

Bible Study

Fred R. Coulter—March 21, 2010

This afternoon we'll have a Bible study. I already have one topic by request, two requests, as a matter of fact, concerning Ezekiel 34. Now the question is: Does Ezekiel 34 refer to the ministers in the churches of God, or does it refer just to ministers in the world who pretend to be ministers of God? We'll tie that together with something else here in just a minute. We will see that it has a broad application.

Ezekiel 34:1: "And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel.... [That refers to all twelve tribes. Shepherds—we can't say exclusively applies to religious leaders, but undoubtedly more so than political leaders, because there are some political leaders who shepherd people along and they do the same thing. The application can be quite broad.] ...Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, 'Woe to the shepherd of Israel who feel themselves!.... [In other words, they're the hirelings. We'll see about hirelings a little later. And they take care of themselves rather than take care of the sheep. So God asked the next question:] ...Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?'" (vs 1-2).

If you're a shepherd of a regular flock, you better feed them or you ain't going to have any income—is that not true? Same way, shepherds that should be representing God have a responsibility to God and from God and to the sheep. It works both ways. So they set themselves up as the elite category. We've all seen this in the church experience we've been through. You can even apply this to the Catholics, if you want to. You look at the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, do they not do the same thing? Oh, they take a poverty vow, but they sure live high on the hog—don't they? Yes!

"You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you kill the fat ones, *but* you do not feed the flock. You have not made the weak strong, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty" (vs 3-4). Now we've all experienced that—haven't we?

I remember I was sitting in a forum where we heard nothing but lies about the profligate son of the alleged apostle, and at that Bible Study, he stood up there and he looked down on the people and says, 'You're all a bunch of dumb sheep.' I was sitting in the back and I said, 'Yeah, but God doesn't expect us to remain dumb.' And sure enough, a lot of them

were because they believed the lies. Just like we talked about this morning. Whenever trouble comes and you try and work it out yourself with your own scheme, to try and hide it, it always backfires.

So here's what happened: "And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd. And they became food to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.... [Now that's like going out into the world and just being absorbed into the world.] ...My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill. Yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none searched nor sought for them" (vs 5-6). Just like some people I talked to here today. They've been to this group and they've to that group, and they've been to the other group, and so forth. And what do they find? You get along for a while and then guess what? These things start kicking in and you say, 'Oh, oh, pete and repeat, here we go again.'

So God has a message. I've read this many times and I've taken this as correction, because as one man brought up, if this is talking about all the shepherds, then that has to include you, too—doesn't it? *Yes!* Which means that lest any shepherd get into the idea or the self-exaltation of doing this to the sheep, God has a message. Just like everything else, when you study the Bible, whenever you come across something you're reading and there's some correction in it, you take that correction for yourself as well. Because it's awfully easy to say, 'Well, it's those people over there. This is not me. I'm an apostle or an evangelist, and I can hide my sins.'

"Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD. 'As I live... [Now God is swearing by His life. Whenever God says, 'As I live,' or 'I swear by Myself,' He means pay attention. *Yes!*] ...surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food to every beast of the field because *there was no shepherd*, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.' Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD, '**Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand...** [That means for what they did.] ...and cause them to cease from feeding the flock" (vs 7-10).

Now how many ministers we know of have given up being ministers. Who caused that? *God did!* Why? *Because He said unless they fed the flock, He was going to do it.* Did He do it? Has He done it? Just like God expects every one of us, He also

expects everyone who is a shepherd, or a minister, elder, teacher, whatever label you want to put on it, ***He expects them to be faithful even if they must stand alone.*** He must serve the brethren, whoever, whatever, wherever they are, according to the Word of God, according to the Spirit of God, according to the love of God, not by his own devices.

“Nor shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth that they may not be food for them.’ For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out’” (vs 10-11). Now we’ve seen a lot of people who’ve been scattered abroad that God brings back. And how many stories I’ve heard. I’ll tell you one thing: the only *Bible in the Original Order* that we have—we send it out if people have been in the Church for years and given up on God, or someone knows someone who’s been in the Church and has given up on God because of the ministers. ‘I’ll never trust another minister again as long as I live.’ Well, you shouldn’t! You should trust God and the minister should trust God and he should do what God says, and it should be evident that he’s doing what God says. It should be evident in his life by the fruits of his life.

