

6.14.20

E-34: The Right Shepherd

Introduction

We are beginning a new series entitled E-34: The Right Shepherd - The Righteous Shepherd. The foundation for this teaching is taken from the bible's Old Testament section, from the book of the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel's historical context is this. He was the son of a second-generation priest taken captive and exiled in 597 BC, when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, captured the entirety Jerusalem, during a brief siege. Also taken captive and exiled from the Kingdom of Judah, was their young King Jehoiachin, his entire administration, his personal military guard, ten thousand capable and procreating Jews, and of course all the craftsmen and skilled workers.

This captivity and exile from Jerusalem, was the result of nearly five hundred years of corrupt, hedonistic, and depraved leadership from the kings, priests, and rulers of both the Northern Kingdom (Israel), and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

Ezekiel's biblical and spiritual context emerges onto the scene with the beginning of a God-sized judgment and consequence for their centuries of unrighteous leadership of rebellious sin, evil ideology, and demonic behavior. They did what was right in their own eyes and abandoned the righteousness of God.

As a young temple trained priest, Ezekiel was considered righteous and godly. God chose Ezekiel along with a small handful of others (Jeremiah etc.), to deliver His spoken Words of judgment. The narrative of Ezekiel came directly from God through visions, divine visitations, and prophetic revelation. It wasn't pretty...

"you will be devastated by your enemies, you will be displaced from your homes, and you will be dispersed into captivity and I will allow it - so you will know that I am the Lord.

Then I will be silent.

When your Shepherds (leaders) have been completely eradicated by a generational purging, I will come to you. You will repent, return your hearts, seek my righteousness, and honor my Name. I will be your Shepherd and you will once again be my people. There will be a new covenant coming and I will rebuild and restore you, and all will know that I am the Lord."

What is E-34?

E-34 is a teaching for those who seek God's truth and direction in a time when lies and deception are mainstreamed as right and acceptable.

E-34 exposes and reveals not only how we got here to this 2020 place - but even more insightful into who and what it was that we allowed to lead us here.

E-34 is so far beyond politics and social injustice. It is beyond the place of pride and the compulsion to be right - it is about being righteous before God, and before humanity.

E-34 Foundations

I would like to first lay out not only a specific context for this series but make a very specific application to our very relevant and real-time circumstances.

As we have learned about God, from Ezekiel - sin has consequences, even in grace. When we have to sit in the consequences of our sin no one likes it, and no one wants to acknowledge that truth - let alone take responsibility for it.

Currently, here is how this process works...

When something that we have heard, seen, or read resonates with us or seems right to us; it is much easier for us to click like or share without fully understanding or knowing - who, what, or why.

By that I mean, the intent or motive of their heart, the depth of their knowledge and understanding, the condition or stability of their mind and emotions, or their personal experiences and learned behaviors, or even the current situation that led them to express their choice of opinion or decision.

In spite of the significance of all those factors, if we decide that they or what they are saying is right, then we feel completely justified in helping to express the ideologies, thoughts, opinions and the beliefs of someone other than ourselves.

Are we right? Maybe. Probably. Let's find out.

Shouldn't the bigger concern be that we are being righteous?

We can't all be right, but according to God we can all be righteous in Christ. (MORE ON THAT TO COME)

Here it is...

I can believe, say, or do something I know is right, but if I believe, say, or do it with a hateful and hurtful heart then I am a hostile to God, and I have abandoned His righteousness and have weaponized His truth just so I could be right.

Matthew 15:18-20

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart comes all unrighteousness. These are what defile a person.

Now, what I just told you is not an attack, accusation, or an indictment of any race, color or creed. Nor is this for any one person or persons that I know or know of - it is for us, all of us.

It is an accurate description of the daily behavior and learned responses of literally hundreds of millions of people.

I would say that little process I just described has become far easier for us do than it has become for us to personally...

Love Openly - Forgive Quickly - Give Freely - Pray Faithfully - Speak Truthfully

Those responses require righteousness - not just a right response.

What does that mean?

Simply that in one of the most critical and spiritually charged times of human history - most of us would rather be right (subjective) than be righteous (absolute).

