

Dismissal of Unfaithful Shepherds

In the Bible, along with promises of tender mercy for the repentant, are stern warnings for the rebellious. These warnings are to be delivered by those who understand the end of sinners. Paul wrote, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11a). God delights not in the destruction of the wicked (Ez. 33:11); therefore, He has warned the sinner ahead of time that he might flee to safety in Christ. Foremost among those in whom God takes displeasure, are leaders of the church who use their power to lead members in rebellion. “My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains” (Jer. 50:6a). James speaks of unfaithful teachers and leaders receiving even greater condemnation than the average church member. He says, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). The prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Malachi, and John, and the Spirit of Prophecy’s witness today testify that unfaithful ministers in the remnant church must be converted or purged out before the remnant church receives showers of blessing, or makes decided progress in the movement of the Three Angels’ messages.

It will not be well for unfaithful ministers in the day of God. Solemn warnings against unfaithful ministers in that day are found in Scripture. Of this day of judgment, Jeremiah says, “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! . . . Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings.” “Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock; for your days for slaughter and your dispersions are accomplished; . . . and the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape” (Jeremiah 23:1, 2; 25:34, 35). Unfaithful ministers who have not fed their flocks or protected them from false teachers, but have instead betrayed their sacred trust of preaching and teaching God’s Word, of all the wicked, will be in trouble and distress when Jesus comes.

In Ezekiel 34 is found not only the precious promise after which is named the famous song, “There Shall Be Showers of Blessing” (26), the obtaining of which is our “greatest need” and “first work” (RH, March 22, 1887), but promised judgment against unfaithful shepherds of the flock which is prerequisite to the “showers of blessing.” Faith in God’s promise in the latter portion of the chapter of “showers of blessing” should be equally matched with faith in His prerequisite promise previously stated in the chapter of judgment against false shepherds. In the direct context of verse 26, immediately before the promise of the “showers blessing,” God addresses the unfaithful shepherds with a stern message of judgment and relief of their duties to His flock. The LORD declares, “Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks” (Ez. 34:2)? The flocks being God’s people (Ez. 34:30, 31), the shepherds being judged are then the false ministers and leaders of God’s people.

God’s declaration to the false shepherds is not without promised action to remove the scatterers of His flock and “cause the shower to come down in his season,” and “the showers of blessing” upon His flock. The LORD says, “Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them . . . And I will make with

them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing” (Ez. 34:8-9, 25-26). God’s declaration against, and removal of, unfaithful shepherds is prerequisite to Him sending “showers of blessing.”

From man’s point of view, especially the post-modern one’s (whatever that means), the summary dismissal of ministers near tenure, or ordination, or retirement, or church politics, etc, may seem harsh, but not to God. As a result of pastoral neglect, God’s precious and vulnerable sheep are scattered, abused, starved, torn, and unprotected. Their crimes of pastoral neglect to seek, serve, nourish, heal, and protect His sheep from wolves (Mt. 24:15) brings to them God’s summary rebuke and dismissal. This rebuke and dismissal of the scatterers of the flock is an absolute must before the flock can be gathered again to benefit from the green pastures watered by the “showers of blessing,” that the world might be blessed with the gospel message. This action by God will also limit the bounds of the transgression of the false shepherds, and thus prevent them from adding to their guilt for still more grievous consequences in the future. Relief of unfaithful shepherds from their duty to God’s flocks is the most just and merciful thing for God to do, both to them and the flock.

God will appoint shepherds over the flock, after He removes the unfaithful shepherds, who will gather and feed His flock. The LORD promises, “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” (Ez. 34:23; cf. Jn. 10:11). “I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD” (Jer. 23:1-4).

Before the world can be benefited by the, “showers of blessing,” the unfaithful ministers must be removed. In their places, God will place faithful pastors. The prophecy of the church being gathered, fed, healed, protected, and empowered to finish the proclamation of the Three Angels’ messages for the return of Jesus under the direction of a faithful ministry is true and sure. If we expect the latter promise of Ezekiel 34 to happen soon, we should expect the former promise to be fulfilled soon, also. This, “Heart of the Problem” will be seen with abundant evidence in the next article.

To be continued ...

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