Just like I’ve said how many times, ***you can’t accomplish spiritual things by political means.*** Never work! ***Nor can the Church of God be run by political means and human hierarchy that’s against God.*** What did Jesus say the servant would be? The one who would be greatest would be what? ***The one who would serve.*** So all the elders, including me, and when I talk to elders I’m talking to myself as well. When a person is ordained as an elder, it’s really a demotion; it’s not an exaltation, because you’re to serve the brethren. All right, we’ll go on a little further here.

So God is going to seek them out. And what is He going to do? ***He’s going to send them to where there are shepherds who are faithful.*** “As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his scattered sheep, so I will seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day” (v 12). Doesn’t that describe like all the trouble you’ve been through? You had gloomy, dark days, because of problems? ***Yes, indeed!***

I had a man who called me and said, ‘Boy, I was so glad to get the Bible. I’ve got to get back with God. I’ve repented. Where can I keep the Passover?’ “And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land and feed them on the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the places of the land where people live.... [Now you

can also apply this to the ten tribes of Israel. And have not all the shepherds of Protestantism and Catholicism fed themselves? There may be some out there that are earnest and honest, but the truth is that every Sunday-keeping pastor in his heart knows the Bible teaches the Sabbath. He knows it, because he had to pass through that going through seminary—is that not right? So you see how broad the application is. This is not just a little, narrow restricted thing. This is to anyone who is serving the people of Israel.] ...I will feed them in a good pasture...” (vs 13-14).

Then it blends into the Millennium and the re-gathering all the twelve tribes of Israel. “...and their fold shall be upon the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture they shall feed upon the mountains of Israel. **I will feed My flock,** and I will cause them to lie down,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘I will seek that which was lost, and bring again those that were driven away, and will bind up the broken, and will strengthen the sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment”” (vs 14-16).

Now if anyone is in Washington, D.C., thinking about what the vote is going to be on Obama-care, they better read that. I’ve nicknamed Washington, D. C.—Washington, D.L.C., the District of Liars and Corruption. Don’t they feed themselves? You go one term in the House of Representatives and you retire with full pay. ‘We’re going to give healthcare to the flock out here and we’re going to ration it out, but, oh, oh, we’ve got a special plan just reserved for us.’ Same with those who are church leaders. Build up assets and things out of church money for themselves, rather than work hard and build their own lives, their own homes, and their own whatever it may be. If they faithfully served God, and faithfully took care of what they should, faithfully served the brethren, God would make sure that He would bless them and they would have adequate. They would not have to go ahead and be pretentious about it, and take money from the brethren and then not help the widow and not help the poor and not help those in need.

Now He’s talking to the flock, because it’s not just the shepherds. There are the enablers within the flock, v 17: “‘And you, My flock,’ thus says the Lord GOD, ‘behold, I judge between lamb and lamb, between rams and he-goats. Is it a small thing for you to have eaten up the good pasture, but must you trample the rest of your pastures with your feet? And to have drunk of the clear waters, but must you foul the rest of it with your feet?’” (vs 17-18). Now this is talking to the ones that are below the pastors and elders; the hotshot super deacons, deaconesses, and

all the privileged. You can apply it there. You can apply this in many different ways.

How about if you apply it to all the people of Israel. Well, how about those who go along with all of the sins and iniquities of the politicians and the church leaders? Same thing, this is a broad application here. How many people have destroyed other people's lives by doing what it describes here figuratively?

"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them, 'Behold I Myself will even judge between the fat lamb and the lean lamb. Because you have thrust with side... [In other words, like a herd of sheep, a side bumping against the other one.] ...and with shoulder, and with your horns have pushed all the weak until you have scattered them abroad. Therefore, **I will save My flock**... [Christ is in the middle of doing that right now. They're still scattering. God is still scattering to get them away from the pastors that feed themselves. Now then, it's up to the flock: What now do I do?] ...Therefore, I will save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey. And I will judge between lamb and lamb. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, My servant David.... [Now that's over physical Israel—right? Prophetically toward Christ, this is Christ is the Head of the Church—would it not be? *Yes, indeed!*] ...My servant David will be a prince among them. I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make a covenant of peace with them, 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'" (vs 20-25). Then it shows that God is going to take care of them.

