

Ruling Chaos

When Leadership is the Primary Cause of Sin

Impossible Hope Series – Part 5

Ezekiel 34

February 10-11, 2024

Introduction

- **The Importance of Good Leadership** – it's been said by Christian leadership gurus, 'everything rises and falls on leadership'. I agree with that theoretically and practically as long as we have an allowance that says that **God is the true leader** of all Christian activity. The reason that leadership is so critical is because **they are the head that turns the body, the rudder that turns the ship. They are the visionaries, the mission setters. If they are off, everything is going to go south.**
- **Leadership is Influence** – that same group of leadership gurus says the axiom, 'leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.' I agree with that statement. If someone is influenced by you, you are a leader in that regard, in that area. If someone is following, you are leading. That doesn't mean you want to lead, nor does it suggest that you are doing it well or poorly, only that you are doing it.
- **Examples of layers and types of leadership** – as goes the **teacher** so goes the classroom. As goes the **parents**, so goes the household. As goes the **friend influencers** so goes the friend group. As goes the **political representative**, so goes the region of influence. As goes the **manager of the store**, so goes the store. As goes the **front office of a sports team**, so goes the team. And the list goes on.

As Goes the LEADER, so Goes the FOLLOWERS

- **Stricter Judgment** – The Bible says that those who are **teachers of the Word of God**, who in turn are **leaders and influencers**, are held to a higher standard than others. **Why? Because they are a gateway for God**, and they can either honor Him in the **purity** of that message or dishonor Him in **distortion** of His message. That affects the listening group significantly. People are making life decisions off what they hear is God's opinion. That can't be done poorly. So, God holds them more accountable. That's the context of James 3:1, but we can see that same principle applies outside the pulpit as well. God holds each influential leader more accountable than the people they lead. For example: those that call for war and design the war are more accountable than the soldiers fighting the war.
 - James 3:1 – "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."
- **God's Heat on Israel's Leaders** – just as we saw **Jesus** go after the **Pharisees and Sadducees** in the New Testament era because they were the Jewish leaders, so too do we see **God going after the leadership of Israel more intensely** in the Old Testament era that we are studying with **Ezekiel**.
 - **Accountability should always start from the top** – it's easy to try to correct things that are right in front of us, but a better question is to ask, 'why did they do that? Who allowed them to think that was, okay? Who trained this element in them?' Now, if they

did it completely on their own, they are the top of their own issue, but if you can go up the chain, that's where you need to start.

- **Recap** – where we are at with the series.
 - **Week 1** – Prophet/priest Ezekiel sees God
 - **Week 2** – Ezekiel's mission – speak to Israel for God
 - **Week 3** – Radical living illustration assignments
 - **Week 4** – the main problem that caused Israel's judgment: **Idolatry**
 - **Specific issues named last week**
 - Highlight from Ezek 22:6-16
 - Civic leadership being corrupt
 - Religious leadership being corrupt
 - Religious sins
 - Sexual sins
 - Disrespect, corruption, pride, injustice, and the list goes on.
 - Eze 22:6-16 - *"Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. 7 Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. 8 You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths. 9 There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst. 10 In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity. 11 One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter. 12 In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord God. 13 "Behold, I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the blood that has been in your midst. 14 Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it. 15 I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will consume your uncleanness out of you. 16 And you shall be profaned by your own doing in the sight of the nations, and you shall know that I am the Lord."*
- **Key question – who let all of this happen? Someone could have stopped it!**
Whose job was it to hold people accountable for all of this corruption and selfish wickedness?
- **Week 5 – God comes after Israel's leadership – HOW things went wrong.**

Lesson

- **Assessing the 3 levels of leadership in Israel** – Israel had 3 primary levels of leadership. 1.) **Governmental leadership** (princes); 2.) **Spiritual leadership** (priest and prophets); 3.) **Tribal leadership** (elders). We are going to walk through each of them and highlight what was going wrong.
- **1.) Governmental Leaders – what was wrong** – At this time **there was a king of Judah** (that was the southern portion of Israel and the only portion left in Israel. The Northern kingdom (known as Israel or Ephraim) was wiped out about 130 years earlier. By the time that we get to Ezekiel's day which was the final days of Judah, the kings are **merely pawns** for the Babylonian Empire who already took over. They are supposed to be puppet kings, but the Jewish people are not known for laying down to oppression so periodically these puppets would revolt and get blasted for it. **The kings were changing out a lot during those days**. So, instead of talking to the king specifically, **God tended to talk, through Ezekiel, to the 'princes'**. That was the governmental leaders that were under the king but **highly influential about what happened in society**.

