

“Abandoned Sheep”

Ezekiel Chapter 34

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD.”

Introduction:

During the Old Testament times we see a wonderful picture of God providing and taking care of his people. He began his relationship with Israel by delivering them out of bondage in Egypt and leading them through the desert. He gave them water to drink when they were thirsty and food to eat when they were hungry. He also protected them from foreign armies and gave them a land flowing with milk and honey for their homes. God was so loving and faithful to His people. He truly cherished them.

For all this, His only demand was that his people honor him and faithfully be obedient to his laws.

Israel continually failed to look to God. They, time and time again, broke his law and sought to please themselves. In the word’s of God, they had prostituted themselves with the nations, in that, they had taken up the very sins of surrounding nations and turned their backs on God.

By 586 BC God had enough! God used a foreign nation to punish Israel. Babylon came and destroyed Jerusalem and hauled Israel off into captivity. There sins had reached the point where God’s judgment poured forth.

It must have felt pretty rotten to see their home, Jerusalem destroyed. Fear must have filled their hearts as they were lead away in force watching some of their own be killed. Can you imagine being herded through the dessert like dogs to Babylon. What about being drug into Babylon as a victors spoil. Children of the Living God held up as trophies of war. If I was there I would have felt extreme shame. It would be no doubt in my mind that God Himself had allowed this to happen.

Transitional Statement:

God’s judgment had come with full force to his people and with an amazing announcement by a prophet Ezekiel during the exile, God points the blame to the men appointed as shepherds. So today lets look at what these shepherds were doing wrong. This to serve as a reminder to us to let God lead the way in our elder appointment process.

Lesson:

I. These Elders were feeding themselves when they should have been feeding the flock.

Ezekiel 34:1-4

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? 3 "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. 4 "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

A. They were selfish.

-They were more concerned about filling their own desires and getting their way than doing God's job.

-Phil 2:3 "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves"

*Selfishness kill the heart of any man, but if found in a shepherd it can kill the flock.

B. These shepherds ate the fat portions

-They took the best of everything for themselves.

-This would be like mom and dad having T-Bone steak for dinner while their kids had to eat macaroni and cheese.

-God never intended for his people to have left overs.

*These shepherds didn't just make a misjudgment, this is a gross cancer of a heart consumed by Satan.

C. The text says they clothed themselves with wool. These shepherds took "the wool off the back of the very sheep they were suppose to be guarding and protecting.

-They were thieves taking

-Instead of giving

-These guys were in it for what they could get.

*They failed to understand that to be a leader is not a glorified position but a humble responsibility.

D. They slaughtered the fat sheep without feeding the flock.

-Israel was spiritually hungry.

-But the shepherds consumed for themselves the very provision that God had intended for the flock.

*They did not feed the flock & they were in actuality spiritually killing them.

- E. They did not strengthen the sick, heal the diseased or bind up the broken
 - When I am sick I need someone to wet a wash cloth and put in on my head.
 - Maybe get me some medicine.
 - A glass of water
 - Can you imagine being very sick and a doctor refusing to use his skills to treat you.
 - What could have been their excuse?
 - Maybe they didn't have time
 - Maybe they thought time was the cure
 - It seems that these shepherds cared only for themselves.
 - They were not attentive to the sheep's needs
 - In the big picture they didn't take seriously their directive of healing a spiritually sick people
- F. They didn't round up the strays
 - Sheep often just put their head down and graze...wondering off without even being aware of it.
 - Shepherds are suppose to gentle lead and guide these sheep that get off the path.
 - But, here these shepherds preferred to stay on coffee break and let the sheep take care of themselves.
- G. They didn't seek the lost
 - Some of the sheep wondered away and found themselves completely lost
 - And that is where they stayed.
 - Lost and scared no-one came after them.
 - Abandoned
- H. And finally they ruled the sheep harshly
 - They acted like rulers instead of shepherds.
 - They were mean and ugly with them
 - Kindness and Compassion were no-where to be found.

II. The result of bad shepherds was the sheep were scattered.

Ezekiel 34:5-6

5 "They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. 6 "My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them."

- The sheep became prey for the beasts of the field.
- The sheep meant to be protected and loved became food for wild savages.
- Flock left unguarded to fend for themselves
- Unity of the flock broke down.
- Abandoned
- *Did you catch Verse 6 "My flock"
- Perhaps these shepherds forgot who the sheep belonged to.

III. Then, God deals with these shepherds

Ezekiel 34:7-10

7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them."

- When shepherds don't act godlyGod will take care of them.
- The flock didn't need to survey
- Or check their approval rating
- *God himself, is in control and he removes those shepherds that don't follow his will.

IV. God's sheep will get what they need. He will see to it!

Ezekiel 34:11-16

For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 " As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. 13 "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. 14 "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD. 16 "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.

- God will see to it that the flock is cared for

VI. But the flock will feel the consequences of their shepherd's sins

Ezekiel 34:17-19

17 "As for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats. 18 'Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures? Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet? 19 'As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!'"

-The shepherds took what was righteous and just from God and trampled it under foot.

-They went to the spiritual water hole and served themselves not taking care to keep the water clean.

*The sheep were helpless and had to live with the results.

VII. The exacting nature of their sin

Ezekiel 34:21

21 "Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad,

-Have you ever seen cows at the feeding trough? The weak get pushed aside and never get enough food because the strong push them aside to fill their own bellies.

-The weak end up dying because they are left to fend for themselves.

Conclusion:

Ezekiel 34:22-25

22 therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another. 25 "I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. 26 "I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. 27 "Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. 28 "They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. 29 "I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.

-Israel had to endure 70 years of captivity as a result of bad leadership

*But God delivered them and from the hands of godless shepherds.

Then;

Ezekiel 34:23-31

23 "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. 24 "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

-The Great Shepherd Jesus the Christ is the shepherd.

*And any shepherds appointed to God's church merely serve as servant shepherds under the Great Shepherd Jesus

To this end declares God:

30 "Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares the Lord GOD. 31 "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

-Shepherds are suppose to help you know your God.

-They are not all knowing

-They are not perfect

*They make mistakes

-But they are servants

WHAT A RESPONSIBILITY THIS IS FOR THE SHEPHERDS RIGHT?

QUESTION? IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A CHRISTIAN THAT MUCH DIFFERENT?

WHAT KIND OF SERVANT ARE YOU TO THOSE AROUND YOU?

-ARE YOU HELPING THOSE AROUND YOU?

-ARE YOU HELPING PEOPLE KNOW GOD?

-OR HAS SOMETHING GOT BETWEEN YOU AND GOD?