

A Shepherd's Role

By Warren Zehrung – October 29, 2011

Brethren, shortly after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong, when the apostasy came full force upon the people of God, no evangelist or church leader, took a stand for the Truth.

The people of God had no man on earth, willing or able, to shepherd them in their time of great confusion.

Many ministers, who were once seemingly on track, started preaching watered-down, false doctrines.

Most of the faithful brethren fled the apostasy before the ministry spoke up.

So I would like to ask the question, what is the proper role and duty of the faithful and true ministry?

In John 21, Jesus Christ told Peter, "*Feed My sheep.*"

Jesus warns us to be very cautious because of the false ministers that abound in the end time.

Matthew 24:11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Sadly, brethren, this past year has witnessed more 'minister led' division among the people of God.

A good shepherd does not scatter the sheep. God speaks of this over and over again.

Today, there is no one man that all of the greater Church of God brethren would recognize as their leader.

We are a people without a physical shepherd that all of the flock can look to. Is this the way it is supposed to be?

God says in Jeremiah 50:

Jeremiah 50:6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, and they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill [the brethren have gone from group to group], they have forgotten their resting place.

The people of God cannot come together. As we look at this scripture in Jeremiah 50, picture the shepherds going out into the sheep and shooing away the sheep in every direction.

Just look at the scattered state of the Church of God today – scattered over every mountain and hill. That is not what God desires. We are talking about the ministry here. They have failed in their duty to be good shepherds to unite the flock, and to have the flock look to the True Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

A good shepherd of the brethren should be imitating our True Shepherd, Jesus Christ

It is God who has ordained the role of Pastor. Pastor is just another word for shepherd.

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Brethren, let me explain right up front, when we read these points, these are not ranks, but they are gifts given to individuals to be able to accomplish the job that God wants them to do.

Let us begin in verse one of Ephesians 4, and see what is being spoken of here.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called,

What is this vocation "*wherewith we are called?*" Brethren, we are called to be 'Christ followers.' He is the Shepherd, and we are the sheep. Christianity is our vocation!

Ephesians 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

We do not see offenses, haughtiness, and ugliness, taking place in this picture. It is a beautiful picture of brethren. What are they doing?

Ephesians 4:3 Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Brethren, do we live our lives "*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" Not competing with other groups. Why?

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is [only] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

But notice closely verse 7:

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Notice that, "*gift of Christ.*" That means that Jesus provided gifts to help us maintain the unity and the oneness of the Body of Christ – the Church. The context here, brethren, is gifts.

Ephesians 4:8and gave gifts to men.

We understand in the next couple of verses, that Jesus is the one who came to the earth, but He is now seated beside His Father in heaven.

Let us look at these gifts.

Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Brethren, understand this, Herbert W. Armstrong was given a gift, and he exercised that gift. No other man has been given that same gift. We have not seen that response, or that gift, exercised by anyone else. But here is what happened. We have to understand these positions here in verse 11, as gifts. Right after WWII, some men in the Church decided that these gifts were like military rankings. I think of a Five star General as being the top rank, and under him you would have a Colonel, a Major, a Captain, a Lieutenant, a Sergeant, a Corporal, and all of the way down to the GI, and privates

And the men in the Church saw Ephesians 4:11 as a ranking order. Who is in charge of whom? Who can tell the other one what to do?

And so, when we came into the Church, many of us found a ranking structure, or pecking order, of who is over whom.

We came in as a lay person, and then there was this ranking order – deacon - local church elder, elder, (getting higher and higher) preaching elder, associate pastor, assistant pastor, pastor, senior pastor, evangelist, pastor general, apostle. That was thought of as a ranking system, a pecking order, of who had the control, the power over others.

We have seen what happens. Carnal limitless authority over others leads to abuse, and it can lead to ruthlessness.

Brethren, understand this, some ministers got to thinking, "I can do what I want, because I am the minister. The minister cannot speak for God, you may have heard, "How dare you question the ministry."

I was once at a ministerial conference, with many other ministers, and amongst us was one evangelist. And we were all discussing how best to deal with a certain situation. Many of the men had experiences and examples to bring up. They were saying, "Well if we do it this way, or the scripture says that we can appeal to God and do it this way." But then the evangelist said that he could over-rule even one hundred ministers, because he outranked them all. This was said, right there in the ministerial conference. So, what the hundred men, who had prayed, fasted and sought God's Will thought, or wanted to put on the table, as something to be considered, need not even be considered because whatever the evangelist thought he outranked them. And that was his words.

Brethren, we must understand that we each have a covenant relationship directly with God.