- **What was wrong** – Technically, **everything that was happening in Israel should have been handled by the king and the senior leadership**. Although the king and his team weren't in charge of the temple, that was the priest's job, history shows that they had the right to kick out bad priests and lead reforms (e.g. Josiah). But if we are going to dial down into some of the details of chapters 11, 19, 22, & 45 we see **a short list of specific sins** that God was holding them accountable for:
 - **Wicked counselors to the king** – Ezekiel Chapter 11 says that 25 sample men (although 2 'princes/leaders' were named) were charged with 'devising iniquity and give wicked counsel.' While Ezekiel watched one of them fell down dead in judgment.
 - **Distorting justice for personal gain** – **shedding innocent blood in the court systems, taking bribes, and extorting.**
 - **General oppression** – when God calls the leadership the oppressors that's a problem. It means that in all the most important ways they were **taking advantage of their own people they were supposed to serve.**
 - Eze 22:6, 12 - "Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood....12 In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord God.
 - Eze 19:1–14 – is a metaphorical prophesy that talks about a pride of lion cubs that each grow up and are captured and taken away. This was to demonstrate the captivity and deportation they were going to experience. Along the way it highlights bad things the 'lions' did: devoured men, stole widows, laid waste their cities. I assume this was speaking of the sins of the Israelite leadership.
 - Eze 45:8-10¹ - "And my princes shall no more oppress my people, but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes. 9 "Thus says the Lord God: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord God. 10 "You shall have just balances, a just ephah, and a just bath."
- **Application: Government leaders today** – Perhaps even more than Israel's monarchy (although technically it was supposed to be a Theocracy where the kings/leaders served God), **our nation is a nation of representative leadership**. We call them civil servants. What this means is that there are **designed to serve the people's best interest**. A dictator would serve themselves and demand for personal gain, but a President, a Senator, an Assembly person, a governor, a mayor, etc. are literally supposed to serve their constituency. That means they are to put their needs on the back burner while they are in office and be a servant to the people. But are they doing that? Or are they getting kickbacks, bribes, power, influence, opportunities for wealth, and advancing their own agendas? Even though we are not a "Christian Nation" in the best sense of the word doesn't mean that God won't hold our leaders accountable for what they do to His people.
- **How do we get good and healthy government leaders?** Politicians? **How can we work the American system for righteousness without become part of the problem?** –

¹ I don't know what this passage is referring to when it says, 'evicting the people', unless we are talking about how someone is taking another fellow Israelite's family land (and being evicted) due to injustice in the courtroom. Now that I think about it, that's likely the answer.

As it so happens, I am leading a **brand new Faith & Culture series on Christianity & American Politics in the month of April** this year and we are going to talking about all of those issues and more. For our purposes here, the simple answer is **three things**: 1.) We need to **WANT good leaders** before we will select good leaders; 2.) We need to learn how to **discern a good leader** in the first place. 3.) We need to **exercise our influence to secure good leaders** instead of simply complaining about the problem.

- **2.) Spiritual Leaders – what was wrong** – We know that God is more interested in spiritual lives than physical lives so it's no wonder why there is **less said about the government officials in comparison to the religious leaders**. The main issue in Israel was **IDOLATRY**, and although kings and governmental leaders were responsible for their idolatry issues and guiding the nation in their theocracy, the majority of the responsibility was on the religious leaders. There were **two classes of spiritual leadership** that was heavily influential in the nation of Israel: **Priests and Prophets**. They had very unique roles.
 - **A.) Priests** – This was the **religious and practical leadership in the Temple and across the nation**. Their **helpers, called Levites** would carry out the functions but the priests were in charge of decision making if it was needed. **Most of what they would do was already set in stone** (procedures, rituals, feasts, sabbath, Passover, kosher laws, sacrifices, etc.). They were more **high-level managers and implementers than anything else**. **The most important thing they did was to make sure that God was honored, and the nation was kept ritually pure**. It's important to realize that priests and Levites were **born into it**, it wasn't a career or even a calling. It was a duty laid upon them at birth. Levites would be allowed to serve officially at 30 years old.² They were dismissed from active service at 50.³ Priests seemed to have longer runs, maybe because there were so few of them in comparison and the work was not as strenuous. There is suggestion that even a priest was not allowed to serve until 30. God seems to address the priests and Levites as one group and we'll do the same here.
 - **What was wrong** – let's take a look at 2 small passages that sum it up...
 - Eze 22:26 – *"Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them."*
 - Eze 44:6–14 – *"And say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations, 7 in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple, when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You have broken my covenant, in addition to all your abominations. 8 And you have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep my charge for you in my sanctuary. 9 Thus says the Lord God: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. 10 But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after*

