

Ezekiel 34:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.

Analysis

"And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats." God promises to judge within the flock, distinguishing true believers from mere professors. The sheep and goats separation anticipates Jesus' parable (Matthew 25:31-46). External covenant membership doesn't guarantee salvation; God discerns hearts. This warns against presuming on religious identity while lacking genuine faith. The Reformed distinction between visible and invisible church appears: not all in the visible church belong to the elect. Final judgment will separate wheat from tares.

Historical Context

Within exiled Israel (586 BC), some genuinely mourned sin while others maintained external religiosity without heart transformation. God promises to distinguish between them—preserving the faithful remnant while judging hypocrites. This principle appears throughout Scripture: God knows His own (2 Timothy 2:19) and will separate genuine believers from false professors. The early church wrestled with this reality: not all professing Christians proved genuine (1 John 2:19). The promise assures both judgment of hypocrisy and preservation of true faith.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to judge within the flock challenge presumption on external religious identity?
2. What distinguishes genuine sheep from goats within the visible church?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה יְהוָה	צֹאֲנִי	כֹה	אָמַר	אֲדֹנָי	יְהוָה	הַנֶּגֶד י
And as for you	O my flock	H3541	thus saith	the Lord	GOD	H2005
H859	H6629		H559	H136	H3069	
שֹׁפֵט	בֵּין	לְשֵׁה	לְשֵׁה	לְאֵיל יִם	וְלִעֲתוּדִים:	
Behold I judge	H996	and cattle	and cattle	between the rams	and the he goats	
H8199		H7716	H7716	H352	H6260	

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 10:3 (References Lord): Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.