

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 17, 2016

Ezekiel 34:1–35:15. False and true shepherds.

Revelation 17:1–18. Religious Babylon, the harlot is destroyed.

Job 37:16–24. Job’s inability to understand God’s ways.

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 34:1–35:15. Note the characteristics of the false prophets in **34:1-10** in contrast to the future true shepherd in **34:11-31**. However, not all of the problems lie with the shepherds. Among the sheep are those who are thoughtless, pushy, greedy, and belligerent (**34:17-24**). In the end, God will restore Israel because of her unique relationship to Him. “You My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are My people, and I am your God.” In this section we have a beautiful display of the grace of God. We see God promise blessing after blessing on His people in spite of their evil ways. God uses the personal pronoun “I” more than thirty times and “my” more than fifteen times with reference to the Good Shepherd. Note the grace of God and His promises through the Shepherd to feed His sheep (**34:13**), gather them (**34:12-13**), establish them in the land (**34:14-15**), rule with justice and compassion (34:16), judge with equity (34:17), be the only true shepherd (**34:23**), and mediate a covenant of peace This is followed by a description of the destruction of Edom in **chapter 35**.

Life in God by second person knowledge and love. What a blessing in our daily lives to be able to walk with Christ as our Good Shepherd (John 10:11) by *second person knowledge and love*. The fact that we can have a second person communicative relationship, as per our recent studies at FBC, brings a richness to that relationship that never talking to Jesus cannot obtain. As we have noted, the Bible is clear that believers can pray to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 12:8-10). Because of the incarnation, He experientially understands our human pain, depression, and ignorance in way that neither God the Father nor God the Holy Spirit could possibly understand—they have never been depressed or weak in any way. We, like sheep, are prone to wander, but He is always there and calls us by name as we know Him by second person *proper knowledge and love*: John 10:14 *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own*. Again, this relationship requires nothing less than a second person relationship.

Revelation 17:1–18. John sees ‘a woman sitting on a scarlet beast’. The beast is like the beast out of the sea and stands for all political powers and worldly governments which oppose God. He is a proud and aggressive scarlet—the color of Satan—and covered in every kind of insult to God. The woman stands for human pride—clothed in royal purple and outrageous scarlet. She is bedecked with dazzling jewels. But her appearance is treacherous, for in her hand is a golden cup of poison. Her name is ‘Babylon the Great’. She is a symbol of all those human enterprises, from the tower of Babel onwards, which have tried to challenge and displace God. She is the mother of all that is deceitful and disgusting. She is also the foremost enemy of the church. John sees that she has become drunk on the blood of the saints. She is political and religious.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. As we walk with the Lord by *second person proper knowledge and proper love* in the midst of our current political turmoil, let us be careful not to fall into the evil of conforming to popular American religion/Christianity, which is very pragmatic and utilitarian and political. The American church, for the most part, is radically different in doctrine and practice than the Christ’s church in the New Testament. Satan first neutralizes the American church and then brings in politico-religious doctrines that are very subtle, requiring spiritual discernment to recognize. It was Paul’s great concern that the local churches he founded not be seduced away from their *sincere devotion to Christ* (2 Cor. 11:1–4). To be clear: Our passion and devotion to Christ should far exceed our passion for American politics. The fact that many Christians have greater fear over making bad political decisions and reaping the consequences than making bad spiritual decisions about Christ and reaping those consequences is very revealing as to which has the greatest influence on the life on a daily basis. Only by walking with the Lord by *second person proper knowledge and love* will one have more love and passion for his relationship with Christ than for his political “savior.” Moreover, only with the Lord can we enjoy a freedom that no government can offer—true freedom of the soul regardless of the circumstances. What is more important, political freedom or spiritual freedom? What is the point of political freedom if the believer daily lives enslaved to his sin nature and Mammon (Matt. 6:24)? Recall the politics of Palm Sunday and how believers and unbelievers turned on the Lord when the politics did not go their way (He did not become their political leader)—and chanted “crucify Him” repeatedly: John 19:15, *But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" Then chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"* Luke 23:21, *But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"* Who really is our king?

Job 37:16–24. Elihu anticipates the format of Job’s encounter with God, directing a series of ironic questions at Job (14–24). His obvious intent is to humble Job. In sharp contrast to the winter weather (6–13), Elihu describes the comfort of summer. A mirror of cast bronze (18) suggests the sky in time of drought (Deut. 28:23). Elihu indicates that, in contrast to Job, he would not choose to challenge God since such an encounter would result in destruction. Beginning with **verse 21**, the storm seems to have abated. The sun is so bright that no one can look at it. Likewise, God’s majesty is such that it is awesome. The golden splendor out of the north (22) may be a reference to the Aurora Borealis. Whatever the golden splendor is, it clearly suggests the brilliance of God.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. While we all need to appreciate the majesty of God and our dependence upon Him, it is not until we see His love that we respond with love. 1 John 4:19 *We love Him because He first loved us.* Had Job responded merely to the majesty of God with humility, it would not have been sufficient. We only connect and unite psychologically with those we love. Love casts out all fear: 1 John 4:18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.* This perfecting of God’s love in our lives is a matter of several stages as we walk with the Lord by proper knowledge and proper love daily. When we were unbelievers, we lived in fear and knew nothing of God’s love. After we trusted Christ, we found a perplexing mixture of both fear and love in our hearts. But as we grew in the Lord, gradually the fear vanished and our hearts were controlled by His love and grace. An immature Christian is tossed between fear and love; a mature Christian rests in God’s love. The more Elihu attempts to get Job to fear God, the worse the problem gets. Love is the only way—and it is its own reward.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don