² At one time it was 25 years old and later changed to 30 years old for unknown reasons.

³ Numbers 8:25

their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. 11 They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple and ministering in the temple. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before the people, to minister to them.

12 Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord God, and they shall bear their punishment. 13 They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my holy things and the things that are most holy, but they shall bear their shame and the abominations that they have committed. 14 Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its service and all that is to be done in it.”

- **Failing to do their job** – although that word, ‘failing’ is technically correct, it sounds like they tried. **They didn’t try. They failed because they didn’t take it seriously and they let it fall into disrepair.** They didn’t do the stuff that God built them for. Their whole purpose was to lead the nation of Israel into holiness. Holiness means set apart for God. It means to be unique to God. It means to follow God’s directions to a ‘T’, so that other nations could see what God was about by looking at their actions. The priests were the tip of the spear in this job. Examples of their roles that they let fall apart (from the above passages):

- They stopped **teaching/training in the kosher laws** (clean vs. unclean).
- They stopped **teaching/training in holiness** (marked out for God vs. regular stuff).
- Stopped enforcing or leading **Sabbath**
- **Allowed non-priests to work and worship in the temple.**
- They served as **holy men in the pagan services** of other gods for the people.

- **Worshiping other gods (in private & public)** - Ezekiel 8:1-18 – **Ezekiel 8 tells the story of God taking Ezekiel on a secret vision-mission to look into the Jerusalem ‘temple’** and see how the leaders of the land (unclear if they are priests – although it’s in the temple it could be symbolic – and God calls them elders and not priests) have not only allowed pagan worship but they are taking part in **pagan worship in their own homes** as well. Ezekiel sees **pagan images carved all over the temple (vile profaning act), and even worship of the Sun** (Egyptians worshiped Ra, the ‘sun god’). There is a reference to the ‘image of jealousy’⁴ which is unclear and mysterious. It seems to be a pagan statue in the Temple. There was such an issue 30 years prior when Israel had put up a statue of Astarte/Asherah (consort of Baal – fertility goddess) in the temple, but it was torn down and removed by king Josiah during his reforms. Maybe God was reminding Ezekiel of the past travesties, or maybe it was a new statue they were proposing or even using. It’s not clear.

⁴ It’s literally translated, ‘jealousy that causes jealousy’ – it refers to the extremely strong feelings God had about how offensive this statue was.

- **Not everyone worshiped false gods** – In addition to the fact that **Ezekiel himself was a priest that wasn't guilty of any of this**, in **Ezekiel 9**, God has his angelic messengers marked the foreheads of all those who are bothered by the false worship happening and consider it an abomination like God does. They are marked out so when God's forces start killing people for idolatry they aren't harmed.
- **When leadership is mixed** - **Ezekiel 11** – God's judgment on the 25 leaders – one dies while he's prophesying. **Ezekiel 11** – God also highlights that He will rebuild with the remnant of the good guys (giving them a new spirit: v. 18-20). The judgment isn't for the good guys but they need to expand their influence if they are going to restore their nation.
- **B.) Prophets** – These were the **supernatural group that allegedly heard from God and conveyed His will to the people**. They were **difficult to hold accountable** because you never knew if they were legit or not until something they said came to pass. They served as **advisor to the king** many times as the king wanted to know if God was on his side or not (the wrong way to go about things – the real question would be, are we on God's side or not, but they weren't being led well during this season).
- **What was wrong** – **Ezekiel 13** states it most succinctly. Let's read a bit of that...
 - **Ezekiel 13:1-23** – *"The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: 'Hear the word of the Lord!' 3 Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4 Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel. 5 You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord. 6 They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the Lord,' when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. 7 Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, 'Declares the Lord,' although I have not spoken?' 8 Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore behold, I am against you, declares the Lord God. 9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord God. 10 Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash, 11 say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, and you, O great hailstones, will fall, and a stormy wind break out. 12 And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the coating with which you smeared it?' 13 Therefore thus says the Lord God: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end. 14 And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it,*