They are not the same, and it's not even that close. We tell ourselves and others we are right - God tells us and others we are righteous. Our flesh demands we be right - Christ determines we are righteous. To be right one must be heard - to be righteous one must love.

Proverbs 16:24-25

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

In this context, the bible continues with this...

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

**Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant
5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or
resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the
truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,
endures all things. 8 Love never ends.**

Apparently being heard is easy (yell louder) - Loving is not.

1 John 3:7-10

**Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness
is righteous, as he is righteous. 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is
of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The
reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides
in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of
God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are
the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is
not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.**

It has become painfully evident over the last three months that most people want to do what is easy... be heard.

Be right and be heard at any cost or consequence; to friendships, families, fellowships, or the future.

Ezekiel chapter thirty-four (E-34), holds for us not only a key to relevant truth, but also to a missing spiritual revelation. The truth revealed by the Holy Spirit - the Righteous Shepherd; is what can lead a people through this critical desire and compulsion to BE RIGHT and BE HEARD.

Checked by the Spirit - led by the Shepherd.

One after another, the Shepherds of the House of Israel and Judah had decided that they knew what was right - and that their idea of right was more important than God's idea of righteousness.

For example: It was no longer right to just worship one God (righteous), it is right to acknowledge other gods as well. So, what did being right about that look like for them?

Molech - the Canaanite god represents the most repulsive of acts in God's sight, the ritualistic sexual abuse and then sacrifice of children to the pagan god, which was in no uncertain terms condemned in by the God of Righteousness - punishment by death.

Jeremiah 32:34-35

They set up their abominations in the house that is called by My name, to defile it. 35 They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did

not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Asherah - a Canaanite fertility goddess. Most often worshipped her through sacred or protected prostitution of minors (sex-trafficking/trading) and ritual (and sometimes incestuous) sexual practices.

1 Kings 14:22-24

During Rehoboam's reign, the people of Judah did what was evil in the LORD's sight, provoking his anger with their sin, for it was even worse than that of their ancestors. 23 For they also built for themselves pagan shrines and set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. 24 There were even male and female shrine prostitutes throughout the land.

Identifying Shepherds - Right and Righteous

It was a common practice of Old Testament writers to identify rulers, kings/monarchs, sovereign leaders with the humble and simple term - shepherd. Moses and David were often identified with the term. Men give titles and God gives influence.

As we will learn, in certain biblical times when there has been a man of humble and surrendered will, a man who has not only the favor of God but the favor of the people, you get both the title and influence.

Isaiah 63:11-13

Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.

Psalm 78:70-72

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.

It's not just ironic, but way more so spiritually significant that both Moses and David were actually shepherds when God called and anointed them for leadership of His people. And, it is not without spiritual significance that both these men received their call to leadership over the house of Israel while they were actually serving as shepherds of an actual flock - sheep.

The context and meaning for Ezekiel's use of the Hebrew word *Ra'ah*; "shepherd" - *hands on leadership, compassionate care*.

In that context it was a strong metaphor to use for teaching hereditary monarchs who might otherwise think only in terms of dictating and exploiting God's people.

The historical recall of Rulers, Kings and Sovereigns over the House of Israel" reminds us that it was the exception rather than the rule that a righteous Shepherd led them.

[Insert Shepherd Chart] Media

Worth noting that even as a young priest; before the exile of the house of Israel, Ezekiel had no problem calling out kings who had not been righteous shepherds but rather ungodly and rebellious rulers who told the people what was right in their own eyes.

Not a real shock then to hear Ezekiel in chapter 34, precursor God's promise of an eventual righteous leadership with one more caustic verbal attack on the egregious appetite and self-adulation of the leaders/shepherds of the past. I'll be honest, they had it coming.

These corrupted and unrighteous shepherds had physically, spiritually, and emotionally exploited the people as if they had ownership and control, feeling right in believing that the flock belonged to them. Leading the people into lies and deception demanding and enforcing only what they determined to be RIGHT. Abandoning RIGHTEOUSNESS and their covenant with God.

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6.21.20

E-34: The Right Shepherd - The Righteous Shepherd

[Part 2 - God's Heart for the Righteous Shepherd]

Today we are continuing E-34. As last week we are still using a pretty narrow biblical context to establish a broader personal application. Two things we can start with today.