Let's come here to Malachi 1. I remember one time in the former church affiliation I was in, I was transferred down to Pasadena. Pastored two churches in southern California, Florence and Santa Monica. They had housing that when they would bring ministers in from the field, they would send the ones living in the homes out to the field, and the ones coming in from the field would go and move into those homes. They had a warehouse with different furniture and there was a man who was in charge of the furniture, and so forth. Dolores and I went around and we were able to choose out some furniture that we had and we moved in. I still remember the address. It was one of those freeway homes they were renting from the state of California. They still haven't put the freeway in, by the way; still there. So he was taking me around and he says, 'Come here, Fred. I want to show you something.' Okay. So he took me over to one of these high, mucky-muck evangelist's house that they were refurbishing. It had ten-foot ceilings. Now remind you, that this was in 1972. So in terms of today's

dollar, it's much more, because today's dollar is like on that gold ad. It's shrinking down to nothing.

So anyway, we're in there and here's a crew hanging drapes, all paid for by church money, paid for by third tithe, supposed to go to widows. And the apostle would use of the widow money every year a million and half for his fuel to fly around the world. So I looked at that and he said, 'Fred, you see those drapes?' *Yeah, I'm looking at them.* He said, 'Do you know how much that cost?' *No.* He said, 'That's \$60,000.' Now, I had a little recourse that they didn't count on. They gave each minister charge of a church, a checkbook to help the poor. So right there, right on that spot, I said to myself, 'I'm going to make sure that every dollar I give away they can't spend.' So I took care of the ones in Florence and Santa Monica and I was generous enough with what should be used to help them the way that it should be.

Now you have the other side. Once they get all spoiled and once they get all rich and once they get absorbed in themselves, they are like they are right here in Mal. 1. They leave doing off the things that God requires and they substitute their own ways, as brought out by what was brought out here.

Malachi 1:5: "'And your eyes shall see, and you shall say, "The LORD will be magnified beyond the border of Israel." As son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then *I am* a father, where is My honor? And if *I am* a master, where is My fear?—says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name'" (vs 5-6). Now how do those who are supposed to be serving as ministers, and in this case priests, but we can use the analogy the same thing applies today—how do they despise the name of God? *By not preaching the Truth the way that they ought to.*

Like one man told me, and I've heard it before, such and such a church was only started so that those elders that went with them could retain their pay. And some of them even bragged, 'Well, I quit in this church, and got my last check there, and I began the other church and two weeks later I got another check, so I never missed a payday.' Is that serving and feeding yourself? They weren't willing to stand for the Truth, even if it meant losing all that they thought was precious to them. They forgot about Luke 14. You count the cost and you forsake everything. If it's taken from you, you say, 'Yes, Lord,' and you go from there.

So here's how they forgot His name. "'And you say, "In what way do we despise Your name?".... [God answers]: ...You offer defiled bread upon My altar. And you say, "In what way do we

defile You?" In your saying, "The table of the LORD is contemptible"" (vs 6-7). Now what are we supposed to do? Let's put this in terms of New Testament language here. What are the people of God to be fed on today? What is the bread? *Word of God and Christ!* He said, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven.'

- we are to teach everyone to have a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ
- teach them how to study the Bible
- give them the tools on how to solve their problems.

Don't have a corporate executive where every person comes to the minister and says, 'Oh, minister, how do I solve my problems?' Sometimes people ask me, 'What do I do about it?' I say, 'Well, it's your judgment. You have to work it out.' *True!*

It can also be this way: when they go the world's Christianity to find out what they believe in their doctrines, and then bring that contemptible food within the Church, they're doing that exact same thing right here—are they not? *Yes!* Now how did the meal from Stavriniades taste? Anybody remember that? Couldn't even season it with garlic to get rid of the stench—right? Just a couple of analogies.

"And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? And if you offer the lame and the sick, *is it* not evil?.... [God says bring the best] ...Offer it now to your governor.... [Yes, run up to your governor and say, 'Here, I've got a gift for you.' And here's a lame, blind, skinny old little ox and you say, 'Here, I brought something real nice for you.' And it falls down sick and ready to die right at his feet. Will he accept it? Well, that's about what they were doing here—right?] ...Will he be pleased with you, or accept your person?" says the LORD of hosts. 'And now entreat the favor of God, and He will be gracious unto you. This has been by your *own* hand—and now will He show regard for you?' says the LORD of hosts" (vs 8-9).

Then He says that you've profaned everything. Malachi 2:1—He says something else: "And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not lay it to heart to give glory to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have indeed cursed them already because you do not lay it to heart" (vs 1-2).