and you shall know that I am the Lord. 15 Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash, and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it, 16 the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord God. 17 "And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own hearts. Prophesy against them 18 and say, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls! Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people and keep your own souls alive? 19 You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death souls who should not die and keeping alive souls who should not live, by your lying to my people, who listen to lies. 20 "Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls like birds, and I will tear them from your arms, and I will let the souls whom you hunt go free, the souls like birds. 21 Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey, and you shall know that I am the Lord. 22 Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life, 23 therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination. I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the Lord."

- Eze 22:25, 28 – *"The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst... 28 And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord God,' when the Lord has not spoken."*
- **The key issues:**
 - **Claiming to speak for God when He didn't speak** - They would claim to have visions and oracles from God. Unfortunately, during Ezekiel's day and the dark days of Israel, **most of them were bogus** and corrupt. They wanted the influence but they didn't hear from God, so they made it up.
 - **Operating for profit** – there was nothing wrong with being supported as a prophet. There was nothing wrong with having an official role of a prophet. **The problem was that they were altering their alleged words from God for profit and they were exacting money from people just to hear from God** (remember, this was a time when God only spoke through prophets unlike today where the Holy Spirit speaks to all true believers).
- **Application: Spiritual/Church leaders today – Today we have a different covenant** (see last week) **and a different structure** set up for our religious activity. We, in the protestant portion of the Church are more of a gathering of believers that God is moving in and through, instead of a top-down, priesthood. **Nevertheless, church leaders are still gateways of what God wants to do among His people. They are people of influence.** They are called and held responsible to convey God accurately to His people. In our local

churches we have **teaching** pastors that explain the Word of God, and they will be held extra accountable for that. We have **shepherds** that are called to minister to the daily spiritual and practical needs of God's people and they will be held accountable for that. Along the way we have all sorts of **influential Christians using their gifts and carrying out their assignments**. Each will be held accountable for faithfulness.

- **How do we get good and healthy spiritual/church leaders?** – It's similar to selecting government officials in the sense that we, as believers, need to support, honor, and be a part of selecting good Christian leaders. **We need to want the right leadership in our churches.** If we are more interested in being a **fancy church** than a **godly church**, we will pick different sorts of **leaders**. If we want a **country club** rather than a **shepherd**, then we are going to lean toward wanting different **pastors**. The type of leadership you support and invest in will grow in influence. I select my leaders based first on character before anything else. If their hearts aren't good we can't use them no matter how brilliant they are.
- **3.) Tribal Leaders** – this level of leadership was those influential from a grass roots level. Each segment of Israelite society had influential leaders that guided how that particular area would handle things. The **base leaders were called shepherds**, the **top echelon** of that group was called **elders**. They were heads of families and heads of local groups. The highest level of this group was also called Elders and they were formalized. They were the grand representation of the nation to the government (keeping a pulse on the people).
 - **A.) Elders** – again, the elders were the highest level of shepherd in Israel, lay leadership. This was a more formal group.
 - **What was wrong** –
 - **Practical idolatry** - *Eze 14:1–11* - *"Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. 2 And the word of the Lord came to me: 3 "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces..."*
 - **A historical problem** - *Eze 20:1–32* – Ezekiel chapter 20 has **God reminding the elders of the land about their history with God. God told their forefathers** how all of this was going to go and what they needed to do. He also laid out for them what would happen if they failed to obey. Starting in verse 30 God tells them that they are rebelling just like their forefathers had done over and over...*30 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and go whoring after their detestable things? 31 When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, declares the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 32 "What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, 'Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.'*