One - We know that Ezekiel (historically speaking) was not actually writing to us, or about us.

Two - His prophetic words and visions finally got on to some form of parchment around 570 B.C.

Here is why that is important. Because under the direction of God's Spirit, Ezekiel was writing directly FOR us. Here is the heart of God within those very words.

Ezekiel 34:1-10

Then this message came to me from the LORD: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: What sorrow awaits you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? 3 You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. 4 You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone

looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty. 5 So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal. 6 They have wandered through all the mountains and all the hills, across the face of the earth, yet no one has gone to search for them.

7 “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you abandoned my flock and left them to be attacked by every wild animal. And though you were my shepherds, you didn’t search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of yourselves and left the sheep to starve. 9 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD. 10 This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I now consider these shepherds my enemies, and I will hold them responsible for what has happened to my flock. I will take away their right to feed the flock, and I will stop them from feeding themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths; the sheep will no longer be their prey.

These words of Ezekiel were also written down and preserved for almost twenty-five centuries so that God's heart and covenant expectations of righteousness from His shepherds/leaders would be revealed and remain relevant for generations to come.

A revelation of righteous leadership for God's people that would eventually be revealed and fulfilled through Christ Jesus in a new covenant relationship with God for all people at all times from all places.

Here is what is so interesting about that... The new covenant in Christ would continue to reveal God's unchanged heart of expectation righteous leadership from His shepherds.

Our template for this of course is given to us through Jesus, as He introduced Himself to the world as "The Good Shepherd." The Shepherd who was now willing to lay down His life for His sheep. When I read these passages over and again these past two weeks it was as if I could feel the "good shepherd" in the same room - as if He leaned towards me and started saying;

John 10:11-15

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. 12 A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. 13 The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.

Matthew 18:12-13

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

As a pastor and shepherd who reaches continually to love and lead His people, reading these words pierced my heart. Not a guilt or shame filled piercing but rather a piercing of the heart that reminds us, calls us and alerts us.

E-34 is saying, "Here is what the arrogant pursuit of being right in our own eyes looked like in our day, Here is how that unrighteousness played out in the lives of our shepherds, and the judgments of our people who willingly followed with a total disregard for the righteousness of God."

The personal connection and practical application available for us is both as;
Shepherds as Leaders and Leaders as Shepherds.

As we discovered last week, when filtering the undeniable relevance of Ezekiel's prophetic words, visions, and our present-day circumstances through the truth-grid of God's wisdom and who He is - it causes the genuine follower of Jesus to be caught within the uncomfortable tension of an obvious spiritual struggle. Be patient - this is not a bad thing - it is a Holy Spirit thing. God's Spirit, piercing our heart. Not a guilt or shame filled piercing but rather a piercing of the heart that reminds us, calls us and alerts us.

The Rightness of Man versus the Righteousness of God

If you or I are determined to provide the leadership of a righteous shepherd to our family, friends and to our Church communities, then E-34 is it for us. If that is not your determination, then E-34 is not so much for you, as much as it is about you. Last week we re-introduced a long-time Reunion biblical truth from the living Gospels, known and named by us as - The Jesus Manifesto.

Let's build this week off of that Manifesto. Use it as a touch-up on what Jesus-Sized truth reveals to us in the context of E-34 and His Heart for the Righteous Shepherd.

Love Openly - Forgive Quickly - Give Freely - Pray Faithfully - Speak Truthfully

It is safe to say those kinds of virtuous and valued responses still come with as I said - Jesus-Sized expectations.

Expectations that require significant levels of spiritual humility and moral righteousness.

What is that?

Well I know what it isn't. It isn't you or I simply determining and deciding in our own eyes what is right.

But what does that mean?

Simply this: In one of the most critical and spiritually saturated times of human history - too many of us have decided we would rather be subjectively right - than be objectively righteous.

And as I said last week, they are not the same, and the distinction is biblically very clear.

To be subjectively right is to use the partiality of my personal truth to make limited determinations of what is morally and ethically right.

To be objectively righteous is to use the impartiality of God's truth to gain an unlimited understanding and revelation of what is morally and ethically right.

