

Pentwater Bible Church

Ezekiel Message 73
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The Book of Ezekiel

Message Seventy-Three

THE SHEEP & GOAT JUDGMENT

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Ezekiel 34:17-24

¹⁷And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, the rams and the he-goats. ¹⁸Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have fed upon the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture? and to have drunk of the clear waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? ¹⁹And as for my sheep, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

²⁰Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto them: Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because ye thrust with side and with shoulder, and push all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; ²²therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it (ASV, 1901).

THE LORD NOW ADDRESSES THE SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:17

¹⁷And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, the rams and the he-goats (ASV, 1901).

The Lord now turns His attention to the flock under the care of the wicked shepherds. He refers directly to them as His flock. He uses the image of weak and strong animals in a flock, because the Lord knew that Judah's political leadership was not its only problem. It is apparent that He sees issues with the flock. He calls them sheep, and he-goats. Not all the flock were professing faith in the Lord God. Some were only masquerading as genuine believers. This amounts to sheep being believers following Him and goats or unbelievers who do not follow Him. His examination and judgment will even separate out from among the people dominant (he-goat) and submissive (sheep). He says he will judge between the sheep who profess to believe and between the goats who really do not. He will put an end to the oppressive conduct of the fat goats who are strong and between the sheep who are weak.

The wealthy were not content with merely consuming the nation's resources. They oppressed the poor in order to profit from them. They had seemingly aligned themselves with the wicked shepherds to subjugate the poor. God is making His intent clear in that He will make it possible for the weak to survive by ending the domination of the strong.

RICH OPPRESSORS OF THE POOR

Ezekiel 34:18

¹⁸Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have fed upon the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture? and to have drunk of the clear waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet (ASV, 1901)?

The wealthy people of means are charged with taking the best for themselves and damaging the means of life for the weak. God Says that they *have fed upon the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture*. The images describe the subjugation inflicted by the powerful classes on the poorer segments of society who are taking the resources and not leaving anything left for the poor. One example is the principle of gleaning. The Torah makes provision for those in need (the poor, fatherless, aliens, widows) by commanding that the last bits of harvest be intentionally left for gleaners (Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:21). The was structured as a type of welfare for the poor and otherwise indigent. The wealthy would take the crops in the harvest but always leaving some for the poor to come in and “glean” some for themselves. In this section of Scripture God is accusing the wealthy sheep of treading the residue (left overs) in the pasture so as to destroy any residue. They also polluted the water available to the poor so as to *foul the residue*.

Frequently an invading army would cut off the water-supply of cities they had laid siege to, as did Jehoshaphat with the wells of Moab (II Kings 3:19, 25). Israel being an arid country there is a scarcity of water which makes it all the more precious. Rainfall is the primary source of supply of water for Israel. The rivers are mostly very small and provide little or no water in summer. Springs supply some of the villages, but even this is not sufficient, so cisterns are used. Cisterns are open pools of water usually on the surface of the ground. Jerusalem has always had to depend for the most part on water stored in this way, and carried to the city in aqueducts. A large number of cisterns have been found and partially explored under the temple-area itself.¹ The water stored in the cisterns is surface water, and can be a great menace to the health of the people. During the summer the water supply diminishes quickly and becomes so stagnant and filthy that it is not fit to drink. The wealthy were taking the first of the water supply and leaving the stagnant and filthy for the people.

THE GOATS LEAVE LITTLE GOOD FOR THE SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:19

¹⁹And as for my sheep, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet (ASV, 1901).

These fat (rich) sheep were successful in brutalizing the lean (poor) sheep by leaving them only empty fields and fouled water to drink. Because the wealthy fed themselves well from the good pastures and left nothing for the poor they just experienced the dregs of

¹ Orr, J. (Ed.). (1999). In *The International standard Bible encyclopedia: 1915 edition*. Albany, OR: Ages Software.

existence and deprivation as their daily course of existence. They were oppressed. God has expressed His disgust with these oppressors through Isaiah too.

Isaiah 5:8-9

⁸Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! ⁹In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant (ASV, 1901).

Here similarly God is judging the wealthy in Israel for flourishing at the expense of the poor. God chastised the people *that join house to house, that lay field to field*, essentially expanding their possessions by ruthlessly squeezing out the common people. Now God is expressing His judgment against a group of wealthy citizens who were not content with their own advantages so they go on to deprive the poor of opportunities that are legitimately theirs, namely being able to glean the leftovers in the fields and having clean available water.

GOD JUDGES THE RICH SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:20-22

²⁰Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto them: Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because ye thrust with side and with shoulder, and push all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; ²²therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep (ASV, 1901).

God says that, “*I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep*”. He will now step in and stop the wicked oppression of the rich over the poor sheep. The rich were no better than the wicked shepherds. He starts to depict the tactics of the ruthless sheep.

In continuing with the sheep illustration the wicked sheep even butted all the diseased sheep with their horns, to drive them away. The weak were helpless with the diseases they had such as leprosy and God says will not permit these wicked practices to continue. Still using the illustration of the sheep He says their wicked oppression will scatter them abroad as they flee the injustice of the rich. So now they are scattering for two reasons. One, because of the shepherds not giving them the spiritual nourishment of God’s Word and two the rich sheep are forcing them away in pursuit of clean water and pure crops. God says that He will rescue the oppressed and will judge the aggressors. He will judge between one sheep and a sheep (goat).