- **Radical pagan worship** – chapter 20 laid out some serious charges. It says that not only were they doing **fertility rituals** in the hills but they had even engaged in false worship of **Molech** which is honored by **child sacrifice**. Where did they get these ideas? It's what the other nations around them would do and they wanted to be just like everyone else.
- **B.) Shepherds**⁵ – shepherds were the most localized leadership to the people. They were the ones interacting with the people most commonly and their lives were interlaced with their people. This was a less formal group. There were a lot of them.
- **What was wrong** – since shepherding was a bit of **a catch all for all leadership in Israel** (anyone with influence), we'll read a longer passage about them and what the Lord had against them. **It will demonstrate why things were only going to get worse if the Lord let it continue.**
 - Eze 34:1–31 – *"The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; 6 they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them."*
- **Key Issues**
 - **Selfishness** – the main issue with the localized leadership is selfishness. They were **feeding themselves** and not feeding the sheep. They were **more interested in their own benefits than those they led**.
 - **Failed responsibility** – they were supposed to care for those around them, but they didn't. **they didn't strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the straying**. They didn't even meet the practical needs of their people because they were too self-focused.
 - **Harsh leadership** – if you noticed at the end of that passage it talks about how it was '**force and harshness**' that they led the people. That's unacceptable. They have no right to do that. **All leadership serves as managers for the Lord**. They don't own the people, God does. They are just caring for HIS people. They don't get to make rules about how they treat them. They are to treat them as the Lord desires.

⁵ It's difficult to know whether God was talking to Ezekiel about the shepherds and meaning the governmental officials (because the ancient Eastern world used shepherd designations for kings, princes, government, civic and tribal leaders. It was a general term for 'leader'. But here I chose to designate them localized civic/tribal leaders because the indictment against them had to do with being so close to the 'sheep' and responsible for day-to-day help, that any distant leadership didn't make any sense. But I could be wrong. All of those leadership pieces tend to overlap anyway.

- **Next week highlight⁶** – notice that from verse 10 on it talks about how God was going to step in Himself and become their shepherd to do what failed leadership didn't do. We won't go into that right now. We'll save it for next week.
 - *Ezek 34:10ff... No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. The Lord God Will Seek Them Out 11 "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out...14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice...23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken."*
- **Application: localized Civic/Tribal leaders today** – The application for today is any leader big or small that is influencing someone else. We must always remember that **everyone on this planet is the Lord's precious person**. They are made in His image and bear His mark. They are His property. Whatever we do to them we are doing to the Lord (Matt 25). We do not get to treat other people any way that we want to. We must treat them as God would want us to. They aren't ours to abuse. They are His to tend to. **This means that you will be held accountable for how you parent your children, how you treat your server at the restaurant, how you influence your group of friends, how you lead at work. All of it matters.** All of them matter.
- **How do we get good and healthy leaders in our lives?** – **We don't always have control over who our leaders are, but we probably have more influence than we think we do.** In America citizens have access to influence any **elected official** (whether it's a clean system or not is up for debate). Our **marriages** aren't arranged, so we have access to determine who we are partnered with and who is going to have authority in our homes. There are many **churches** (1 United States but 400,000 churches), and we need to plant our families in healthy churches that doesn't have abusive leadership. We have options now of how our children are **educated** so we have control over who is leading them. We have **many job** careers (as opposed to the caste systems of other nations) to choose from and we need to be able to work for companies that aren't corrupt.
- **When we are leaders** – **We must be the healthiest leaders we can be. Whenever we have unhealed points, points of insecurity, gaps in our goodness, sin in our lives, it bends our nature.** We cannot serve or lead well if we are unhealthy. **There is a Christian mandate to get healthy with whatever tools or miracles that God provides.** Otherwise, our pain and dysfunction pours out on others.

⁶ When God steps in – (ex. Chap 34) God has to step in when bad leaders don't cut it – many times it's on the grace of God and His presence that gets our kids out of our homes in one piece (a warning for kids not to follow in their parents rebellious footsteps – 20:18-21). Too often God has to build His Church despite bad church leaders. Too often God has to create a Christian nation with only moderate wanna-be Christians (in title only). But praise the Lord He does.

Conclusion

- **Our part in the leadership issues** - God doesn't blame everyone for leadership's bad mistakes but there are ramifications. At the same time the point is whether or not we are following God (He's our leader) or we are following people (they are our leaders).
- **Next Week** – We turn the corner from judgment to radical hope – this is when you want to invite your friends and family.