

## The Fat Shepherds Are Fleecing The Sheep - Ezekiel 34

What has happened to our society? Why is the world becoming more and more immoral and lawless? Why has the church lost its godly influence? There was a time when the church was well respected and had a strong moral grip on society but that is no longer the case. Why? The fact is, when the world looks at 'Christianity' today, they see paedophiles, homosexuals, filthy-rich leaders and televangelists teaching false doctrine, self appointed prophets prophesying lies, crazy antics in churches and so called Christians joining with cults and pagan religions etc. There really is no need for us to scratch our heads and wonder why there has been such a strong moral decline in society – it is simply because the church has gone astray and lost its stabilising influence. The unsaved are not stupid; they see through much of the nonsense and, quite rightly, consider themselves as good as any 'Christian' and perhaps even more righteous. How can a Christian talk to them about their sinfulness when they see the 'church' doing the same things? Why should they bother seeking our guidance? A friend said that the Devil has done such a great job destroying the church that he is now holidaying somewhere in the Caribbean, and it doesn't look as though he will ever need to return to work. He can relax and enjoy his holiday because the shepherds he has placed in the church are doing a great job for him.

### Looking after the flock

Ezek. 34 tells how the shepherds of Israel fed richly off the people but didn't take care of them, just as many of the church leaders do today. Ezek. 34:2-4 says, *“Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.”* Israel's shepherds were feasting off the flock while neglecting to care for them physically or spiritually; the spiritually weak were not being helped in their faith; those needing physical help were ignored; those who had strayed from the faith were not brought back or even searched for – the flock was neglected and abused in every way while the shepherds ate off the fat of the land. This is exactly what is happening in many churches today. Leaders are not tending their flocks but rather they are fleecing them and living in luxury while there are believers in great need worldwide. It can't be justified.

Ezek. 34:5 gives the result of neglecting the flock: *“They were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.”* When believers are not being cared for, they can lose their faith and hope and wander off to become food for the many false religions and cults. It is common for people to get sucked into churches who promise all sorts of things but when these promises fail they leave in disappointment and bitterness, rejecting Christianity in the belief that it is full of lies. This leaves them wide open to other wolves who will seduce them into their hell-bound ways.

### False doctrine

2 Tim. 4:3 tells us that *“the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”* Surely that time is now. Many leaders and televangelists have replaced solid doctrine with shallow 'all about me' nonsense - *“Make me rich! Give me power!”* Their teachings are shamelessly self-centred yet well received by many itching ears because it is all about what they can get from God, rather than death to self. Death to self is complete self-denial but many prefer the lies as Jer. 5:31 tells us: *“The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end [at the judgment]?”*

Most Christians believe that Jesus' return cannot be too far off. If we really believe this then we must also take careful note of His warnings of end time deception (Matt. 24). If you and I want to be able to discern this deception then we must have a good understanding of scripture. If we don't know the real thing then how can we discern a fake? Do you study your Bible and take it to church or do you just believe the voice from the pulpit? That voice could be one of the Devil's co-workers masquerading as a servant of righteousness (see 2 Cor. 11:13-15). We only get one chance at salvation so we must be careful and study the Bible to see if we are in the truth and truly born again. Jesus commands us not to be deceived - can you biblically defend what you have been led to believe? Do you get upset when someone questions your beliefs? If so, then it is a sign that you are not secure in your doctrine, you may be in error. We all need to study opposing doctrine and have peace about what we believe. If we are misled then we can't blame someone else. We must check things out for ourselves. Remember, there is no second chance, no Purgatory.

### **Finishing off**

The greatest reason for the world's ever worsening condition is that the church has lost its godly influence over society. Christianity was once a standard for morality and common decency but ungodly behaviour by so called Christians has blackened the name of Jesus. Sadly, the unsaved see the wickedness and nonsense in the 'church' and think it is Christianity. A good way to explain things to the unsaved, and witness at the same time, is to show them Matt. 24 where Jesus predicted it would happen before He returns to destroy the wicked.

We really can't do anything about the falling away of the church because it is part of end time prophecy. However, we can be good Bereans and search the scriptures to be sure of what we believe. My question to you is, "Are you in the faith or into heresy?" Search the scriptures and be separate from the wicked.

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