

Sunday, November 6, 2011

The Shepherd and the hired servants

Our Lord Jesus told us in the Gospel of John (Chapter 10) about his relationship with us and resembled it with the relationship of the shepherd and the sheep. It is a resemblance that was also repeated many times in the Old Testament, *"I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick... And feed them in judgment... You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God," says the Lord GOD.*" (Ezekiel 34:15-16, 31), *"Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand... He will feed His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young."* (Isaiah 40:10, 11)

In the words of the Lord Jesus we can also see two important comparisons. The first is between the true shepherd who enters from the door and the robbers and thieves who attempt to sneak upon the sheep from different directions. In the second comparison he emphasizes on the vast difference between the good shepherd and the hired servant, this comparison is the topic of this article.

The Lord Jesus describes the hired servant as one that does not care about the sheep, neither does he worry about their safety or well being. A hired servant only cares about his own wages and only focuses on his own self interest. Therefore, if he sees the wolf approaching, he flees and leaves the sheep behind letting the wolf attack the sheep and devour them. Sometimes a hireling is worse than that, when he becomes like a wolf and attacks the sheep himself, slays them, and shed their blood on the ground, while he is supposed to be their protector. In doing so, he is indeed a hireling and completely unfit for being a shepherd for the sheep.

As to the real shepherd, his first priority is taking care of his sheep. He knows them by their names, leads them on a safe pathway, and gives them freedom to come and go to find green and rich pastures. Over time, he develops a close relationship between him and his sheep, so the sheep can recognize his voice clearly and follow him whenever he goes. However, the sheep neither follow nor ever feel safe around the stranger or the hired servant, because they don't see in them love and faithfulness.

If we observe worldly life, we see that free and civilized nations always choose leaders who have the character of a shepherd rather than hired servant. Even if these nations are deceived by some wolves who master the art of disguise and hide in the cloths of the shepherds, they quickly realize that these leaders are hirelings and are absolutely unfit to lead their nations. Then they quickly get rid of them in the first elections and replace them with others.

We may see, in this current era, some rulers who force themselves on their nations, and don't step down from their positions of power following the principle of *"We rule you or we kill you!"* Indeed those are hirelings, who don't care for the wellbeing of the flock, whom the bible spoke about them that they care only for themselves and not the flock (Eze 34).

These matters are common occurrences in worldly kingdoms. Nonetheless, the children of God are members in a heavenly kingdom, their King is loving and just, gentle and victorious. Thus you find them, under any circumstances, being joyful, peaceful, and content under the care of this king, the good shepherd who protects them, leads them and nourishes them. Even if they are subjected to offenses on the earthly level, because of some hirelings in leadership positions of their nation who don't care for the wellbeing but rather sometimes attack them, they trust that their king is more powerful than everyone. He defends them and changes everything to their good, and He is always their safe harbor and fortified fortress.

Therefore we should never be troubled if we come across these hired servants in leadership positions in the course of our lives. We are under the care of a great God who doesn't neglect us and never desert those who trust in him, He is able to deliver us no matter how vicious the enemy might be, for He is the one *"Who speak in righteousness, mighty to save"* (Isaiah 63 : 1). He may allow that we experience severe tribulations to the point of death *"That we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us."* (2 Corinthian 1:9-10).

Finally, the greatest thing we see in our Good Shepherd is that He lays Himself for the sheep, and gives His life unto death for the life of His sheep, for He gives his sheep eternal life by dying for their sake. This is opposite to what a hired servant or any other shepherd would do. Any ordinary shepherd raises the sheep to ultimately slay them for food or to sell them for a profit, but our Good Shepherd offers Himself to be slain for our sake to eat His body and drink His blood and live through Him forever.

It is truly amazing to have such a unique shepherd who lays Himself for His sheep as a sacrifice for them to eat and through which they restore their lives forever.

"O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!" (Psalm 84: 12) and Blessed are those people whom You shepherd



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