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God-Ordained Leaders - Shepherds

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God-Ordained Leaders—Shepherds

Abel- Sacrificing Shepherd

Text: Gen. 4:1-8 *Now Abel was a keeper of sheep.*

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord." ² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶ So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." ⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Context: The leadership angle for this biblical character is not possible to determine from the Genesis account of the incident recorded in ch. 4. However, we receive a clue to his character from Heb. 11:4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.* Abel is a significant character in the Bible even though his life is thinly reported on. Able is significant to us because he is a picture of the person and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, shepherd of God's people.

Abel		Jesus
Shepherd	Occupation	Shepherd of God's sheep
Offered up one of the first blood sacrifices that was acceptable to God (Gen. 4:4).	Past Ministry	Offered up a final blood sacrifice that was acceptable to God Himself, the unblemished Lamb of God. (Jn. 1:29)
Righteous (Heb. 11)	Character	Source of all righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21)
His testimony lives on...he being dead still speaks (Heb. 11:4)	Present Ministry	He is ministering to us forever through His sacrifice, "Behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6). (See also Heb. 4:14-16)
Murdered without cause	Death	Murdered without cause

<p>Abraham</p>	<p>Text: Heb. 11:8-10 <i>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.</i></p> <p>Heb. 11:17-19 <i>By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense</i></p> <p>Context: Gen. 12:16 indicates that Pharaoh gave Abraham's wealth a jump start. Gen. 13:1-13 indicates that when God said He was going to bless Abraham He was entirely sincere about it. Gen. 13 relates that Abraham was so successful that he and his "junior partner" and nephew Lot had to split up. Abraham is joined by King David and Jesus the Messiah as the key shepherds of the Bible. Abraham and David were good at shepherding but Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Abraham</th> <th></th> <th>Jesus</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Shepherd</td> <td>Occupation</td> <td>Shepherd of God's sheep</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Abraham obeyed God and went to Mount Moriah to offer his only son as a burnt offering to God. (Gen. 22:1-19)</td> <td>Past Ministry</td> <td>As the Only Son Jesus offered up a final blood sacrifice that was acceptable to God, Himself, the unblemished Lamb of God. (Jn. 1:29)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tested Faith (Heb. 11:17)</td> <td>Character</td> <td>Tested Faith (Jn. 19:30)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplar of Faith</td> <td>Present Ministry</td> <td>Object of Our Faith</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Abraham		Jesus	Shepherd	Occupation	Shepherd of God's sheep	Abraham obeyed God and went to Mount Moriah to offer his only son as a burnt offering to God. (Gen. 22:1-19)	Past Ministry	As the Only Son Jesus offered up a final blood sacrifice that was acceptable to God, Himself, the unblemished Lamb of God. (Jn. 1:29)	Tested Faith (Heb. 11:17)	Character	Tested Faith (Jn. 19:30)	Exemplar of Faith	Present Ministry	Object of Our Faith
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<p>Isaac-the Substituting Shepherd</p>	<p>Texts: Gen. 26:14 Isaac also was a very successful farmer and shepherd.</p> <p><i>12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. 13 The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; 14 for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.</i></p> <p><i>1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only [son] Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. (Gen. 22:1-2)</i></p> <p>Context:</p>															

As a business man Isaac continued on with a prospering family livestock enterprise which indicates some degree of leadership ability. When it came to his family and in particular the apparent last days of his life, Isaac did not lean on the wisdom of God's word concerning transfer of the covenant responsibilities but leaned on the arm of flesh instead.

Isaac		Jesus
Miraculous promised son	Family	Miraculous promised son
Shepherd	Occupation	Shepherd of God's sheep
Pre-figure a son who obeyed his father to the point of death (Gen. 22:4).	Obedience to the Father's will	The only begotten Son of God who obeyed His Father's will to the point of death. (Lk. 22:42; Phil. 2:8)
Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22:2)	Place of sacrifice	Mt. Moriah (Jn. 19:17; cf. Mk. 15:22; Mt. 27:33; Lk. 23:33)
(Gen. 22:1, 7-8)	Ministry as sacrificial lamb	Jn. 1:29, 36; 1 Pet. 1:18
Gen. 22:6	Carried the wood of sacrifice on their backs	Jn. 19:16-17
"Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Gen. 22:7)	Both asked a question of their Father	"My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46)
Isaac's life was spared by a substitute ram (Gen. 22:12-14)	Ministry of substitution	Jesus' life became a substitute to all who believe

Jacob-The Toiling Shepherd

Text: Gen. 30:25-43 This passage presents the story of how Jacob was wise in the ways of building his flocks and herds. Verse 43 articulates just how prosperous he became. *Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.*

Gen. 31:38-41

38 These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. 39 That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. 40 There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. 41 Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock.

