

Pentwater Bible Church

Ezekiel Message 72
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Wolf in Sheep's Clothing – Artist Unknown

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Ezekiel

Message Seventy-Two

THE SHEPHERDS & THE SHEEP PART II

February 19, 2017

Daniel E. Woodhead

Ezekiel 34:7-16

⁷Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: ⁸As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely forasmuch as my sheep became a prey, and my sheep became food to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my sheep; ⁹therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: ¹⁰Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them.

¹¹For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. ¹⁶I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice (ASV, 1901).

THE INDICTMENT OF THE FALSE SHEPHERDS

Ezekiel 34:7-8

⁷Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: ⁸As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely forasmuch as my sheep became a prey, and my sheep became food to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my sheep (ASV, 1901);

Our Lord now begins to address the wicked shepherds directly with the command to *hear the word of Jehovah*. God begins to stress again the situation the wicked shepherds created causing the sheep to scatter and become prey to all the beasts of the field. Neither did the shepherds look for the sheep when they were scattered The shepherd did not carry out their responsibilities but only took care of themselves. God still calls the sheep His. This

obviously means that He has never relinquished His rights to any under shepherd of the flock. These wicked men were given temporary responsibility but only under the vigilant oversight of the Lord God.. This then is the indictment, they failed to look after the people of God to whom they were entrusted. This should be a sober message to anyone who has teaching responsibilities of the Word of God. God is very serious about the quality of the teaching of His Word and will chastise those who cause the sheep to scatter because of poor quality teaching including denial of essential doctrines necessary for the sheep to flourish. The false shepherds had brought Israel to ruin and now He would intercede to rescue His chosen people. This fact cannot be missed. God will cause His people to hear the truth and bring the genuine sheep under shepherds when the false ones fail. There is a component of responsibility on the sheep to seek out the truth of God's Word taught clearly and abandon the false teachers. Only the truly saved will seek the truth.

GOD WILL DELIVER THE SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:9-10

⁹Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: ¹⁰Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them.

The main objective of God in this situation was to bring about the deliverance of the sheep and their well being. God does not desire the ruin of anyone. Primarily this text is a rebuke against Israel's false shepherds. The sheep are meant to receive comfort and His promise that He has not forgotten about them. The Lord God will deliver His sheep from the hand of the unfaithful shepherds and He personally would gather His scattered sheep. Throughout the history of the Church this is also very apparent. When the shepherds have gone bad and no longer are feeding the flock of sheep, God intervenes and leads them to a new shepherd who will feed them.

Revelation chapters two and three can be seen as a chronological developmental exposition of a broad overview of Church history. We can see the letters as an accurate chronological depiction of the problems encountered throughout church history. The last letter, Laodicea provides an accurate picture of the apostasy of the visible Christian Church. The Church of the Apostasy represents Church history from AD 1890-to now.

Revelation 3:14-22

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and

discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

This letter is directed to the Laodiceans This word means “people ruling.” This is diametrically opposed to God’s ruling in the church. It is a church entirely ruled by men. This is because the Holy Spirit is not present and doing His ministry of guiding, teaching, and illuminating. While this has happened throughout the history of the Nation Israel it is far worse in the Church Age since the 1890’s. God says that in the latter times some will leave the faith being led by demons. This is what led the Israelite shepherds away from God as they worshipped the Canaanite idols on the “high places.” The following passage clearly describes the shepherds who are given authority to bring God’s Word in the Church Age and why they fail.

I Timothy 4:1-3

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons , by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (KJV),

The source of the apostasy is demons, for apostates have essentially given in to seducing spirits and are preaching a system of doctrine, which is a doctrine of demons. Furthermore, they speak lies through hypocrisy, and their consciences have stopped working. We can see how the shepherds through their adherence and interest in demonic activity have been led to teach a whole host of unbiblical requirements. As they turn from clearly teaching God’s Word they deny its authority.

II Timothy 3:1-5

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵ having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (KJV).

Beginning with a description of the general character of false shepherds of God Word. Many of these characteristics are true today. Verse five specifically identifies the false front put on by the shepherds. These men have a form of godliness, but deny the power of God’s Word. Consider apostate clergy, wearing flowing clerical gowns and embracing church hierarchical titles, have a form of godliness. But they deny the power thereof, for they have denied the true *power* of godliness. They claim to trust in God but are actually trusting in worldly methodologies. They bring the world’s attractions in to lure the sheep

to remain when they stop affirming the authority of God's Word. We are commanded to separate from them. This is one aspect of the sheep scattering from the false shepherd that no longer carry's the voice of God to the sheep.

