

Sheep & Goats

Ezek. 34:17 . – “And as for you.” The Ellipses of this passage may be thus supplied: “And ye, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD (Adonai Jehovah): Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. [Is it] a small thing to you [goats] 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? And [is it a small thing that] my flock [i.e., my sheep] eat [or must eat] that which ye [goats] have trodden with your feet; and drink that which ye have fouled with your feet?”

The contrast is between the sheep and the goats. Sheep never become goats, and goats never become sheep, either in nature or in grace. The Chief Shepherd knows His sheep here; He separates them now, and will eternally separate them from the goats in the coming day, when He shall “save his flock, and judge between cattle and cattle” (verses 20 , 22 , 23).

The characteristic of the goat alluded to here, is graphically set forth in a paper read before the Victoria Institute, Feb. 1, 1892, by J.W. Slater, Esq., F.C.S., F.E.S. He says, “The native flora and fauna of St. Helena have been practically extirpated by the goat. These young seedlings were browsed down as fast as they sprung up, and when the old giants of the forest decayed there were no successors to take their place. As a necessary consequence, the insects and birds disappeared in turn. The same horned wretch’ – fit type of evil – which, as Sir Joseph Hooker shows, has ravaged the earth to a greater extent than man has done by war, is now in the very same manner laying waste South Africa. To such an extent has the mischief already been carried, that a troop of the Colonial Cavalry on the march actually gave three cheers on meeting a tree!”

Have we not here a fit illustration of Ezek. 34 ? And may we not see in ecclesiastical affairs around us (through the unfaithfulness of the shepherds) the ravages of the “goats” in treading down and laying waste, and fouling the pastures of the flock of God? The goats have turned our churches and chapels into places of amusement and of musical entertainment, where they may have “pleasant afternoons,” and “make provision for the flesh”; so much so that the Lord’s sheep are “pushed” and “scattered,” and scarcely know where to find the “green pastures” and the “living waters” of the pure Word of God and the Gospel of His grace! Thank God, the Chief Shepherd is coming; and, when He comes, though He will scarcely “find faith on the earth” (Luke 18:8), He will “save His flock” and separate them from the goats for ever, and be their One True Shepherd.

(Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated by E. W. Bullinger, Kindle, Locations 885, 897, & 909 of 15074)