

## "PROPHECY AGAINST THE SHEPHERDS"

– JUNE 27. – EZEKIEL 34. –

SELF-SEEKING SHEPHERDS – FEED THEMSELVES, BUT NOT THE FLOCK – THE TRUE SHEPHERD COMES – SEEKING THE SCATTERED SHEEP – FEEDING THE FLOCK – CARING FOR THE SICK AND LEAN – REPROVING THE SELFISH OF THE FLOCK – DAVID TO BE THE NEW SHEPHERD – ONE FLOCK, ONE SHEPHERD – "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD."

**"I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep." – V. 15.**

TODAY'S Study is a parable, applicable, we believe, at the present time. It begins with an arraignment of the shepherds, the pastors of the Lord's flock. It accuses them of neglecting the sheep in favor of themselves. It declares that they appropriate the wool of the sheep and devour the best of the flock, but neglect to feed the flock – neglect to lead them to the "green pastures" of God's Word and to the "still waters" of Divine Truth. The parable pictures the Lord's flock, scattered here and there, some wounded, some torn, some lean and hungry, all neglected so far as the false shepherds are concerned.

We cannot understand this as signifying nominal Christians, but the true saints of God. Nominal Christianity fares well enough, but the Lord does not recognize merely nominal Christians as His flock. They are the tares, not the wheat; they are the goats, not the sheep. The shepherds who neglect to care for the sheep, to provide them with the spiritual food and to assist them to find it, to appropriate it, are often quite busy with the goats – the worldly elements of their congregations. Their church arrangements are often especially for the goat, or tare class. These do not care for

spiritual food; they must be provided with entertainments, suppers, sociables, discourses on politics, or harmless dissertations well filled with jokes. Do not they furnish most of the money? Would they not withdraw from the church if spiritual food were dispensed? For these some are providing "smokers," parish houses, well supplied with games, etc.

But the shepherds were not appointed by the Lord to look after the goats and the tare class, but to look after the wheat, the Lord's sheep. They are unfaithful pastors, or shepherds; and this prophecy is a reproof to [R5693 : page 157] them. The true flock of God is scattered, some here, some there, in many denominations and outside of all. They become the prey of the beastly of the world, and are ensnared into various false doctrines, but "neither did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not My flock. 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."

### **THE SHEPHERD GATHERING HIS FLOCK**

Many Bible students believe that this Scripture is in process of fulfilment – that we are living in the Parousia of Christ, and that He has been present in the world for some years past, searching out the truly consecrated of His people, and gathering them out of all sectarian systems and from the world, to Himself. Surely it is true that the shepherds are ceasing to feed the flock; for very few of the flock of the Lord's consecrated people any longer seek spiritual food at their hands. They are wandering in a famishing condition, and much in danger of falling into the various snares of the Adversary.

However, the Great Shepherd Himself is with His flock, and is causing His voice to be heard; and the sheep will be gathered to Him out of every nation and out of every denomination. Truly, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me"; and "a stranger will they not follow; for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:27,5.) The voice of the Lord, of the Great Shepherd, amongst His sheep is to be heard now because it is the time of His Second Presence. He is about to complete His flock of this Gospel Age and to glorify them with Himself in the First Resurrection. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow them; they shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep, and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land." Verses 11-13. [R5694 : page 157]

The Home-land of the Lord's sheep of this Gospel Age is Heaven itself, and His bringing them to it will mean their resurrection change. Then they shall be in the Kingdom with Jesus Himself – still His sheep, still His flock, still His Bride, still His members. But He declares also, "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." – John 10:16.

## **THE SECOND FLOCK AND ITS FOLD**

These other sheep of the Lord, we believe, will include all of mankind who, during the Millennial Kingdom, will be glad to avail themselves of the great provision the Lord has made for them in His Plan. They are other sheep in the sense that they will be of a different nature from the flock which the Lord is selecting during

this Gospel Age. The flock now being called and gathered are being begotten to the Divine nature, a spirit nature, and they will attain to this spirit nature by a resurrection change; as it is written, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." – 1 Cor. 15:50.

The other sheep will be the great flock of the Lord, the great family of Adam, purchased by Jesus. For a thousand years the work of calling and gathering mankind and separating between sheep and goats will progress, as outlined in Matthew 25:31-46. The whole world will be granted the opportunity of taking their choice as to whether they will be sheep or goats. And nothing in the Scriptures informs us whether the sheep or the goats will be the more numerous. We are merely informed that all will have the invitation to become the Lord's sheep, to come under His shepherding care; and by so doing and proving their loyalty to Him and developing His spirit, His character-likeness, they will be granted everlasting life on the human plane, the earthly plane.

