3; 20:19; 23:13; 25:3).

<sup>15</sup> Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 302.

This includes the highlighting of the listener’s identification before God; the identification with the “sufferings” of the Messiah; the joining of suffering and ethical behavior with an eschatological tone to provide hope in the midst of the audience’s social persecution. 1 Peter 5:1–11 utilizes these rhetorical strategies when addressing the different members of the church and particularly the elders. We will now touch on these rhetorical strategies before moving to an exegesis of the passage.

#### 4.2.4.1 Audience’s Identification - God’s Elect and Holy People

An important rhetorical strategy that Peter utilizes for helping his audience members cope with suffering has to do with their identification. Thus, Peter reminds his hearers that they have been “born again” into a living hope (1:3); they have an inheritance which does not spoil (1:4); as living stones they are being built up into a spiritual priesthood (2:5), and in the climax of this special status, they are God’s “holy nation” (ἔθνος ἅγιον (1 Pet 2:9, 10)). Within this climactic passage believers are given additional titles: They are a “chosen race,” “royal priesthood,” and “a people for God’s own possession.” The language comes from Exod 19:6<sup>16</sup> and the context is Israel’s archetypal deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The passage also makes reference to Isa 43:20–21<sup>17</sup> which is set in the context of Israel’s exile and restoration, but which recasts this event through the lens of the Exodus story (cf. Isa 43:2, 3, 10, 16–20).<sup>18</sup> Peter is not merely using God’s ancient covenant community as an inspiring metaphor. Rather, Peter is identifying his listeners precisely as God’s precious covenant community today. This is why he states that they are God’s “chosen” (ἐκλεκτός) (1 Pet 1:1; 2:9) echoing the language of Isa 45:4.

We should note that 1 Peter repeatedly utilizes the Exodus motif to identify his audience.<sup>19</sup> This includes previous statements that his listeners: 1) Will receive “an

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<sup>16</sup> (Cf. βασιλειον ιεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον (1 Pet 2:9) to βασιλειον ιεράτευμα καὶ ἔθνος ἅγιον (Exod 19:6 LXX).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. γένος ἐκλεκτόν (1 Pet 2:9) to γένος μου τὸ ἐκλεκτόν (Isa 43:20 LXX); λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν (1 Pet 2:9) to λαὸν μου, ὃν περιποιήσάμην (Isa 43:21 LXX)

<sup>18</sup> Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 49.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Exodus motif within 1 Peter see: Paul Deterding, “Exodus Motifs in First Peter,” *Concordia Journal* 7 (1981): 58–65.



inheritance” (κληρονομία);<sup>20</sup> 2) have been “redeemed” or “delivered” (λυτρόω)<sup>21</sup> and that by the imperishable blood of an “unblemished lamb” (1 Pet 1:19 cf. Exod 12:5–7); 3) 1 Peter’s listeners are called to “gird up the loins of their mind” (1 Pet 1:13; cf. Exod 12:11); 4) finally, 1 Peter’s audience is called to holiness (“You shall be holy because I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16 cf. 1:15; 2:5, 9)) using the covenantal language of the Exodus (Lev 11:44). Though shepherding language is absent from these descriptions, the Exodus motif is nevertheless important for Peter’s idea of “the flock” later on and for the special care and concern its leaders should have on its behalf (5:2).

The audience members’ special identity motivates 1 Peter’s paraenesis. Believers have been redeemed from their ignorant way of life, “former lusts” (ἐπιθυμία) and wanton dissipation in which they once participated, and they are to live for God’s will instead (1:14, 18; 4:2–3). Peter calls his audience to sobriety, godly fear, alertness and sound judgment (1:13, 17; 4:7; 5:8). In addition, they must put aside malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander (2:1; 3:10) and not return evil or insult in kind (3:9). In the household codes, Peter concretely sets out the details of this ethical calling (2:11–3:12). Finally, Christian leaders must also mark a contrast with the surrounding culture. They should be motivated by a pastoral concern for others, by a desire to set an example and by deep humility (5:1–4, 8).

Peter’s description of the audience’s identity flows into his understanding of God’s flock in our passage (5:2). Terms like the “diaspora”, “resident aliens”, “Babylon” and “holy nation” (1:1, 2:9; 5:13) plus the myriad of reminders that place the audience within the context of the Exodus are meant to evoke a sense of belonging within God’s great drama with his people. He previously led his ancient flock through the difficult wilderness and the exile. He will lead his flock again through the persecutions they are experiencing in Asia Minor.

#### 4.2.4.2 *Identification with the Christ’s Sufferings*

Another rhetorical strategy that Peter uses to help his listeners cope with their conflict is the identification with the “sufferings” of the Messiah. The most visible and representative section for this identification with Christ occurs in Peter’s instructions for slaves to “submit”

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Pet 1:4; cf. Deut 12:9; Josh 11:23 LXX.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Pet 1:18; cf. Exod 6:6, 15:3 LXX.

to unjust or even physically abusive masters (2:18–21).<sup>22</sup> Peter then utilizes Christ’s passion as the example that slaves are to follow in their suffering.<sup>23</sup> He completes his exhortation by framing Christ’s passion as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s fourth servant song<sup>24</sup> to which he alludes or quotes on multiple occasions: 2:22 (Isa 53:9); 2:23 (Isa 53:7); 2:24 (Isa 53:12, 5; cf. 53:4, 11 and 12); 2:25 (cf. Isa 53:6).<sup>25</sup>

Christ’s example in 1 Pet 2:18–25 is likely meant for the entire congregation (including the leaders) and not only for slaves. There are several reasons for this argument. First, this passage serves as the heading for Peter’s entire domestic code (2:18–3:12). Also, later in the code, he addresses wives and husbands with the phrase “in the same way” (ὁμοίως) (3:1, 7) connecting instructions to them to what he previously said to slaves. Furthermore, at the end of this section, Peter restates his instructions about non-retaliation but applies them to everyone (πάντες) (3:9).

Peter completes his reflection on Christ’s suffering with two more shepherding references stating, “you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls” (2:25). The reference to straying sheep comes from Isa 53:6.<sup>26</sup> Peter is completing his reflection on Isaiah 53 by reminding the audience of their former plight. However, now they belong to the shepherd who guards their souls. The reference to straying (πλαναώ) sheep that have returned (ἐπιστρέφω) is also reminiscent of Ezek 34:16 (LXX) where these terms appear together. The context is that God as eschatological shepherd will bring back his sheep from where they have been scattered. A further link with Ezekiel is the ποιμήν and the ἐπίσκοπος language, which is connected to Ezek 34:11 (cf. ἐπισκέπτομαι)

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<sup>22</sup> The concepts of non-retaliation and of trusting in God’s justice for vindication appear repeatedly in 1 Peter as part of the audience’s expected ethics (cf. 1 Pet 1:5, 17; 3:9; 4:5, 19).

<sup>23</sup> Goppelt suggests that 1 Peter 2:22–24 reflects “fundamental aspects of the Passion narrative without representing particular parts...” Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, 211.

<sup>24</sup> In this regard, Elliott states the following: “Within the NT, 1 Peter manifests the most extensive use of Isa 52:13–53:12 in elaborating the details, significance, and soteriological effects of Jesus’ suffering and death and in presenting him as a model to be emulated. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 547.

<sup>25</sup> Bosetti adds a conceptual link between 1 Peter 2:21 and Isa 53:4–6. See Elliott for a more expansive list of connections. Bosetti, *Il Pastore*, 108; Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 547.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ὡς πρόβατα πλανώμενοι (1 Peter 2:25) το ὡς πρόβατα ἐπλανήθημεν (Isa 53:6)).

and which speaks to the theme of restoration via God or God’s agent as shepherd.<sup>27</sup> Peter Davids suggests that Peter is relying on OT traditions of straying sheep, God as shepherd and the promise of a messianic shepherd, which have been mediated through the church tradition of Jesus gathering his “lost sheep” or Jesus as shepherd.<sup>28</sup> Neither the connection to Ezekiel 34 or the list of traditional texts by Davids adequately explain why Isaiah 53 and the sacrificial lamb would be joined to Ezekiel 34 and the shepherd image so directly as in 1 Pet 2:25.

Kelly Liebengood proposes that Zechariah 9–14 holds the key to the connection. First he argues that 1 Pet 2:21–25 represents a Christian “pesher” on Jesus’ passion in which case Zechariah 9–14 is a more likely source for our 1 Peter passage given its extensive use in the passion narratives to explain Jesus’ suffering (Mark 14:26–31; Matt 26:30–35). Secondly, Liebengood links Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 9–14 using a procedure known as *heqesh* (the bringing together of two passages via a common feature) through the shared theme of restoration via YHWH’s appointed agent who must suffer. In this case, the 1 Peter 2:25 text does not reflect the more general shepherd motif in Ezekiel 34 or Jeremiah 23, but rather, the suffering shepherd of Zechariah 13:7–9. Also, as we noted in our OT chapter, we believe Zechariah 9–14 reworked Ezekiel 34 in order to add a suffering shepherd to Israel’s eschatological expectations. Lastly, Liebengood argues that Peter joined 1 Pet 2:25 with Zech 10:2 (LXX) and Isa 53:5–6 (LXX) and their wider text plots through the technique of *gezerah shavah* using ὡς πρόβατα and ἰάθημεν / ἴασις.<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 53:5–6 states that we have been healed (ἰάθημεν) by his stripes and that “all we as sheep (ὡς πρόβατα) have gone astray.” Zechariah 10:2 LXX states that the people wandered (ἔξαιρω) like sheep (ὡς πρόβατα) because there was no healing (ἴασις). This is distinct from the MT translation which states that the people wandered because they had no shepherd.

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<sup>27</sup> Both Bosetti and Elliott connect 1 Peter 2:24–25 with Ezekiel 34 based on the similarity of language in the two passages (shepherd, sheep, return, straying, overseer). Bosetti, *Il Pastore*, 121–40; Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 536–38.

<sup>28</sup> Straying sheep (Num 27:16–17; Jer 50:6; Ezek 34:5–6); God as shepherd (Gen 48:15; Ps 23; Isa 40:11; Jer 23:1–4; Zech 11:4–17); messianic shepherd (Jer 31:10; Ezek 37:24); Jesus gathering his “lost sheep” (Luke 15:2–7, 19:10); Jesus as shepherd (John 10; Heb 13:20; Rev 7:17). Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 112–14.

<sup>29</sup> Liebengood, “Zechariah 9-14 as the Substructure of 1 Peter’s Eschatological Program,” 83–96.

Liebengood's three-step proposal shows the plausible connections between Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 9–14 and how these traditions might have coalesced in Peter's vision of Jesus as both sacrificial lamb and suffering shepherd. This leads to our final point of consideration. How far we can press the similarities between Jesus' suffering and that of the slaves, congregation or Christian leaders, particularly Christ's sacrifice as the sinless lamb? Peter draws on this parallel again in two other places in his letter. First, in 3:17 and 18, he compares believers who are "suffering" for righteousness sake with Jesus' vicarious atonement for the unjust. Secondly, in 4:13, Peter refers to the audience "sharing" in the "sufferings of Christ" because they are being "reviled" (ὀνειδίζω), which matches the description of Christ during his crucifixion (cf. Matt 27:44; Mark 15:32). In like manner, the mistreatment of slaves ("to strike with a fist" (κολαφίζω)) in 2:20, mirrors Jesus' physical abuse at the hands of his accusers using the same term (Matt 26:67; Mark 14:65). Both Davids and Selwyn believe these references are to be understood as examples. In other words, as Christ endured persecution with patience, so must Peter's audience.<sup>30</sup> But is that the extent of the application?

In 2:25, Peter refers to Jesus as the "shepherd" (ποιμήν) and "overseer" (ἐπίσκοπος) of souls. Both terms come together when Peter exhorts elders to shepherd God's flock by exercising oversight (5:2). Thus, as we will later argue, Jesus' example as both a suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb forms part of Peter's pattern of leadership based on the shepherd / flock motif. This is not to suggest that the elders or church leaders play the same role as Jesus does in redemption. Nevertheless, our 1 Peter passage, as well as the other passages of study make some type of connection in this direction. For example, we have already commented that the ἐπίσκοπος / ἐπισκέπτομαι language points toward an aspect of divine redemption in the OT. Furthermore, in the Miletus Speech, this notion of redemption comes through in Paul's identity as the suffering servant of Isaiah (Acts 13:47) who then serves as the example for the elders as we have already noted. There are similar implications in our John 21 passage where Peter is commanded to follow Jesus sacrificially, but which leaves ambiguous to what extent (John 21:19, 22). Finally, here in 1 Pet 2:25, the shepherd

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<sup>30</sup> Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 166; Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 221.

image very concretely points to Jesus as the model for shepherd elders both in his role as suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb.

#### 4.2.4.3 *Suffering and Eschatology*

A final rhetorical strategy that Peter utilizes to encourage his audience in their difficult situations is the joining of suffering with a promise of future glory for his audience. In our passage of study, which is framed in the context of suffering (5:1, 9, 10), Peter promises the elders that they will receive “a crown of glory” from the “Chief Shepherd” himself (5:4). This should serve as motivation for leadership no matter the sacrificial costs. Earlier in the letter, Peter joins these themes again. The temporary trials by fire they are encountering (1:6, 7; cf. 5:10) will only prove their faith at the revelation (*ἀποκάλυψις*) of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:7, 9; cf. 4:13). The word *ἀποκάλυψις* is eschatologically charged and is connected with God’s coming wrath or judgment (Rom 2:5); his punishment of God’s oppressors (2 Thess 1:7); a new era free of sin and corruption (Rom 8:19) and Jesus’ literal return (1 Cor 1:7; Rev 1:1). Furthermore, Jesus’ expected return is rhetorically utilized to motivate 1 Peter’s audience to live lives of excellent moral and ethical character (1:13–14; cf. 4:14).

As we have demonstrated, the theme of suffering in 1 Peter is multi-dimensional and pervasive in the letter. While 1 Peter’s audience may not have been experiencing empire-sanctioned violence, nevertheless they were at all times vulnerable to social threat by local governments and the populace which could include mistreatment, intimidation, and even legal action. Peter’s response to the suffering was two-fold. Sometimes they would suffer precisely because of their ethical contradistinction to the Gentile population. In this case, they were to lean further into their identity as God’s covenant community having also come through their own Exodus. Secondly, their suffering brought them into a spiritual bond with Jesus who also suffered greatly and was mistreated during his passion. For leaders, this was particularly relevant as Peter directly connect Jesus’ suffering as both sacrificial lamb (Isaiah 53) and suffering shepherd to the work of the elders in our passage (1 Pet 2:25; 5:2). In the next section, we shall perform an exegetical analysis of 1 Peter 5:1–11. This will allow us to understand how Peter reflects on leadership using the shepherd / flock motif. At the same time, we shall utilize our study of suffering in 1 Peter to inform our analysis.

### 4.3 Exegesis of 1 Peter 5:1–11

We now turn to an exegetical analysis of 1 Peter 5:1–11. The preliminary issues in 1 Peter that we have treated in our methodology and in this chapter will serve us well in this section. First, because we are dealing with a genuine epistle, this latter section represents the closure to an integrated set of ideas that the author has been repeating throughout his epistle. Secondly, Peter returns to the topic of suffering in these last verses utilizing the rhetorical strategies we identified in our socio-historical study of persecution. Furthermore, Peter once again expands his audience’s identification with Jesus (both as a model for suffering) and as an example of leadership for the elders. Finally, the ecclesiastical code (5:1-7) serves as the counterpart to the domestic codes, setting the church and its leaders in ethical contradistinction to other secular groups and leaders. We begin with an analysis of the immediate context of the passage before moving to its structure. Finally, we will complete a study of the individual verses.

#### 4.3.1 Immediate Literary Context of 1 Peter 5:1–11

Our passage fits into the last major division of 1 Peter, which runs from 4:12–5:11. The presence of the inferential conjunction οὖν (“therefore”) at 5:1 joins our passage with the previous section on suffering (4:12–19). The two sections are linguistically and thematically connected: 1) both speak of the “sufferings (πάθημα) of Christ” (4:13; 5:2) which connect to the “sufferings” (πάθημα) of 1 Peter’s audience (5:9); 2) both connect to the promise of participating in a future eschatological “glory” (δόξα) that will one day be revealed (4:13, 14; 5:1, 4, 10). Here again, the language is similar. (cf. ἀποκάλυψις in 4:13 to ἀποκαλύπτω in 5:1); 3) Finally, both sections make use of the noun πάθημα as an alternate form of speaking of the audience’s conflict and in conformity to God’s divine will or timing (4:13; 5:1, 9). Nevertheless, it still remains unclear how and why Peter wanted to join these two sections.

We know that the tone of judgment as well as suffering intensifies dramatically in the previous section (4:12, 13, 17, 18). Therefore we can speculate that in the following section Peter highlights the responsibility for leaders in guiding and caring for the flock so that it remains faithful to the Lord in the midst of suffering and alert to its attendant dangers (5:8). Davids notes how the instructions to leaders are sandwiched in between two sections on suffering. Thus, the pressure for the group to disintegrate is the reason that Peter now

addresses the leaders in this section.<sup>31</sup> We can also speculate that the contrast between Gentiles and Christians and the promise of judgment for both groups in the prior section leads to the author trying to articulate a similar contrast between Christian and non-Christian leaders in the next section.

Our passage also forms part of the final section of 1 Peter and it is given using the language of exhortation. As such, it shows affinities with final exhortations found within other NT epistles.<sup>32</sup> One such affinity is the relationship between the church and its leaders. In his Corinthian correspondence, Paul mentions those of Stephanus' household who have dedicated themselves to the "ministry" (διακονία) and instructs his readers to "be subject" (ὑποτάσσω) to such men (1 Cor 16:6). Peter uses the same verb when we instructs younger men "to submit" to the elders in our passage (5:5). Paul gives similar advice to his Thessalonian audience when he instructs them to "recognize" (οἶδα) and "esteem" (ἡγέομαι) those who "rule over" (προοίστημι) and "instruct" (νουθετέω) them (1 Thess 5:12–13). Finally, the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to "imitate" those who lead (ἡγέομαι) and spoke the word of God to them (Heb 13:7). In addition, he instructs them to "be persuaded" (πείθω in the passive tense) by their leaders to whom they should "submit" (ὑπείχω) (Heb 13:17).

Another noteworthy trait of the final exhortations in the NT epistles is the call to vigilance or the warning to be alert. Sometimes the warnings point out specific dangers from divisive, unprincipled or undisciplined men.<sup>33</sup> In the case of 1 Peter the warning is against the devil who seeks someone to devour (5:8). Final exhortations often contain a call to vigilance for one's own ministry (Col 4:17) or a call to be vigilant in prayer (Col 4:3). Often, this urgent request uses language or images that convey a strong warning against all manner of threats to one's faith or the church: γρηγορέω ("watch out") (1 Cor 16:13) or ἀγρυπνέω

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<sup>31</sup> Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 174–75; See also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 322.

<sup>32</sup> To substantiate this claim we analyzed twelve final exhortations in the NT using either grammatical criteria or their placement prior to the final greetings and / or the benediction of the letter. Four of these passages used the term λοιποί ("finally") to indicate a transition to a final exhortation (2 Cor 13:11; Eph 6:10–20; Phil 4:8–9; 2 Thess 3:1–15); Several passages gave a list of exhortations prior to the final greeting of the letter (1 Cor 16:13–16; Col 4:2–6, 17; Tit 3:9–11; 3 John 11) with one exhortation forming part of the final greetings (Rom 16:17–18); Several passages gave a list of exhortations prior to a final benediction (1 Thess 5:12–22; Heb 13:1–19; 2 Pet 3:14–18; Jude 21–23)).

<sup>33</sup> Rom 16:17–18; 2 Pet 3:17; 2 Thess 3:6.

(“be awake”) (Eph 6:18). As previously mentioned, γρηγορέω is a highly charged (and eschatological term) that conveys an imminent sense of danger (cf. Acts 20:28). In other cases, the warnings are tied to an exhortation to stand firm (στήκω) or to be strong in the faith (1 Cor 16:13; Eph 6:11, 13, 14), a combination which also occurs in our passage (5:8, 9).<sup>34</sup>

Readers will note that we have chosen to analyze 1 Pet 5:1–11 as a whole and not just 5:1–4 where the shepherd / flock motif and leadership are directly highlighted. There are four reasons for this approach. First, verses 5:1–7 together form the ecclesiastical code, which mirrors the household codes earlier in the letter (2:11–3:12). Secondly, the call for humility begins at v. 5, with all church members and incorporates the paraenesis on humility in vv. 6–7; Third, the term πάθημα (“sufferings”) appears in 5:1 and 9 suggesting a connection; Fourth, the presence of a predatory element (“roaring lion) in verse 8 connects the remaining section 5:8–11 to the shepherd theme in the first four verses. We will now proceed to outline a structure for these verses

#### 4.3.2 Structure of 1 Peter 5:1–11

We can split our passage into two main sections, one dealing with the ecclesiastical code (5:1–7) and another with a warning toward alertness (5:8–11). We can also further delineate Peter’s instructions to the elders (5:1–4), younger men (5:5) and the whole church (5:5–7). The dramatic change in tone, language and subject allows us to group the next set of verses together (5:8–11). We suggest the following structure for 1 Pet 5:1–11 and for the analysis that follows.