Jesus died in order to make that covenant relationship with God possible.

A ranking system, like some of the men thought that the Church should be set up, separates one from God's covenant relationship. No minister, nor anyone else, can interject themselves into our covenant relationship with God. You and I have a covenant relationship with God. No-one can come in and override what you believe, and that God has shown you in your heart, according to the scriptures. You cannot say to someone, forget the conclusion that you have prayerfully come to, and do it my way. No-one can put themselves between you and God.

God did not create a pecking order, even though it runs very deep in the church. It does not work like that, where the lay person can be told by the deacon, and the deacon by the local church elder, and you go all of the way up to the evangelist, and the pastor general, to the apostle. You cannot find it written in the scriptures.

In fact, this is where the false concept of the wife being a lesser Christian than the husband, who out-ranks her, came from. They taught that the husband always gets to have his way! The Bible teaches no such thing. Marriage is not a ranked arrangement. God created Eve from Adam's side. Marriage is a side-by-side covenant relationship. It pictures Jesus Christ and the church.

The primary responsibility is placed on the husband to make sure his wife comes behind in nothing. The wife is not the lesser Christian, the lesser being, or the lesser member.

In Christ, there is neither male nor female. One does not out-rank the other, and one does not have power over the other.

Jesus died for His wife to be able to succeed, so she could prevail, thrive, develop, and to be successful.

I Corinthians 1:7 So that ye come behind in no gift;

The wife does not come behind her husband when it comes to power, control and gifts. That is not the marriage covenant that God has set up.

The Church is not a slave to Christ, and that is an incorrect connotation. The Christian wife is not a slave to her husband. That is what happens when men go off on doctrine, and it causes all kinds of hurt and imbalance in what God plans.

The same ministers taught that God backs up whatever a minister teaches. That is false. It is only when a minister teaches according to the Scriptures that things work out, because God backs up what He says in the Bible.

What are the spiritual gifts for?

Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

What is the role of these shepherds? What is their duty? We find the answer in verse 13.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

A pastor, who is a true shepherd, protects his flock.

Ephesians 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

These gifts are for a very specific purpose. They are to bring us to the perfection of Christ. We will not get there, but we need to move that way.

A pastor who is a true shepherd points the brethren to Christ, and to live as Christ does.

Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

We are to become like Christ in all things. Yes, Jesus is the Head of the Church. The husband is the head of the wife. But that does not mean that he gets to be the king and the wife does all of the bidding. The same thing with Christ, He did not come to this world and treat us that way. He became the servant, lower than us. He was down on His hands and knees serving us. That is what brings true unity.

Notice how it all comes together in verse 16:

Ephesians 4:16a From whom (Jesus Christ, the Head) the whole body fitly joined together.....

We do not see God's church fitly joined together. We are in a mode, in the greater Church of God, of thinking that a lot of people are not needed, are not wanted, and they should be disfellowshipped, kicked out, put away, and not sought after.

Ephesians 4:16b and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Brethren, we have seen some of that. At the Feast of Tabernacles this year, God blessed us richly, seeing the edifying of the body in love.

How can we, today, know what the duties of a pastor are? What are the duties of a true shepherd? The answer is, Jesus Christ is our Shepherd, and He is our example of what a pastor [shepherd] should be. How many people actually believe that, and live as though Jesus Christ were the example for the ministry and for all of us?

So many of God's people today are like the ancient Israelites, and they are in need of a shepherd. That is not a bad thing to be in need of a shepherd. But the ancient Israelites eyes were not on Christ. I might ask the same question, "How many of us have our eyes set on Christ."

Moses prayed to God for a replacement for himself. Remember he was told that he could not go into the Promised Land because of his unbelief. He made his mistakes, but he was used by God as a shepherd for a long time. Moses prayed for a good leader for God's people. He prayed for a shepherd for the sheep.

Numbers 27:15-16 And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

You see these unconverted Israelites (God was not calling them to conversion and they were carnal in every way) needed a shepherd to lead them. They needed a shepherd that they could see.

Numbers 27:17 Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

Just picture a shepherd with a flock of sheep, leading them in, and leading them out. He takes them to green pastures. God compares us to sheep, who need a shepherd.

Numbers 27:18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

Joshua was chosen to be the shepherd after Moses.

Brethren, today, the painful scattering and separation of God's people continues. There is no leader in the greater Church of God who is recognized by all the scattered brethren. No one leader today would be able to warn all the Church brethren of anything, like when it is time to flee, or to speak concerning doctrine and so forth.