You ever heard a sermon that sounded like it was a curse? *Yes, indeed!* Speaking of cursing, there was one time when the pope blessed a fleet of fishing boats, went out and got caught in a storm,

and they all sank. How's that for cursing a blessing? He didn't lay it to heart. Paul writes there in Rom. 2, says 'You who teach another, do you not teach yourself?' *Yes, that's why!* Every time, anyone who's a minister, elder, I take it this way. I read this, not just to teach or preach, but I read it for correction for me, because if I don't take the correction from the Word of God, and if I don't stay on the straight and narrow, Dolores is there to let me know right away. She's right there, trust me. But I have to do the correcting myself, just like you have to do the correcting yourself. The Word of God is not given to a minister to preach to you. The Word of God is given to all of us. How many times did Paul say, 'we,' including himself? *Yes!*

So He says, "'Behold, I will rebuke your seed; and I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your appointed feasts. And one shall carry you away with it.... [Have you ever gone to the Feast of Tabernacles and said, 'What on earth is this nonsense being preached! It's a bunch of skubalon.' You know what 'skubalon' is? That's Greek for *dung*!] ...And you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, so that My covenant might be with Levi'... [Now the covenant is with the elders and teachers of the ministry today.] ...says the LORD of hosts. 'My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him for fear; that he might fear Me, and he was in awe before My name'" (vs 3-5).

"The law of Truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned away many from iniquity.... [But, we're going to see, something happened.] ...For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you [the priests] have departed out of the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law.... [Have a lot of people stumbled at the law, the teachings, the behavior? *Yes!*] ...You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,' says the LORD of hosts. 'Therefore I have also made you contemptible and base before all the people... [Hasn't that happened to those ministers who conducted their lives in the ways that we've been reading about? *Yes!* I've heard people say, 'Oh, yeah, that minister.'] ...just as you have not kept My ways but have been partial in the law. Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, each man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?'" (vs 6-10).

At the last elders' conference last year I gave a message to all the elders on the elders' covenant with God. We do have a covenant with God. That

covenant needs to be maintained at all times. We need to be faithful to the Word of God, honest in our behavior, impartial in the things that we do and preach and teach.

There was a famous saying down in Pasadena when things were really getting tough and all the lies and sins were flurrying around like ‘skubalon’ in the wind. How many have gone down Hwy. 5 past Harris Ranch? You go down there, they’ve got this big feedlot and as you go by it you smell all this wondrous manure, just all up in the air. Sometimes it gets hot and dry and the manure is in the air. I know Dolores and I, we thought, ‘Well, we’ll by the Harris Ranch and get a steak there.’ We’ve never been there. So we stopped by there and we got out and here’s all this stench in the air. It just made us want to vomit. Then we got inside and they wanted like \$45 for a steak and we said, ‘We’re out of here.’ That’s the way things turn out. Deal treacherously!

Let’s go to John 21. This is something that everyone who’s teaching needs to go over and over all the time. The worst possible thing that can happen to anyone who is in the position to feed the flock and teach the brethren is that you become complacent with the Word of God. When I say *you*, I’m talking to me. Never become complacent with the Word of God. This is quite a thing that happened between Peter and Jesus. Remember, it wasn’t between any of the other apostles. This was repeated three times, undoubtedly because Peter denied the Lord three times—didn’t he? Yes!

John 21:15: “Therefore, when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these?’ And he said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’” What are you going to feed them? *Food in due season!* That’s why at Passover and Unleavened Bread, what do we talk about? Passover and Unleavened Bread, because that’s the lesson—is it not? Yes! Likewise with Pentecost, and all the Holy Days. Paul told Timothy, ‘Preach the Word. Be instant in season and out of season.’

‘Feed My lambs.’ That’s a responsibility—right? Christ wants those who are teaching to teach the brethren, so that all of us together can receive the highest reward possible, because

- we love God
- we love each other
- we love the Word of God
- we all believe it
- we all live by it

—and that’s what is taught. Can’t be any other way, ‘feed My lambs.’

“He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Shepherd My sheep.... [That means, *help them in the right way.*] ...He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep’” (vs 16-17).

Then he had another message for Peter and still we’re going to see Peter couldn’t help but compare himself with John. Jesus tells Peter, v 18: ““Truly, truly I say to you, since you were young, you have dressed yourself and walked wherever you desired; but when you are old, you shall stretch out your hands, and another shall dress you and bring you where you do not desire *to go.*” Now He said this to signify by what death he would glorify God. And after saying this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me’” (vs 18-19). That must have been some session with Peter there in front of all the apostles. Peter still didn’t get it. We’ll see he later learned.