##### I) Ecclesiastical code (5:1–7)

###### A. I (Peter) exhort the elders among you (5:1–4)

1. Shepherd the flock among you exercising oversight
2. You will receive a crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd appears

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<sup>34</sup> Other elements of final exhortations that are not contained in our passage include: call to love one another (though it is found throughout Peter’s epistle) (1 Cor 16:14; Heb 13:1); to be hospitable (Heb 13:2); to live in peace with one another (2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13; 2 Pet 3:14); to do good and avoid evil (1 Thess 5:21–22; to be fervent in prayer and to avoid doctrinal error (Heb 13:9), false teachers (2 Pet 3:17) and divisive men (Rom 16:17, 18; Tit 3:10–11).



- B. Younger men be subject to elders (5:5)
  - C. Everyone be clothed with humility (5:5)
  - D. Paraenesis on humility (5:6–7)
- II) Be alert because the devil prowls around like a lion (5:8–11)
- A. Resist him firm in faith (5:9)
  - B. Your brothers around the world are also suffering (5:9)
  - C. God himself will establish and perfect you in due time (5:10)

#### 4.3.3 The Ecclesiastical Code (5:1–7)

The first section in our passage (5:1–7) addresses three distinct “groups” within the church: elders (πρεσβύτερος), younger men (νέος) and everyone (πάντες). This section serves as the ecclesiastical counterpart to the domestic codes found in the earlier part of the letter (2:11–3:12). The pattern between the two codes is striking. In the domestic code, Peter addresses one party in three distinct paired social relationships. In our passage, he addresses two parties within another paired ecclesiological relationship. In the domestic code, the term submission (ὑποτάσσω) is used three times with relation to each group (2:13, 18; 3:1). In our passage, Peter instructs “younger men” to “submit” (ὑποτάσσω) to the elders. In both passages, Peter completes his exhortations for proper behavior by addressing everyone (πάντες), by incorporating a call to “humility” using the rare term ταπεινοφροσύνη and by citing a passage from the LXX to substantiate his final instructions (3:8, 9; 5:5)

##### 4.3.3.1 Peter Addresses the Elders (5:1)

As with the Miletus Speech, our passage narrates an apostolic address to the elders of the church. In the 1 Peter 5 passage, they are called to a careful oversight function that is quite similar to what we see in Paul’s discourse. This includes: Jesus as a model (sacrificial lamb / suffering shepherd), suffering as part of leadership, and the call for humility, to be an example and free of greed among other things. Again, this suggests a distinctive pattern of reflection on the shepherd image which was carefully articulated and transmitted to the nascent communities. Here again we also see how the oversight function (ἐπισκοπή, ἐπισκοπέω) combined with the social / ecclesiological role of the elder such that the two

terms (πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος) came to describe the same person in their capacity for watching over the church.<sup>35</sup>

Peter begins his address to the elders (πρεσβύτερος) with a literal exhortation (παρακαλέω). He speaks in the first person (as if to make his appeal that much more personal). This is something he does only two other times in the whole epistle, once to exhort the church to godly behavior (2:11; 5:12) and a second time to exhort his readers to stand firm (2:11; 5:12).

Three self-descriptions, joined with καὶ, set the proper tone for the request to elders. The author is writing: 1) as a “co-elder”; 2) as a “witness of the sufferings of Christ” and 3) as a “partaker of the glory to be revealed.” The author’s rhetorical strategy at the outset depends on establishing an identification with the elders in these self-descriptions. First, the author uses the term συμπρεσβύτερος (“co-elder” or “fellow elder”) a *hapax legomena* in the NT, the LXX and the extant Greco-Roman literature. The prefix (συμ) is derived from the preposition συν and indicates an association or linkage with the noun to which it is attached. Thus we derive similar συμ-noun composites in the NT such as συμμαθητής (“fellow disciples” (John 11:16)) or συμπολίτης (“fellow citizens” (Eph 2:19)). The author of 1 Peter has already shown himself to be fond of the συν preposition (e.g. 3:7; 8; 4:4; 5:13).<sup>36</sup> When combined with the term for elder in our passage, it conveys a “sense of solidarity and collegiality between the author and the elders addressed.”<sup>37</sup> The author is thus making his appeal more intimate, personal and forceful because he is first identifying with the elders and is addressing them as one of their own and not as an apostle who would have much greater authority.

This identification with the elders is further strengthened with the next two self-descriptions. The apostle speaks about his personal “witness” to the “sufferings of Christ.” As previously mentioned, Peter has already connected his audience’s afflictions with that of Christ’s sufferings (2:21–23; 4:1, 13) even using the same language at 4:13, which he uses in our passage (τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν). Now both audience and author are connected in a mystical bond to each other and to the Lord, through Jesus’ afflictions.

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 20:28–31; 1 Pet 5:1–4; Tit 1:5, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 817.

<sup>37</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 817.

The identification with the elders is extended even to the last self-description, where Peter suggests that he, like the elders, will be a “partaker” (κοινωνός) of a future eschatological glory. The author stands in the same relation to the elders when it comes to this future hope. Both must bear suffering as a testing of faith (1:6–7) and a temporary trial (5:10). Both must have faith that God will vindicate his people (5:10; cf. 2:23) and that they will receive a crown of glory upon completion of their work (5:4). Thus, in language and tone, Peter’s strong identification with the elders at this point sets the proper motivation for his audience to follow through on his subsequent instructions.

The phrase “sufferings of Christ” is repeated three times in 1 Peter (1:11; 4:13; 5:1) with virtually identical constructions in the latter two cases and all references using πάθημα in the plural. This creates a semi-technical phrase in the letter that points to Christ’s passion and crucifixion during his final week in Jerusalem based on these considerations: 1) The gospel writers frequently tie the verb πάσχω (“to suffer”) (from which the noun πάθημα is derived) to Jesus’ last week in Jerusalem, his persecution by the religious leaders (elders, chief priests or scribes) during his passion and to his eventual death and resurrection;<sup>38</sup> 2) the gospel writers and the preaching of Acts confirm this use of (πάσχω) as both connect the “sufferings” of Christ to the “resurrection” or “glory.”<sup>39</sup> This is the sense we get from its usage in 1 Pet 1:11 which states that Christ’s “sufferings” (πάθημα) were followed by his “glories.”; 3) Hebrews 2:9 speaks of the “suffering” (πάθημα) of death when speaking of Christ’s sacrifice on behalf of human beings thus incorporating the crucifixion as part of Christ’s “sufferings.” Thus, as a witness to the opposition, legal and spiritual trials, mockery, insult and violent persecution against the Lord during Jesus’ final week, which was followed by the resurrection, Peter is eminently qualified to speak about “the sufferings of Christ.” In addition, he can encourage his listeners to bear up under conflict, follow Christ’s example of suffering (2:21) and wait for the coming glory and the Lord’s eventual vindication of his people.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Matt 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 24:26, 46; Acts 1:3; 17:3; cf. Phil 3:10.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Pet 2:21, 23; 4:13, 19; 5:6, 10.

In this first section, Peter sets the right tone with the elders, identifying as it were as a fellow elder and sufferer and a future partaker of eschatological glory. The theme of identification becomes stronger from Jesus to the elders via the shepherd / flock motif.

#### 4.3.3.2 *Shepherd the Flock (5:2–4)*

The shepherd / flock motif occupies the next set of verses (5:2–4). The exhortation to the elders begins with an imperative, ποιμάνετε and an appeal for proper oversight (ἐπισκοποῦντες)<sup>41</sup> for the church which Peter designates as “the flock of God” (5:2). Peter will concretely lay out what this shepherding oversight entails in the next few verses. For now, we simply make three important observations. First, this verse contains a variation of the ποιμήν-ἐπίσκοπος pairing, which we highlighted in the section on the prophets.<sup>42</sup> As we noted, the combination was typically applied to God in his capacity for judging Israel’s failed shepherds and for redeeming (saving) his flock from an oppressive leadership structure. Here, the word combination is applied to the elders.

Secondly, as we developed earlier, Peter utilized this two-term combination in reference to Jesus in 2:25 (ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον). There, he highlights Jesus’ role both as a suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb. Now in this passage, Peter deliberately connects Jesus to the elders via the ποιμήν-ἐπίσκοπος combination. As we stated in our earlier analysis, it is not clear how far we can push the image of the lamb for the elders. Perhaps they are to imitate Christ in his vulnerability, his trust that God would vindicate him (2:23) or his willingness to sacrifice on behalf of God’s people. However, given the redemptive overtones of this word pairing in the OT and its connection to Jesus’ redemption in 2:25, some type of connection exists for identifying the elders as lambs. This also fits with Paul’s identification as the servant of Isaiah in Acts 13:47 and his identification with the shepherd elders in the Miletus Speech as we stated in our Acts chapter.

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<sup>41</sup> Two formidable manuscripts  $\aleph^*$  and B do not contain ἐπισκοποῦντες while manuscripts that incorporate the term include:  $\Phi^{72}$ , A, Codex Sinaiticus, second correction ( $\aleph^2$ ), P,  $\Psi$ , 33, 69, 81, 945, 1241, the Vulgate and Old Latin tradition as well as the Syriac (syr<sup>p</sup>) and Coptic (cop<sup>bo</sup>) versions. The Editorial Committee of the United Bible Societies’ Greek NT was ambivalent on this term. Based on the balance of external evidence and the possibilities for transcription, the Committee included the word but enclosed it within brackets to indicate doubt as to its validity. See Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 625.

<sup>42</sup> Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:11; Zech 10:3; 11:16.

The third observation regarding this initial passage has to do with “flock of God.” As in Acts, where the ἐκκλησία formed the undercurrent for everything that was taking place, here too, in 1 Peter, God’s flock has been visible throughout. The flock goes by many names in 1 Peter, God’s elect, his spiritual house or holy nation, but in the “flock” Peter likely returns to the Exodus. It is perhaps better to say a new Exodus, since now it is Christ as the unblemished lamb who redeems God’s people (1 Pet 1:19). As we also noted, this latter verse is but one of many references to the Exodus in 1 Peter. In addition, God as a shepherd is one of the OT narrative’s defining characteristics. Finally, the genitive construction of ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ (the flock of God) sets the proper relationship between God, his people and its leaders. The flock is “of” God, it belongs to God and he has paid a steep price for it (1:19). It is only as under shepherds that the elders are allowed to function and exercise their roles. They are charged with careful oversight which is in keeping with the flock’s special status and value before God.

With the shepherd tradition in the background and Jesus’ own example within 1 Peter, the next section concretely expands on the expected shape and scope of this oversight ministry using three successive antithetical parallels. The elders are to shepherd the flock, in this way:

not (μὴ)	under compulsion	but rather (ἀλλὰ)	willingly
nor (μηδέ)	for dishonest gain	but rather (ἀλλὰ)	with eagerness
nor (μηδέ)	as lording it over...	but rather (ἀλλὰ)	as an example

We note the common grammatical structure in these phrases: First there is the adverbial particle (μὴ) or coordinating conjunction (μηδέ), which negates the adjective and presents behavior to be avoided. These grammatical elements anticipate the contrast with the adjective that follows. The adversative is next (ἀλλὰ) which sharply introduces the contrast. This is followed by the opposing adjective. In this way, a certain rhetorical objective is achieved whereby the task or ministry of shepherding is defined as a series of undesired values and behaviors in direct contrast to the opposite desired values and behaviors. This is in keeping with the entire apologetic and ethical tone of the letter. As part of the special people of God, its leaders must be above reproach and they must perform their leadership tasks with the highest ethical standards and sacrificial concern modeled after the chief shepherd.

Specifically, Peter directs the elders to perform their tasks not “under compulsion” (ἀναγκαστῶς) but rather “willingly” (ἐκουσίως). The adverb ἀναγκαστῶς is a *hapax legomena* in the NT as well as the LXX. It means “by force, constraint or under compulsion.” In Greco-Roman sources we can point to a few examples of how the term is used. Thus, a fixed number of subjects were required, “under compulsion,” to participate in various rituals connected to the death of the Spartan kings.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the Athenian galleys were filled with mercenaries from various regions who were serving in the fleet “by force,”<sup>44</sup> and Herod was able to populate the city of Tiberius with Galileans from the surrounding regions who were relocated there “by constraint.”<sup>45</sup>

The adverb ἀναγκαστῶς is related to its noun form ἀνάγκη (“necessity”) in which something is imposed externally by law, duty or force as in the case of Paul’s divine “compulsion” to preach the gospel (1 Cor 9:16; see also its use in Philemon 14). It is also derived from its verb form ἀναγκάζω (“to necessitate,” “to compel” or “to constrain”) as when Paul confronts Peter about “compelling” the Gentiles to live like Jews (Gal 2:14) and the king’s commissioner “compelled” the Jews to offer unlawful sacrifices at Modin (1 Macc 2:25). The term ἀναγκαστῶς very much contrasts with the selfless and willing example of Jesus, which the elders are to emulate in their own leadership roles.

In our text, ἀναγκαστῶς modifies the verbal imperative ποιμάνετε clarifying the way in which shepherding is not to be carried out. It is contrasted with ἐκουσίως (“willingly”, “voluntarily” and of “one’s own accord”) and highlights how the true work of the shepherd should be fulfilled without the slightest pressure from external forces. It speaks not only to right actions toward the flock but the right attitude as well. The term is found only in Heb 10:26 of the NT, which points to the dangers of continuing to sin “willingly” or “willfully”.

Next, Peter instructs the elders to perform their leadership functions not for “dishonest gain” (αἰσχροκερδῶς) but rather with “eagerness” (προθύμῳ). The adverb αἰσχροκερδῶς is derived from the combination of αἰσχρός (“shameful”, “dishonest” or “sordid”) and κέρδος (“gain or advantage”). It is also a *hapax legomenon* in the NT as well as the LXX and is often translated as “greedily”. The word conveys a base or shameless desire for money, which is

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<sup>43</sup> Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.58.13.

<sup>44</sup> Thucydides – Peloponnesian War – 8.24; cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.58.3.10.

<sup>45</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18, 37.

more concretely captured when the two terms are viewed in isolation. This precise word combination and connection to undesirable leadership can be seen in Paul's warning against false teachers in Titus 1:11.

The call for vigilance against "sordid or unjust gain" or "greediness" appears to have become a standard part of Christian paraenesis for church leaders.<sup>46</sup> This is in contrast to the false teachers who are part of the Ephesian church and referenced in 2 Peter. In both letters, the false leaders' greed is mentioned as part of their destructive character (Tit 1:11; 2 Pet 2:3, 14). We should also mention in this regard that the "elders" were sometimes tasked with the administration of funds (Acts 11:30), making this quality even more important. Finally we should point out that this is not a novel concern. In the OT tradition, God instructed Moses to select able men, who hate "dishonest gain" or "covetousness" (עבצ) when selecting judges to help lead the people (Exod 18:21).

The adverb προθύμως means "eagerly", "readily" or "willingly" and creates a strong contrast with the prior term that warns against serving the church with an improper motivation for selfish or personal gain. It is a *hapax legomena* in the NT though it is derived from the adjective προθύμως meaning "ready", "willing" or even "eager". Thus Paul stated that he was "eager" (προθύμως) to preach the gospel to the Romans (Rom 1:15).

The final antithetical parallel which defines the work of a true shepherd / elder is the instruction for leaders not to "lord it over" or "to exercise dominion over" (κατακυριεύω) the members of the church but rather to set an example for them (τύπος). The term κατακυριεύω appears only in Mark 10:42 (cf. parallel in Matt 20:25 and use of κυριεύω in Luke 22:25), precisely where Jesus is discussing the concepts of status and leadership with his disciples. In that context, Jesus's disciples must not take their leadership cues from Gentile rulers who "lord it over" their subjects or from "benefactors" who abuse their client / patron relationships. Rather, in direct contrast, they must take on the identity of "servants" and "slaves" if they are to be called great in God's kingdom. Furthermore, this identity is rooted in Jesus' own example of servanthood and ultimately in his sacrificial death on behalf of others.<sup>47</sup> The connection to the gospel tradition is appropriate because it marks an ethical

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<sup>46</sup> 1 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:11; cf. 1 Tim 3:3 "free from the love of money."

<sup>47</sup> Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28; Luke 22:15–20.

contradistinction between Christian and Gentile leadership styles. Furthermore, it reinforces the connection that the author has already made between the elders and Jesus in terms of the shepherd image, their overseeing role and the “sufferings of Christ.”

Within 1 Peter, the author has already referred to Jesus as the “example” (ὑπογραμμός) to follow for bearing up under unjust suffering (1 Pet 2:19). Now Peter calls on the elders to be an example to the flock using a different word (τύπος). The concept of a leader setting an example or of modeling behavior for others to follow appears to have developed as part of a standard paraenesis within the Pauline churches<sup>48</sup> and within Paul’s apostolic teams (1 Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7). The apostle Paul also called his churches to be “imitators” (μιμητής) of his sacrificial leadership (1 Cor 4:16), his apologetic behavior (1 Cor 11:1) and his suffering for the sake of the gospel (1 Thess 1:6). In the Thessalonian correspondence, it is notable that the concept of imitation extends specifically to Christ’s suffering as well (cf. 1 Thess 2:14) as it does in 1 Peter.

Finally we note that the elders’ responsibilities are not only framed using Jesus’ example, but also, they are infused with an ultimate motivation. Thus, there is an eschatological reward that awaits those who selflessly give of themselves to God’s people in the way of their master Jesus. They will receive “an unfading crown of glory” from the “Chief Shepherd” himself (5:4). The entire phrase, along with the earlier reference in our passage to being a “partaker of the glory to be revealed,” forms part of Peter’s extended eschatological outlook and rhetorical strategy that we have already discussed. In the same way that Peter joined a call to holiness with a promise of future glory as a rhetorical strategy for dealing with suffering, he now enjoins the elders to responsible leadership and the promise of future glory. Furthermore, the image of a “crown” (στέφανος) as a reward for faithful service or behavior became part of early Christian paraenesis, particularly in the Pauline corpus.<sup>49</sup> In our passage, it is combined with the term ἀμαράντινος (“unfading”) to suggest the eternal or incorruptible nature of the reward (cf. 1 Pet 1:4 and the “imperishable inheritance” that awaits the saints). The term itself is a *hapax legomena* in the NT and the LXX.

#### 4.3.4 Mutual Humility (5:5–7)

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<sup>48</sup> Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:9; cf. Acts 20:35.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Cor 9:25; Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; 3:11; 4:4.



After addressing the “elders” (πρεσβύτερος) in a semi-official capacity, the final section of the ecclesiastical code is directed to “younger men” and then to all members of the community (5:5–7). In the case of the former, Peter directs “younger men” (νεώτεροι) to “be subject” (ὑποτάσσω) to the πρεσβύτερος. Peter has previously established three separate pairs of relationships along these same subordinate lines. Thus, everyone should “submit” (ὑποτάσσω) to government institutions or authorities; slaves should “submit” to their masters and wives should “submit” to their unbelieving husbands.

In this regard, it is almost certain that Peter is establishing the proper relationship between “younger men” in the churches and the elder / shepherd leaders just addressed in 5:1–4. This is distinct from the references in 1 Timothy 5 and Titus 2 which address two groups of men based on their age (πρεσβύτερος and νέος) but neither of whom appear to have any functional responsibility within the church.<sup>50</sup> It is precisely in this concrete social interrelationship between older and younger members seen within the pastorals that we are confident in translating νέος as “younger men” in our passage and as those who have no formal responsibility within the church.

A strong teaching on “humility” rounds out the ecclesiastical code, which is directed to all members of the church (πάντες). Peter has already enjoined his audience to be “humble in spirit” (ταπεινόφρων), at the end of his paraenetic discourse to household members (1 Pet 3:8). They are not to return insult for insult, they must keep their tongue from evil and they must turn away from evil and do good. All of these behaviors begin with “humility” which is required of Peter’s audience, whether they are citizens, slaves, husband or wives.

The author now uses three separate but related terms in two short verses to once again call the members of the church to a proper attitude and motivation in their dealings with one another and with the outside world: 1) the very rare noun, “humility” (ταπεινοφροσύνη); 2) the rare adjective “humble” (ταπεινός) as part of a citation from the LXX (“God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble”) and 3) the verb form “to be humble” (ταπεινώω) in the imperative. Together, these terms appear to form part of an extensive early church teaching on humility which in some cases is based on Jesus’ own example.