Some leaders teach that their group is more special to God than any other group of God's people. Leaders want the power, they want the control, and some people say that they want the money.

It is only in looking to Jesus Christ that we can learn the proper role of a shepherd. This is what we need to do, brethren, look to Jesus Christ. We are going to see that Jesus describes Himself as a Good Shepherd. What does a Good Shepherd do, and how would we know a Good Shepherd when we see one?

Sometimes Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd, sometimes He calls Himself the Great Shepherd, and He is also referred to as the Chief Shepherd. Jesus defines what a good shepherd is.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

Jesus died for us. He lay down His life for us. A good pastor will be laying down his life for the brethren just as Jesus did.

How many Pastors would lay it all on the line to save a single member of their congregation?

How many Pastors would give up their reputations, their position, their salary, and everything that goes with it, to restore a hurt member who has been driven away? That is what Jesus Christ would do.

Jesus continues:

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

There is that close relationship. This is a covenant relationship.

Jesus Christ is not willing that any should perish, and that extends not just through the Church, but even through the world. That is the attitude of a good shepherd.

Luke 15:4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

That is what a good shepherd does, he lays his life down, and he puts his own life in jeopardy to save the sheep. It seems that too many 'false' shepherds today are into the size of their congregation, into the numbers, and willing to push out of the congregation those who try to live according to the Word of God. All who live righteously are going to see persecution. That happens in the Church of God. Do not assume, as I once did, that if somebody was kicked out of the Church that they were doing something evil, or that they were doing something wrong, or that they were doing something against God. No, many people who were doing God's will were put out by shepherds that you could not refer to as "good" shepherds. One minister's excuse for not pursuing one lost sheep was, it does not do any good, and it never works. Brethren I submit to you that that kind of reasoning is denying the scriptures, it is denying the power of God, and it is not following the example of Jesus Christ who would, knowing that God the Father is in charge, leave the ninety nine and lay down his life to save one. Jesus Christ gave His life to save us.

Jesus Christ, besides being called the Good Shepherd, is also called the Great Shepherd, and later we will see that He is the Chief Shepherd.

A great shepherd perfects the sheep through the covenant relationship that they have with God.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Great Shepherd is working in us, and making us perfect, through this everlasting covenant.

Jesus rules from heaven, and brings us toward perfection in a Covenant relationship.

A Covenant relationship with God is the highest form of godly government. That is God in us, God living in our lives, and directing our steps, and our actions.

Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd who will establish us in the Kingdom of God.

1 Peter 5:4 "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away."

The Chief Shepherd rewards His own, and returns to restore the Kingdom of God over all the earth.

Jesus is our role model on how to recognize a true shepherd.

Brethren, we are speaking about some of the faults of the ministry, but it applies to the brethren as well. Sadly, some people will fall into line under a pretend shepherd in order to curry favor with their leadership. They think that they are on safe ground, as long as they are in the minister's good graces. When a minister is not a good shepherd, you do not want to be in his good graces. Notice what God says to those false ministers. Jesus said in the end time that there would be false prophets, false ministers, and false teachers. They will look brilliant and wonderful, and no wonder, because Satan himself disguises himself as a minister of light.

Ezekiel 34:1a And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel,

For us today, brethren, those are spiritual shepherds, the ministry.

Ezekiel 34b and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe *be* to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Everybody knows that the shepherd takes the sheep out to green pastures to feed the sheep. But here are some ministers getting fat off the sheep. Jesus said "Feed my sheep."

Ezekiel 34:3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but* ye feed not the flock.

This is God's warning! God is saying that the ministry should be feeding the flock good spiritual food. It should be food that points them to Jesus Christ and to salvation.

There are men in organizations, who will tell you that these verses in Ezekiel apply to the Kings and rulers in Ezekiel's day.

Brethren, who is Ezekiel written to? The book of Ezekiel is written to us, end-time Israel. Ancient Israel did not get to hear Ezekiel's message in his day, because they went into captivity, and the book was not delivered to them.

The Hebrew indicates that this next verse refers to sheep that need 'extra' care from a shepherd.

To us, brethren, we could apply it to those who are scattered, shattered, abused, the elderly, the poor, those who are easily led astray, those who are imprisoned, uneducated, weak, and even gullible. This could include those who are more easily victimized.

Ezekiel 34:4a The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up *that which was* broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away,

Brethren, we have seen an incredible driving away in our Church history. Many, many people driven away, and God says, "*neither have ye brought again that which was driven away.*"

Ezekiel 34b neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

God is holding the ministry accountable. They have not been treated with consideration nor justice. Also, making them do things that were not spiritually profitable for them.