But here, v 20: “But when Peter turned, he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had sat at the supper and leaned on His chest, and had said, ‘Lord, who is it that is betraying You?’ Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, what *shall happen* to this one?’.... [A little politics! ‘What’s going to be his reward? *You just told me what’s going to happen to me.* What’s going to happen to him?’] Jesus told him kindly, ‘It’s none of your business.’] ...‘If I desire that he remain alive until I come, what *is it* to you? You follow Me’” (vs 20-21). Now think about that!

- Three times: ‘feed My sheep, feed My lambs.’
- Twice: ‘follow Me.’

Five specific instructions within this short space of Scripture. Now John did live to see the return of Christ in vision as recorded in the book of Revelation that John wrote. But can you imagine, because it says it went out through the whole church, ‘Well, this disciple won’t die until Jesus comes.’ Now can you imagine what happened when John died, and Jesus didn’t return? *Sounds like something a lot of us experienced in 1972 and 1975—right?*

Now, let’s come to 1-Peter 5; we will see when Peter was old he learned his lesson. Again, this is important for everyone who’s teaching to go over. God does not want hierarchical authority that grips a church and everyone must follow what this man

says. God does not want that, should never be taught. What should be is, brethren, we all are subject to the Word of God. We are all to learn of the Word of God. If someone has something where they see that I've done something wrong, or something like that, let me know. If I've done something wrong, I need to repent of it. I don't want to go around and keep doing it—right?

Notice what he says here. 1-Peter 5:1: “*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: Feed the flock of God that is among you... [Did he get the point? Yes! He learned that very well.] ...exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but with an eager attitude; not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but by being examples to the flock of God”* (vs 1-3). Now there are two kind of examples:

1. The one from self which says, ‘I must set an example,’ but may not necessarily live it when no one else is watching.
2. The one who is an example, because that’s how he lives.

You see the difference? You don’t become an example because you’re told to be an example. You become an example because that’s how you live. That’s what God wants with all of us. We’re to be lights in the world—are we not? Yes, indeed! So these are some very important things.

“And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested... [at His return] ...you shall receive an unfading, *eternal* crown of glory.... [Then he talks about humility.] ...In the same manner, you younger men be subject to the older men; and all of you be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time” (vs 4-6).

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Now let’s come to Jeremiah 23; quite a chapter. It’s about the prophets of Israel who served Baal; very interesting information in there for us. Now I tell you, the two prophets that had the hardest prophecy ministry were Jeremiah, and the worst one was Ezekiel. You read what Ezekiel had to go through. There was one man who one time said, ‘Well, I’m Ezekiel watchman on the wall.’ I said, ‘Good. Read what Ezekiel went through and you do that.’

Jeremiah 23:15: “Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets. ‘Behold, I

will feed them wormwood, and make them drink poisonous water; for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone forth into all the land.” Now here’s a principle. You can take and apply this to the religious channel, The Trinity Broadcasting Channel. I was reading the report of a man who read a mockery of what the preachers were like that someone wrote in a book and he thought, ‘That’s a little overdone.’ So one day he was channel surfing through the channels watching the TV and he came across the religious channel and he decided to stop and watch it for a while. He said, ‘I was appalled. The mocking of those ministers I saw real life on television.’ That’s what’s happening in the United States today. Ungodliness is going forth because of the Protestant and Catholic ministers and priests.

Verse 16: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you vain; they speak a vision from their own heart, not out of the mouth of the LORD. They still say to those who despise Me, ‘The LORD has said, ‘You shall have peace!’’’ And they say to everyone who walks after the imagination of his own heart, “No evil shall come upon you!”’’ (vs 16-17).

I remember talking to a woman one time. She was double died-in-the-wool Baptist. She said, ‘The law has been nailed to the cross.’ Okay. I let her talk on. She talked about the rapture. So when she was done talking I asked her, ‘Now let me ask you a question. Since you say the law has been done away and you cannot sin, regardless of what your behavior is, and that there’s going to be a ‘rapture’ and you’re going to be *raptured away*. Now my question is this: If the rapture occurs while you’re in the middle of committing adultery with a man, will you be raptured away?’ She said, ‘Yes.’ Like it is here, ‘no evil shall come upon you.’

“For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD to see and hear His Word? Who has attended to His Word and heard *it*? Behold, the tempest of the LORD has gone forth in fury, a whirling tempest. It shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked” (vs 18-19).