Context: The story of Jacob contains considerably more information than that of Abel but both have aspects of their lives and characters that provide a connection to Christ. Jacob is significant to us because he is a picture of the person and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ who labored for the church.

Jacob		Jesus
Shepherd	Occupation	Shepherd of God's sheep
Jacob is a key leader in the plan of God. God	Leadership	Jesus educated some Sadducees who rejected His leadership. He

	referred to Himself regarding the three first leaders of His people. “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exod. 3:6; Matt. 22:32; Acts 7: 32)		said, <i>But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”</i>
	Jacob was chosen as a beloved one before his birth (Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9: 10-13).	Divine Calling	Jesus, the Son of God, is the beloved of the Father before human history. <i>“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17: 24)</i>
	Jacob is a symbolic example of a good shepherd. Recall that he served faithfully in the house of Laban for 20 years. (Gen 31:38-41).	Service	Christ is the good and faithful Shepherd (John 10: 11, 14) who cares about saving each one of us.
	Jacob did not have an easy life and was a man who had to endure many troubles until he learned to walk with God. <i>And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my [a]pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.”</i> (Gen 47: 9)	A life of testing and struggles	Jesus did not have an easy life either as He did the will of God perfectly. <i>He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.</i> (Isa. 53:3)

Joseph-the Ruling Shepherd	Gen. 37:2 Jacob’s first son by Rachel (Gen. 30:22-25) served his father tending livestock along with his brothers. <i>This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers.</i> Of course, his story later on in life is that Joseph was in authority over all the livestock in Egypt as Pharaoh’s second in command because of his divinely provided wisdom making him a leader extraordinaire.		
	Joseph		Jesus
	Beloved son of his Father (Gen. 37:3)	Family	Only-begotten Son of His Father (Jn. 3:16).
	His birth was miraculous because Jacob was old and Rachel was barren. (Gen. 30:22-24; 37:3)	Birth	The mother of Jesus was a virgin and experienced a miraculous conception. (Matt. 1:18; Lk. 1:31-33)
	Shepherd	Occupation	Shepherd of God’s sheep

	<p>Hated by his brothers for no cause (Gen. 37:4, 8)</p> <p>Substitutionary atonement: Innocent Joseph suffered for his guilty brethren. (Gen. 50:17-18)</p> <p>Became savior of the people (Gen. 45:5; 47:25)</p>	Past Ministry	<p>Hated by His brothers for no cause (Jn. 7:5; 15:25; Mk. 3:21)</p> <p>Substitutionary atonement: Innocent Christ suffered for His guilty brethren.(Isa. 53)</p> <p>Became savior of the people (Matt. 1:21; 1 Jn. 4:14)</p>
	Strongly tempted without sinning (Gen 39:14)	Character	Strongly tempted by Satan but did not sin (Matt. 26:59-62)
	His life continues to proclaim a strong testimony of faithful service and character. <i>By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.</i> (Heb. 11:22)	Present Ministry	The Lord Jesus Christ resides in heaven in the throne room of God. He serves the children of God as intercessor (Heb. 7:25), as advocate (1 Jn. 1:9), encourager (Heb. 4:14-16), and working on earth through His people (Jn. 14:12).
Judah	Gen. 38:12 All of the patriarchs served as shepherds for a time since the main mode of life for them in Canaan was nomadic husbandry. His character and leadership are highlighted in the Joseph narrative.		
Jethro (Reuel) and his Shepherdess daughters	Jethro, the priest of Midian, had seven daughters and they served as shepherdesses (Exodus 2:16). (Note, scholars tend to think Jethro and Reuel are the same person). Jethro is famous for his organizational skills in helping Moses escape a crushing administrative nightmare in dealing with the various issues that involve any community of human beings trying to live together in harmony.		
Moses	Exod. 3:1 Jethro gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses to be his wife. While he lived with Jethro's clan Moses lived as a shepherd.		
	Moses		Jesus
	Pharaoh (the King of Egypt) ordered the killing of all the baby boys of the Hebrews, and only Moses is saved alive (Exod. 1:22 – 2:10)	Brave Parents	King Herod who ruled in Israel at the time of the birth of Jesus ordered all the male babies in Bethlehem to be killed, and only Jesus is saved (Matt 2:13-18).
	Shepherd of Midian for 40 years. After Moses fled Egypt, he was hunted by Pharaoh and lived in Israel (the Sinai is part of the land promised by God. He returned to Egypt after 40 years (Exod. 2:15; 7:6-7)	Occupation	As an infant Jesus' life was in danger as he was hunted by Herod. This sojourn is like and unlike Moses' experience. Jesus fled Israel to sanctuary in Egypt and when God reported that it was safe to return, his family returned to Israel (Matt 2:13-21).
Moses went up a mountain to receive the Law from God (Exod. 19:3).	Ministry of the Law	Jesus went up a mountain to give a new Law to God's people (Matt 5:1).	