When the apostasy hit the Church of God, no evangelist, no church leader, not a one stood for the truth.

Many of the faithful, left the Church before most of the ministry spoke up. We were all under one heading, Worldwide Church of God, and we thought that was all that there was for a while. But it broke up because of these wrong practices, and these wrong teachings. Yes, the gospel went to all of the earth, and a great work was done. We are still reaping the benefits of that great outcry of the gospel that went out. But, many were lost.

Where were the shepherds when everything came apart at the seams? Why did the Church scatter to the four winds? Here, in Ezekiel, we find out why:

Ezekiel 34:5 And they were scattered, because *there is* no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

So many of the brethren were just devoured and used up, but thankfully, some have held on to the truth.

Brethren, there was not a single leading minister, trained to shepherd the flock, who stayed to help the flock. It is true, that hundreds upon hundreds of ministers were not true Shepherds. If they had been, they would have been laying their life down to preserve the unity, and preserve the people, and the truth.

Ministers, senior Pastors and even the Evangelists, who were trained for years to understand God's way, did not stand up for the truth during the apostasy. They proved useless in the crisis following the death of Herbert Armstrong.

It is also true that because of the scattering, many brethren now have no shepherd to feed and lead them today. Some think that they do, but some are being put upon in a terrible way. There are those men who put themselves forward as high ranking ministers with some highfalutin title, but they are not shepherds of Jesus Christ. They are their own shepherds, and they are abusing the brethren.

Ezekiel 34:6a My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill:

That describes the people today, but not just today it goes all the way back to the ancient Israelites as well, but it applied definitely to today. You can see God's people being tossed and turned, going from here to there, searching and looking. Brethren, when you do that measure it against the scriptures.

Ezekiel 34:6b yes, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek *after them*.

God says that no one did seek after them. I think what we can gather from this statement is that the church corporate organizations, that are going about trying to build-up their own groups, is not valid in God's eyes. Some of these groups say that they have 4,000 members, and are trying to get everybody out there. We are searching for everybody. Why would God say, "*none did search or seek after them.*" It must be that no-one is searching, or pulling the people of God together in these large groups in a proper way. From God's point of view, *none did search or seek after them.*" So the people of God are just floating around. We will cluster in small numbers, but nothing that the world can see and know of.

Ezekiel 34:7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Most ministers will not consider that these verses refer to them. God calls the ministry “*My Shepherds*,” meaning that they had the responsibility, and are accountable and answerable directly to God.

Ezekiel 34:8 As I live, said the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

One of the most telling signs of the times is that God's people have been put out, and forced out of the church even for political reasons. They have been disfellowshipped, not for sin, or not for heresy. God says that not only did they not search for my flock, even when their attention was called to those cases, but the ministry continued to be a part of the scattering!

Ezekiel 34:9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

God says that He holds the ministry accountable To Him! This includes ministers who made merchandise of the members of the Church of God, and those who did not protect the brethren from false doctrines.

Ezekiel 34:10a Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand,

Thankfully, God says that not a one will fall to the ground that God does not know about. God is eternally merciful, and we can thank God for that. But He is going to hold someone responsible.

Ezekiel 34:10b and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore;

Now that is scary. God says that the time is coming when this ministry, who is not properly taking care of God's people, will not be able to feed themselves any more. It is going to come to a halt. Will it be through further scattering and people stopping tithing? People will be so scattered, and persecution will come and shut them down. But be sure of this, as God says:

Ezekiel 34c for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

God is going to put a stop to it. Jesus does not leave us without hope. Look at what the Good, the Great, and the Chief Shepherd is doing.

Ezekiel 34:11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even I*, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

Now that is beautiful. Jesus Christ will seek out His people, and when Jesus Christ seeks out His people, He finds them.

We have the choice and the opportunity to serve God, but if we do not, His Plan is sure, because He is the Good, the Great and the Chief Shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:12 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 will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

This is certainly an end time setting, because God uses an efficiency of words, and it pertains to our day!

Ezekiel 34:13 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 upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

This is Millennial in scope. Some conclude that since Jesus will gather the flock, we do not need to concern ourselves with doing so. The reasoning goes something like this. We did not do the scattering; therefore we do not have to do the gathering. Or worse yet, "I'll gather the sheep into my group (to shear and to eat as we saw). But brethren, that is not the attitude of Jesus Christ.

On that Passover night, Jesus prayed five times, "Father let my people be together." Let my people be as One Body. Brethren we today had better have an attitude of building godly ties with all of God's people. I do not see any way around it, because this is the attitude of Jesus Christ. All of His people should be One in unity, One in Spirit, and so forth.

