

BIBLE CLASS 16.022023 THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS
Ezekiel 34:17 & Matthew 25:32

I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says Yahweh. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; and feed them with judgment. Ezek 34:15 -16

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Matt.25:32-34
(Mat 25:32-1 KJV)

³¹ Kisha Yesu akawaambia, "Usiku huu wa leo, ninyi nyote mtakuwa na mashaka nami, maana Maandiko Matakatiifu yasema: `Nitampiga mchungaji, na kondoo wa kundi watatawanyika.`" ³² Lakini baada ya kufufuka kwangu, nitawatangulieni Galilaya." ³³ Petro akamwambia Yesu "Hata kama wote watakuwa na mashaka nawe na kukuacha, mimi sitakuacha kamwe." ³⁴ Yesu akamwambia, "Kweli nakwambia, usiku huu kabla jogoo hajawika, utanikana mara tatu." (Mat 25:31-34 SWA)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The prophet Ezekiel is reminding the Jews in captivity in Babylon that Israel is God's flock, Yahweh was their shepherd, as the psalmist wrote regarding their deliverance from Egypt, "He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." (Psa. 78:52) of David we read, "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands. (Psa 78:70-72) The shepherds of Israel were the rulers, the Judges, the King and his princes, who should have been thoroughly familiar with the God given, Law of Moses. There were some worthy rulers, but many worthless ones who had a bad influence upon their people, God's flock. Jeremiah speaks of these 23:1 & 2 "Woe be to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! Says YAHWEH. Therefore the LORD God of Israel says this against the pastors that feed my people; You have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says YAHWEH".

It is the same protest that condemns the exile in Babylon and those Jews remaining in Judah. Ezek. 34:2 woe be to the shepherds of Israel that feed themselves! The scattered flock of Israel became meat to all the beasts of the field. (see Deut. 28:26). Their shepherds ruled over them with force and cruelty

And they robbed the flock and fed upon the fat, which was forbidden to the Israelites in Leviticus 7:23,24. As a result of their greed and corruption these political shepherds were violently ended. Thus says the Yahweh; 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 anymore; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. (Eze. 34:10) Judah's rulers were finished and Ezekiel's prediction came to pass, "Thus says, Adonai Yahweh the Lord GOD; "Remove the diadem, take off the crown: this shall not *be* the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*. (Ezek. 21:26-27) so it came to pass, Jerusalem was besieged in 597B.C. and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587B.C. The Jews that survived were taken into captivity.

Yahweh however did not forsake his people altogether, he still regarded the remnant as His flock and in 34:11-12, He makes it clear that He will be their Shepherd "For this says the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. (Eze. 34:11-12) Under his care the Israelites would be protected, for he vowed, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that which* was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: (Eze. 34:16)

It is where a proper understanding of God-manifestation reveals the full meaning of the prophet's words, because Yahweh became the good Shepherd by revealing Himself in his Son. This is demonstrated in his teaching preserved in the Gospel record by John, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees, because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (Joh 10:11-15)

Not long after these words were spoken the Lord Jesus was arrested and put on trial, found guilty by the ruling authorities and put to death by crucifixion. But this was not the end for after three days he rose from the dead. He revealed himself to his disciples as John records in chapter 21 So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these? He said unto him, Yes, Lord; thou know that I love you. He said unto

him, Feed my lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Following this Do you love me? He said unto him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my sheep. He said unto 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 unto him, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. (Joh 21:15-17) Following this, 40 days past during which Jesus shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: (Act 1:3) He ascended to the right hand of God in heaven, after which his disciples having received the gift of speaking in different languages continued the work that Jesus began, the apostles Peter and John being the foremost advocate of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter never forgot the request Jesus asked of him and it is clearly part of his teaching about Christian life “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that does not fade away.” (1Pe 5:2-4)

Paul, himself a true shepherd, exhorted the leading brethren in Ephesus to feed the flock with true kindness and care. All such faithful shepherds shall receive a royal trust of larger dimensions. We are not all in the formal position of shepherds, but all of us have an appointed care of one another. Brother Roberts pointed out that “The shepherd spirit applies to the whole (membership), because of Christ; and though wolves sometimes array themselves in fleece, for the sake of the attention that belongs to the sheep, we must take care not to be betrayed into a neglect of the precept and examples given for our development, in preparation for the unspeakable exaltation that awaits us, if Christ approve.”

Ezekiel continues in verse 23, “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.” It is important to note that the name ‘David’ in the Hebrew language actually means “Beloved” and is used as such seven times in the New Testament referring to Jesus as my beloved son. This undoubtedly is whom Ezekiel refers to in the following verses, “And I the LORD 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. 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. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. (Eze. 34:23-27)

So referring now to our second verse Matthew 25:32:-

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”: Matt.25:32-34

Who are the blessed of the father of Christ Jesus? James provides the answer, (2:5) “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? It is the saints who “take the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever (Dan.7:18) and who, being washed from their sins in the blood of Christ, are made kings and priests with to reign with him (Rev.1:6; 5:10)

The nations as such **do not** inherit the Kingdom but are governed by the Kingdom in the hands of the saints. Jesus taught who his brethren are, “whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother....” (Mat 12:50) what then is the meaning of nations? The word is *ethnos* in Greek and the same word is used when the Jewish believes agreed with Peter concerning the baptism of Cornelius and his friends, saying “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”. (Acts 11:18)

Clearly Jesus is not referring to any and every Gentiles, but to those to whom the Truth has clearly been named and received, but not necessarily baptised because it is knowledge that brings responsibility. Jesus’s estimate of Jews according to the flesh was, “You are of your father the devil”. Gentiles like ourselves and all others who have heard and accepted the Gospel of the Kingdom and the things concerning Jesus Christ, have had the truth unveiled to our minds and understanding some hold firm to till the end of their lives, others find the lust of other things entering in make them unfruitful Mark 4:19 and they give up and return to the ways of the world. But in doing so they do despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29) The redeemed of God are taken out of all nations (Rev 5:10) it is not an exaggeration then to say that those rejected at the judgment seat of Christ would similarly have come from all nations, since

the gospel was according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: (Rom 16:26)

That there will be many rejected at the Judgment seat of Christ for many will know what God requires but will they have put their knowledge into action? It is important to take heed to the instruction Jesus gives, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. (Mat 25:40) Not what we know but what we do with that knowledge is the deciding factor as to whether we will be worthy of life eternal, as Jesus says “Not everyone that says unto me Lord, Lord, but he that does the will of my Father.”

This parable being so decisive, why should the figure of sheep and goats be introduced? As we learned in Ezekiel, Yahweh promises to be Israel’s shepherd, and people of Israel his sheep. Sheep are generally submissive to the shepherd they know, whereas goats are fixed on their own intentions. Sheep are white or light coloured, whereas goats are black and brown. Sheep’s wool is soft whereas Goats have coarse hair. In the Middle East Goats have been responsible for destruction of trees and foliage, having extirpated many species of trees that once covered the hills. Goats will mingle with sheep, but have no inclination to breed together. At night they gather in distinctive groups and as well as they keep themselves apart. Sheep generally are obedient to their shepherds but goats can be more difficult to herd. Goats were often offered for a sin offering in Leviticus.

DHH