1. Separation is not an optional part of Christianity; it is a commandment (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; I Timothy 6:5; II Timothy 2:16-18; 3:5; Titus 3:10; 2 John 7-11; Revelation 18:4).
2. Separation is not mean or unloving; it is obedience to God.
 - a. "Mark them . . . avoid them" (Romans 16:17)
 - b. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with" (II Corinthians 6:14)
 - c. "Have no fellowship with" (II Corinthians 6:14)
 - d. "Come out from among" (II Corinthians 6:17)
 - e. "Withdraw thyself" (I Timothy 6:5)
 - f. "Shun" (II Timothy 2:16)
 - g. "Purge oneself from" (II Timothy 2:21)
 - h. "From such turn away" (II Timothy 3:5)
 - i. "Reject" (Titus 3:10)
 - j. "Receive them not into your house neither bid them Godspeed" (II John 10)
3. We are to separate even from brethren who are walking in disobedience (II Thessalonians 3:6).
4. Separation is a wall of protection against spiritual danger. Failure to separate from error leaves one open to the influence of error (I Corinthians 15:33). The reason a shepherd separates the sheep from wolves is to protect them. Likewise, a faithful and godly Bible teacher will seek to separate his flock from spiritual dangers that are even more destructive than wolves. As evidence of this we see many false prophets, corrupt denominations and seminary teachings.

Another activity of the false shepherds is mockery of the fundamentals of the faith and that of *creating schisms or separations*.

Jude 17-19

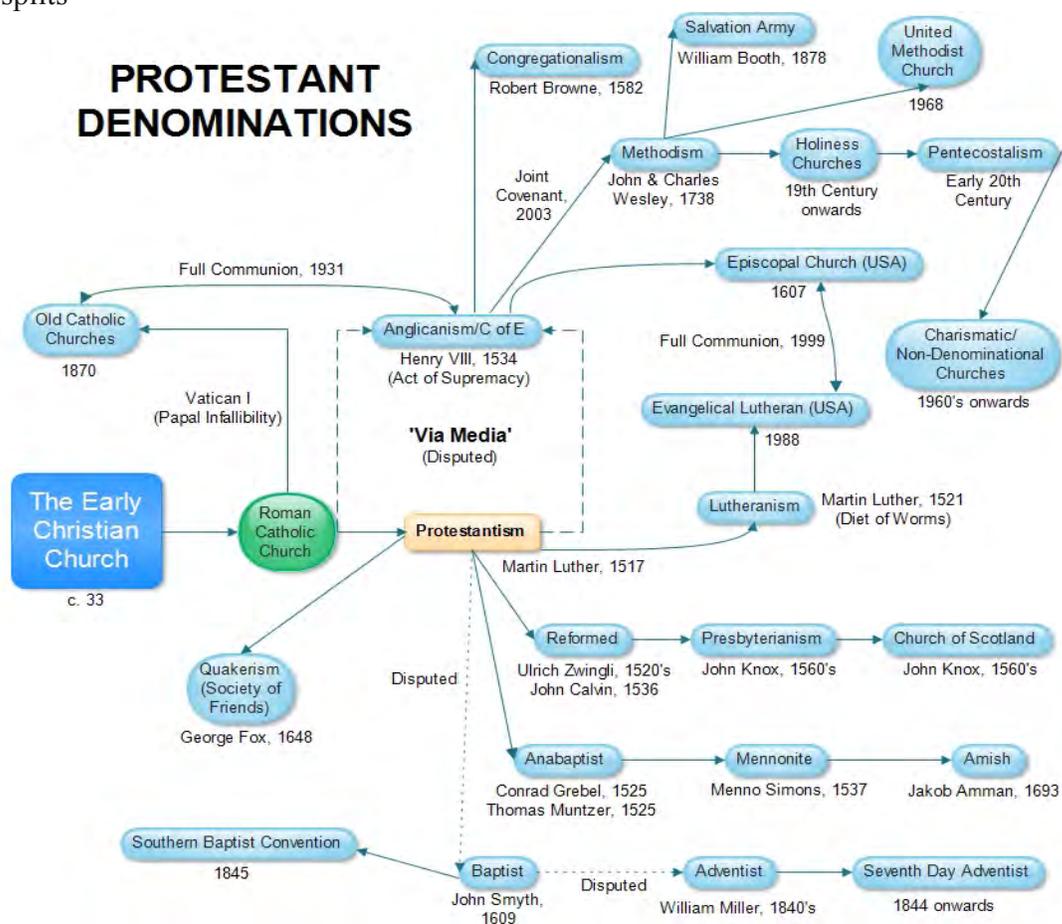
But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit (KJV).

