

● THE Gospel Part 12 – The Anatomy of False Prophets – Study Guide

This study guide focuses on the divine indictment against the "shepherds of Israel"—the leadership of the redeemed—who are accused of feeding themselves while neglecting and brutally ruling the flock. Drawing heavily from Ezekiel 34, it describes how God will personally intervene to rescue His scattered sheep and judge between the "fat" (arrogant/exploitative) and "lean" (faithful/weak) sheep. The text clarifies that the "just and the unjust" resurrection mentioned in Acts 24:15 refers specifically to the redeemed, emphasizing that inheritance in the coming earthly kingdom is strictly conditional upon a changed life. Furthermore, it warns that while false prophets are often indistinguishable from the true "wheat" in the present, they will be fully revealed by Jesus Christ at the resurrection.

Definitions of Key Words

- **Gospel:** According to Jesus Christ, this is the message of His **earthly coming kingdom** and the redeemed's **inheritance** in that kingdom.
- **Shepherds:** The spiritual leadership within the children of Israel and the church who are responsible for feeding and protecting the flock.
- **False Prophets:** Teachers who come in "sheep's clothing" but are "ravenous wolves" inwardly, often teaching an "easy route" that requires no change or striving.
- **The Lost:** Specifically the "**lost sheep of the house of Israel**"—redeemed people who have wandered or been scattered due to poor leadership.
- **Just and Unjust:** Scriptural categories referring to the **two types of redeemed people** who will be raised at the resurrection.
- **Ionian Life:** Often translated as "eternal life"; the life promised to the faithful in the coming kingdom.
- **Striving/Agony:** The difficult, narrow route of life transformation required to enter the kingdom, contrasted with the "easy route" of false doctrine.

Expansion of Key Points

1. The Indictment of Self-Serving Shepherds God pronounces "Woe" upon

the leadership of the redeemed who prioritize their own sustenance over the care of the flock. These shepherds "eat the curds" and "clothe [themselves] with the wool" but fail to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, or search for the lost sheep (**Ezekiel 34:1-4**). Because the leadership "ruled them harshly and brutally," the sheep were scattered and became prey for "wild animals"—a reference to the influence of Satan and demonic spirits (**Ezekiel 34:5-8**).

2. God's Personal Rescue and Restoration Because human leadership failed, the Sovereign Lord declares, "I myself will search for my sheep." He promises to rescue them from the places where they were scattered on "a day of clouds and darkness" (**Ezekiel 34:11-12**). This rescue involves bringing the redeemed out from the nations and into "their own land," where He will pasture them on the "mountains of Israel" (**Ezekiel 34:13-15**). This restoration is linked to the resurrection of Israel (**Ezekiel 36 & 37**).

3. Judgment Between "Sheep and Sheep" The resurrection is not a universal welcome for all redeemed; God will "judge between one sheep and another" (**Ezekiel 34:17**). He specifically targets the "fat sheep" who shoved the weak and "muddied" the water for others, promising to destroy the "sleek and the strong" while shepherding the flock with justice (**Ezekiel 34:16-22**). This correlates with the resurrection of the "**just and the unjust**" mentioned in **Acts 24:15**, both of which categories refer to the redeemed (**Daniel 12:2**).

4. The Anatomy of False Prophets False prophets are "ravenous wolves" who appear in "sheep's clothing" and are often so closely aligned with the gospel that they are indistinguishable from the true "wheat" until the harvest (**Matthew 7:15; Matthew 13:24-30**). Their primary characteristic is that they teach the **opposite of what Jesus said**; whereas Jesus said the way is "hard," they teach that it is "easy" (**Matthew 7:13-14**). They often use the name of Jesus and perform mighty works, yet they are rejected because they did not follow the required "direction" of striving and change (**Matthew 7:22-23**).

5. The Mandatory Requirement of Change Entering the kingdom is impossible without a fundamental transformation. Jesus taught that "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (**Matthew 18:1-4**). This change involves humbling oneself and unlearning false doctrines. The "easy route" taught by many—involving no striving or agony—is the "wide route" that leads to being shut out of the gate.

6. Satan's Focus on the Church Satan is not primarily at work in the ungodly world; his "firm focus" is on the redeemed because they are the ones who can head for the inheritance (**2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 11:3**). He operates

inside the church through false prophets to ensure the redeemed remain uninstructed and lose their inheritance. Believers are exhorted to be "as wise as serpents" to avoid being outsmarted by his evil schemes (**Matthew 10:16**).

Biblical References within the Sources

- **Ezekiel 34:1-31**: The shepherds of Israel, the scattered sheep, and God's personal rescue.
- **Matthew 7:13-23**: The narrow vs. wide gate, false prophets, and those crying "Lord, Lord" outside the gate.
- **Matthew 10:16**: Sheep among wolves; being wise as serpents.
- **Matthew 13:24-30**: The parable of the wheat and the weeds (darnell).
- **Matthew 18:1-4**: Requirement to change and become like children to enter the kingdom.
- **Acts 24:15**: The resurrection of the just and the unjust.
- **Daniel 12:2**: The resurrection to everlasting life or shame/contempt.
- **2 Corinthians 2:11**: Not being outwitted by Satan's designs.
- **2 Corinthians 11:3**: Thoughts led astray from pure devotion to Christ.
- **Deuteronomy 18:22**: Testing a prophet by whether their word comes true.
- **Titus 1:1-2**: The hope of eternal life promised long ago.
- **Isaiah 61:1-2 / Luke 4:17-20**: Proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour.

Study Questions

- **Contextual Meaning**: To whom does the phrase "just and unjust" refer in the context of the resurrection, according to the source?
- **Leadership Accountability**: What specific failures of the "shepherds" led to the sheep being scattered and becoming "food for wild animals"?
- **Entrance Criteria**: What is the "one-word" requirement Jesus gave the disciples for entering the kingdom in Matthew 18?
- **Identification**: Why is it difficult to identify false prophets in the present age, and who is responsible for their final exposure?
- **Strategic Focus**: Why is Satan's focus primarily on the "redeemed" rather than the "world"?

Answer Key

- It refers specifically to the **redeemed**; there are just and unjust individuals within the body of those called by God.
- They fed themselves instead of the flock, failed to strengthen the weak, did not heal the sick, did not search for the lost, and ruled with harshness/brutality.
- **Change**. Unless an individual changes and becomes like a child, they will never enter the kingdom.
- They are "closely aligned" to the gospel and appear in "sheep's clothing". Only **Jesus Christ** (the gatekeeper) and the **angels** at the end of the age will reveal them.
- Because only the redeemed have a potential **inheritance** to lose; Satan's goal is to stop them from obtaining it.

Exhortations

- **Prioritize Personal Change**: Do not rely on a "decision" made years ago. If you are the same person today as you were when you first believed, you must question if you are on the narrow path.
- **Scrutinize Easy Doctrine**: If your theology makes the walk with Christ "easy" and free of "striving," it is a different message from the one Jesus taught. Reject the "wide route".
- **Trust the Scripture over Titles**: A person's theological degree or "Reverend" title means nothing to the Gatekeeper. Test every leader by their commitment to the literal words of Jesus Christ.
- **Prepare for Infiltration**: Understand that the "wolves" are **among the sheep**. Be as wise as serpents and stay deeply rooted in the scriptures to avoid being outwitted by religious deception.