Here is a biblical template to help Shepherd's (spiritual leaders), move into a more Spirit-Centric revelation of those un-changing and objective truths.

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

Proverbs 16:24-25

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Psalm 81:11-12

**But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.
12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own
counsels.**

Romans 10:3-4

**For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to
establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 For
Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

Matthew 6:33

**Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will
give you everything you need.**

Psalm 37:23-26

**The steps of a righteous man are established by the LORD, though he
fall, he will not fall flat on his face, for the LORD upholds his hand. I
have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous
forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending
generously, and his children become a blessing.**

The Bible is the eternal search-engine for righteousness and truth. As righteous Shepherds/Leaders, as righteous fathers we must use that search engine to find the righteous ways of God and not settle for the way that seem right to man. To free ourselves and our children from the ways of men who now appear to be fully enslaved to the demonic task of destroying the righteousness of God

God's Heart for the Righteous Shepherd - Leader - Father

Feed the Sheep

Give Attention to the Weaker Sheep

Take Care of the Sheep Who are Sick

Look for the Sheep Who are Lost

Love the Sheep We Have

Protect the Sheep from Evil

Know the Sheep by Name

6.28.20

E-34: The Right Shepherd - The Righteous Shepherd

[Part 3 - Template for the Righteous Shepherd]

E-34 Text [34:11-16]

The word of God delivered through the voice and obedience of Ezekiel is the final word to the shepherds of the house of Israel and Judah. NEARLY FIVE CENTURIES of rebellious and unrighteous leadership from all but handful of kings and leaders.

Leading and living by their own standard of what was right - abandoning God's template for righteous leadership of His people.

There is quite a bit here to process. Here are three of the corrective realities they each one faced as Ezekiel delivered God's righteous judgment and the promise of a new path to hope and salvation in Him.

First, it is clear that God was finished with the shepherds who for those nearly five centuries did only what was right in their own eyes - they exchanged the truth for a lie.

Romans 1:19-25

They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. 20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his

invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

22 Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. 23 And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. 25 They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

The teachable moment for you and I in this can be right here and right now...

If it is not God's righteousness, then it is not the truth, and then in reality - it is only a lie. A lie that we have either believed or have not believed. Please understand that

this little reality check is not just a one-time occurrence in life - it is continual, and it is daily. That is why we need the God and righteous shepherd to lead us. If we can accept that then we can hear and know the truth, and we can become free in its righteousness. The righteousness of the good shepherd is enough for us.

Secondly, God was permanently closing down His old covenant operations with Israel (with one exception). Whatever promises they shared in the past were done, and a new covenant would come to them in the future. That new covenant would be established only through the name and bloodline of the house of David - Jesus.

Ezekiel 34:23-24

And I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David. He will feed them and be a shepherd to them. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

Finally, as a parting shot, God tells generations of kings, rulers, priests and leaders one last time what a righteous shepherd truly is. Ezekiel reveals God's righteousness toward His people. In fact, He is revealing the righteousness of the shepherd that David the King had confessed as his own...

Psalm 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Five hundred years earlier David (a true shepherd - after the heart of God) acknowledges God as His true and righteous shepherd. Look at the remarkable connection between God the Shepherd of David, and God the Shepherd of His people in E34. Obviously, there was a huge disconnect after David that led to the E34. I love hearing God speak as a shepherd to His people, because I know He speaks to me as my shepherd as well.

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in

the land. 14 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

I can verify personally, that the righteousness of God remains and resides in His people. That righteousness is Jesus Christ - the Son of the Living God and the one and only true and good shepherd. When I have listened to His voice and followed His word I have never faltered and failed. My pain and my suffering in this life have been the result of my stubborn and rebellious desire to be right in my own eyes and then insisting I be right in yours.

My own anger, hatred, pride, lust, doubt, fear, anxiousness and selfishness are not the righteousness of God - they are not the heart and hope of the Good Shepherd.

They keep me in hiding, they keep me dividing, they keep me wounding and hurting others, they keep my heart away from the other sheep, they keep me from following in the paths of righteousness, the still waters, the table of the Lord, and dwelling in the house of the Lord.

This is illustrated five-hundred years later in the story of Jesus the Good Shepherd as he encounters and man named Zacchaeus.