They begin denying some of the fundamentals of the faith such as the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the Virgin Birth, the Substitutionary death of Christ, and His physical resurrection from the dead. Then they attempt to convince some to their heresies but not all will accept them. Many sheep as the Lord said will know His voice and follow Him only and not a false shepherd (John 10:1-5). In the course of time this produces a split within the visible church. Throughout the Church age there has been *schism after schism*. Church after church and denominations have split over denials of the Trinity, the incarnation and the Second Coming. Like the example we have in Ezekiel's day these scatterings of the sheep through heretical teachings and deeds of separations have become prevalent, as church history has progressed from the time of Jesus to the present day. Liberalism (aka Modernism) and other attempts to keep God's Word from clearly reaching the sheep have accelerated since the early 1900's. The decade of the 1920's was

characterized by the great Modernist-Fundamentalist battles. There were many attempts to fight Modernism within the church. But toward the end of the decade, it was apparent that the Modernists were firmly in control of both the denominational church positions (this included all the major denominations except the Southern Baptist Convention) and their schools.

This led to the separatist movement of the 1930's as the Fundamentalists pulled out of the denominations and started their own denominations or independent churches.

Emerging from the United Presbyterian Church of the United States of America was a group led by J. Gresham Machen, which subsequently split into three separate denominations (Orthodox Presbyterians, Bible Presbyterians and the Evangelical Presbyterians) due to internal struggles. Out of the American Baptist Convention came the General Association of Regular Baptists (GARB). Out of the United Methodist Church came the Evangelical Methodists. The following chart is a partial depiction affirming these splits



Protestant Denominations since Christ by <http://protestantism.co.uk/denominations>

Additionally, ecumenical movements have been prevalent during the 1940's and to the present day. Ecumenism is a demonic attempt to tie bad teaching and practices to good. It only results in bad theology and doctrine as the fundamental Bible believers either cave in to the liberal apostates or break off in separation to clearly receive God's Word from other sources. In 1948, the World Council of Churches was organized on two principles: *First*, the unity of all the Churches in the basis of liberal beliefs; and *second*, the unity of all religions. In 1950, the old Federal Council of Churches was reorganized into the National Council of Churches, again attempting to unify all churches in the United States along

liberal beliefs. Consequently, the visible church is primarily apostate today. Even among conservative denominations, the threat of apostasy is taking over of the schools and the supplying of liberal ministers for the pulpit.

GOD AFFIRMS HIS DELIVERANCE OF HIS SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:11-16

¹¹For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. ¹⁶I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice (ASV, 1901).

Even though the false shepherds ignore the sheep to chase after their own desires and profit God always comes to aid the sheep. He says that He *will search for my sheep, and will seek them out*. God takes charge with great affection to the genuine sheep of God. Jesus expressed this same truth in John chapter ten. In very loving text God says that He will bring the scattered Jews out of all the places in the world wherein they have been scattered and place them again in the land of Israel. He will not allow them to again suffer anything they need, because He will supply it. The Lord's treatment of His flock is diametrically opposite to that of the false shepherds. There will also be judgment on the rich of the nation who have oppressed the poor. God's Word tells us that prosperity causes people to forget God.

Proverbs 30:8-9

⁸Remove far from me falsehood and lies; Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is needful for me: ⁹Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, And use profanely the name of my God (ASV, 1901)

All these promises to Israel and the Church as well will be realized in the Messianic Kingdom.

NEXT MESSAGE: GOD JUDGES THE FLOCK TOO & BRINGS HIS MESSIAH

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

E-mail info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com Toll Free 877-706-2479