Ezekiel 34:14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

So brethren, we see this theme of peace, unity, togetherness, oneness, and rest developing

Ezekiel 34:15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

If we are not being fellow Christians to all God's people now, we are not going to be there then, on that beautiful day that Christ just described.

Ezekiel 34:16 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: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

God says that there is no free pass, no free ticket. We will all stand before Jesus Christ, and give an account of ourselves. Ministers and brethren, it makes no difference. Notice how Jesus holds the members just as accountable. We have been talking about the shepherds and pointing the finger away from us. Jesus Christ is going to turn the table on us, and as we go on we are going to see that we, the flock, are just as accountable.

Romans 14:10 and 12 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Ezekiel 34:17 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.

God is going to say just because we say that we are in the Church of God that does not mean that we can act as these cattle that are taking advantage of other brethren. Brethren cannot take advantage of brethren. We have to take part of the solution. We too go to our brother, and we too lay our lives down. Members are also guilty of abuses. Some members bash the ministry without cause, and brethren alike. Worse yet, members who received the engrafted word of truth that was able to save their souls {James 1:21} but they are not making it available to those called in this last hour. It is self-serving. I am in the Church and I do not care about others. Unless I make my group bigger, and make me look better, then I might consider it.

Ezekiel 34:18 Does it a small thing unto you [members, sheep] 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?

We had the Correspondence Course, we had the big congregations, and we had all of the activities. Some brethren are making sure by their criticism, by their attacks on the whole church that no-one gets to eat of the good pasture. They were baptized and received God's Holy Spirit, only to live now as if they were not brethren to anyone. You do not care about somebody brand new coming into the Church, somebody searching, somebody looking and crying out for a home, and people to meet with. Do you make people stand alone and close the door in their face? Some members are now on a spiritual starvation diet because of selfish and thankless members who do not care if anybody else hears the truth of God.

Ezekiel 34:19 And *as for* my flock, [God's true brethren] they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

People are not getting God's Truth in all its cleanliness, and they have to pick here and there, having to scavenge to find God's Truth. This should not be. We need to make God's Truth available. Think of a lush deep green pasture. This is what we should be striving with all of our might to provide for whoever God calls to partake of the pasture.

Most messages today are not the good spiritual food that we once had in abundance. This is a clear warning to us brethren that we must be protecting, teaching and propagating the Truth of God.

Ezekiel 34:20 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.

Just because we are in the Church, God is not going to come in and make a clean sweep and bring everybody into the Kingdom and say, "you stuck it out, you went to Sabbath services every week, and you get a free pass. No, there is an attitude of living a covenant relationship with God, of living like Jesus Christ. No one is going into the Kingdom Of God without learning Godliness.

We must grasp the vision of the Kingdom, where we live by the Kingdoms rules.

Many offenses occurred at the hands of hostile and overbearing members who caused weaker members to lose faith and drift away. God is going to hold them accountable.

Ezekiel 34:21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

So, brethren, when someone comes in our midst we have to bend over backwards, and bend over backwards, and bend over backwards. If they leave on their own, if they profane God's Holy name, and will not meet with us, or if we give everything we have and it is not enough and they leave, then we might say God I did my best. But for me to say that I will not be the first to reach out, I will not be the first to give an extended hand, I will not be the first to bring them along. We have to be very careful. So it shows, through these verses (starting back there in verse 12, scattered members did the same thing that the ministers did).

Ezekiel 34:22 Therefore, I will save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

We start seeing this millennial picture. But, brethren, we cannot wait until the millennium and say that Jesus will do it when He gets back. We will have lost our crown.

Ezekiel 34:23, 30 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 the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them, and *that* they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, saith the Lord GOD. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men, *and* I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.

Let us make real sure that this is not talking about a shepherd and sheep, it is talking about Jesus Christ and us. We are the flock, and we are the sheep of God's pasture.

After reading and studying Ezekiel 34, we are waiting for Jesus Christ to come back and gather the Saints together. We are waiting for Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, to come back and establish the Kingdom of God. We want to be a part of it, but brethren we have seen some terrible atrocities in our time. Sometimes we can think that we are doing is so right, we are on track and God just winks at everything that we are doing. But if we could stand back, like Jesus Christ, and see the great picture, this scattered church being scattered even more year by year. There is something inherently wrong, and we need to reach out for one another in unity.

We should be a part of the gathering that will be completed and accomplished by Jesus Christ?

WD/pp/sl