And every time you read all of these things, remember all of these things came to pass. If you want a real education in how it came to pass, read the book of *Josephus* where he describes the fall of Jerusalem in 526_{B.C.}, and then read where the fall of Jerusalem again in 70_{A.D.} It will just absolutely blow you away of the evil and everything that took place exactly like Jeremiah prophesied and Ezekiel prophesied. It happened the second time in 70_{A.D.} and both times it happened on the ninth of Ab.

Verse 20: ““The anger of the LORD shall not return, until He has executed and until He has performed the purposes of His heart; in the latter days you shall understand it perfectly.... [So this is a prophecy for our day. So as we've been talking about the shepherds, now we'll talk about the prophets, which are pretty much equal to the same thing and find that they have done grievous things against God as well.] ...I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.... [put in your margin Psa. 138, where God says He ‘exalts His Word above His name.’ Isn’t that interesting? All sacred-namers better keep that in mind. Salvation comes through Christ, not through pronunciation of a correct name.] ...But if they had stood in My counsel and had caused My people to hear My words... [So the Word of God, even if a false minister or prophet preaches the Word of God correctly to cause] ...My people to hear My words then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings” (vs 20-22). In other words, God will honor the correct teaching of His Word anywhere at any time. Isn’t that amazing? That’s how important it is.

““Am I a God Who is near,’ says the LORD, ‘and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him?’ says the LORD. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’ says the LORD.... [Yes, with all that He’s created and everything that He has made.] ...‘I have heard what the prophets said, who prophesy lies in My name, saying, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed”’” (vs 23-25). You go through the Trinity Channel and it’s, ‘God spoke to me.’ Same thing. God didn’t speak to them.

““How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies and who are prophets of the deceit of their own heart? They scheme to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell, each one to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten My name for Baal.... [Now this v 28 I take very personally, and all of us need to also, but especially everyone who is teaching]: ...The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream. And **he who has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully...**” (vs 26-28). There it is right there. ‘Let him speak My Word faithfully.’ Rightly dividing the Word of Truth. That’s what it has to be.

““What *is* the chaff to the wheat?” says the LORD. ‘Is not My Word like a fire?’ says the LORD; ‘and like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets who steal My words each one from his neighbor. Behold, I *am* against the prophets who use their tongues and say, “He says,” when I did not say.

Behold, I *am* against those who prophesy false dreams and tell them, and cause My people to go astray by their lies and by their wantonness. Yet I did not send them nor command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,’ says the LORD” (vs 28-32). Pretty strong message—right? Yes, indeed!

Now let’s go to John 10, and then there are a couple of other questions here I’ll go ahead and cover. Just like everyone of us, we are all to be faithful with the Word of God unto death—is that not true? Does not God require that of every one of us? Yes! Did He not require it of Peter three times by saying, ‘Feed My sheep’? Yes, indeed!

Now here in John 10 Jesus talks about the fact that He is the true Shepherd. I think it’s interesting. John 10:1: ““Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and a robber.... [There is no other way to salvation except the way of God. Everyone who says, ‘Your soul goes to heaven,’ is a liar! The only way you receive eternal life is through the resurrection. Is that not what the Bible teaches? Yes! ‘He’s a thief and a robber.’] ...But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.... [Christ went ahead before us. He prepared the way.] ...When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice”” (vs 1-4). That’s why today we have the resources here—don’t we? Isn’t it interesting? We all have our Bibles; we all have them open; we’re all reading what it is here. Is it all according to the Word of God? Yes! Who’s voice is it? I may be speaking, but these are the words of Christ—are they not?

I remember, I forgot where I was, but someone came up to me afterward and said, ‘We heard the voice of Christ through your preaching.’ And I said, ‘Make sure it was the words of Christ.’ I explained to them the same way here, but don’t equate me as speaking as Christ would speak. But if I speak His words, they are the words of Christ that came from His voice.

““But they will never follow a stranger for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers”” (v 5). So as you check the doctrine, as you check the things,

- find out whose teaching the Truth
- who’s teaching the right way
- What are their fruits?
- What are they doing?

- How are the people that they are teaching?
- Do they love one another?
- Do they love God?
- Do they serve one another?
- Do they pray for one another?
- or Are they all the chattel of the minister?