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. 2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. 3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. 7 But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

Template for the Righteous Shepherd

One - Search and Rescue

Two - Bring Them Home and Make Them at Home

Three - Feed Well and Rest Well

Four - Treat the Wounded and Train the Weak

7.5.20

E-34: The Right Shepherd - The Righteous Shepherd

[Part 4 - The Righteous Rescue]

E-34:17-24

And as for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to his people: I will judge between one animal of the flock and another, separating the sheep from the goats.

18 Isn't it enough for you to keep the best of the pastures for yourselves? Must you also trample down the rest? Isn't it enough for you to drink clear water for yourselves? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?

19 Why must my flock eat what you have trampled down and drink water you have fouled?

20 "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will surely judge between the fat sheep and the scrawny sheep. 21 For you fat sheep pushed and butted and crowded my sick and hungry flock until you scattered them to distant lands. 22 So I will rescue my flock, and they will no longer be abused. I will judge between one animal of the flock and another.

23 And I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David. He will feed them and be a shepherd to them.

24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

In Part Four, we are going to use our time and attention to both discover and to cross a couple of "bridges of prophetic relevance" regarding the reality of the Righteous Rescue made by the Good Shepherd as foretold by Ezekiel in E-34.

One - The Righteous Rescue of E-34 is made known between the Good Shepherd and Zacchaeus [Luke 19]

Two - The Righteous Rescue of E-34 is made complete between the Good Shepherd and all mankind [John 10:7-16]

E-34 Re-Call Bridge [Verses 20-22]

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The Righteous Rescue of E-34 is made known between the Good Shepherd and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

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9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

The irony of the name Zacchaeus to the story of his encounter with Messiah Jesus is at least worth a chuckle. In Hebrew, Zacchaeus means; pure or innocent.

The irony of course is that Zacchaeus was in fact anything but pure or innocent. He was in fact a "tax collector" for Rome. The way of Rome in an occupied culture such as the Jews at the time of Jesus, was to employ "local collectors" to collect the heavy tax from the people.

Rome knew that the people would not take advantage of local collectors for fear of Rome itself - but they also knew that local collectors had firsthand knowledge of merchants, herders, farmers, and the skilled trades and services.

Local collectors knew who had the money and who didn't. This system worked fine for Rome because they could down-size operations in an occupied and foreign territory and Caesar would always get what was Caesar's.

This system also worked very well for the shrewd and savvy local collectors who knew firsthand who they could over charge so they could make money from both Rome and their own people. Rome knew, but did not care. The people knew, yet they were powerless to do anything about it for fear of Rome.

And so, year after year they suffered and payed the local collector who became richer and more greedy - but also more hated and isolated from family and community.

When Jesus travels the streets of Jericho and reaches out to honor the obviously dis-honorable Zacchaeus - He does this with an unprecedented yet simple home visit. Jesus speaks prophetically to him, "I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus heard the voice of the Shepherd and welcomes Him into his home.

This was too much for the people - for them it was NOT RIGHT. They had been done wrong and had been cheated and bullied. They were hurt and angry. "What about us they ask"?

In their hurt and anger they could only see what was right about righteousness in their own eyes. However, in the eyes and heart of a Good Shepherd, it was His RIGHTEOUS thing to do. Zacchaeus was indeed made right, pure, and innocent that day, and the rest is history.

The result of the Good Shepherd's righteous rescue of Zacchaeus brought repentance, restoration, and a reconciled and interest-bearing re-payment to all who had been wronged.

Had Jesus done only what was right in the eyes of the people, Zacchaeus would have remained lost, and the people would have remained bitter and broke. Because of the righteousness of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, ALL are cared for - ALL are provided for.

E-34 Re-Call Bridge [Verses 23 and 24]

And I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David. He will feed them and be a shepherd to them.

And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

The Righteous Rescue of E-34 is made complete between the Good Shepherd and all mankind

John 10:7-18

I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. 9 Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. 10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. 12 A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. 13 The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

17 "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

The endless covenant and eternal veracity of God's promises to His people to always be the Good Shepherd is not only remarkable but so precise and specific - even after century upon century of rebellion and resistance.