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<sup>50</sup> 1 Tim 5:1, 2, 11, 14; Tit 2:4, 6.

The Synoptic tradition juxtaposes those who would exalt themselves above other people with those in humble circumstances and demonstrates the way in which God inverts this dynamic using similar proverbial language as in our passage, “whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, in the Synoptic Gospels, the penitent sinner is justified and not the prideful Pharisee; the greatest in the kingdom are those who humble themselves as a child or as a servant and not those who love the places of honor in a banquet or synagogue (Matt 18:4; 23:12; cf. Prov 25:7); the rulers are brought low and the humble are exalted in reference to Jesus’ birth (Luke 1:52).

This is a common theme in the wisdom and prophetic literature of the OT as we are reminded that God vindicates those who willingly submit to his will<sup>52</sup> while he judges arrogant kings and kingdoms who oppose him.<sup>53</sup> Peter makes use of this juxtaposition in status when he states “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time” in order to encourage his listener’s to wait on the Lord’s vindication (1 Pet 5:6). He affirms this with a direct citation from Prov 3:34 (LXX), “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (ταπεινώω).” This text formed part of the early church’s tradition on this subject since the letter of James also called its readers to humility and utilized identical language “humble yourself in the presence of the Lord and he will exalt you” as well as the identical citation (Jas 4:6, 10).

As we have mentioned, the early church incorporated the concept of “humility” (ταπεινοφροσύνη) or the descriptive of being “humble” (ταπεινώω) as part of a long list of behaviors and virtues that were expected of those who had experienced newness of life in Christ. Indeed, in 1 Pet 5:5 the directive toward humility utilized the image of “putting on” garments (“gird” (ἐγκομβόομαι)) itself a familiar Pauline metaphor to describe attitudes, status and behaviors that Christians should either reject or fully embrace.<sup>54</sup> Along with humility, these expected behaviors included kindness, compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, love, unity and the admonition not to think more highly of oneself than

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<sup>51</sup> Matt 18:14; 23:12; Luke 1:52; 14:11; 18:14; cf. Jas 1:9.

<sup>52</sup> Job 22:29; Ps 138:6; Prov 15:33; 16:18; 29:23.

<sup>53</sup> Isa 2:12; 14:13; 47:10; 57:15; Ezek 28:2; 31:10.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. use of ἐνδύω in Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; 6:11, 14; Col 3:10, 12; 1 Thess 5:8.

necessary.<sup>55</sup> Finally, we again remind the reader that “humility” and high Christology come together in the great hymn of Philippians (Phil 2:5–11). This is important to bring out since it appears that early on (given the date of Philippians) the church had already linked the call for humility with the work and person of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 11:29; 2 Cor 10:1) providing yet one more way in which Jesus’ behavior and example was modeled by his followers.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.3.5 Suffering (5:8–11)

The last major section in our text (5:8–11) continues to address all the members of 1 Peter’s audience. These are the author’s final words and may explain why the tone has changed to one of urgency. Peter is sounding an alarm, graphically describing the audience’s spiritual enemy as a roaring lion and continuing to exhort his audience to bear up under suffering. The reference to a predatory lion indicates that Peter has extended the shepherd image in order to warn the church. Peter’s last mention of the image was in 5:4 but now it appears that he has utilized it again because he deemed it important to his final comments.

Peter begins with two imperatives, “be sober” (νήφω) and “be alert” (γρηγορέω). The call for spiritual sobriety comes via a literal admonishment to abstain from wine (νήφω). This is because the effects of drunkenness, which include a dulling of the senses, sleepiness, poor judgment and increased potential for sin (cf. 1 Cor 15:34) could just as easily apply in the spiritual world as in the physical world, with equally deadly effects. Thus the term came to denote having a certain spiritual readiness, temperateness, alertness and sobriety so as not to be taken by surprise by attacks from spiritual enemies. When combined with γρηγορέω (“be alert, be awake”) we have precisely the picture of spiritual readiness needed to remain pure and avoid spiritual harm. In addition, in γρηγορέω, we also have a shepherding term, which hearkens back to the pastoral vigilance needed to care for God’s people. Finally, as we have already touched on in our section of the Miletus Speech, γρηγορέω is a highly charged eschatological term. It is a strong word of warning against false teachers who would

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<sup>55</sup> Col 3:12–14; Eph 4:1–3; Rom 12:9–21; 1 Pet 3:8–12.

<sup>56</sup> Hellerman examines the Christ hymn of Philippians 2 against the background of Roman social values. In the description from Christ’s exaltation to his humiliation on the cross, Paul is portraying Jesus’ descent as a *cursus pudorum* (“course of ignominies”) to subvert the Roman *cursus* ideology and thus define how power and honor were to be used by the Philippian church. Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

infiltrate the church (Acts 20:31) and especially on being spiritually prepared for the Lord's return.<sup>57</sup>

Peter next gives the reason for the call to spiritual alertness. He identifies the audience's enemy as none other than the devil himself. This spiritual being is the source of temptations (Matt 4:1, 5, 8, 11; Eph 4:27; Jas 4:7); one who works in opposition to God's good purposes (Matt 13:39) and to his people (Acts 10:38; Eph 6:11) and the one who steals, lies and murders and is the source of the same (John 8:44). Peter describes the devil with predator like qualities ("as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour"). This means the threat is real, maybe imminent, and carries with it real spiritual danger for 1 Peter's audience.

Finally, Peter once again exhorts his audience to bear up under suffering (πάθημα) (5:9). As we have already noted, the term πάθημα is used sparingly but importantly in 1 Peter to speak of the "sufferings of Christ."<sup>58</sup> In this way, the author once again connects the audience's suffering to that of Jesus. In the Miletus Speech, the danger to the flock was perverse men ("savage wolves" (Acts 20:31), but here, it appears that the danger is the temptation to buckle under the pressure of persecution. This is the reason for Peter's exhortation to stand firm in their faith and to resist the devil (cf. Jas 4:7). Peter also returns to his rhetorical strategy for helping his audience navigate the difficulties of their social situation. It is only temporary (5:10; cf. 1:6) and future eschatological glory awaits for faithful behavior (5:9; cf. 4:13). In addition, God himself is the one who will ultimately vindicate the members of 1 Peter's audience (5:10; cf. 2:23). They can trust God because he cares for them and he will exalt them at the proper time (5:6)

It is fitting that the letter ends with an exhortation on overcoming suffering. There is a very real spiritual enemy, and the audience must be alert and firm in their faith so that they might not give in to the pressure. This is suffering in 1 Peter, but it is only temporary, and they have all of the spiritual resources needed to overcome it.

#### 4.4 Conclusion and Summary

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<sup>57</sup> Matt 24:42; 25:13; Luke 12:37; 1 Thess 5:6.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Pet 1:11; 4:13; cf. 2 Cor 5:1; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; Heb 2:9, 10.

We are now in a position to summarize the thematic emphases that have arisen from our analysis of 1 Pet 5:1–11 and its greater context. These verses narrate how the apostle Peter utilized the shepherd / flock motif to exhort elders to a specific type of leadership. As we stated in the beginning of our study, we believe these verses in 1 Peter represent one way about speaking about leadership. The shepherd image captured and communicated various important elements about Christian leaders. This is what we have called a coherent pattern of sustained biblical reflection on leadership based on the shepherd / flock motif.

In the first part of this chapter, we analyzed the theme of suffering within the letter. We then summarized Peter's rhetorical responses to encourage his hearers in the midst of their distress. Peter's responses also infused their suffering with theological significance in two ways. First, he reminded his audience of their identity as God's chosen and holy nation by applying the symbolic imagery of the Exodus to their situation. They had been redeemed by the blood of Christ, the Passover lamb (1 Pet 1:19). Secondly, in their social persecution, they were identifying with Christ in his passion (2:19-25). Both these observations flow directly into Peter's use of the shepherd / flock motif and the leadership themes that develop from them.

First, the "flock of God," was likely connected to the Exodus theme in 1 Peter. In this way, the shepherd / flock motif served as the vehicle for connecting Peter's audience to God's acts in the past. At the same time, Peter's audience had now been reconstituted via a New Exodus in Christ. This demonstrated both the value of the flock and the proper relationship between God, his leaders and his people. The flock belonged to the Lord and elders were only acting as under shepherds.

Secondly, we noted how Peter purposefully linked Jesus' role as a suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb to the elders' oversight role as shepherd leaders (2:25; 5:2). Peter's reflection on Jesus' passion (2:21–25), which was a commentary on the sacrificial lamb of Isaiah 53, became the model by which the elders were expected to govern. We also noted the way this passage particular passage wove the themes of Ezekiel 34 (the promise of a Davidic shepherd) and Zechariah 9–14 (the Davidic shepherd who dies) into Peter's overall presentation of the shepherd image in 1 Peter. Finally, the title of Chief Shepherd also connects Jesus with the work of the shepherd elders (5:4).

Peter also used the shepherd / flock motif to appeal to predatory language. This is a unique attribute of this motif. He combines the predatory language with the rhetoric of warning and strikes an urgent tone.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the predatory language is equated with the audience's suffering. They are to "resist" (ἀνθίστημι) because they know it is the same "sufferings" their brothers in the faith are currently experiencing (5:9, 10). There is a real danger posed by social persecution, which is apathy or resignation in the faith.

Finally, the image of the shepherd is suggestive of various tasks, which the elders are expected to perform. First, the presence of "overseeing" language (ἐπισκοποῦντες) is critical to the shepherd image and combines a redemptive tone with the functional outworking of the shepherd's role. In 1 Peter's instructions to elders, careful oversight means avoiding an improper financial motivation to serve. Another aspect of shepherd leadership is humility of mind (ταπεινοφροσύνη). While this command was not specifically directed to the elders, they are part of the πάντες (5:5) that is called to humility. In addition, the appearance of this rare term in the Miletus Speech and in the great Christ hymn of Philippians 2 reveals its importance in early Christian teaching and its connection to Jesus himself. The concept of being an example also forms a part of shepherd leadership.

In the next chapter we will treat the use of the shepherd / flock motif in John 21:15–19 and its connection to the "Great Shepherd" discourse in John 10. As we will see, many of the same themes flow into John's use of the shepherd image suggesting a pattern of ideas about leadership that the early church adopted.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Matt 24:42; 25:13; Luke 12:37; 1 Thess 5:6.

## 5 The Shepherd / Flock Motif in John 21:15–19

### 5.1 Introduction

We now arrive at John 21:15–19, our final passage of study where shepherd leadership is prominent. In the previous two chapters we have argued for a coherent pattern of leadership that appears in the Miletus Speech and 1 Peter 5:1-11 based on the shepherd / flock motif. In The narrative in John 21:15–19 describes Jesus’ “commissioning” of the apostle Peter as a shepherd over his [Jesus’] sheep. This text is qualitatively different from our first two passages of study in the following ways: 1) the shepherding charge is given within a gospel and in a concluding section; 2) the speaker is Jesus and not an apostle; 3) the apostle Peter, and not the elders, is the recipient of the shepherding charge; and 4) the shepherding responsibilities demanded of Peter can be summarized with one command, “shepherd my sheep,” rather than a variety of commands as in our other two texts. Despite these literary differences, this passage still demonstrates a coherent pattern of biblical reflection on early church leadership based on the shepherd / flock motif that is similar to what we see in our other two passages of study.

In order to move our thesis forward, our first task will be to explore the literary and lexical connections between the use of the shepherd / flock motif in John and our passage of study. Thus, we will analyze the “Good Shepherd” discourse in John 10:1–18. This passage represents the high point of shepherd Christology in the NT and fully informs how John perceives the shepherd image in John 21. The question we wish to answer with this preliminary study is, what themes are present in these narratives and how do these inform Jesus’ commissioning of Peter as the shepherd over Jesus’ flock? Our second task will involve an analysis of John 21 and its function as the concluding portion of John’s Gospel. If it was added after the completion of the Gospel (as we will argue), what does this tell us about the purpose of our passage and about the theology that John wishes to communicate through it, particularly with respect to Peter whom Jesus’ commissions? Finally, we will complete this chapter with an exegetical study of our passage and a summary of the use of the shepherd / flock motif in John 21:15–19. We begin this chapter and analysis of the “Good Shepherd” discourse.

## 5.2 Literary Analysis of the “Good Shepherd” Discourse (John 10)

Our first task is to analyze the “Good Shepherd” discourse (John 10:1–18). Many of the themes of this discourse flow naturally into our John 21 passage most concretely in what it means to be a true shepherd. The “Good Shepherd” discourse uses an extended shepherd / flock metaphor to highlight various aspects of Jesus’ ministry.<sup>1</sup> It is arguably one of the NT’s most extensive and well-developed applications of the shepherd image to the mission of Christ himself. Indeed, given our historical and theological study of the shepherd / flock motif, we could even say that this portion of John’s Gospel represents the climax of the biblical witness with respect to this image. If all roads led to Rome in the ancient world, then all biblical roads regarding the shepherd image surely led to Jesus. Andrea Köstenberger states this more eloquently: “In the end, all ‘good shepherd’ motifs, both human and divine, converge in Jesus. Still faint in Joshua’s day, more explicit in David’s time, yet clearer at the time of the Babylonian exile, the motif of a messianic shepherd-king, who gathers God’s ‘scattered flock’ and delivers his people, finds its fulfillment and most pronounced revelation in Jesus the Messiah.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the central role of this image in defining an important aspect of Christology, the appearance of the “Good Shepherd” discourse in John’s Gospel seems rather abrupt. Up to this point, the image of the shepherd has been largely absent from John’s presentation of Jesus. Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand and the subsequent reference to the wilderness wanderings in John 6 is an indirect reference to the shepherd motif via the Exodus. Thus, Jesus fed his sheep, just as God fed his sheep in the desert and just as Peter will be required

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<sup>1</sup> Barrett states that the “Good Shepherd” discourse is neither parable or allegory but a “symbolic discourse” since symbol and straightforward discourse stand side by side. Villiers calls the discourse a “veiled or symbolic utterance” pertaining to Jesus the messianic shepherd. Hendriksen uses the term “allegory” to describe the discourse and lays out several principles for its interpretation as such. Carson describes the discourse as a series of “sustained metaphors.” Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 367; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 381; J. L. De Villiers, “The Shepherd and His Flock,” *Neotestamentica* 2 (1968): 94; William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, New Testament Commentary (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), 99–101.

<sup>2</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Jesus the Good Shepherd Who Will Also Bring Other Sheep (John 10:16): The Old Testament Background of a Familiar Metaphor,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12 (2002): 91.



to feed Jesus' sheep later in our passage (21:15, 17). Deely's study argued that John 8–11 closely followed a wider plot sequence found in Ezek 33–37. This would yield the source behind John 10 (Ezekiel 34 in the plot sequence) and also provide a reason for the placement of the discourse at this point in the Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

The discourse itself advances many of the themes in John's Gospel: 1) Jesus' divinely authorized and sacrificial mission as a reflection of the Father's work (John 10:3, 7, 11);<sup>4</sup> 2) the conflict between Jesus and Israel's current leaders based around questions of his legitimacy (John 10:1, 5, 8, 10);<sup>5</sup> 3) the relationship between Jesus and those who believe / do not believe (John 10:2–5, 9, 14);<sup>6</sup> and 4) the characteristic nature of salvation (John 10:9).<sup>7</sup> Thus, instead of taking us far afield from John's overall purpose, the shepherd image in the discourse is being used to advance it. Given Jesus' conflicts with the religious leaders, the use of the shepherd image at this point in the Gospel seems quite appropriate particularly if the polemic of Ezekiel 34 stands as the background to the discourse. As we will see, this is exactly what is happening as Jesus compares the quality and characteristics of his care for God's people to that of Israel's leaders.

Chapters 9 and 10 should be read together. Barrett goes as far as to say that John 10 is a commentary on John 9.<sup>8</sup> John makes a reference to the blind man after the discourse (10:21)<sup>9</sup> and both chapters report a similar "division" (cf. *σχίσμα* in 10:19 with 9:17) based on Jesus' ability to perform a miracle. In addition, the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees that

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Katherine Deely, "Ezekiel's Shepherd and John's Jesus: A Case Study in the Appropriation of Biblical Texts," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, ed. Craig Evans and James Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> John 3:34–36; 5:30, 36–38, 43, 44; 6:38–40; 7:16–18; 8:47; 9:31.

<sup>5</sup> The conflicts in John's Gospel incorporate: the cleansing of the temple (2:13–25); Sabbath disputes (5:10–15; 7:23; 9:14); Jewish national identity (8:37–47, 53; 9:28)); and conflict in the synagogue (9:13–34)) among others. In addition, Jewish leadership has split on Jesus' divine legitimacy (3:1–21; 7:45–52), which is something that occurs after the "Good Shepherd" discourse (10:19–21).

<sup>6</sup> John 2:11, 23; 4:39, 41, 50; 5:46; 6:64; 7:31, 48; 8:34–47; 9:39–41.

<sup>7</sup> John 1:12, 13; 3:5, 16–18; 4:13–14; 5:24; 6:27.

<sup>8</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 367.

<sup>9</sup> Given that John 10:19–21 is related to the narrative of the blind man in Chapter 9 and 10:22–38 references the shepherd image, many scholars suggest the following reorganization of Chapters 9 and 10 to make for a smoother arrangement: Chapter 9; 10:19–21; 10:22–38; 10:1–18. Carson warns about such dislocations. Apart from the difficulty of how this could be accomplished in the manuscripts, the break between Chapters 9 and 10 is not as radical as might appear. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 379.

concludes Chapter 9 becomes the metaphor of thieves, robbers and hirelings, who are illegitimate and cruel leaders (John 10:1, 10, 12). This blindness, which is characterized as a refusal to believe the works that Jesus has done in his Father's name is the reason that the Pharisees are excluded from Jesus' flock (John 10:25–26; cf. 12:40). In contrast to these leaders, the shepherd image concretely conveys the love that God has for his people through the sacrifice of the good shepherd. Finally, in a possible nod to the shepherd image, Jesus found the man whom the religious leaders had cast out and brought him into God's fold. He becomes one of Jesus' sheep who believes and now hears the shepherd's voice (John 9:38; 10:3).

### 5.2.1 Structure of the “Good Shepherd” Discourse

In this section we will briefly sketch out an outline of the “Good Shepherd” discourse in order to better organize our analysis. John concludes the episode of the healing of the blind man in the previous chapter with the man professing belief in Jesus (John 9:38). A conversation with the Pharisees ensues that becomes the “Good Shepherd” discourse (10:1–18). The narrative concludes with a division among the Jews and a final statement that looks back on the episode with the blind man (10:21).<sup>10</sup> In the discourse, Jesus speaks to the nature of his ministry and his relationship with his people using three metaphors: 1) the door as the proper access to the sheepfold (10:1–6); 2) Jesus as the door to the sheepfold (10:7–10) and 3) Jesus as the sacrificial shepherd (10:11–18). There is a pause in the discourse at 10:6 and three “I am” statements at 10:6, 7 and 11.

With these elements in mind, we can divide the “Good Shepherd” discourse as follows: 1) Jesus as the true shepherd who enters by the door (John 10:1–6); 2) Jesus as the door to the sheepfold as a metaphor for salvation (10:7–10); and 3) Jesus as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep as a commentary on his passion (10:11–18). Jesus' judgment over the Pharisees introduces the speech (9:39–41) while the division over Jesus' mission

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<sup>10</sup> Michaels and Maloney join Jesus' dispute with the Pharisees, the discourse and the division after the discourse into one distinct unit (9:39–10:21). J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 570–93; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 299.

brings the discourse to a conclusion (10:19–21).<sup>11</sup> We should also mention that each section is marked by a strong contrast: 1) Jesus who enters the sheepfold by the door compared to thieves / robbers who climb in another way; 2) Jesus as the door who gives life contrasted with the thief who takes life; 3) Jesus who lays down his life for the sheep compared to the hireling who runs away at the first sign of danger.

### 5.2.2 Ezekiel 34 and the “Good Shepherd” Discourse

Before moving to an in-depth analysis of the “Good Shepherd” discourse, we shall treat the influence of Ezekiel 34 upon the narrative. As with the Miletus Speech and to some extent 1 Peter 5 (in dialogue with 2:25), Ezekiel 34 has played an important role in shaping the “Good Shepherd” discourse and by extension will impact what John’s Jesus says to Peter in John 21. This connection occurs at the lexical, thematic and theological levels. To review, Ezekiel 34 is the apex of theological development of the shepherd-king motif in the OT.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that God himself is acting as the shepherd who rescues his people at this point in Israel’s drama. Ezekiel’s words are an indictment against Israel’s shepherd leaders for the catalogue of injuries they have visited upon God’s people (Ezek 34:1–6). Given this failure in leadership, God’s people have been left vulnerable to predators (enemy nations) and they have been scattered in exile (Ezek 34:5). God makes three promises amidst this crisis. He will replace Israel’s failed shepherds. He will restore his people and reverse the injuries their leaders have inflicted upon them (Ezek 34:11–16). He will establish a future shepherd in David’s mold over his people who will usher in a covenant of peace (Ezek 34:23, 24) and who will one day reunite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah into one flock (Ezek 37:19–28).

