

### Introduction

- This book was written by a former slave named Hermas that Paul knew (Rom 16:14).
- It is a series of 5 visions, 12 commandments, and 10 parables Hermas received from an angel and the Holy Spirit appearing as the church.
- The overall message is the church needs to repent and live holy lives because the end times are coming.
- It is a prophetic book that was widely accepted by the church.
- It is heavily allegorical and has challenging to interpret passages.

### 5 Visions

- First vision is of his former owner who calls him to repentance and holiness because his family is going astray from God.
- In the second vision he is commanded to copy the visions and give them to the churches. The message is to repent before tribulation comes.
- The third vision is the longest and he watches a tower being built, which symbolizes the church. Anyone who repents of their sins can be a part of the construction.
- The fourth vision is of a great beast coming to attack the church that can only be endured by faith.
- This is certainly a premillennial eschatology but could be a reference to the rapture.
- The fifth vision is of an angel named the shepherd who is assigned to watch over Hermas. This is one of the places the later tradition of guardian angels comes from.

### 12 Commandments

- The angel, the shepherd of Hermas, gives 12 commandments.
- 1st commandment is to believe and obey the one true God.
- 2nd commandment is to be sincere and innocent like children.
- 3rd commandment is to love and only speak truth.
- 4th commandment is to be chaste and pure sexually. He gives further instructions that divorce and remarriage that go a little beyond Paul's words.
- He also seems to say there is only one chance of repentance for sins after baptism.
- 5th commandment is to be patient and avoid anger to not quench the Holy Spirit.
- The 6th commandment is to follow the path of righteousness instead of the path of unrighteousness. He also warns of two angels that are with each person.
- 7th commandment is to fear God and keep His commandments.
- 8th commandment is to be self-controlled.
- 9th commandment is to not be double-minded and pray like God loves you.
- 10th commandment is to avoid grief over worldly things and embrace cheerfulness.
- 11th commandment is to test the prophets. False prophets are identified by their pride and when they ask for money. True prophets are revealed by their holiness.
- 12 commandment is to get rid of evil desires and have holy desires.

## 10 Parables

- Parable 1: Christians live a foreign city that threatens to exile them if they do not conform to the ways of the city. We must live like we are heading to the heavenly city.
- Parable 2: The elm and the vine live together as perfect trees just as the rich and poor help each other grow in their faith.
- Parable 3: Trees in the winter all look alike. The truly saved can't be distinguished from sinners until the end.
- Parable 4: Tree in the summer either bear fruit or die, we should bear fruit.
- Parable 5 mocks highly ritualistic fasting and calls to holy living.
- Parable 6: One shepherd spoils his sheep in luxury and the other treats them harshly. The point is luxury spoils us while punishment and suffering sanctify us.
- Parable 7: Hermas is punished by a shepherd because Christians must suffer until they truly repent of sins.
- Parable 8: Branches are take off a willow tree and only return bearing fruit. Christians are to repent of their sins and bear fruit.
- Parable 9: The longest parable by far is about the tower of the church being built around 12 mountains. There is a strange incident with 4 virgins (9:10) who are later revealed to be spirits (9:15).
- Parable 10: Another angel sends the shepherd and four virgins to live with him as long as he keeps his life pure.

## Problems

- The book does not mention Christ, cross, or the resurrection as much as I wish.
- At places he appears to be saying Christians must be perfect or lose their salvation.
- Guardian angels and virgin spirits are strange passages I do not like.

## Evaluating

- There is no application Hermas calls Christians to that is not biblical or Christlike.
- The book was accepted as prophetic and worth listening to almost universally.
- True and false prophets are to be accepted or rejected completely.
- I appreciate Hermas consistent humility throughout the book.
- I believe this is genuine prophetic revelation, though not canonical or inspired, even though I am not always sure how to interpret it.