We've all seen that, too—haven't we? *Yes!* So we have to ask the question: When are we all going to learn? *There comes a time we've got to learn.* There comes a time when we have to apply the lessons—right? Not only learn it, but to understand it and live it and do it and keep it—correct? *Yes!*]

"Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. Therefore, Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers... [Now that's an interesting statement. Someone asked me sometime, 'Why did God let all these false messiahs and saviors and gods come on the scene before Jesus did?' *So that you would have plenty of chance of seeing all of their fruits and know what they did, and then could see the fruits of Christ and what He did.* It fulfills right here, 'all who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers] ...but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life, and may have *it* more abundantly... [Of course ultimately that is eternal life in the Kingdom of God.] ...I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the* shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them. Now the hireling flees because he is a hireling and has no concern for the sheep"]' (vs 6-13).

Again, that helps define who are those who are serving God, feeding the flock, and I use all of these things as judgment also for my behavior, because Paul said, 'You who teach others, don't you teach yourself.' How can we in good conscience preach and teach things and we ourselves do not follow it? *Can't be!* Doesn't mean we're perfect. I make mistakes, I do things that I regret and have to repent, just like you do.

So I hope that can help answer the question, help you, give you some tools to help you with some of the experiences you are going through. But ultimately it is the judgment that each one of us has to make individually and personally. And take all of the experiences that you have gone through not as a

disillusionment, but as a learning lesson to help you draw closer to God so you can know more of God's way and learn more of God's Word, and so that you can have a stronger relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

A lot of people immediately, when they find out about things, they want to immediately run off to church, because they're used to being churched. Now that's okay, but like many are doing now because they've been burned over and over again in different churches, they use the website. This one man I talked to, he says he's gone through almost every Church of God website searching for the Truth. He doesn't want to get burned again. He had it enough. He said, 'Enough is enough is enough.' I told him, 'Well, you are doing the right thing. You need to do that.' If the Truth is out there and someone is really searching for the Truth, they will find it.

Here are three questions that we have to ask ourselves:

1. Will you obey God if commanded to?
Yes, absolutely we should—isn't that true? God says do this, we do it.

2. Will you obey God if you are told you don't need to?

Now that's a very interesting question—let me give you an example. When the apostasy reached a critical mass right at the beginning of it, after all the Stavrinidesm that people went through, someone got up at the headquarters church and gave a sermon saying that it's okay to eat unclean foods. Now there were 1200 people in that auditorium. That afternoon and evening hundreds of them were at the Red Lobster and various places where they sold unclean fish foods, and they were eating them. How quickly will some people go against God when they're told, 'Well, you don't need to keep that commandment'?

How many people do that when they're told, someone comes up and says, 'Well, I've read my Bible and all the way through the Bible, I see I'm to keep the Sabbath. I've been coming to this Sunday-keeping church now for however long, and what do you think about that?' The minister says, 'Oh, that was nailed to the cross. You don't need to.' Right at that point there's a choice has to be made—right? Do I obey what God says or do I obey what a man says? What did Peter say? 'We ought to obey God rather than men'—is that not correct? There it is. There's your answer.

3. Will you obey God if you're commanded not to?

That's a point of martyrdom—is it not? *Of course!*

God has offered us eternal life. He's given us the begetting of eternal life, the earnest of the down payment. He said, 'Don't be afraid of those who are able to kill the body, but not able to take your life.' He'll resurrect it. That's why in Heb. 11 it says of Abraham that he went out to offer Isaac because he knew that He could raise him from the dead. So there has to come a time in the conviction of what we believe, not that we go out and we preach martyrdom. 'Everybody martyrdom! Go out and cause a storm and get yourself killed and get into heaven.' I have a message, I wish this message would come from Allah to all Muslims: 'Hey, guys, we're out of virgins.' There comes a time that we are going to have to stand us for Christ and if it costs our life, that's the way it is. The only thing they can do is kill the body, but **they can't take away your eternal life.** And we can resolve ourselves to that.

How should we react to those who claim to be brethren, but believe the God of the Old Testament was the Father? *It would be a matter of doctrinal study really.* When you get down to questions like this, it's because people have not really studied the Bible. I had a question here just recently where some people were teaching that Jesus had a Nazarite vow. Now how do we know that Jesus did not have a Nazarite vow? *Because He was called a winebibber.*

Now John had a Nazarite vow from birth. I often picture John the Baptist as having flaming red hair, long beard, great sweeping eyebrows, and dressed with this camel's hair, the leather girdle around there, and with piercing, blazing eyes saying, 'Repent!' Wooo, almost scare you, 'Yes, yes, John. But it's interesting. He was the son of a priest, but never practiced anything for the priesthood. Instead of telling people to go take the ceremonial baths in the pools around the temple, he went down to the Jordan River. And of course all the priests and everybody in the Levitical community, and most of the Jews knew that he was the son of priest. So when he showed up on the Jordan River, because he was in seclusion till the day of the beginning of his ministry, I bet they kept saying, 'I remember that one who was born of this old woman. Remember all the celebration that happened there, that he was to be a prophet. I wonder where he is.' Ten years later, fifteen years later, so however long it was, was he thirty years old, we don't know. We're not told. And all of a sudden he shows up at the Jordan there saying, 'Repent!' That's why the committee of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Levites came on down to find out, 'Who are you?' They knew he was the son of a priest.