There the Lord will bring the Restitution which St. Peter mentions (Acts 3:19-21), and which will be offered to Adam and all his race, who will not receive the call of this Gospel Age. Theirs will not be so high a call, but will evidently be a glorious one. The whole earth – a Paradise, an earthly heaven – will be their everlasting portion, but it will not be the Heavenly Home to which the Church has been invited. The world's blessing of Restitution to human perfection, to the image and likeness of God in the flesh, will not be the equivalent of the spiritual nature granted to the Church of this Age, but it will be wonderfully grand.

As for the goats of that time, thank God! they are not to be tormented, as many of us once supposed. Rather, they are to be cut off from life, as is implied in the Greek word *kolasin*. "These [the goats] shall go away into everlasting cutting off; but the righteous [the sheep] into life everlasting." (Matthew 25:46.) The Great

Shepherd, who is now gathering His flock of this Gospel Age, will remain therefore for a thousand years to gather out fully all His flock of the Millennial Age, to separate them fully from all having the contrary spirit, and to destroy completely all except His sheep. All who really love righteousness and hate iniquity, when given a clear opportunity to discern and to take their stand, will choose the right and become the Lord's sheep. All others, who will to be wicked, will die; as it is written, "All the wicked will He destroy." – Psalm 145:20.

"I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment" – with a righteous recompense. – Verses 15,16.

### **THE FLOCK CRITICIZED ALSO**

Not merely the shepherds, the pastors, the preachers, the ministers, are reproved by the Lord, but also some of His flock not in official positions. In the Day of the Lord's presence, these also will be dealt with, as we read:

"And as for you, O My flock, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they have eaten that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they have drunk that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God unto them, Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad, therefore will I save My flock, and

they shall be no more a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle." – Verses 17-22. [R5694 : page 158]

The New Order of things incidental to Messiah's Kingdom is here brought to our attention. This already has begun in respect to the Gospel Church. Some who have been considered quite prominent in Christendom, pushing and managing its affairs, and discounting the Lord's true sheep as peculiar people, will be reprov'd by the Lord in this Day. The poor, the outcasts, the peculiar, are the ones that He styled His flock, and that He was to especially gather and especially feed and especially heal in this time. And is it not so? Is the Lord not feeding His sheep and blessing them irrespective of all sectarianism, and wherever they may be, in every land? Verily, He is searching them out and feeding them; and soon, the Harvest time closed, these will be gathered to the Heavenly fold. Meantime, the good work begun with the Gospel sheep will be extended amongst mankind.

Never again will the Lord leave His sheep without shepherding. We are not from this to understand that He made a mistake when He said, "If I go away, I will come again"; but rather that the leaving of His flock for a time was incidental to their testing, their proving, and development, that those loyal to the Lord, the principles of righteousness and the instructions of His Word might be manifested, even though they were scattered, and that others also might be manifested as unfaithful. It is, however, refreshing to know that throughout the entire Millennial Age, until all the work of perfecting the sheep shall have been accomplished, the Shepherd will be with them. Thus we read:

"And 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. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. 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." – Verses 23-25.

We are not from this to understand that the Prophet David of old is to be made Jehovah's representative and given the care of the sheep in the future. The word David signifies *beloved*; and the thought, we believe, is that the antitype of David is meant. Jesus is preeminently beloved of the Father; and the Bride class, the Church, are to be the members of Christ, their Head – members of the Beloved. Thus the Lord Jesus said of His people, "The Father Himself loveth you."

We see then that The Christ, Head and Body – Jesus and the Church – are to be the antitypical David, or Beloved of God, into whose care all who are His sheep or who desire to become His sheep during the Millennial Age will be committed. The wild beasts, representing the evil-doers, those who will devour, destroy and do harm, will be caused to cease; and the whole world will become "the fold." No longer will there be need of making a special fold, building the fences against the enemies; for the sheep will be in a quiet and restful condition – "in the woods."

In other words, the close of the Millennium will witness what the Lord has declared, that nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all His holy Kingdom. (Isaiah 11:9.) It will witness also what Jesus has declared; namely, that from that time onward, there shall be no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying, no more curse, because all the former things shall have passed away. "And He that sat upon the Throne said, Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:3-5.) Even Satan shall be bound, to deceive the world no more until Messiah shall have fully accomplished the work of perfecting the flock.

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