

Church of Christ

...Heart to Heart...

The church of the New Testament, that our Lord built, believed in and had “*elders*.” They were older men given the task of “*overseeing*” God’s people. There is another term used to describe these men and their work. *Poimen* is the Greek term for our English words “*shepherd*” or “*pastor*.”

Today we seem to know little about “*shepherds*.” The Old Testament shows us extensively the idea of *shepherding*. David was a shepherd. Among the shepherds of Tekoa was the prophet Amos, who called himself a herdsman (Amos 1:1; 7:14). The shepherd carried a garment in which to wrap himself in inclement weather, a pouch for food and some defensive weapons (I Sam. 17:40). Included was a long rod with a crook on the end used in managing, guiding and defending the flock. The word “*shepherd*” began being used metaphorically to represent a leader in their relationship to the people (II Sam. 5:1-2; Psa. 78:70-72). David called God his “*shepherd*.” He saw God as his source of security, and as looking out for his soul (Psa. 23). In Ezekiel 34, the whole chapter deals with the “*shepherds*” of Israel. They have taken their eyes off of God and forsaken their tending of God’s flock. Read the chapter and you will see their work described in detail and why they received condemnation from the Lord.

Jesus is called the “*good shepherd*” (John 10:11). He is never called an “*elder*” or “*overseer*” but “*shepherd*.” He lays down His life for the flock. That’s a good description of the work of a “*shepherd*.” Peter address the “*elders*” in I Peter 5 and exhorts them to “*shepherd the flock of God among you*.” Some versions use the word “*feed*” instead of “*shepherd*” but the word is *poimen*. “*Shepherds*” aren’t the owners of the flock but a servant of the Owner. Their work is to “*shepherd*” or tend to the flock. They live among and with the sheep, not aloof or unapproachable! They look out for the needs of the sheep. Read I Peter 5:1-5 and you can almost “*smell*” the pasture and hear the bleating of the sheep. The “*shepherd*” is right there among them, “*shepherding*.”

The other English word for *poimen* is “*pastor*.” It shows up only one time in Eph. 4:11. “*Pastor*” is the noun form of the word “*shepherd*.” “*Pastor*” comes from the idea of one who tends herds or flocks. It is “*pastors*” plural! **It’s not speaking of a title for preachers**, as the world uses it, but men who “*pastor*” or “*shepherd*” through teaching, in this context. We are still speaking of the “*elders*,” “*overseers*” or “*shepherds*” in a congregation. They tend the flock, showing the way to live in right attitudes and desires through their teachings and examples.

These men in the Lord’s church are very important. The different words used describe their role: *Episkopos* is the “*overseers*,” that’s their function. *Presbuteros* is the “*elders*” and describes their dignity. *Poimen* is the “*shepherds*” and describes their work. More next week. Think about it!!!

Brent