As we will observe, this is almost the entirety of John’s program within the “Good Shepherd” discourse. Jesus is the Davidic shepherd whom God had promised who replaces

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<sup>11</sup> Moloney divides his section as follows: 9:39–41 (Jesus and the Pharisees); 10:1–6 (sheepfold parable); 10:7–13 (contrast between Jesus as door and Good Shepherd with those who are thieves, robbers and hirelings); 10:14–18 (Jesus lays down his life for the sheep); 10:19–21 (division amongst the Jews). However, the repetition of the “I am the good shepherd” refrain and the theme of Jesus laying down his life (vv. 11, 14, 15) make it difficult to concur with dividing vv. 11–18 as Moloney suggests. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 301.

<sup>12</sup> Fikes, “A Theological Analysis of the Shepherd-King Motif in Ezekiel 34,” 2, 3, 110.

Israel's shepherds who did not care for God's people. In John 10, there is also a clear contrast between Jesus, who is the legitimate shepherd and voluntarily dies for the sheep and the thieves, robbers and hirelings who are illegitimate, injure the flock and abandon the sheep when danger arrives. Indeed, this is one place where the good shepherd with his sacrificial death on the cross exceeds the promises made in Ezekiel's prophecy. The other place is in extending the blessings over God's people to incorporate eternal life. This is what it means for Jesus to save his sheep and to lead them to pasture (10:9).

There are also many lexical connections between John 10 and Ezekiel 34.<sup>13</sup> Jesus accuses the thief of coming to destroy (ἀπόλλυμι) the sheep (10:10). In Ezekiel, the concern is over the "lost" (ἀπόλλυμι) sheep whom the bad shepherds do not seek (Ezek 34:4) but whom God does seek (34:16). In the wider context, Jesus indicates that he will not lose (ἀπόλλυμι) any sheep that the Father has given him (John 6:39; 10:28; 18:9) or that no one will "snatch" them out of the Father's hand (10:29) as the wolf had done earlier when the sheep were abandoned (10:12). In this regard, Jesus speaks of the careless hireling who leaves the sheep vulnerable to be scattered (σκορπίζω (10:14)). This is similar to Ezekiel where the shepherds abandon their flock and they are "scattered" (διασπείρω) into exile (Ezek 34:5, 6, 12). John's Jesus indicates that he will lead out (ἐξάγω) those in his fold. In Ezekiel it is God who promises to "lead out" (ἐξάγω) his people from their exile (Ezek 34:13). Also, Jesus indicates that his sheep will be able to freely move in and out of the fold and find pasture (βομή). In Ezekiel's prophecy, it is God who promises to feed his sheep in good pasture (βομή) (here symbolized as the Promised Land after restoration) (Ezek 34:14; cf. v. 31). John's Jesus indicates that anyone who comes in through the proper door (that is, belief in Jesus), will be saved (σώζω). In Ezekiel, God promises to deliver (σώζω) his flock (Ezek 34:22). Finally, the good shepherd indicates that he will know (γινώσκω) his sheep, and they will know (γινώσκω) him. In Ezekiel, after God's people have been rescued and

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<sup>13</sup> Manning identifies three phrases, eleven (11) keywords, five (5) near synonyms and four (4) weak synonyms shared between John 10 and Ezekiel 34. As he states, no other shepherd text in OT comes close to this many parallels. Manning also provides a helpful table in his study that lists all 28 verbal parallels. Andrew Manning, "Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in John's Gospel," in *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet*, ed. Andrew Mein and Paul Joyce (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 27–28.

restored to their land, the prophet writes that “they will know (γινώσκω) that I am the LORD” (34:27).

The foregoing similarities in context and wording are significant. In the discourse, Jesus takes on the role that both God the shepherd and the promised Davidic shepherd played in Ezekiel’s prophecy. In the claims to having unity with the Father and doing his work, in performing deeds that only God could perform and in being sent by the Father, John blurs the lines between Jesus as God and Jesus as sent of God. This allows for the communication of Jesus’ messianic identity in divine / human terms.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, we should mention one aspect of Ezekiel 34 that is prominent in John 10, which is God’s relationship with his sheep. This is captured most vividly in the personal pronoun μου, which identifies God’s covenant community as “my flock”, “my sheep” or “my people” and is mentioned sixteen times in Ezekiel’s passage.<sup>15</sup> God repeats this refrain not only as part of his covenant language, but also, to make a claim of ownership over his people. Jesus does the same in the “Good Shepherd” discourse. He uses the phrase “my sheep” four times, to indicate his ownership and legitimacy over the flock. His sheep hear his voice, he calls them by name, he knows them, and they know him, they follow him, he leads them out and goes before them. This refrain is repeated four times in John 21:15-19, where Jesus highlights for Peter precisely what he is requesting, “feed my lambs.”

### 5.2.3 Analysis of the “Good Shepherd” Discourse

There are four major themes within the “Good Shepherd” discourse. First, there is the legitimacy of Jesus as shepherd over the sheep in contrast to Israel’s current rulers. Secondly, the discourse emphasizes the relationship of Jesus to the sheep and vice versa in contrast to the sheep’s relationship to other leaders. Third, the discourse highlights the sacrificial nature of the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Finally, there is mention of “other sheep” that belong to Jesus’ flock. We will cover each of these themes in order.

From the very beginning, the “Good Shepherd” discourse deals with the question of Jesus’ legitimacy as a ruler over God’s people in contrast to Israel’s current rulers. The

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<sup>14</sup> Manning, “Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in John’s Gospel,” 30.

<sup>15</sup> Ezek 34:6, 7, 10–12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 30, 31.

metaphor of the door to the sheepfold is simply a way of affirming Jesus' legitimacy. John's Jesus enters the sheepfold through the "door" (10:1, 3) as opposed to thieves (κλέπτης) and robbers (ληστής) who circumvent the proper entrance and climb in from some other way. One way of entering is authorized, the other way is not. J.L. de Villiers makes our point arguing that that "the door" signifies being "sent of God" and that the Jewish leaders had been unfaithful to their mission to care for God's people.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus' legitimacy has been an unfolding controversy in John's Gospel, which has spilled out in various ways including: the cleansing of the temple (2:13–25); Sabbath disputes (5:10–15; 7:23; 9:14); Jewish national identity around the figures of Abraham and Moses (8:37–47, 53; 9:28); and conflict in the synagogue with the blind man (9:13–34) among others. In addition, Jewish leadership has divided on Jesus' divine legitimacy (3:1–21; 7:45–52), which is something that continues after the discourse (John 10:19–21). Jesus has made two claims in defense. First, he states that he shares a unique relationship with the Father (5:16–23) and secondly, his mission is an extension of the Father's works.<sup>17</sup> Jesus utilizes both of these defenses later in the discourse (10:15–19, 30, 35–38).

The identity of the "thief" and the "robber" is disputed (10:1). Barrett believes they represent messianic pretenders or the "saviors" that arose in the Hellenistic world from time to time.<sup>18</sup> The following factors suggest they are Jewish religious leaders instead. First, we are dealing with a shepherding context which has historically pointed to a critique of Jewish leadership. Secondly, the conflict with Jewish leadership is a major theme in John and forms the immediate backdrop to the discourse. Third, the "figure of speech" (παροιμία) is directed to "them" (10:6) which is presumably the Pharisees as Jesus' audience, which began at 9:40. Finally, the thief and robber will appear again in 10:8 and 10 and, as we will argue, are likely a reference to Ezekiel 34 where Israel's shepherd leaders come under criticism. Thus, in this first section of the discourse, John presents Jesus as Israel's true and legitimate shepherd in

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<sup>16</sup> De Villiers, "The Shepherd and His Flock," 94.

<sup>17</sup> John 5:30, 36–38, 43, 44; 6:38–40; 7:16–18; 8:47; 9:31.

<sup>18</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 369.

contrast to the Pharisees who ignore Jesus' signs as God's son<sup>19</sup> and who treat God's people callously.

The second major theme that appears in the "Great Shepherd" discourse is the relationship that Jesus has with the sheep. This is communicated with the concepts of "calling" (φωνέω), "hearing" (ἀκούω) and "following" (ἀκολουθέω) in this first section (10:3, 4). The description of Jesus calling his sheep by name suggests an intimate knowledge that Jesus has of his followers. Peter will appeal to this knowledge later on when he responds to Jesus' question about love saying, "Lord, you know that I love you" (21:15–17). In the descriptions of Jesus calling his own from the "fold" (αὐλή), D.A. Carson suggests that Jesus is gathering followers from Judaism's sheepfold to constitute his own messianic flock.<sup>20</sup> William Hendriksen also believes that the fold is Israel, which he states is clearly implied by 10:16 where Jesus' mentions that he has sheep that are not from the same fold.<sup>21</sup> It is perhaps best to say that God is reconstituting his ancient covenant community, his eternal flock, around the death of the "Good Shepherd." Later, John's Jesus will speak of incorporating the Gentiles into one flock, and they too will also "hear" the shepherd's voice (10:16).

Given that the sheep belong to Jesus (10:3), they "hear" and respond to his voice. The concept of hearing has been a repeated refrain in John to signify one's legitimate status before God or Jesus. For example, those who "hear" Jesus' words and believe will have eternal life (5:24–37). Even the dead who have done good will one day "hear" Jesus' voice and experience the resurrection (5:29). Alternatively, those who do not "hear" Jesus' words, do not belong to God but in fact belong to their father the devil (8:43–44). This was precisely the case with the Pharisees in the discourse who did not "perceive" (γινώσκω) what Jesus was saying to them (10:6). They could not "hear" the shepherd's voice.

Since the sheep recognize Jesus' voice, they will "follow" (ἀκολουθέω) him wherever he might "lead" (ἐξάγω). In this case Jesus goes "before" (ἔμπροσθεν) his sheep, a likely

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<sup>19</sup> Jesus has performed 6 of the 7 "signs" that John stated were written to prove that Jesus was the son of God (20:30, 31) including: 1) changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana (2:1–11); 2) healing of nobleman's son (4:46–54); 3) healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1–15); 4) feeding of the 5,000 (6:5–14); 5) walking on water (16–24); and 6) healing of the blind man (9:1–7). The raising of Lazarus from the dead occurs in the next chapter (11:1–45).

<sup>20</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 383.

<sup>21</sup> Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 100.

reference to the Exodus as we will demonstrate later. Since a flock may be driven from the back or the front, the image of Jesus “going before” his sheep suggests the proper relationship between disciple and master. John returns to this understanding of relationship to Jesus later in this chapter (10:22–30). There, Jesus rebukes the Jews who do not believe in him and are therefore not his sheep. If they were, they would “hear” his voice and “follow” him. We will return to this concept of “following” in our passage of study, given that Jesus’ last words to Peter include the command, “follow me” (ἀκολούθει μοι) (21:19, 22). As we will argue, the command will carry both the concepts of discipleship and a Christ-like sacrifice required of leaders.

Using the same concepts of “knowing” and “following,” we see the contrast in relationship between the true sheep and the “strangers” (ἀλλότριος) – literally, “belonging to another” (10:5). This is another way to refer to the thieves and robbers mentioned earlier (10:1). The sheep will not follow that type of leader because they do not know his voice. A stranger is also ignorant of the sheep. He doesn’t know them. It is mutual non-recognition. Here again we are dealing with the question of who is legitimately authorized to lead God’s people; the one who comes in through the door of the sheepfold or the ones who climb over some other way. Ironically, the people up to this point had been following a stranger if we are talking about Israel’s religious leaders. But it is in the context of Jesus’ appearance as the true shepherd, that the sheep will no longer heed the voice of a stranger.

“Hearing” and “following” are merely two ways of defining one’s relationship to the Great Shepherd. They are also two ways of speaking about the effects of salvation as John’s Gospel defines it. This is made explicit when Jesus compares himself to the “door of the sheep” in the next section of the discourse (10:7–10). He is not only the legitimate shepherd over the sheepfold as in the earlier metaphor, but also, by his life, death and resurrection he becomes the legitimate door to the sheepfold (cf. 14:6). Being “born again” is another way to express the same concept as Jesus did during his discussion with Nicodemus (3:3, 5). Belief in Christ would be the way of entrance. The sheep who come in through that door will be saved (σῶζω). They will also experience “life” (ζωή) in abundance (10:10), a likely



reference to eternal life, which is a major theme in John's Gospel (though it would not exclude abundant material blessings in the present life).

Jesus describes this saved status in idyllic pastoral terms. His sheep will be able to “go in” (εισέρχομαι) and “go out” (ἐξέρχομαι) and find pasture” (10:9). Earlier, John's Jesus stated he would “lead out” (ἐξάγω) his sheep (10:3). It is likely that John is indebted to Numbers 27:17 where these three terms appear within the larger context of God appointing a successor to Moses. This is a critical shepherding passage as we noted in our OT chapter, which connects Moses, Joshua, David and now Jesus in their divinely appointed roles as shepherds over God's people. Barrett suggests that Christians gave this passage a messianic interpretation because of the Greek name for Joshua (Ἰησοῦς).<sup>22</sup> Andrew Manning suggests that the use of the Numbers passage accomplishes two goals: It legitimizes Jesus by comparing him to Joshua and it condemns the judgment of Israel's religious leaders since Jesus (like Joshua) was approved of God.<sup>23</sup>

I would only add two other observations to these plausible assessments. First, the wider context in the Numbers passage is Moses' concern that God's people would not be “as sheep without a shepherd” (Num 27:17). Here, in the “Great Shepherd” discourse, God provides his ultimate guarantee that this would never again be the case. Unlike the hireling who flees under duress, the good shepherd is prepared to die for his sheep (10:12). Secondly, there is likely a connection to the Exodus in 10:3 and 9, with the phrases leading out and in. It has been building and has now merged with the shepherd image. The allusion to the passage in Numbers 27:17 in the discourse is an obvious connection as is Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 and the subsequent reference to the manna in the desert (6:1–14, 26–35). Finally, Jesus' invokes Moses as a witness to himself (1:45; 5:45–46) and as a sign of his crucifixion (3:12). Ironically, all appearances of Moses occur before the “Good Shepherd” discourse while none appear afterwards.

In this section of the discourse, Jesus again references the “thieves and robbers” who came before him and to whom the sheep (once again) would not listen (John 10:8, 10). The

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<sup>22</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 369.

<sup>23</sup> Manning, “Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in John's Gospel,” 27.

πάντες in v. 8 must be qualified as referring not to every single prophet or leader that came before Jesus, but to those who had failed to lead in a way that God demanded.<sup>24</sup> Francis Moloney indicates that the thieves and robbers are Jewish religious leaders who have rejected Jesus and have rejected anyone inclined to hear Jesus' revelation.<sup>25</sup> This is demonstrated concretely in the rejection of the man born blind in the previous chapter. Again, the actions of these men contrast with Jesus' offer of salvation. They only came to steal (κλέπτῃς), kill (θύω) and destroy (ἀπόλλυμι) (10:10). Jesus came to give salvation and life in abundance. The term ἀπόλλυμι is likely a reference to Ezekiel 34 (vv. 4 and 16) where God accused Israel's false shepherds of not seeking after the "lost" (ἀπόλλυμι) sheep and promising that he himself would do so. It is likely no coincidence that eternal life in 10:28 includes the promise that not one of Jesus' sheep would ever perish (ἀπόλλυμι). This is a promise that Jesus repeats on several occasions in John's Gospel, "this is the will of him who sent me, that all that he has given me I lose (ἀπόλλυμι) nothing but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39; cf. 18:9).

In John 10:11, Jesus changes metaphors again using his most sublime "I am" statement, "I am the Good Shepherd<sup>26</sup> [who] lays down his life for the sheep."<sup>27</sup> The shepherd who dies<sup>28</sup> is a concept from Zechariah 13:9, ("Awake o sword against my shepherd..."). Zechariah's passage is a reworking of Ezekiel 34's promised Davidic shepherd as we have

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<sup>24</sup> Even the copyists had difficulties with this verse as some manuscripts removed the word "all" (πάντες) while others removed the word "before me" (πρὸ ἐμοῦ) (e.g. "before me"). The Editorial Committee of the Textual Commentary of the Greek NT was ambivalent on whether to keep or remove the text since the external evidence for the shorter text was impressive. In the end they decided to keep the words but to enclose them in brackets. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 195–96.

<sup>25</sup> Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 303.

<sup>26</sup> Carson notes here that "good" is not meant to suggest "goodness" but rather worth or nobility. Michaels translates "good" as what is "true", "real" or prototypical. In other words, what makes the shepherd "good" is that he lays down his life for the sheep. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 386; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 585.

<sup>27</sup> Hendriksen sites the "Good Shepherd" metaphor as that which controls the entire discourse. Nearly all of the references are to the shepherd who knows his sheep, calls them, leads them out and is known by them. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 103.

<sup>28</sup> Hylen argues that another interpretation of the phrase "he lays down his life" (vv. 11, 15, 17, 18) is that "he risks his life" without discounting that this phrase can also point to Jesus' death. Using the description of "risk" adds another context to Jesus' ministry in the gospels since he is portrayed as the shepherd who risks his life for his followers in the present. In addition, it calls on the disciples to do the same without implying that they must be martyred. Susan Hylen, "The Shepherd's Risk: Thinking Metaphorically with John's Gospel," *BibInt* 24 (2016): 382–99.

already demonstrated in our OT chapter. John is indebted to Zechariah 9–14 in his presentation of Jesus as he quotes or alludes to Zechariah at several key places in his Gospel: For example, he quotes Zechariah 14:8 in John 7:38 at the Feast of Tabernacles and the temple libation (“from his innermost being will flow streams of living water”); Zechariah 13:7 in John 16:32 during the “Last Supper” discourse (“Behold an hour is coming...for you to be scattered”); Zech 9:9 in Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:15) (“Behold your king riding on a donkey colt”); 4) Zechariah 12:10 in John 19:37 during Jesus’ crucifixion (“They shall look on him whom they have pierced”).<sup>29</sup> Here we can see three of the four messianic figures from Lamarche’s study of Zechariah 9–14, which he argued formed a composite image of the Shepherd-King in the Gospels.<sup>30</sup> These are the king (Zech 9:9), the martyr (Zech 12:10), and the smitten shepherd (Zech 13:7).

Within the “good shepherd” image lies the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus’ life on behalf of his sheep. It is for their redemption and not merely an act of heroism. However, other concepts are tied into this sacrifice as well. Jesus’ sacrifice is the reason for the Father’s love (10:17), not because of the crucifixion, but as Barrett states, because the Father’s love is eternally linked to the son’s sacrificial mission and willingness to carry out the Father’s will at the cost of the son’s own life.<sup>31</sup> Jesus’ death is voluntary. He lays down his life of his own initiative, which is a notion that must be carried forward in his followers, particularly those called upon to lead (cf. ἐχουσίως in 1 Pet 5:2). In the Last Supper discourse, Peter indicated he would “lay down his life” (13:37) for Jesus and Jesus stated, “Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends” (15:13) Furthermore, Jesus is authorized to lay down and take up his life by the command of the Father (John 10:17, 18) again echoing the divinely authorized nature of his mission and even now hinting at the resurrection. In another biblical sense, this is all in keeping with the Father’s plans and

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<sup>29</sup> Kubís’ dissertation traces the biblical and post-biblical antecedents of Zechariah 9:9, 12:10 and 14:8 and the use of these passages in the Gospel of John. Adam Kubís, *The Book of Zechariah in the Gospel of John* (Pendé: J. Gabalda et Cie, 2012).

<sup>30</sup>R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1971), 103–10; Paul Lamarche, *Zacharie IX-XIV: Structure Littéraire et Messianisme* (Paris: Gabalda, 1961).

<sup>31</sup> Carson echoes Barrett in his explanation of this verse. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 377; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 388.

purposes. Luke would say it is “according to Scripture” (Luke 24:27). In all ways, it is a summary of John 3:16, “for God so loved the world, that he [willingly] gave his only begotten son...” [emphasis added].

This type of sacrifice is once again contrasted to the thief who kills (John 10:10) or to the hireling who flees at the first sign of danger (John 10:12). Note that the hireling does not have ownership over the flock (as Jesus does). The hired hand leaves the flock vulnerable to attacks from predators, in this case, the wolf (λύκος). In the absence of a shepherd, the wolf snatches away the sheep (ἀρπάζω) and scatters them (σκορπίζω). Many of these descriptions, as we saw, can be connected to Ezekiel 34 and God’s dealings with Israel’s false shepherds.