I would say this, that in a situation like that, find out why they believe that, and don't accept the fact that—here, let's go to Matthew 11:25. Let's see what Jesus Himself said. Now there are some prophecies in the Bible that elude to God the Father. There are: 'The Lord said to My Lord.' I looked until I saw in a vision the Son of man coming on the clouds to the Ancient of Days' (Dan. 7). There are prophecies where it talks of the Lord Who was the one Who became Jesus Christ, where it says, 'And I will be a Father to them.' You read the context carefully. That is in the context of being re-gathered in the Millennium. It is the prophecy of Jesus (Isa. 9) was that He would become an everlasting Father. So how do you put all of those together.

Matthew 11:25: "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight *to do* this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal Him'" (vs 25-27). If He were the God of the Old Testament, He would have already been revealed—don't you think? *Yes!*

Now let's come back to Isaiah 9, and this is another prophecy. It was a very hard time for the Jews to figure out. Here is the prophecy that Jesus would be born. Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God... [So here calling a babe Who would become a man, the Mighty God.] ...the everlasting Father..." At the time that He's born as a babe, He's certainly not going to be a father anytime soon. Would you agree to that? *Yes!* You also have this: when Jesus was a grown man and in His ministry, much to the consternation of some of these pseudo-prophets, He never married Mary Magdalene. So when is Jesus going to become the everlasting Father? After the resurrection of the saints and the marriage of the wife to the Lamb, and they together bring more sons and daughters into the kingdom of God during the Millennium, and He will become an everlasting Father. Is God the Father an everlasting Father? *Yes!* That doesn't take away from the fatherhood of God the Father, anymore than you have children. They grow up and they have children. Does that take away from your fatherhood? *Of course not!* So that's when He will become the everlasting Father.

So to help answer the question here concerning this, part of the problem is that there

needs to be more study concerning the subject and not speculation, but let the Scriptures put together the Scriptures, ‘line upon line; here a little, there a little,’ so you get the full complete story. So that would require some other study and things like that.

How to react to ministers that allow brethren to stay in their congregation. What he should do is teach them the Truth. That’s simple. Teach them the Truth.

- Do you believe the Truth?
- Do you abide by the Truth?
- Do you love the Truth?

If you teach the Truth and it’s right and it’s correct, which it is, well, then that ought to persuade the minds of those people that they should be able to change their thinking concerning it. So you end up in a policing problem if there’s not the teaching. How are you going to police it? What are you going to do with sacred names? What are you going to do with clean and unclean meats? Now what are you going to do with long hair, short hair? What are you going to do with plunging necklines down to the belly button? All of those things.

If I were you, I would ask the minister if you know him, ‘Would you please do a study and give a study or sermon on the God of the Old Testament. Is He God the Father, and if it’s true, can you prove it and if it’s not, what do we know? Take it from there. That way you can find out. You don’t have to worry about policing; you don’t have to get in an argument about it. Just let the Word of God settle it. Then you’ll find out, does he rightly divide the Word of God? Can he teach the Truth to the brethren and will they believe it?’

That’s the best way to let the answer come. See, because with partial knowledge you don’t want to stand up and condemn people and say, ‘Oh, you believe this, You ought not believe it,’ without teaching people what the Bible shows we need to believe.

Turned out to be a very interesting Bible study this afternoon.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ezekiel 34:1-25
- 2) Malachi 1:5-9
- 3) Malachi 2:1-10
- 4) John 21:15-19
- 5) 1-Peter 5:1-6
- 6) Jeremiah 23:15-32
- 7) John 10:1-13
- 8) Matthew 11:25-27
- 9) Isaiah 9:6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Luke 14
- Romans 2
- Psalm 138
- Hebrews 11
- Daniel 7
- Isaiah 9

Also referenced: Book: *Josephus*

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