For you and I, that is even more reason to have hope for the realistic idea of a Righteous Rescue from the Good Shepherd. The shift from God the Father as the Good Shepherd, to Christ the Messiah as the Good Shepherd is easily seen as we bridge over from E-34 to John's historic gospel.

The context of the ending of the Old Covenant to the introduction and fulfillment of the New Covenant should be fairly clear in this bridge of passages as well. E-4's bold reference to David the King, David the Shepherd is obviously not an indication of a mystical re-incarnation of Israel's glorious past, but more importantly it is a confirmation from their greatest Messianic voices (Ezekiel - Isaiah - Jeremiah) of genuine hope for a righteous rescue in their future. E-34 is revealing that it would all that and even more.

The idea of a righteous Shepherd King was not Israel's idea it was Gods. His first fulfillment of that promise was the shepherd David. And now it would be fulfilled once and for all 485 years later through the Righteous Rescue of Jesus the Messiah, the One Good Shepherd, Jesus the Shepherd King.

John's recollection of the words of Jesus are a true revelation of God's Shepherd heart for His people - only now the Righteous Rescue of His sheep would include the sheep of all flocks and all pastures.

Once again, the Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus would not seem right in the eyes of the religious legalism and arrogant pride of the leaders and rulers of the house of Israel. This was not right they would say - but as we know now it most certainly was righteous.

it is important in our day, in the face of the evil of man - to proclaim the Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. We need to courageously and without fear acknowledge that the Righteous Rescue of the Good Shepherd will always be beyond what is right with man.

Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd, I lay down my life for my sheep. However, not just the sheep in this pasture but sheep from all times and all places. They too are my sheep - I will rescue them as well. Don't worry about the wolves - I will lay down my life for you - I will protect you - the wolves evil will not harm you.

The **righteous rescue** of Jesus the Good Shepherd goes on...

Just as quickly as I lay down my life for my sheep I will pick it up again because I intend to rescue the sheep of all nations and they will be ONE flock. I am the Good Shepherd.

7.19.20

E-34: The Right Shepherd - The Righteous Shepherd

[Part 5 - Unrighteous Restored in the Righteousness of God]

E-34:25-31

I will make a covenant of peace with my people and drive away the dangerous animals from the land. Then they will be able to camp safely in the wildest places and sleep in the woods without fear. 26 I will bless my people and their homes around my holy hill. And in the proper season I will send the showers they need. There will be showers of blessing. 27 The orchards and fields of my people will yield bumper crops, and everyone will live in safety. When I have broken their chains of slavery and rescued them from those who enslaved them, then they will know that I am the LORD. 28 They will no longer be prey for other nations, and wild animals will no longer devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will frighten them.

29 And I will make their land famous for its crops, so my people will never again suffer from famines or the insults of foreign nations. 30 In this way, they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them. And they will know that they, the people of Israel, are my people, says the Sovereign LORD. 31 You are my flock, the sheep of my pasture. You are my people, and I am your God. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

I confess I was a bit conflicted as I chose the title for Part 5 - the final part of E-34.

The Unrighteous Restored in the Righteousness of God

Not that I don't believe it - you know I do. it just that like you I forget things.

Yes, as we have learned - the "sheep of His pasture" (the house of Israel) had been idolatrous hedonistic, defiant and rebellious for nearly half a millennium. Did I also mention unrighteous covenant breakers as well?

We also know from E-34 that they faced and paid the promised consequences both physically and spiritually for being all that and more.

My conflict as I read the last six verses of E-34 was that I could see the painful end of something old, and the joy of beginning something new - but with the same people.

I was ready to move on from them, and yet I could clearly see that God was not. I was ready to jump ship and talk about the Messianic connections and the implications of a New Covenant with God with new people who did not have all that bad history.

I remembered something I had read in one of my research resources; a commentary of Ezekiel by John W. Hilber. So, I went back to read the part I had remembered again.

In his introduction to this wonderful commentary, Hilber gives a warning to fellow teachers, preachers, pastors, and all seekers of truth and the righteousness of God.

His warning was this... "One of the most common mistakes in teaching the Old Testament is to use the passage only as a springboard or illustration for what ends up being an exposition from the New Testament.