Another important concept can be found in the term “knowing” (γινώσκω) (10:14). Jesus had earlier spoken about the sheep “knowing” his voice using another verb (οἶδα). Now he speaks about a personal knowing (γινώσκω) of his own sheep and their knowing (γινώσκω) him (10:27). This mutual relationship is even compared to the mutual knowledge between Jesus and the Father (10:15). This is all in keeping with the theme of Jesus’ unity with the Father (10:30; 17:21), authority as sent by the Father (4:34; 5:30; 7:29), work as reflecting what the Father does (5:36; 10:25; 14:11) and word as reflecting what the Father says (12:49; 14:24). Given this divinely authorized relationship, Jesus is able to extend that relationship to his followers so that they become his sheep who know him and his voice and follow him.

The final theme within the Good Shepherd discourse has to do with Jesus’ enigmatic statement, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will hear my voice and they will become one flock with one shepherd” (10:16). Who are these “sheep” from another fold? The most likely scenario is that they represent Gentiles in contrast to the fold of the Jewish nation that Jesus has referenced throughout the “Good Shepherd” discourse. This view is something like a consensus.<sup>32</sup> The idea is that both Jew and Gentile will come together as one flock under one shepherd (cf. John 17:23). Unlike

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<sup>32</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 388; Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 113–14; Manning, “Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in John’s Gospel,” 34–36; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 304–5; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 455–56.

Luke-Acts, where the conversion of Gentiles formed an essential component of Jesus' mission, in John, this universalism is present but more subdued.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, many indications in John's Gospel point to Jesus as a Jewish messiah<sup>34</sup> with only a few narratives that speak of outreach or success among non-Jews (4:39, 54).

Perhaps the context of 10:16 is the Jewish conception of ethnic and national unity. As Manning states, "one of the functions of the shepherd discourse is to redefine the people of God."<sup>35</sup> The door to the sheepfold is now belief in Jesus as the Son of God (10:7; 20:30, 31). The background for John 10:16 is Ezek 37:21–28 where God promises to reunite Judah and Israel under one shepherd, David, and under a covenant of peace. These elements are an expansion of Ezek 34:23 where the Davidic shepherd was briefly introduced. Though the context is Jewish reunification, Köstenberger suggests that Jesus extends the promise to the unity of Jews and Gentiles based on typological heightening where there is escalation from antitype to type.<sup>36</sup> Given the Jewish-Gentiles tensions at the time of John's writing, this verse would be of interest to Christian communities. It would remind them of the Lord's vision of one unified Jewish-Gentile flock.<sup>37</sup>

#### 5.2.4 Conclusion on the "Good" Shepherd Discourse

The "Good Shepherd" discourse can be considered the climax of the use of the shepherd image in scripture. John's Jesus applies to himself a series of symbols from the shepherding world in order to affirm the legitimacy of his ministry. The symbol of the door as an entryway signals that Jesus has legitimate access to the sheepfold (God's people) and that his mission has been divinely authorized by the Father. John's use of Numbers 27:17, where

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<sup>33</sup> John 1:12–13; 3:16; 6:35; 11:52; 12:32; 14:12; 17:20; 20:21–23.

<sup>34</sup> John 1:11 states that Jesus came to his own, but his own did not receive him. John 1:23 quotes from Isa 40:3, where the context speaks about the restoration of Israel in Jerusalem. John 1:29 references Jesus as the "lamb of God" which reflects the Levitical law of atoning for sin. Many of Jesus' disputes occur with the Jewish religious leaders and center around the proper role of the law in Jewish life. Finally, most of John's narratives (unlike in the other gospels) take place in Jerusalem (clearing of the temple (2:12–22); healing of the paralytic (5:1–15); Jesus teaching at the Feast of Booths (7:14–52); Jesus teaching extensively at the temple (8:12–59); the healing of the blind man (9:1–41); Feast of Dedication (10:22–38); entry into Jerusalem (12:12–18); Jesus' Farewell Discourse (13–17) and Jesus' passion (18–20).

<sup>35</sup> Manning, "Shepherd, Vine and Bones: The Use of Ezekiel in John's Gospel," 32.

<sup>36</sup> Köstenberger, "Jesus the Good Shepherd," 77–78.

<sup>37</sup> Köstenberger, "Jesus the Good Shepherd," 72.

God authorized Joshua to lead the congregation, also serves to legitimize Jesus' ministry. The symbol of Jesus as the door to the sheepfold indicates that there is only one way of salvation and that is through belief in Jesus. Finally, Jesus as a shepherd who dies for his sheep is the symbol indicating the method by which Jesus would provide salvation. John understood this clearly based on his use of Zechariah 9-14 which spoke of a Davidic shepherd whom God would strike down.

The discourse also serves as a polemic against Israel's current leadership. It contrasts sacrificial and life-giving leadership by Jesus with harmful and self-serving leadership provided by the religious leaders. This dynamic is also affirmed by John's extensive use of Ezekiel 34 in which God / God's agent rescue the flock from Israel's failed leadership. In the next section, we will begin to analyze how the "Good Shepherd" discourse feeds into John's use of the shepherd / flock motif and leadership in John 21. We begin with an analysis of John 21 as the concluding portion of John's Gospel.

#### 5.2.5 Function of John 21 as the Conclusion of John's Gospel

Before analyzing our third and final passage where shepherd leadership is prominent, John 21:15-19, we will first explore the place and the purpose of John 21 as the conclusion of John's Gospel. Why was this chapter written and what does that reveal about our passage where Jesus commissions Peter using the shepherd image? The answers to these questions will be useful in our exegetical analysis of John 21:15-19.

We begin by noting that there is widespread consensus that John 21 is an addition to John's Gospel, though what kind of addition is still under debate.<sup>38</sup> Morris does not see a way to reach a final conclusion on whether John 21 is an integral part or an addition to the Gospel<sup>39</sup> while John Breck, J. Michael Ramsay and Craig Keener argue that John 21 is an

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<sup>38</sup> Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 473–75; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 545–46; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 655–56.

<sup>39</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 758.

original conclusion to the work written by the author of the Gospel.<sup>40</sup> To this we can add the question as to whether John or another redactor was responsible for the addition.

John appeared to bring his Gospel to a close when he stated the reason for including certain narratives (20:30–31). Thus, after this summary conclusion, the transition to Chapter 21 as well as the narratives that follow feel a bit disjointed. Apart from the strained attempt to close out the Gospel once again (21:25), the scene has shifted to Galilee from Jerusalem and the disciples are fishing again<sup>41</sup> rather than actively pursuing ministry as one would expect (cf. Acts 1-7). In addition, Jesus performs a miracle that seems more fitting for the body of the Gospel than for the conclusion (cf. Luke 5:1–11). To this we can add that another narrator has joined the scene (21:24) and the concerns have shifted from Christology to ecclesiology with final words to / about Peter and the beloved disciple.

Many scholars have demonstrated the literary and linguistic connections between John 21 and the rest of the Gospel to show how John 21 is a fitting conclusion to the Gospel or at least to demonstrate that John was indeed the author.<sup>42</sup> However, despite the literary incongruities that may exist, there is no manuscript evidence that John's Gospel ever circulated without Chapter 21.<sup>43</sup> Maloney's statement is incisive in this respect: "Whatever scholarship may decide about the origins of John 21 as some form of addition to the original Gospel, this collection of post-resurrection stories was important to Christians who first wrote and passed down the Gospel to later generations. For this reason alone, it should be regarded as an "epilogue," something that belongs to the Gospel as we now have it and not just an "addendum" or "postscript" added as an afterthought."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> John Breck, "John 21: Appendix, Epilogue or Conclusion?," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36 (1992): 27–49; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. Vol. 2.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1219–22; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 1024.

<sup>41</sup> Moloney asks how it could be possible that after receiving a commission to forgive sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples could return to their everyday activity of fishing. In the end, Moloney argues that the setting by the lake is only important for the appearance that follows but is clearly independent from what transpired in 20:1–31. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 549.

<sup>42</sup> Breck, "John 21."

<sup>43</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 667–68; Paul Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," *JBL* 102 (1983): 86; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 546; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 757.

<sup>44</sup> Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 546.

Indeed, because the focus in John 21 swings so concretely toward the apostle Peter<sup>45</sup> (and what appears to be his restitution) and to new information about the “beloved disciple” (his death and testimony to the gospel),<sup>46</sup> John 21 feels more like a literary response to an unfinished task. Its seeming purpose is to bring closure to the stories of two central characters of John’s Gospel rather than being a proper conclusion.<sup>47</sup> In the case of Peter, we have what amounts to the passing of the leadership mantle, from that of the movement’s founder to its most important apostle and to the wider group of disciples. We should keep in mind that the conversation which has shifted to Jesus and Peter in our passage still takes place before all of the disciples (and before the narrator’s audience). Thus, whatever the content of Jesus’ requests, it is most certain that one purpose is to reestablish Peter’s leadership and credibility within the primitive church. Morris states that the scene gives an “official” sanction to Peter’s restoration.<sup>48</sup> For the above reasons, we also argue that John 21 is an epilogue written by John after he had concluded his original Gospel.<sup>49</sup> This frees us from having to reconcile its strange literary character with the rest of the Gospel or to relitigate what seemed a fitting conclusion in Chapter 20. At the same time, and in keeping with what we believe is a meaningful intent, this indicates that John 21 and especially verses 15–19, are a purposeful and critical reflection on early church leadership based on the

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<sup>45</sup> Peter is named first in the narratives (vs. 2), initiates the fishing expedition (vs. 3), jumps into the water to meet the Lord on the shore (vs. 7), brings up the nets full of fish (vs. 11), receives a personal pastoral charge from the Lord (vv. 15–17) and inquiries about the beloved disciple (vv. 21–25). Michaels, *The Gospel of John*.

<sup>46</sup> Barrett argues that the main reason for John 21 is to correct a false view regarding the destiny of the “beloved disciple.” He was not going to survive until the Lord’s return but he would become the “guarantor of the church’s tradition” via his written gospel. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 583–84.

<sup>47</sup> This was also Minear’s conclusion as he argued that one of the original functions of John 21 was to “provide an edifying end to the story of these two men.” Their narrative arc had ended somewhat abruptly after their visit to the tomb (John 20:10). Ridderbos argued that John’s intention in Chapter 21 was to sharpen Peter and the beloved disciple’s profiles particularly in the roles they were to play in the church. Minear, “The Original Functions of John 21,” 91–93; Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 656.

<sup>48</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 767.

<sup>49</sup> Carson argued for an originally integral gospel that included Chapter 21. Even if the addition were later, it would signify that the original author was trying to improve his work. Morris titles this section of his commentary “Epilogue (21:1–25)” and finds it difficult to decide on the questions surrounding John 21. In the end, he inclines to viewing it as a later addition to the gospel but coming from the hand of the original author. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 668; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 757.



shepherd / flock motif. As we will argue, that reflection is based on John's earlier and more sustained statements of the shepherd image in the "Great Shepherd" discourse (John 10).

### **5.3 Exegetical Analysis of John 21:15–19**

In this section, we wish to critically analyze the use of the shepherd / flock motif by John's Jesus. Specifically, what are the elements of leadership that this image communicates? We will begin with a few remarks about the farewell nature of this narrative and its importance to the overall function of John 21:15-19. After this we will situate the passage within John 21 as a whole and finish with an exegetical study of the passage.

#### **5.3.1 John 21:15–19 as a Farewell Scene**

An overlooked detail in many commentaries or studies of John 21 is the fact that that the interaction between Jesus and Peter amounts to a farewell scene. As with the Miletus Speech, some characteristic elements remain, while others have been reframed. The most notable example is the lack of an approaching death seen of the speaker as in a typical farewell speech. However, these are some of the last words that Jesus speaks in the Gospel. As with other farewells, Jesus' main purpose is to secure for the needs of the church (his sheep) which he is leaving behind. This is a central concern of biblical and Jewish farewell narratives as we have already highlighted and as we highlighted in the Miletus Speech. The scene contains other characteristic elements of the farewell form including: summoning of an audience, the speaker as an example, parenetic exhortations to the audience (Peter in this case, and implicitly, the wider church), naming of a successor, the predictions and warnings about the future, and the promises by the hearer.<sup>50</sup>

As with the Miletus Speech, the farewell form raises the profile of Jesus' words and of the importance that John places in them. In addition, the form also tells us that John's audience and the purpose for utilizing the shepherd / flock motif goes beyond Peter and his restoration. It incorporates the leadership of the broader church. Jesus, as the founder of this movement, is passing on the leadership torch to the second generation. It is now the apostles

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<sup>50</sup> See earlier Chapter and section on the Miletus Speech as a Farewell Speech for a complete list of farewell characteristics.

and other church leaders, here represented by Peter as a leader of the primitive church who has been given the shepherding role. And in this critical scenario, Jesus’ final words on leadership to Peter are “shepherd my sheep.”

### 5.3.2 Literary Context of John 21:15–19

John 21:15–19 forms part of the last post-resurrection appearance by Jesus to his followers in the concluding chapters of John’s Gospel.<sup>51</sup> It is bounded by the narrative of the miraculous catch of fish and Jesus eating breakfast with his disciples (21:1–15) and Jesus’ statement about the fate of the “beloved disciple” who is also identified as the author of John’s Gospel (John 21:20–24). Though there were seven disciples identified in the narrative (21:2), they retreat into the background starting at verse 15 with Jesus’ personal encounter with Peter. The scene opens with a transition from the earlier context of catching fish and sharing a meal, “so when they had finished breakfast...” (21:15) to Jesus having a personal encounter with Peter on the shore “so Jesus said to Simon Peter...” (21:15–17).

### 5.3.3 Jesus’ Pastoral Charge to Peter

John 21:15–17 forms a thrice repeated pattern of inquiry, response and pastoral charge. Three times Jesus asks Peter, “do you love me?” Three times Peter responds in the affirmative, and three times Jesus responds with a pastoral charge:

<b>Jesus’ inquiry</b>	<b>Peter’s positive response</b>	<b>Jesus’ charge</b>
Jesus said to Simon Peter, do you love (ἀγαπάω) me more than these?	Yes Lord, you know that I love (φιλέω) you	Feed (βόσκω) my lambs (ἀρνίον)
He said to him again, a second time, Simon son of Jonah do you love (ἀγαπάω) me?	Yes Lord, you know that I love (φιλέω) you	Shepherd (ποιμαίνω) my sheep (πρόβατον)

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<sup>51</sup> There were four post-resurrection appearances at the end of John’s gospel: 1) Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalen on the day of his resurrection (20:11–18); 2) Jesus appeared to his disciples on the evening of his resurrection (20:19–23); Jesus appeared to his disciples a week after his resurrection and challenged Thomas about his unbelief (20:24–29); Jesus appeared to seven disciples and Peter (21:1–14, 15–19, 20–23). Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 477.

He said to him a third time, do you love (φιλέω) me?	Peter is grieved (λυπέω). You know everything Lord. You know that I love (φιλέω) you.	Feed (βόσκω) my sheep (πρόβατον)
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The thrice repeated question that Jesus makes to Peter suggests that Jesus is restoring Peter for his three-time denial of the Lord earlier in the Gospel (18:18–27).<sup>52</sup> Many commentators, for example, note the rare term ἀνθρακιά (“coal fire”) which only appears twice in John and nowhere else in the NT. The word is used once in the incident where Peter denies Jesus three times (18:18) and once in this extended scene where Jesus questions and charges Peter three times (21:9).<sup>53</sup> Paul Minear is even more confident and suggests the connections stretch back to Jesus’ Last Supper discourse via the concepts of “the beloved disciple,” “following” and martyrdom (cf. John 13:23, 25 with 21:20 and 13:36 with 21:19).<sup>54</sup> He states “It is highly probable that the same author intended from the outset to balance the triple denial, predicted in 13:38 and narrated in 18:15–27, with the triple pledge of love in 21:15–17.”<sup>55</sup>

Jesus’ initial question to Peter adds the phrase πλέον τούτων “more than these.” This could mean more than you love the other disciples, more than you love your fishing equipment which represents the life of a fisherman or more than the other disciples love me.<sup>56</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels discounts the first meaning based on Jesus’ earlier command that the disciples should mutually love one another (13:34–35; 15:12, 17). He also discounts the second meaning since a reference to a “love for fishing” does not fit the context of the

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<sup>52</sup> This is like a settled consensus. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 584; Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 475–76; Minear, “The Original Functions of John 21,” 92; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 555; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 767.

<sup>53</sup> Hendriksen notes additional connections between the two narratives including the use of the *Amen, amen* formula (13:38, 21:18) and the pattern of *following, cross and denial* which takes place in 13:36–38 and in reverse order, *affirmation, cross and following*, in 21:15–19. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 486–87.

<sup>54</sup> Minear, “The Original Functions of John 21,” 92.

<sup>55</sup> Minear, “The Original Functions of John 21,” 92.

<sup>56</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 584; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 1042–43; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 559; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 768.

story.<sup>57</sup> Michaels believes that Jesus' question is a test that builds on the tradition of Matthew 26:33 (Peter's boasting of his loyalty to Jesus over against the other disciples) combined with Peter's rash promise that he would give his life for Jesus at the Last Supper discourse (13:37). Will Peter make the same boasting mistake again? When Peter answers yes, but without the comparative language "more than these," Michaels suggests that Peter has passed the test.<sup>58</sup>

This is plausible, but I would like to argue for another option. In the first place, just because Peter does not include the phrase "more than these" in his response, does not mean that he isn't answering the same question. "Yes I do" could be a precise affirmation to Jesus' initial question, "Do you love me more than these?" Also, while I affirm that John is making concrete connections to the Last Supper discourse and to Peter's denials, I am less certain that the phrase "more than these" could be pressed into testing whether Peter has learned his lesson about boasting or being rash. The opposite would seem to be true given that Peter is (once again) the first to throw himself in the water when he recognizes Jesus on the shore in this episode (21:7; cf. Matt 14:28). It would also make little sense that a figure like Jesus would seek to compare one disciple's love for him over against another. We do know however, that Jesus does insist on a love that surpasses loyalty above familial or material bonds (Luke 10:27; 14:26; 16:13 and parallels). This would especially be the case if another person sought to injure the Lord's flock. Would Peter's love for the Lord surpass any feelings he might have for the injuring party? If so, do you love me more than you love these other disciples would be an appropriate way to ensure that Peter's loyalty to Christ was greater than for any person, particularly his peers.

#### 5.3.4 The Near Synonyms in Jesus' Charge to Peter

A few well-known questions arise from the structuring of this three-part exchange. Is there a deeper significance to the different words for "love" in Jesus' questions and Peter's replies

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<sup>57</sup> Keener suggests that the phrase "more than these" refers to Peter's craft as a fisherman. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary - Volume One* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1236.

<sup>58</sup> Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 1043.

(ἀγαπάω and φιλέω)?<sup>59</sup> Are the terms that Jesus uses in his pastoral charge synonyms or do they have distinct meanings? This includes the verbs: “to feed” (βόσκω) and “to shepherd” (ποιμαίνω), which are actions that are to be directed to Jesus’ “lambs” (ἀρνίον) and “sheep” (προβάτον). In the first instance, though John utilizes ἀγαπάω nearly three times as much as φιλέω in his Gospel, the terms are used somewhat interchangeably to describe the love between God, Jesus and the disciples and even to describe the “disciple whom Jesus loved.”<sup>60</sup> Many other commentators have demonstrated how John used these terms interchangeably and thus we should seek no deeper meanings in these terminological differences.<sup>61</sup> Hendriksen is representative of scholars who argue for two types of love. One type demands a whole-hearted devotion by and toward Jesus (ἀγαπάω) while the other is of a lesser affection (φιλέω), which is all that Peter can muster given his abject failure in his earlier denials. Hendriksen also suggests that the reason Peter is grieved the third time is that Jesus questions even this lesser affection by using φιλέω as Peter had.<sup>62</sup> While this is plausible, there is simply little by way of structure or grammar to accept Hendriksen’s conclusion. The narrative states that Peter was grieved because of the repetition of the question (21:17) and the interchangeability of the two terms already mediates against making a distinction.

David Shepherd uses a narrative-critical approach to arrive at a more nuanced conclusion. He connects Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s triple denial (13:31–38) to Peter’s actual denials (18:15–27) and then to Jesus’ triple question exchange with Peter in our passage (21:15–

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<sup>59</sup> Jesus uses the verb ἀγαπάω twice and φιλέω once to inquire about Peter’s love but Peter responds about his love using φιλέω all three times.