THE GOOD SHEPHERD WILL BE SET UP

Ezekiel 34:23-24

²³And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it (ASV, 1901).

In a direct contrast between the wicked, incompetent, self serving, shepherds and oppressive goats living among the sheep, God will bring the Good Shepherd. This is Jesus who made it known that He was the Good Shepherd.

John 10:11

¹¹I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep (ASV, 1901).

This passage in Ezekiel refers to the Messianic Kingdom coming on this earth. Jesus will fulfill the Davidic Covenant and run the world's government from Jerusalem. Righteousness will prevail and fairness among the people with no oppressive leaders or wealthy people harming the poor. Resurrected David will be a prince among the Jewish people leading them under the auspices of King Jesus the Messiah. The Lord has decreed this so it will come to pass.

After a shepherd's flock has been separated from the goats, he takes them to pasture. Near the pasture is a sheepfold or an enclosure for the sheep. The shepherd takes his place in the doorway or entrance and functions as a door or gatekeeper. The sheep can go out to the pasture in front of the enclosure, or if afraid, they can retreat into the security of the enclosure. The security is with the Good Shepherd. It will be completely secure in the Messianic Kingdom with no threat of the wicked leaders or the wicked goats who previously subjugated the sheep. In fact in the seventy-five interval at the end of the Tribulation before the start of the Messianic Kingdom the sheep gentiles will be judged along with the goat gentiles. This will determine which of them enter the Kingdom. Jesus described this judgment in His Olivet Discourse. The division of sheep and goats will be the final judgment of this sort of a division of the population. However, during the judgment at the end of the Tribulation it will be limited to Gentiles.

This judgment will be for the manner in which the gentiles have treated the Jews during the Tribulation. God says through the prophet Joel that it will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

Joel 3:1-3

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgment upon them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations: and they have parted my land, ³and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink (ASV, 1901).

The Lord tells us that this judgment is to occur near the time of the national restoration of the Nation Israel. All the Gentiles left after the war will be gathered into the Valley of Jehoshaphat for the judgment. The Jewish goats will have already been judged by their leaders and families during the national regeneration of Israel (Zechariah 13:2-6). This is the same place on the east of the Temple Mount next to the Mount of Olives where the final battle took place. The term Gentiles is the same as nations. This is a determination of

their individual final destination of eternal life or eternal hell. Therefore it is a very serious event. The basis for the judgment will be pro-Jew or anti-Jew. That is, how they treated the Jews during the Tribulation. The sins committed are listed as:

1. Scattering the Jews in the middle of the Tribulation.
2. Parting the land during the Campaign of Armageddon.
3. Selling the Jews into slavery (Zechariah 14:1-2)

Each Gentile will be judged on the basis his participation in or his refusal to participate in these actions.

Matthew 25:31-33

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² Before Him will be gathered all nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats. ³³ He will set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left (MEV).

Jesus is the Judge who will sit on a throne in the all His glory in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. All the living Gentiles who made it through the Tribulation will be gathered before Him for the Judgment. Note the positional aspect of the decision, right and left. The Bible frequently associates right with favorite and left as inferior. *Christ now sits on the right side of God the father judging.* (Hebrews 12:2) *A wise man’s heart is at his right hand; but a fool’s heart at his left* (Ecclesiastes 10: 2). *The Lord’s right hand is glorious and powerful* (Exodus 15:6).

There will be two individual divisions, the pro-Jewish known as the sheep camp and the anti-Jewish known as the goat camp. Matthew 25:34-40 discusses the pro-Jewish sheep camp:

Matthew 25:34-40

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in. ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ And when did we see You sick or in prison and come to You?’” ⁴⁰ “The King will answer, ‘Truly I say to you, as you have done it for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it for Me.’” (MEV)

Jesus describes those who have helped Jesus’ brethren who are the Jews during the Great Tribulation. A failure to frame the Bible in a natural chronology will provide difficulties in realizing terms such as brethren. The church had not yet been initiated when Christ’s Olivet Discourse was given and will leave the earth prior to the Tribulation. Therefore, His usage of the term brethren in this context refers strictly to the Jews. This assistance to

the Jews during the Tribulation will be a very dangerous activity similarly as it was during the II World War. This was a time when the Nazis were hunting the Jews and killing those who hid them. The Jews will flee into the wilderness without provisions. The pro-Jewish sheep will provide them with food, clothing and shelter. They will identify with the Jews by visiting them in prison and in general exhibit kindness toward them. These folks will go into the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium). The goats will not see any kindness from Jesus.

Matthew 25:41-45

⁴¹ “Then He will say to those at the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. ⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not serve You?’ ⁴⁵ “He will answer, ‘Truly I say to you, as you did it not for one of the least of these, you did it not for Me.’ ⁴⁶ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (MEV).

The anti-Jewish goats are the ones who helped the Antichrist in destroying the Jews. They will be killed and sent directly to hell. This judgment, which sends those who helped the Jews to eternal life and into the Kingdom. However, those who harmed the Jews will be sent directly to Hell. God is not judging them on works. The sheep are simply showing their faith in Christ through their works. A believer will not follow the Antichrist and will follow Christ’s commandments. So only believing Gentiles will enter into the Kingdom and their belief will be evidenced through their works in saving Jews. God has always judged those who oppress the Jews harshly even when it is from their own brethren.

NEXT MESSAGE: GOD BRINGS HIS MESSIAH

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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