I thought, was he talking to me? Well, in this instance considering what I was thinking about these six verses - Yeah, he was.

What Hilger said to me was simply this: The Old Testament and its ancient writings of the painful and unbelievably frustrating unfaithfulness to God are not merely a prop or opening act - there are meanings and moments, and revelations of who God is that must be opened and examined because they have deep eternal implications for the outcomes and manifest destiny all humanity. You can't righteously teach Ezekiel without accurately representing what mattered most to Ezekiel. Now he had me.

What mattered most to Ezekiel?

What makes E-34, E-34?

So, before we go on, here is what we need to know.

First, it is clear that what was most important to Ezekiel was that he accurately and faithfully delivered God's message and intentions to the Household of Israel - The Sheep of His Pasture.

Secondly, it is painfully obvious that Ezekiel is unquestionably passionate about God's people - His people. He loves them enough to tell them the truth about the

very behavior and sin that caused the loss of their homes, the city of David, and their covenant promise; resulting in their exile, their scattering, and their slavery to Babylon.

The text and meaning of E-34 and all other thirty-eight books of the Old Testament are a treasure chest filled with prophetic keys to the future, precious nuggets of profound wisdom, and timeless relics, altars, and artifacts that remind us in those critical and vulnerable moments of our own history (especially when we begin to lose our way), and desperate need to know not only **WHO GOD IS** - but **WHO HE IS NOT**.

WHO HE IS, is the single-most important reason to preserve and remember the past - an ancient past of the good, the bad, and the ugly. A past that is more than capable of revealing to each of us substantial parts of **Who We Are**, and providing much of the answers to **Why We Are Here**.

So, the significance and need for teaching Ezekiel is the same for all of the Old Testament—don't ignore but pay attention, don't erase but rather embrace, don't don't refrain but rather explain and dig deep for the meaning of the text itself rather than fearfully and ignorantly clicking to **Options** and **Remove From Dock**.

Which means... **Oh yeah, it's in there - but if I don't see it, I don't have to look at it every day!**

Righteous Consideration of the Past

Before Ezekiel could move forward to deliver the difficult and devastating message of the Righteous Shepherd to the sheep of His fold, he too had to remember and find meaning from the past. He looked back so he could find answers to the future. Could the unrighteous be restored by the righteousness of God? He found his answer in Leviticus 26. (Should Read)

So you see, It is by the intentional design of the Righteous Shepherd that the texts of the Living Gospels and Epistles of Paul, James, John and Peter can confirm and give fulfillment to the message such as E-34 for example. However that message must be heard and seen in the meaning and purposes of Ezekiel himself. Let me give you one last example.

Hosea 6:1-2

He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us;

He has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

After two days he will revive us;

On the third day he will restore us,

that we may live in his presence.

So, it is really easy to just use this passage from the prophet Hosea to rush forward to the obvious prophetic connection with the future Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah a promised are foretold event that brought restoration and healing to all humanity.

If we rush forward from this text, we learn little from what mattered to Hosea and appreciate even less the connection to a text like ours from E-34, where the meaning of WHO GOD IS is so critically important to us knowing why Christ came, died, and was resurrected.

I will make a covenant of peace, and I will rescue and restore you;

I will make the land safe and you will live safely in it;

There will be showers of blessings and you and the land I gave you will prosper;

I will break the chains of bondage, and You will no longer need to fear or be a prey to other nations.

How can we fully move forward without knowing that the Righteous Shepherd has cleared the path to our living this kind of righteous life in Him? How can we fully move forward without fully knowing the righteous heart of the Righteous Shepherd who gives His righteousness for us?

The answer is of course we really can't. Not without a glimpse and understanding of the covenant heart of the Righteous Shepherd. A heart that 450 years after Ezekiel delivered its content would be physically incarnated and made manifest in the life, death and resurrection of the Shepherd King - Jesus of Nazareth - The Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for the sheep of His pasture.

Because of E-34 we now know why... **The Unrighteous Are Restored in the Righteousness of God**

Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Having considered at all that - I believe you and I can close out E-4 by answering this simple question.

What is the lesson we learn from the Righteous Shepherd – we who are now also known as the Sheep of His Pasture?