<sup>60</sup> John uses the term ἀγαπάω 27 times in his gospel 15 of which occur in the upper room discourse. He utilizes the term φιλέω 10 times. The term ἀγαπάω is used to describe: 1) people’s love for others’ approval and darkness (3:19; 12:43); 2) God’s love for the world, his son and the disciples (3:16; 14:21; 17:23); 3) Jesus’ love for his disciples, Martha and the Father (11:5, 13:1; 14:31; 15:9); 4) the disciples’ love for one another (13:34, 15:12, 17) and Jesus in obedience (14:15, 21, 23) and 5) the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20). The term φιλέω is used to describe: 1) the Father’s love for the son and the disciples (5:20); 2) Jesus’ love for Lazarus (11:3, 36); 3) the world’s love for its own (15:19); 4) one’s love for one’s life (12:25); 5) Simon’s love for Jesus (21:15, 16, 17) and 6) the disciple whom Jesus loved (20:2).

<sup>61</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 584; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 676–77; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1235–36; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 1043; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 768–70.

<sup>62</sup> Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 486–88.

23).<sup>63</sup> The thread that runs through these narratives is Jesus' insistence on the self-sacrificial love (ἀγάπη) that would lay down one's life for others as he instructed, and Peter supposedly understood in the Last Supper discourse (13:37). Thus, Shepherd argues that the two verbs for love (ἀγαπάω and φιλέω) are not incidental. Instead, they represent a final effort by John's Jesus to have Peter understand the ἀγάπη type love to which Jesus was pointing on the night he was betrayed (13:34–38) but which Peter failed to demonstrate in his denials (18:15–27). Peter's use of φιλέω in our passage shows that he has still not grasped Jesus' original meaning and leaves open the question of whether Peter will fully embrace the type of discipleship that Jesus seeks.<sup>64</sup>

We agree with Shepherd that John refers back to the Last Supper discourse and to Peter's denials. There is a direct connection when he highlights the "beloved disciple" who leaned on Jesus' bosom during their last meal (21:20; cf. 13:25). However, there is very little to suggest (apart from the different words for love) that Peter is thinking about different categories of love. Three times he answers affirmatively regarding his love for Jesus and the last time he is grieved by the mere repetition of the question not the choice of word as we have already noted. The notion that Peter is not aware that Jesus is asking for a different type of love (hence he could answer yes in ignorance) is also difficult to prove. What is perhaps more relevant about Shepherd's analysis is his identification of the self-sacrificial love that Jesus wanted to promote among his disciples in the Last Supper discourse and to which he was now calling Peter, using the interchangeable terms for love. As Timothy Wiarda notes, "the shepherding role is portrayed, not so much as a position that has been achieved, but as a command that is to be obeyed."<sup>65</sup> That John's Jesus added the shepherd image to this request (as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep) only further cements this understanding and applies it to leaders in particular.

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<sup>63</sup> This includes the following lexical and thematic parallels: 1) the idea of where Peter would "go" or would not "go" (13:33, 36 vs. 21:18); 2) the concept of "following" (13:36 vs. 21:19, 22); 3) Peter's ultimate death (13:37, 38 vs. 21:19, 22); and 4) God's "glory" (13:31–32 vs. 21:19). David Shepherd, "Do You Love Me?: A Narrative-Critical Reappraisal of Ἀγαπάω and Φιλέω in John 21:15-17.," *JBL* 4 (2010): 780–81.

<sup>64</sup> Shepherd, "Do You Love Me?," 792.

<sup>65</sup> Timothy Wiarda, "John 21:1-23: Narrative Unity and Its Implications," *JSNT* 46 (1992): 64.

The near synonyms in the pastoral charge that Jesus gives to Peter (“feed” and “shepherd” and “lambs” and “sheep”) are different than in the case of “love.” First, there are more variations. Secondly, they have different nuances based on their usage in John and their historical antecedents. And thirdly, they must be understood in light of what John has written in the Good Shepherd discourse. Hendriksen argues for one flock but seen from three different perspectives: “lambs”, “sheep” and “little sheep” (given his acceptance of this variant at verse 17).<sup>66</sup> Thus he suggests that all believers can be seen as “lambs” who are weak and immature and must be “fed” (βόσκω) God’s word for strength. Sheep are prone to wander and must be shepherded, and believers are “little sheep” in need of Christ’s tender care (as they are of Peter’s care as well).<sup>67</sup>

This is perhaps too tidy a summary, though I believe the terms should be distinguished since they do not carry the same meaning. The verb “to feed” (βόσκω) is a *hapax legomena* in John’s Gospel but is an important term in Ezekiel 34, which we analyzed earlier and to which John 21 is likely indebted. This term appears seven times in Ezekiel 34<sup>68</sup> and is used to speak of false shepherds who fed themselves instead of God’s flock. In addition, it speaks of false shepherds whom God will remove and of God who will become a shepherd to his people and feed them. When we discussed the influence of Ezekiel 34 in John 10, we noted how God promised to send a shepherd who would feed his people and the way in which Jesus’ fulfilled that divine mandate. We should note that in the beginning of this narrative, we see that Jesus quite literally feeds his followers (21:12, 13). Furthermore, this identity and responsibility for feeding passes to Peter and to the leaders of the Christian church.

The verb “to shepherd” (ποιμαίνω) in our passage (21:16) connotes everything that Jesus communicated via the Good Shepherd discourse starting with a leadership ethic built upon self-sacrifice (10:11, 15). This is now Peter’s charge. But beyond that, a true shepherd has an intimate knowledge of the sheep in his care (10:3, 14, 27), which is even more important since the sheep belong to the Lord. A true shepherd will not flee before danger to the flock

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<sup>66</sup> The variant πρόβατα (“little sheep”) only appears in 21:16 and 17 within manuscripts B, C and 565 in both cases. This suggests a desire to smooth out the text to match the reference to “little lambs” in 21:15.

<sup>67</sup> Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 488–89.

<sup>68</sup> See Ezek 34:2, 3, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16.

(10:12). Shepherding in the mold of the NT is infused with its OT antecedents such as its concerns for guiding, feeding and protecting the flock, strengthening the weak and seeking the lost. A final detail is the imperative form of the verb. There are only 11 occurrences of the verb “to shepherd” (ποιμαίνω) in all of the NT.<sup>69</sup> Five of these refer to Jesus, three do not apply to leadership and the other three are found in our three passages of study. Moreover, in all three passages of study, the verb is used as part of a charge from a prominent figure to those who represent the leadership of the primitive church. This suggests the NT writers were careful in using the shepherd image but purposeful in communicating a pattern of reflection whenever they utilized it.

The reference to “sheep” ( πρόβατον) in 21:16 and 17 automatically places us within the “Good Shepherd” discourse where Jesus referenced πρόβατον fourteen times.<sup>70</sup> There are only four other occurrences of the term in all of the Gospel of John and two occur in our passage. Here as in the Good Shepherd discourse, the focus is on those who belong to the Lord, whom he calls, and who follow the shepherd because they recognize his voice (i.e. they have been saved). We might argue that Peter’s love for Christ is also a focal point of the passage, but it only serves the main function, which is the care of those who have “believed.” Thus, each time Peter responds in the affirmative, “you know that I love you Lord”, Jesus immediately responds with his instructions for the proper shepherding of his people. The repetitive request is not only a literary antidote to Peter’s earlier denials, but also, it emphasizes the importance of the charge that Jesus is giving to Peter, that is, the oversight and shepherding of his [Jesus’] “sheep.” We should also mention that “the sheep” in this case incorporates Jew and Gentile into one flock under the shepherd Jesus (10:16). This means that Peter, the apostles and church leaders are now tasked with looking after Christ’s universal flock.

Finally, the term ἀρνίον is the diminutive form of “lamb” signifying “little lambs.” It is a *hapax legomenon* in John and aside from Revelation, it does not appear anywhere in the NT. In Revelation, ἀρνίον is used 26 times and is translated as “the Lamb.” It is used to signify

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<sup>69</sup> Matt. 2:6; Luke 17:7; John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 9:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Jude 12; Rev. 2:27; 7:17; 12:5; 19:15.

<sup>70</sup> John 10:1–4; 7, 8, 11–13, 15, 16, 26, 27.



Jesus in his exalted state but in the symbolic way of the lamb who was slain. Thus, the Lamb is present in the throne room of God and receives the same honor as God. The Lamb leads the armies of God against God's enemies. The martyrs have washed their robes in the "blood of the Lamb." The church is the bride of the Lamb and its members have their names written in the "book of the Lamb."

### 5.3.5 Other Literary Connects Between John 10 and 21

There are other indications that John 10 and 21 should be read together. This is based on the following terms and concepts: "knowing" (οἶδα and γινώσκω), "following" (ἀκολουθέω) and "my sheep" (τὰ πρόβατά μου). Within the "Good Shepherd" discourse, we saw how the sheep "knew" (οἶδα) the shepherd's voice and would therefore "follow" (ἀκολουθέω) him. In contrast, they would not follow a stranger because they did not "know" his voice. Later, Jesus would talk about the reciprocal "knowing" between himself and his sheep saying, "I know (γινώσκω) my sheep, and my sheep know me" (10:14). The concept demonstrates the intimate knowledge that Jesus has over his sheep. Within Peter's response to Jesus he appeals to the Lord's knowledge, "you know that I love you Lord" using both οἶδα and γινώσκω (21:17). By appealing to the Lord's "knowing," Peter is affirming that he belongs to the Lord as one of his sheep.

A further indication of this belonging is communicated with the phrase "follow (ἀκολουθέω) me" (21:19, 22). In the "Good Shepherd" discourse as we discussed, this is another way to speak about discipleship (cf. 1:43 where Jesus tells Philip, "follow me" using the same grammatical construction). Jesus' sheep follow him because they have come in through Jesus as the gate and have been saved. In our passage of study however, there is a deeper meaning communicated by Jesus' command. Peter is called to "follow Jesus" in the way of sacrifice. As the Good Shepherd laid down his life for his sheep, so too the under shepherd should do the same for Christ's sheep. Indeed, Jesus indicates to Peter by what

death he would glorify God (cf. 12:33) and there is some indication that it was via crucifixion (21:18).<sup>71</sup>

That this is also the significance of “follow me” can be derived by the lexical and conceptual parallels of our passage with a portion of Jesus’ Last Supper discourse. In that narrative, Jesus had instructed his followers to “love” (ἀγαπάω) one another as he had loved them (13:33–35). Peter then inquired where Christ was going, and Jesus responded, “where I go, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow (ἀκολουθέω) later” (13:36). To this statement, Peter responded that he would “lay down his life” for Jesus (13:37) using a similar construction to Jesus’ statement that he would “lay down his life” for the sheep in the “Good Shepherd” discourse (10:11, 15, 17). Now in our passage of study, Jesus asks Peter about his “love” (ἀγαπάω). Next, he says to Peter “follow me” (ἀκολουθέω) precisely in a context where Peter is assuming the mantle of the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Whereas before Peter could not follow Jesus (and indeed he denied Christ three times), now he can follow him. And the proof of that love and the test of his following Christ as the sacrificial shepherd is his promise to shepherd the Lord’s sheep.

Finally, we should mention the important possessive (μου) that Jesus uses in each charge to indicate “my lambs” or “my sheep.” This is in keeping with the historical antecedents of the flock and the way this continues to be understood in our three passages of study. The sheep, lambs or flock, belong to Jesus, which is part of what the NT contributes to the image. Formerly, the flock belonged to God throughout the OT, no matter whether we studied the historical, wisdom or prophetic literature. Even in the Miletus Speech and in our 1 Peter 5 passage, they clearly identify God’s people as God’s flock. In John, the flock belongs to Jesus thus showing his identity with the Father and his oneness with the Father.

## 5.4 Summary and Conclusion

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<sup>71</sup> Barrett highlights the parallel between John 21:19 (ἐκτενεῖς τὰς χεῖράς σου) and Isa 65:2 (ἐξεπέτασα τὰς χεῖράς μου) and the fact that many Church Fathers saw in Isaiah’s passage a foreshadowing of the crucifixion. Barrett also argues that John 21:19 is an early indication of Peter’s martyrdom by crucifixion, which is an event which the text presupposes. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 585.

We are now in a position to summarize the most salient findings in this chapter. We began by noting that even though John 21:15–19 differs in many respects from our two previous passages of study, it still demonstrates the same pattern of biblical reflection on early church leadership based on the shepherd flock motif. Next, we analyzed the “Good Shepherd” discourse (John 10:1–18) as the literary backdrop to our passage. As the ultimate application of the shepherd image in the Bible, the discourse highlighted Jesus’ divinely authorized mission, which was ultimately as the shepherd who willingly died for his sheep. By his death, Jesus is able to call out sheep from both Jewish and Gentile folds to become one flock. These sheep know his voice and follow him, and he personally knows each by name. He leads them to pasture in contrast to the thieves, robbers and hirelings that represented the abusive religious leadership over God’s people. These themes were in keeping with the promises of Ezekiel 34 and 37 whereby God or God’s Davidic agent would shepherd God’s people due to the failures of Israel’s religious leaders.

After this analysis, we began our study of our passage by noting that John 21:15–19 forms part of a purposeful epilogue, which John appended to his gospel to communicate important details regarding the apostle Peter and the “beloved disciple.” As such, John’s concern with this final chapter is primarily ecclesiological though the overt use of the shepherd image provides a Christological substrata to the whole dialogue. We noted how our passage of study had many of the characteristic elements of a farewell scene. This automatically elevated the actual content of Jesus’ words, but more importantly, set the focus of Jesus’ words upon the audience to which Jesus’ final words were directed. We argued that this audience was the Apostle Peter standing in as a representative for the entire church leadership that came in after Jesus’ departure.

Our John 21 passage of study dealt with Jesus’ pastoral charge to Peter, which could be summarized with the phrase “shepherd my sheep.” That John’s Jesus activated the shepherd image in this final scene shows a purposeful intent to communicate a certain set of ideas related to early church leadership. The meaning for *how* to “shepherd” Christ’s sheep flowed directly from Jesus’ own example in the Good Shepherd discourse. The main thought could be succinctly stated as a sacrificial leadership in which the under shepherd was willing to lay down his life for Jesus’ followers. This involved “following” Jesus not only to signify

discipleship, but following Jesus in the way that sacrificial shepherd leadership would dictate. Additionally, in the context of the John's Gospel, the good shepherd is also the slaughtered lamb. In the next chapter, we will bring together the different concepts of leadership reflected within each passage. As we will see, what emerges an articulate and purposeful pattern of leadership based on the shepherd / flock motif.

## **6 Patterns of Reflection on Early Church Leadership Based on the Unique Attributes of the Shepherd / Flock Motif**

It is now time to bring together our analysis of all three passages of study. We have analyzed the use of the shepherd / flock motif in three diverse literary witnesses of the NT. This includes the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38) where the apostle Paul exhorted the elders of Ephesus to shepherd the church of God (the flock) over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. The discourse also formed an integral part of Luke’s two-part narrative beginning with the gospel about Jesus Christ and then continuing with a theological history of the expansion of the Christian church.

Our second passage, 1 Peter 5:1–11, formed the conclusion to a first century encyclical letter attributed to the apostle Peter who encouraged the churches of Asia Minor to bear up under societal persecutions by imitating Christ in his sufferings. In this concluding text, the apostle Peter exhorted the elders of the churches to shepherd the church of God (the flock) willingly, without undue pressure and always setting an example for believers under their care. Finally, our third passage of study formed the epilogue to the Gospel of John where Jesus exhorts the apostle Peter to shepherd his sheep whom Jesus, the Great Shepherd, had already redeemed through his sacrificial death on the cross.

As we have stated, the principal aim of this study has been to discern how these three passages communicated their understanding of early Christian leadership based on the attributes of the shepherd / flock motif. As we have tried to demonstrate, each of our passages represents the culminating statements in a coherent pattern of sustained biblical reflection on early Christian leadership, which was consciously transmitted to the nascent communities based on five unique attributes of the shepherd / flock motif: 1) a connection to important events in biblical salvation history where the shepherd / flock motif is prominent; 2) the nature of Jesus’ ministry as both suffering shepherd and sacrificial lamb, which becomes the ultimate example of Christian leadership; 3) the importance of the people of God, “the flock”, to the conception of early church leadership; 4) the predatory language inherent in the metaphor which speaks to the vulnerability of the group and the need to protect God’s people from spiritual attacks and 5) specific responsibilities for church leaders that are inherent to the shepherd / flock motif and which combine the shepherd, elder and

bishop terminology. We will now assess our three passages together based on this rubric of ideas.

## **6.1 Connection to Events in Salvation History Where the Shepherd / Flock Motif is Prominent**

### 6.1.1 Overview

As we noted in Chapter 2, the shepherd / flock motif appears prominently in the Exodus and the Davidic Dynasty narratives. The former narratives describe both God and Moses as careful shepherds who lead, protect and pasture God's flock through the harsh and dangerous wilderness. The journey's final destiny is the Promised Land (a veritable shepherd's dream), where God installs his people (described as a flock) and where they can live in abundance and security (emotive aspects of shepherding) after the elimination of Israel's enemies (described as predators). In the case of the Davidic Dynasty narratives, the shepherd image combines with royal ideology as God takes David from tending sheep in the field to shepherding God's people as king over Israel. In addition, God promises to establish David's throne forever in the Davidic covenant.

The prophets of the OT reframed these narratives for their particular historical contexts. Thus, while the people lived in idolatry, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel reminded a new generation of Israelites about their former liberation from Egypt. The prophets also denounced Israel's leaders as cruel shepherds and promised that God would personally shepherd his people. In addition, God promised to send a future Davidic shepherd who would reunite the northern and southern kingdoms and shepherd God's people with righteousness. Furthermore, Isaiah reworked Israel's liberation from Egypt as a New Exodus where God's people would be restored as a flock from the countries where they had been exiled. God would reestablish them in the Promised Land and Israel would once again live in peace and abundance.

Two prophets radically altered Israel's expectations of the Davidic shepherd while simultaneously adding unique perspectives to the image. First, Isaiah's renewal, already noted above, incorporated the "Suffering Servant" who took on the form of a vicarious

sacrificial lamb and atoned for the sins of God's people. Secondly, Zechariah's post-exilic narratives reworked the promise of Jeremiah and Ezekiel's Davidic shepherd to incorporate a dying shepherd as part of God's redemptive plan. The shepherd's death would also result in the scattering of the flock. We will now cover the patterns of leadership that result from the unique attributes of the shepherd / flock motif.

### 6.1.2 Connections to the Exodus Tradition

Both 1 Peter and the Gospel of John utilize the Exodus narrative in presenting important aspects of Jesus' ministry. These aspects influence the way our passages of study appropriate the shepherd image. 1 Peter is greatly indebted to the narratives of the Exodus as a way to frame its audience's experiences and identity. Thus, the members of 1 Peter's audience are God's "holy nation" (ἔθνος ἅγιον), "chosen race," "royal priesthood," and "a people for God's own possession" (2:9–10) echoing the language of Exod 19:6 after Israel was delivered from Egypt. Peter also applies covenantal language and the Mosaic Law to his audience saying, "You shall be holy because I am holy."<sup>1</sup> This critical passage also makes reference to Isa 43:20–21 which is set in the context of Israel's exile and restoration, but which recasts this event through the lens of the Exodus story (cf. Isa 43:2, 3, 10, 16–20).

John's Gospel evokes the Exodus narrative in Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 with a reference to the manna in the desert (6:1–14, 26–35). This is important for several reasons: First, Jesus is emphasizing the role of God / Moses as shepherds and the feeding of God's flock in the desert wilderness. Secondly, Jesus is assuming the role of God / Moses who feeds God's sheep. Finally, Jesus is not merely feeding God's people with physical bread (since those who ate the manna died anyway), rather he is feeding his people with the bread of life, that is himself, which leads to everlasting life. In other references to the Exodus, Jesus directly invokes Moses, first as a witness to himself (1:45; 5:45–46) and then as the antitype to his crucifixion (3:12). Finally, in the "Good Shepherd" discourse, the Exodus narrative with its shepherding overtones comes together with the concrete shepherd image in the person of Jesus. This is based on John's use of Numbers 27:17 where Moses requests a leader for

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet 1:16 cf. 1:15; 2:5, 9; Lev 11:44.

Israel so that they would not be “as sheep without a shepherd.” This critical shepherding passage connects Moses, Joshua, David and now Jesus in their divinely authorized roles as shepherds over God’s people. With the coming of the good shepherd, God would never again leave his people without a shepherd.

As we mentioned in our OT chapter, the Exodus narrative is subtler in its use of the shepherding motif and chooses to portray God or Moses acting as shepherds rather than given them that title directly. Even so, Moses was an actual shepherd and in his final request, he asks God for a quality shepherd leader to lead God’s people (Num 27:17). In addition, later writers made the implicit connections between the Exodus and shepherding language (Ps 77:20; 78:52). Finally, it is important to note that the use of the Exodus narrative in the greater context of our passages of study puts the emphasis on God’s flock. We will say more about this when we summarize our third element (“the flock”) later in this chapter. For now we simply note that in the call for leaders to shepherd God’s flock, it is God’s care for his people in the desert wilderness of the Exodus that forms part of the model for the early church’s reflection on leadership and the shepherd image.