	Through blood Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant (Exod. 24:8).	Ministry of the Covenant	Through blood Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15).
	Moses' law and teachings are still studied and obeyed by God's people.	Present Ministry	Jesus is the new great teacher of the God's law and people today continue to study and obey God's laws.
David	1 Sam. 16:11 <i>And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep."</i>		
	David		Jesus
	Born in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 17:12).	Earthly Family	Born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1).
	Shepherd (1 Sam. 17:15)	Occupation	Shepherd of God's sheep (Jn. 10)
	An unlikely candidate for king (1 Sam. 16:1-13a). Anointed for service by the Holy Spirit (1 Sam. 16:13b).	Past Ministry	An unlikely candidate for king in the eyes of the religious elite (Jn. 6:42). Anointed for service by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 4:18).
		Character	
	David is a "forever" king per divine prophecy. (1 Kgs. 9:5)	Present Ministry	Jesus is an eternal king per the word of God (Rev 11:15).
David's everlasting reign points to that of Messiah (1 Kgs. 9:15).	The Greater David	Born a king (Matt. 2:2). Served as king during His earthly sojourn (Book of Matthew). Rules and reigns from the heavenly throne room (Acts 2:32-35; Eph. 1:20-23) He is the Greater David, the long-hoped-for Messianic King.—John 7:42.	
Amos	<p>Text: Amos 7:15 <i>Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel."</i></p> <p>Context: Amos prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel around 750 BC, even though he is believed to have been from the southern kingdom of Judah. Uzziah ruled over Judah at this time, and Jeroboam II ruled over Israel, both having long and relatively successful reigns. Amos was an older contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah of Jerusalem.</p>		

<p>Evil Shepherds</p>	<p>Text: (Jer. 23:1-4) <i>“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the LORD. ² Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the LORD. ³ “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. ⁴ I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the LORD.</i></p> <p>Context: Jer. 21-24 reveals several charges against the leaders of Judah. Since there was absolutely no sign of repentance after all of God’s efforts to lead them to restoration, Nebuchadnezzar’s army is coming to Jerusalem and God will not stop him. The shepherds are the leaders. All of the kings, officials, the priests, and prophets had failed God and the people.</p>
<p>Irresponsible Shepherds</p>	<p>Text: (Ezek. 34:1-10) <i>And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ³ You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. ⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. ⁶ My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.”</i></p> <p><i>7 ‘Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: ⁸ “As I live,” says the Lord God, “surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock”— ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord! ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.”</i></p> <p>Context: The prophet takes the reader or hearer back to before the exile and God rehearses their failures before Him and the people. He excoriates them for their selfishness and greed at the expense of the people. David is mentioned as he will be a righteous shepherd during the millennium. The final king, priest and prophet will not mistreat the sheep for He will be the Good Shepherd, Messiah.</p>

<p>Greedy Shepherds</p>	<p>Text: (Zech. 11:4-9) <i>4 Thus says the Lord my God, “Feed the flock for slaughter, 5 whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich’; and their shepherds do not pity them. 6 For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land,” says the Lord. “But indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor’s hand and into the hand of his king. They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver them from their hand.”</i></p> <p><i>7 So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds; and I fed the flock. 8 I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9 Then I said, “I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other’s flesh.”</i></p> <p>Context: The two preceding chapters of Zechariah (9 and 10) present a positive scene where Messiah is portrayed as a caring and loving shepherd of God’s people. But in chapter 11 a revolting and repulsive scene is presented in a drama looking at the people of God after their rejection of Messiah during His earthly sojourn. After 70 years in a foreign land of humiliation and 400 years under the control of one nation after another, are the leaders and priests following God now and helping His “sheep?” No, as the text indicates they are greedy and have become rich at the expense of the sheep. Their total rejection of Jesus the Messiah will be rewarded with judgment which occurred when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (11:1-3). God promised that since they have rejected the true shepherd He will give them a fool for a shepherd. This will be the antichrist (11:15-16).</p>
<p>The True Shepherd: Jesus</p>	<p>Text: Christ, the Good Shepherd <i>I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.</i> (John 10:11)</p> <p>Our Shepherd owns us.</p> <p><i>Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.</i> (Psalm 100:3)</p> <p>Our Shepherd guides us.</p> <p><i>My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.</i> (John 10:27)</p> <p>Our Shepherd provides for us.</p> <p><i>The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.</i> (Psalm 23:1-2)</p> <p>Our Shepherd protects us.</p> <p><i>...though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for He is with us: His rod and His staff, they comfort us.</i>(Psalm 23:4)</p> <p>Context:</p> <p>Christ, the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20) <i>Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant...</i></p>

	Christ, the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4) <i>and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.</i>
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