### 6.1.3 Connections to the Davidic Dynasty Narratives

If the Exodus narrative formed one substructure of NT soteriology, the Davidic Dynasty narratives formed a core component of its Christology. As we previously summarized, one strand of these narratives focused on David as the shepherd king and on the perpetual kingdom God had promised in the Davidic covenant. Another strand was filtered through the prophetic literature where God had brought judgment upon Israel’s faithless shepherds for their carelessness over God’s flock. In their place, God had promised that he would one day send a messianic shepherd in David’s mold who would reign with justice. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel concretely wrote about this situation.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of Luke-Acts, Jesus is presented as the long-awaited Davidic shepherd (Luke 1 and 2) who was born in the city of David and who would reign over the House of Jacob forever (Luke 1:33). This fulfills the Davidic covenant where God promised to install

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<sup>2</sup> Jer 23:1–7; Ezek 34:1–31; 37:24–28.



a perpetual kingdom from David's line. Later, Luke presents Jesus as the one who seeks and saves his lost sheep (Luke 15:1–7; 19:1–10). This fulfills the promises in Ezekiel 34 of a messianic shepherd in David's mold who would shepherd God's people in place of its corrupt shepherds.

This is very similar to John's presentation of Jesus within the "Good Shepherd" discourse. Using an extended shepherding metaphor and numerous lexical and thematic connections to Ezekiel 34, John's Jesus represents God's Davidic shepherd who establishes his legitimate rule over God's people over against Israel's current failed leaders who are symbolized as thieves, robbers and hirelings in the discourse (10:1, 10, 12). John's Jesus extends the benefits of Ezekiel's promises and incorporates the giving of eternal life based on the sacrifice of his own life. In addition, John's Jesus adds two nuances to our understanding of Ezekiel 34. First, Jesus takes on the role of God as shepherd in the Ezekiel passage and secondly, the sheep belong to Jesus whereas they belonged to God in the Ezekiel passage.

As we also noted, Ezekiel 34 represents a traditional source for the Miletus Speech, quite apart from any connection that it has to Jesus' ministry. This happens not only at the lexical level, but also, on the thematic and contextual levels as well. An important lexical connection is the ἐπισκέπτομαι / ἐπίσκοπος language which traditionally appears in important shepherding contexts.<sup>3</sup> In the LXX, ἐπισκέπτομαι connotes a careful inspection and even a visitation by the Lord in the context where God's people need to be rescued, usually from their corrupt leaders. The long standing conflict that Paul had with the Jewish religious leaders (itself a continuation of Jesus' conflict with the same leaders in Luke's Gospel) already places Israel's current shepherds under this same context. Now Paul is passing on the mantle of shepherd leadership to the elders whom he deems ἐπίσκοπος. This is in keeping with the characteristic elements of a farewell scene, which include a concern for the audience that is being left behind as well as the appointment of successors.

#### 6.1.4 Connections to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah

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<sup>3</sup> Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2; Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:11; Zech 10:3.

Another connection to events in salvation history where the shepherd / flock motif is prominent is in the Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah. In Luke-Acts, Jesus is presented as the Isaiah's Suffering Servant. This occurs in paradigmatic fashion through Jesus' mission to both Israel and the Gentiles, which reflects the third servant song (Isa 49:6) and which appears as a thread from start to finish in Luke-Acts. In addition, Luke shows his familiarity with the fourth servant song and the servant's vicarious suffering as a sacrificial lamb during Jesus' arrest (Luke 22:37) and in the encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch, where Philip preaches salvation from Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:32, 33).

In 1 Peter, the focus on the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah is extensive. In 2:21–25, Peter utilizes Isaiah 53 as a commentary on the patient endurance of suffering during Jesus' passion. This long-suffering is then utilized as an example for slaves (and the wider congregation) to bear up under unjust suffering. Later in this passage, Peter joins Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 9–14 via a procedure known as *heqesh* (the bringing together of two passages via a common feature) through the shared theme of restoration via YHWH's appointed agent who must suffer. In addition, Isa 53:5, 6 (LXX) combines with Zech 10:2 (LXX) and its wider context using *gezerah shevah* and the terms ὡς πρόβατα and ἴαθημεν / ἴασις. In this way, Peter is able to join the motifs of sacrificial lamb (in the first part of the passage) and dying shepherd (in the final part) and apply them to Jesus. Peter finishes his reflection on the servant by stating that Jesus is the shepherd and overseer of souls (1 Pet 2:25)

#### 6.1.5 Connections to the Dying Shepherd in Zechariah 9–14

In his magisterial work *According to Scripture*, C. H. Dodd spoke of a central tradition or *kerygma* which he calls the "substructure" of NT theology.<sup>4</sup> This substructure incorporated certain passages of the OT that consistently appeared in diverse places of NT literature and which Dodd called *testimonia*. Using these pre-selected Scriptures, the NT writers were able to add significance to the different portions of Jesus' life, passion, death, resurrection and his subsequent appearances to his followers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 11, 12.

John's Gospel utilizes Zechariah 9–14 and the shepherd who dies in its presentation of Jesus (John 10). However, John is greatly indebted to Zechariah 9–14 in his presentation of Jesus throughout his Gospel as he quotes or alludes to Zechariah at several key places: 1) the Feast of Tabernacles in talking about living waters (John 7:38; cf. Zech 14:8); 2) during the “Last Supper” discourse as Jesus predicts his followers will scatter (John 16:32; cf. Zech 16:32) 3) in Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem as Israel’s king (John 12:15; cf. Zech 9:9) and 4) during Jesus’ crucifixion as the crowd looks upon the one they have pierced (John 19:37; Zech 12:10). Finally, we have already mentioned 1 Peter’s indebtedness to Zechariah 9–14 at 2:25, which combines Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 9–14 into a vision of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb and the suffering shepherd.

#### 6.1.6 Summary of Connection to Events in Salvation History Where the Shepherd / Flock Motif is Prominent

The use of the shepherd / flock motif in our three passages drew from a rich source of Israel’s most important events. In all of these traditions, it is noteworthy that the shepherd image is central to Israel’s history and to what the OT writers wished to communicate about the relationships between God, his leaders, and his people. This connection is one of the reasons why Luke, Peter and John appropriated the image and applied it to Christian leaders. In the case of Luke, for example, the shepherd image played a much smaller role than in the other two Synoptics.<sup>6</sup> And yet, in the Miletus Speech, a critical section in Luke-Acts where the ecclesial messianic / apostolic mission is coming to a close and with the added impact of a farewell form, Luke surprisingly utilizes the shepherd / flock motif to tell us something very important about leadership.

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this is why there are several full scale studies on the shepherd image in Matthew, but very few for Luke including: Baxter, “Matthew’s Shepherd Motif and Its Socio-Religious Implications”; Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*; Clay Alan Ham, “Zechariah in Matthew’s Gospel: Jesus as Coming King and Rejected Shepherd” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003); Terry J. Hedrick, “Jesus as Shepherd in the Gospel of Matthew” (Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 2007); S. McKnight, “New Shepherds for Israel: An Historical and Critical Study of Matthew 9:35-11:1” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Nottingham, 1986); Joel Willitts, “Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of ‘The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel’” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2007).

There is one additional point that bears highlighting. In this review of events in the OT where the shepherd image is prominent, we see that it appears during some of Israel's darkest and most difficult periods. This speaks not just to the universal nature of the shepherding practice, but to the fact that the shepherd image is an enduring leadership symbol that communicates so many aspects of Israel's experiences with God and its leaders. Many of these experiences are highly emotive and relational (sometimes painfully so) and it is why the shepherd image is so unique as a symbol of leadership. Finally, each of these strands is critical to the NT's presentation of Jesus or salvation and each has important implications for how our three passages of study reflect on the issue of leadership and the shepherd / flock motif.

## **6.2 Jesus as the Ultimate Example of Christian Leadership**

In our effort to discern a coherent pattern of reflection on the shepherd image perhaps stating that Jesus is the ultimate model or example of true Christian leadership seems fairly obvious. However, there are mediating circumstances which require a fresh appraisal of this facile identification. In the first place, as we stated in our introduction, it is simply not the case that the post-resurrection communities so easily applied Jesus' example as a shepherd of his flock (particularly one who dies) to the leaders of the church. Of the twenty-seven books that became the NT canon, the application of the shepherd image to Christians leaders where some kind of connection is made to Jesus' shepherding ministry appears only in our three passages. A fourth (Eph 4:11) mentions the term shepherd but it is not singled out among other leadership titles. Thus, the dearth of this kind of metaphorical application suggests a purposeful and conscious intent in the rare cases where Christian shepherd leaders do appear. Secondly, there appears to be an even greater reluctance on the part of the NT authors to use the example of Jesus as a sacrificial lamb as a model for Christian leaders. Nevertheless, in all three passages, we have argued that this is happening at some level. Finally, the way in which each author makes the connection to Jesus varies though in each case the shepherd image figures prominently and communicates similar ideas. Again, this suggests a conscious attempt to link Jesus with the apostles or to Christians leaders via this image.

In the case of the Miletus Speech, Luke purposefully links Jesus' mission to that of the apostle Paul via their journeys to Jerusalem, suffering in mission, opposition from Jewish leaders, tribunals before Jewish leaders and Roman magistrates and the fact that both Paul and Jesus give farewell speeches that incorporate the topic of leadership. In the case of Luke's Gospel, this latter connection seems all the more intentional, since Luke places the dispute about rank among the disciples and Jesus' commentary on leadership at the Last Supper instead of earlier as in the other Synoptic Gospels. In other words, Luke narrates a farewell scene where Jesus transfers the mantle of sacrificial leadership to his followers prior to his death. Finally, both Jesus and Paul take on the role of the servant of Isaiah, which incorporates a dual mission to Israel and the Gentiles (Isa 49:6) and which also reflects the role of the sacrificial lamb on behalf of the people they serve.

Jesus thus becomes the model for what sacrificial ministry represents, which Paul passes to the elders at the level of the narrative. Given that the Miletus Speech represents a farewell scene, it is the needs of the audience that is being left behind, which come to the fore. Another characteristic element of the farewell form has to do with the speaker postulating himself as an example for his audience. Thus, Paul's tireless ministry, humility, tears, care for the weak, dedication to the gospel in spite of persecution and the roles that connect him to Jesus, concretely demonstrate what it means to "watch out" for the flock of God. Paul also provides an example of a fearless and thorough ministry of proclamation as an antidote to the "grievous wolves" whose perverted teaching would become a threat to the flock upon his departure. Finally, Luke's presentation of Jesus as the Davidic shepherd who came to seek and to save the lost provides a direct example from Jesus to the elders in their roles as shepherds of God's flock. And in a paradoxical twist, Jesus as Isaiah's sacrificial lamb might also be reflected in Jesus' sending of his disciples as "lambs" among the wolves.

Within 1 Peter, Peter purposefully links Jesus' passion in his role as sacrificial lamb and suffering shepherd to the elders' oversight role as shepherd leaders. First, Peter's reflection on Jesus' passion in 2:21–25 (itself a commentary on the sacrificial lamb of Isaiah 53) becomes the model by which slaves (and the wider community) identify with Jesus in his sufferings. This identification with the "sufferings of Christ" is repeated at least three more times within 1 Peter (3:17–18; 4:13; 5:1). In addition, 1 Peter presents Jesus as Zechariah's

suffering shepherd (a theme which reworks Ezekiel’s messianic shepherd to incorporate the death of the shepherd). Finally, in a key text, Jesus is transformed from the sacrificial lamb to a “shepherd” and “overseer” (2:25) which are two titles that Peter gives to the elders in our passage (5:2). This is a complement to the identification of Jesus himself as the chief-shepherd in our passage suggesting a further connection (5:4). Peter, in turn, also identifies with the elders through the term “co-elder”, his participation with them in the sufferings of Christ and the expected glory that is to come at Jesus’ appearing. In all of these identifications, the elders are to serve the flock in the same sacrificial role that Christ displayed for the church, both as suffering shepherd and as sacrificial lamb.

In our John passage, the connection between Jesus and Peter around this important leadership image is direct and concrete. Everything that the “Good Shepherd” discourse signifies in terms of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep would also apply to Jesus’ pastoral charge to Peter. Indeed, Jesus’ command to Peter, “follow me” also signals an invitation to the type of sacrificial leadership that a shepherd in Jesus’ mold would provide those who have been entrusted to his care. Jesus’ calling his sheep and knowing them, the sheep responding to his voice, and the laying down of his life for the sheep are all different facets of the type of leader that Peter and by extension all leaders of the church should strive to become.

We should mention at this point that the concept of divine authority has been one of the most consistent themes in our discussion of the shepherd / flock motif and leadership. This is one of Laniak’s concluding observations in his extensive survey of shepherd leadership in the Bible.<sup>7</sup> He states that there is a “divine preference for human agency”<sup>8</sup> where at least in the case of God, he takes risks to enlists leaders in his mission. It also means that a leader is dependent on a divine appointment or divine empowerment to carry out his position.<sup>9</sup> In the Miletus Speech for example it is the Holy Spirit who appoints overseers. In John, it is Jesus himself who appoints the shepherd.

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<sup>7</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 248–49.

<sup>8</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 248.

<sup>9</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 48.

As far back as written history, we see that the king's authority, wisdom, protection, abundance and justice were merely reflections of the type of leadership that the gods were to provide their subjects. Both Moses and David overtly operated under this kind of authorized relationship and every Israelite king properly understood the direct line of legitimacy which extended from Yahweh to his designated under shepherds though in later stages many kings ignored its implications. In our passages of study, this divine authority passes from Jesus to his designated apostles to the elders / leaders of the church via the shepherd image.

We should also mention that with divine legitimization also comes divine delegitimization. The ANE writings narrate how the gods removed kings for various offenses. In the OT, God's removal of cruel shepherds for harming God's flock became a major thematic focus in the exilic period. This is also what drove the appeal of a promised Davidic shepherd into the NT period, who would shepherd in a wholly different manner than Israel's failed leaders. This kind of theological understanding, where God / Jesus / apostles were appointing new shepherds over God's flock, was also present in two of our passages of study (the Miletus Speech and John 21) particularly since their greater literary contexts were indebted to Ezekiel 34.

### **6.3 The Importance of the Flock in the Leadership Equation**

Another unique contribution of the shepherd / flock motif to the early church's reflection on leadership has to do with the emphasis on the flock or the people of God. While studies and articles on the shepherd image (and its implications for leadership) are in abundant supply, the same cannot be said for the second half of this important motif, the flock. This has occurred despite the extraordinary esteem that is communicated about the metaphorical flock through a variety of writings: 1) a shepherd cannot exist without a flock since his title or function is always in relation to the flock under his care; 2) a leader's worth (and even the maintenance of his position) is strictly measured by the quality of care that he provides to those he shepherds. This is made painfully obvious in the prophetic literature; 3) the whole of the Biblical narrative is written from the perspective of God in relation to and caring for his people, the flock; 4) Jesus died for his sheep, which apart from being a radical orientation of the image, speaks volumes about the importance of the flock to the biblical narrative.

Within the Miletus Speech, the elders are called to “watch out” for the flock, which is also defined as the “church of God” within the same verse (Acts 20:28). Within Luke-Acts, this “flock” or ἐκκλησία became concretely visible in the Spirit-filled community of Jew and Gentile. The constitution of this flock was the whole of Christ’s mission (Luke 2:32), Christ’s commission to his apostles (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) and Christ’s commission to Paul (Acts 9:51). Paul’s church planting movement in which he formed ecclesial communities is but another important outworking of this notion and represents a major part of Luke’s narrative (Acts 9, 12–20). Indeed, the whole of Acts is the outworking of how God’s messiah, through his appointed apostles, ably fulfilled the dual mission of Isaiah’s servant by regathering Jacob and the Gentiles into one unified “flock.” In fact, an often overlooked aspect of this regathering has to do with a reunification of the Israelite kingdom given that the Samaritans also received the Holy Spirit as a sign of their being re-accepted into the people of God (Acts 8:5, 12, 17). Finally, the Miletus Speech communicates the value of the flock to God, which is, the blood of his own son (Acts 20:28). This is one reason that careful vigilance is required and why it becomes the Holy Spirit’s responsibilities to install leaders over the church.

In our 1 Peter passage, the audience is identified as the “flock of God” (ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ) (5:2). In one sense, as with Acts, the entirety of 1 Peter is “flock-centric” as the members of 1 Peter’s audience are identified throughout as “the elect”, “resident aliens”, “the diaspora”, God’s “spiritual house” and the people of God reconstituted via the New Exodus that Christ has brought about. Peter’s entire rhetorical arsenal is brought into the service of helping new believers understand their place as members of God’s household, the reasons for the culture’s hostility and the divine significance of their trials in order to remain faithful despite social persecution. The elders are charged with careful pastoral oversight which is in keeping with the flock’s special status and value before God. Peter stated that value explicitly saying that his audience (the flock) had been purchased with the blood of an unblemished lamb (1:19) here a reference to Israel’s foundational event, the Exodus and the Passover lamb.

Within our John 21 passage (a passage that reflects the words and concepts of John 10), the flock is given a special status. First, in one of his final acts in John’s Gospel, Jesus



arranges for the care of his sheep after his departure. Indeed, at the literary level, John has purposefully added this section to the end of the Gospel not only to complete Peter's story in the Gospel, but the church's as well. The reference to the trustworthiness of the gospel witness (John 21:24) also helps to complete this ecclesial story. Through the Gospel, the author becomes "the guarantor of the church's tradition and of the word of Jesus by which alone the church lives."<sup>10</sup> Secondly, this care meant that whatever actions the good shepherd took or had promised to take on behalf of his sheep in John 10, Peter as a designate for all church leaders would also be required to take. As the sheep heard the voice and followed their true shepherd, so too would they follow a shepherd in Jesus' mold. Indeed, the protection of the flock (against metaphorical thieves, wolves, or hirelings) would even extend unto the giving of his own life.

Jesus also uses very personal language ("my sheep", "my lambs") to refer to believers in our John passage. This speaks once again to the highly emotive and relational elements inherent within this unique metaphor. The scribal variations in the manuscripts ("little sheep" or "little lambs") accentuate this notion. Within John 10, Jesus used similar possessive language speaking about how his sheep hear his voice, he puts forth his own, he calls each sheep by name and he knows each one personally. In the language of the covenant, "my flock" is only ever applied to God. Yet here in John, Jesus takes on the role as the owner of the sheep (unlike the hireling). Finally, Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice in order that his sheep would find pasture, here defined as salvation leading to eternal life.

A final detail of the flock metaphor in John is its universal scope. Jesus stated that he would gather sheep from another fold. This is understood as the gathering of Gentile believers. In keeping with the promise of Ezekiel 37:34, Jesus became the Davidic shepherd who would pasture one flock of Jew and Gentile believers.

The ecclesial image of the flock also helped to affirm the proper relationships between God, his designated leaders and his people. First, there was the relationship of God to the church. The church was of God (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ). He was the rightful owner and redeemer of the flock here using the economic terms used by our authors (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet

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<sup>10</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 583–84.

1:19). Conversely, because God was the owner, the ecclesial image also established the proper role between the elders and the church. Their functional task was overseeing that which belonged to someone else. Indeed, they were metaphorically closer to actual shepherds few of whom owned the flocks for which they cared. The worth of the flock required constant vigilance on the shepherds part. Finally, the ecclesial image of the flock helped to establish the proper relationship between God and the elders. We have already touched on this aspect. In summary, they were under-shepherds who had been placed there by the Holy Spirit or another divine authority and allowed to exercise their oversight roles. They would be judged on the actions which they took which benefitted or harmed the flock.

#### **6.4 The Use of Predatory Language**

Another unique attribute of the shepherd / flock motif was the inherent connection to predatory language. In a literal sense, a predator could include animals of various types (bear, fox, hyena, or wolf to name a few). As a biblical metaphor, it became a symbol of foreign oppression mostly during the exilic period. The prophet Amos' graphic description of Israel's coming exile was but one example of many, "As a shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch" (Amos 3:12). This predatory language was particularly disturbing when the biblical authors cast God himself as the wolf or the lion who ravaged and scattered his sheep.

In the OT, it was the lack of attention by the shepherds (or sometimes their active participation in leading the people into idolatry), which wreaked havoc on the flock, caused it to wander and led to God's scattering of his people in the exile. In the Miletus Speech it is false teachers acting as "grievous wolves" who will seek to undermine Paul's work once he has departed the ministerial scene. In the historical Paul's ministry, it was most concretely felt in the heresies, which attacked the communities he founded in Galatia, Corinth, Colossae and Philippi and which would later attack the congregations in Ephesus and Crete. Not surprisingly, it is the ministry of preaching and proclamation which becomes a central element of the Lucan Paul's example of shepherding to the elders. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in the only other direct reference in the NT to Christian leaders as shepherds,

the focus is on “equipping the saints” so that they would not be tossed around “by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:12, 14). Finally, the predatory language gives rise to the rhetoric of warning, with terms that are typically reserved for “the last days” and that call for extreme vigilance by the shepherds of God’s church.

Within our 1 Peter passage there is also an appeal to predatory language. Peter warns his audience to beware of the devil who prowls around like a lion seeking whom he may devour (5:8–11). As previously mentioned, the use of predatory language in this passage is noteworthy for three reasons. First, it appears that Peter extended the shepherding image into this section in order to forcefully warn the church. The image is self-contained within 5:2–4. Yet Peter utilized the image again after skipping several verses presumably because he deemed it useful for his final comments.

The second reason the predatory language is noteworthy is that once again, a NT author combines predatory language with the rhetoric of warning and he uses the same eschatologically charged term *γοηγορέω*, which Paul used in the Miletus Speech. This is clearly a developing tradition in the NT incorporating leadership, the shepherd / flock motif and the themes of vigilance and metaphorical predators. Moreover, this is a NT development perhaps due to the heightened eschatological expectations of Jesus’ first coming. We see no such combination of terms, particularly *γοηγορέω* and shepherding terminology anywhere in the OT.

A final reason that the predatory language is noteworthy in our passage is because it is equated with the audience’s suffering. This is a very different use than in the OT, the “Great Shepherd” discourse and even the Miletus Speech where false teachers were the motivation behind the language. In 1 Peter 5, the hearers are to “resist” (*ἀνθίστημι*) the devil because they know it is the same “sufferings” their brothers in the faith are currently experiencing (5:9, 10).

Finally in our John 21 passage there is no concrete usage of predatory language though it is quite prominent in its sister passage, John 10. Here, it is not heretics or suffering experiences that prey on God’s people but rather Israel’s failed religious leaders. They are thieves and robbers who do great damage to the sheep. Jesus calls them illegitimate since they do not even enter through an authorized venue but climb in another way. In addition,

because they do not have a sense of ownership for the flock, they easily abandon the sheep to predators (in this case, the wolf). As Israel's long-promised Davidic Shepherd, Jesus came to replace Israel's failed leadership. In our passage, Jesus passes that mantle of shepherd leader to his followers via Peter.

## **6.5 Responsibilities / Characteristics of Leaders Reflected in the Shepherd Image**

The final unique characteristic of the shepherd / flock motif has to do with the responsibilities and characteristics for Christians leaders that are reflected in the image. Before proceeding, there are two important observations related to this review of shepherding responsibilities. First, some of these characteristics are quite native to the metaphor and are to be expected (feeding, protecting, overseeing) while others have their source in their connection to Jesus or in what became early Christian parables but which are further removed from traditional shepherding elements. Secondly, no other leadership metaphor contains the breadth of activities, instruments, locales and emotive / relational elements of the shepherd / flock motif. Yet even despite this variety, there appears to be a coherent pattern or a set of ideas, which the authors of our passages wanted to communicate. We have summarized four of these ideas so far. We will now review the fifth idea which is a compilation of various tasks associated with the shepherd / flock motif.

Within the Miletus Speech and our 1 Peter passage we encounter the ἐπίσκοπος-ποιμήν word combination, which becomes ἐπισκέπτομαι-ποιμήν in the OT (LXX). These terms appear together in several critical shepherding contexts and connote a redemptive visitation by God toward a suffering community: The most notable examples are Moses and his request for a leader (Num 27:16, 17) and God's replacement of Israel's failed leaders with a promise of a Davidic Shepherd in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah (Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:11; Zech 10:3, 11:16). We can summarize a few previously drawn conclusions.

First, the ἐπίσκοπος terminology within a shepherding context speaks to a functional role for the leaders of the nascent Christian communities. Shepherds are meant to "oversee" flocks in a very general sense, as shepherd leaders are meant to "oversee" God's people. The term ἐπίσκοπος is not a substitute for a more formal office as the term is traditionally

interpreted in the pastorals (e.g. “bishop” or even “overseer”). Instead, overseeing in the metaphorical shepherding sense incorporates careful vigilance, close inspection, frequent visitations and even adopting a redemptive stance towards those allotted to a leaders care.

Peter’s carefully structured antithetical parallels (5:2–3) represents a stricter listing for how this oversight function is to be carried out. It would include such requests as a willing attitude to serve God’s people, being an example to the flock, avoiding the temptations to “lord it over” God’s people or an improper desire for financial gain. In the Miletus Speech, proper oversight would call for sacrificial vigilance, humility, setting an example and caring for the weak. Since the warning about greed appears in two of our passages of study and in the requirements for elders / overseers (Tit 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3, 8), this indicates that this was a concern to the early church. Of particular interest for our study is that both authors chose to use the vehicle of the shepherd motif to communicate a similar idea to leaders.

Another attribute of leadership that seems integrally related to the shepherd image in our passages is having an attitude of humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη). The traditional source for this teaching appears to be the Christ hymn of Philippians (2:5–9) where this term occurs and which represents another purposeful intent by the early church to follow in Jesus’ steps. Also, as we already noted, ταπεινοφροσύνη became a distinctly Christian attitude in the NT and often appeared within a context of ethical / moral instruction.<sup>11</sup> Within the 1 Peter passage, this command is not specifically directed to the elders but they do represent part of πάντες (5:5) that is called to humility. In addition, this appeal is made with another traditional passage from Proverbs 3:34 (LXX), a passage that James uses in an identical way (Jas 4:6, 10). In the Miletus Speech, ταπεινοφροσύνη appears as part of Paul’s ministry right along with tears and afflictions (Acts 20:19) and which is presented as part of Paul’s example based on the farewell form. In Paul’s case, he also appeals to the longstanding time in which he ministered among the elders (3 years according to Acts 20:31), which allows for his character to be evaluated.

Another characteristic of shepherd leadership suggested by our passages of study concerns the task of suffering for the sake of the “flock.” This is based on two primary

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<sup>11</sup> Col 2:18, 23, 3:12; Eph 4:2; Phil 2:3, 1 Pet 5:5.

factors. One factor is Jesus' model of self-sacrifice for his people. The other factor is the inevitable conflict and persecution that the gospel engendered and the demands placed on Christian leaders in response to it. These were NT developments. Though both Isaiah and Zechariah anticipated some form of suffering by the Messiah (as lamb and shepherd, respectively), they did not fully understand its implications. In the case of the ensuing division, we would have expected nothing less than a century long conflict between Judaism and the gospel given that God, in Christ, was revolutionizing Israel's millennia old cultural, religious, social and ethnic landscape. And when confronted with these novel and difficult realities, the authors in our passages drew on the shepherd / flock motif to make sense of history and to make it sensible to a new generation of leadership.

Within the Miletus Speech we have Luke's purposeful intention to connect Jesus' suffering with Paul's via their shared trials (literal and spiritual) and their appropriation of the Isaiah's suffering servant as we have demonstrated. Concretely, and more importantly, as a responsibility for the elders, the Miletus Speech exemplifies Paul's tears and trials and even his willingness to die for the gospel (Acts 20:19, 24; 21:13). These in turn are a microcosm of his suffering on behalf of the flock to which Acts and Paul's own letters widely attest. Within 1 Peter we see this same pattern though now the connection between Jesus' own suffering as a lamb and his suffering as a shepherd are directly tied to the elders via the shepherd image and the reworking of ideas from Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah (1 Pet 2:25; 5:2, 4). Indeed, if we could point to a "scarlet thread" running through 1 Peter, which gives the letter its unity and purpose, it would have to be the theme of suffering and the rhetorical strategy the author utilizes to encourage his audience in the midst of it.<sup>12</sup> An important plank of that rhetoric is that shepherd leaders will suffer for the flocks they lead in the mold of Jesus. Finally, within our John 21 passage, Jesus' command to Peter, "follow me" is pregnant with all the implications of self-sacrifice inherent in the "Good Shepherd" discourse. In the Last Supper discourse, Peter promised he would lay down his life for Jesus (John 13:37) a boast he later failed to fulfill. In his restoration, he would be given another

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<sup>12</sup> Goppelt finds the unified theme to be: "the existence of Christians in a non-Christian society and overcoming that society by being prepared to bear oppression, i.e. to 'suffer.'" Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, 19.

chance to follow in his masters footsteps as a shepherd who suffers on behalf of the sheep. Indeed, in Peter's case, Jesus may have even implied his martyrdom via the crucifixion.

Two final characteristics of shepherd leadership that arise from the use of the shepherd / flock motif in our passages concern being an example to the flock and the use of money.<sup>13</sup> Within the Miletus Speech this comes through a characteristic element of the farewell form. Typically, the speaker postulates himself as the model for the behavior he wishes to engender in his audience after his departure. In the case of the Miletus Speech, it explains much of Paul's self-apologetic defense of his ministry. More importantly for our study, Luke's use of the farewell genre allows the Lucan Paul to set the standards for the shepherding action he desires in the elders. Indeed in two cases, Paul's work to support himself and care for the weak, he specifically states his example as motivation. In our 1 Peter text, the passage directly exhorts the elders to prove themselves as "examples" (τύπος) to the flock. This passage alludes to the *logia* in the Gospels where Jesus is making a direct contrast with what appears to be a Gentile model of leadership where leaders "lord it over" (κατακυριεύω) their subjects. Shepherd leaders should not exercise that type of leadership.

Finally, two of our passages touch on the right use of money. In the Miletus Speech, it forms part of Paul's self-defense prior to his departure (Acts 20:33). In our 1 Peter passage it comes as a direct command for what it means to properly "oversee" the "flock of God" (1 Pet 5:2). As we have stated, this admonition against greed or on the right use of money became part of the early church's leadership ethics (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3, 8). That they were joined to one of the most enduring images for leadership is not surprising. Literal or metaphorical shepherds were mainly judged on one criteria: how well did they care for the flock entrusted to their care? The misuse of money particularly by a leader was a sure way to bring harm to God's people.

## **6.6 Summary of the Unique Contributions of the Shepherd / Flock Motif**

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<sup>13</sup> Walton suggested that "attitudes toward money," was one of the four major themes connecting the Miletus Speech to 1 Thessalonians leading to a similar portrait of Paul between Acts and his epistles. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*.

The NT authors were careful in applying the shepherd image to the leaders of the Christian communities. When they did, it was based on a sustained reflection of the OT and a new vision of what the image had become via its fulfillment in Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. This reflection coalesced into a set of ideas, a pattern of shepherd leadership, which they consciously transmitted to the leaders of the early churches. This pattern connected the Christian leaders and communities with Israel's salvation history and the great shepherding narratives of the past. It connected them to Jesus' life as the suffering servant of Isaiah and as the Davidic shepherd of Ezekiel who came to gather to feed his united flock in contrast to its failed leadership. This pattern recognized the great value of God's flock and established the right relationship between God, his leaders and his people. God was the owner of the flock and the leaders were under shepherds. The pattern reminded church leaders of the vulnerabilities of the flock and the need for constant vigilance and protection from spiritual attacks. Finally, the pattern brought out certain characteristics of leadership including the role of the ἐπίσκοπος (oversight), suffering for the flock, being an example, and the avoidance of greed.



## 7 Summary and Conclusions

We began this study with the following questions. How did the New Testament church think about leadership? What principles, roles, and responsibilities did it espouse for those who would lead God's people? Of the different leadership models available in the surrounding culture, three NT authors selected the shepherd / flock motif as the vehicle by which they reflected on these questions. As we noted at the beginning, the use of the shepherd / flock motif to encourage leaders toward responsible leadership was rare in the NT. Thus, when this motif occurred, it spoke to a desire on behalf of these authors to consciously articulate a series of leadership concepts, or what we have termed a pattern of leadership, that was based on this image. But why did they select this motif and what is the pattern of leadership they sought to communicate?

We have approached these questions in three stages. The first stage was preparing to understand the metaphorical uses of shepherd / flock motif by immersing ourselves in the world of the historical shepherd. In the first part of Chapter Two, we analyzed the tasks and the tools of a shepherd and the value of the flock. We also noted that many important biblical figures were shepherds which created a natural connection between actual and metaphorical shepherding. We also noted how the presence or absence of shepherds and flocks in the Promised Land signaled a covenant blessing or curse for God's people. Finally, we noted that the primary emotions connected to the flock included peace, well-being, and security when the shepherd was properly caring for the sheep and fear, stress, and insecurity when the shepherd failed in his primary tasks. These emotive elements were critical in describing the exilic and post-exilic narratives where the exile and restoration utilized these symbols to describe the state of God's people.

The second stage of our study involved the analysis of the historical and theological antecedents of the shepherd flock motif. In the second part of Chapter Two, we analyzed the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the ANE, OT and post-Biblical Jewish literature. We began with the ANE literature as the important context for a better understanding of the OT material. First we demonstrated that both gods and kings appropriated the title of shepherd to speak of their ideal rule. The deities were responsible for the benevolent care and protection

over creation and humanity which included the provision of rain, crops, and fertility. As depicted in the literature, we demonstrated that both gods and kings sought to rule with justice and compassion especially toward the weak and mistreated. They endeavored to provide abundance for the people and protection from invasion or enemies. Two important themes that emerged from this analysis were the divine preference for leadership and human leadership that reflects divine leadership. Both these themes were carried through the OT, NT and into our passages of study.

Next we analyzed the Exodus and Davidic Dynasty narratives as well as the use of the shepherd / flock motif in the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Zechariah. We argued that most of what the OT authors sought to communicate regarding the shepherd / flock motif was embedded in these narratives and books. As the foundational event in Israel's life, we demonstrated how the Exodus narrative portrays God / Moses as shepherds guiding, feeding and protecting God's people in a hostile wilderness and leading them to the Promised Land. We also noted how the shepherd / flock motif extended into Israel's Deuteronomist vision and her association with the Promised Land. If Israel maintained her covenant faithfulness she could expect to live in peace, security and abundance. If Israel was disobedient to the covenant then she would experience fear, insecurity and scarcity as a flock who was scattered would experience.

The Davidic Dynasty traditions combined the shepherd motif with royal ideology. In the Davidic covenant, David's rule was extended in perpetuity. The exilic and post-exilic prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Zechariah reformulated these traditions for their own time. This was especially the case with the Davidic Dynasty tradition.

We noted how both Jeremiah and Ezekiel's message was one of judgment for Israel's leaders for having led God's people astray as false shepherds. But God as eschatological shepherd promised that he would one day restore his flock and then appoint a Davidic shepherd to rule over his people. We then argued that Zechariah reworked Ezekiel's expectation of a Davidic shepherd to incorporate the shepherd's death. Isaiah introduced the concept of the Suffering Servant who as a lamb was sacrificed on behalf of God's people. He also utilized the Exodus to speak of a return to Jerusalem from exile in a New Exodus.

We finished the second stage with an analysis of the shepherd / flock motif in the post-biblical Jewish literature. We noted that it maintains much continuity with the OT use, however, there were a few noteworthy differences. First, we noted that there are more direct references to God as shepherd compared to the OT. Secondly, we uncovered the concept of a shepherd who teaches in this literature. Finally, we noted that in 1 Enoch, all of the patriarchs, Moses, the twelve tribes, prophets, and people are referenced as sheep. In the case of Moses, it is all the more noteworthy because this application occurs in the context of God using Moses as an instrument of redemption and salvation of his people.

The third stage of our study involved an analysis of our three passages, the Miletus Speech (Acts 20:17–38), 1 Peter 5:1–11 and John 21:15–19 individually in Chapters Three, Four and Five, respectively. Within each chapter, we traced the traditions of the Exodus, New Exodus, the perpetual Davidic Dynasty, the promise of an eschatological Davidic shepherd and God's restoration of his people within each work as a whole. All of these formed part of the Christology of the gospels which was especially pertinent for our study in Luke-Acts and John. One of the reasons why the NT writers selected the shepherd / flock motif was its connection to Jesus, and specifically in his roles as Davidic shepherd and sacrificial lamb. We finished these chapters by analyzing the shepherd / flock motif in our three passages to arrive at a set of ideas or concepts connected to leadership within each work.

In the final stage of our study, Chapter 6, we gathered up all of the strands of the shepherd / flock motif within each work to demonstrate the pattern that emerged from the way each passage utilized the shepherd image. We were able to show that the early church consciously transmitted a set of leadership principles, a pattern of leadership, that was based on the unique attributes of the shepherd / flock motif. Why did these NT writers choose the shepherd / flock motif to articulate certain leadership qualities? They wanted to connect the leadership to events in biblical salvation history where shepherd leadership was prominent. Both 1 Peter and John appealed to the Exodus, while the Miletus Speech had direct connections to God's promises of a Davidic Shepherd in Ezekiel 34. The NT writers chose the shepherd image because they wanted to connect to Jesus and his ministry, specifically in his role as Davidic shepherd and sacrificial lamb. This provided the early church with a

model of leadership where leaders would make the ultimate sacrifice for God's people. Another reason for using the shepherd / flock motif was to elevate the flock as a critical component within their works. God had rescued his flock and in his son, he had sacrificed for them. The flock belonged to God and the motif was well suited to show the proper relationship between God, his leaders and his people. The NT writers also recognized the spiritual dangers to God's people and the predatory language was critical to communicate the urgency and the rhetorical impact they needed. Finally, these NT writers wanted to communicate various qualities in a leader, all subsumed under the rubric of careful, redemptive oversight. Thus humility, lack of greed and suffering on behalf of the flock all became proper expressions of the best of the shepherd motif.

The authors of our passages of study were careful in their application of the shepherd / flock motif to Christian leaders. When they used it, our study has indicated they had something specific that they wanted to communicate. Rather than adopting secular leadership models from the broader culture, the early church opted for a coherent and widespread articulation of how leadership ought to be based on the shepherd / flock motif. This model was clearly rooted in the OT but radically re-envisioned by Jesus' death and resurrection. This provided our authors with a rich set of traditions, vocabulary and concepts with which to describe the leadership of the early church. That this pattern was widespread is evident by how it made its way into disparate witnesses of the NT.

Finally, there are various potentially fruitful avenues for further study of the shepherd / flock motif as a symbol of leadership in the early church. First, in our analysis of the motif within the Jewish post-biblical literature we noted the appearance of the shepherd as a teaching figure. This was most notable in the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, 2 Baruch and its focus on the law and even the Qumran literature where a central task of the overseer was the instruction of new members. This function of the shepherd is largely absent in the Old Testament but appears in key places of the New Testament specifically when Jesus teaches the people (Mark 6:34). In the Miletus Speech, Paul warns the elders against grievous wolves who would distort the truth (Acts 20:30) and makes the ministry of proclamation a central aspect of what it means to shepherd the church. In the pastorals, one of the few ministry skills required of elders is the ability to teach (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2). Does this use

of the shepherd image as a teacher constitute an emerging leadership pattern in the early church, again modeled after Jesus but reflecting the appearance of aberrant doctrine as the church began to grow? Are there other socio-historical factors that could account for this shift? Another potential avenue for study is to compare the unique attributes of the shepherd / flock motif that we identified in our study to one specific Synoptic Gospel. The most significant work of this kind has been done with the Gospel of Matthew, particularly Baxter's socio-religious study.<sup>1</sup> However, there is room for a further investigation focused solely on the gospel of Mark. Laniak observed Mark's use of the "shepherd in the wilderness" Exodus theme in Mark 6-8 and Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 as well as his use of Zechariah in the passion narratives (Mark 14:27).<sup>2</sup> These mirrored the characteristic elements of the shepherd / flock motif which we identified in our passages of study connected to the OT and Jesus. But are the other characteristics which connect the shepherd image to the flock, predatory language and the language of overseeing missing? And if so, would the putative earlier date for Mark's gospel account for some of these distinctions?

A final avenue of study would consider whether the early church's pattern of leadership which was based on the shepherd / flock motif continued into the post-apostolic area. How would the unique contributions of the shepherd / flock motif in our three passages compare with the writings of the second generation of Christians? For example, readers will recall that the term elder and overseer were used interchangeably in the NT (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-7). However, by the early second century these terms were becoming distinct and church leadership began turning from a plurality of elders toward a monoepiscopate. To what extent did this transition and distinction in terms translate into a bifurcation in the shepherding roles assigned to these leaders in later church history? Did protecting the flock from heresy become a principal task of the shepherd and therefore require a centralization of the teaching role in one person? Was it the case that the bishop assumed most of the patterns of shepherd leadership previously assigned to the elders? Indeed, is the bishop's staff which is so iconic reflect this transition? In all, we can see that the shepherd / flock motif represents an

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<sup>1</sup> Baxter, "Matthew's Shepherd Motif and Its Socio-Religious Implications."

<sup>2</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 171-179, 180, 181.

enduring and flexible symbol for those who are tasked with leading God's people. In addition, the image reminds us that flock cannot be forgotten as part of any leadership equation.

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