

Ezekiel Chapter 34

Ezekiel 34:1 "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,"

This again is a brand new prophecy. Ezekiel turns from the people, to their leaders who have the greatest guilt.

From this chapter on, Ezekiel's messages are mostly comforting, telling of God's grace and faithfulness to His covenant promises.

Ezekiel 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe [be] to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"

"Prophesy against the shepherds of Israel": The reference was to pre-exilic leaders such as kings, priests, and prophets (their civil leaders), as well as their spiritual leaders. Meaning those false ones who fleeced the flock for personal gain (verses 3-4), rather than fed or led righteously. This stands in contrast to the Lord as Shepherd.

These Scriptures have a meaning for the Jews and the Christians, as well. We will try to look at both, as we go along. The very beginning of these verses is a reprimand for not caring for the sheep. The kings then, and the preachers now, must be careful to feed the sheep. That is the primary job of a shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:3 "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: [but] ye feed not the flock."

This speaks of those who take from the sheep and give nothing. We see in some churches today, that ministers are living far above the conditions of their people and are not teaching them true doctrine or the dangers of not living according to God's holy word.

Ezekiel 34:4 "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up [that which was] broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them."

Some treat the church as if it is a hotel for saints and not a hospital for sinners.

Mark 2:17 "When Jesus heard [it], he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Those whose spirits are sick need us. The weak sheep need more care than the healthy ones. A good shepherd keeps his sheep together with love, patience, and kindness, not by driving them. Jesus told the parable about the shepherd that left the 99, and went to find that one that was lost. The 23rd Psalm describes the good Shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:5 "And they were scattered, because [there is] no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered."

When the flock is divided it is easy prey for the wolves. They get one sheep off from the others, and kill him. This is true of the church. Together we stand, divided we fall. The wolf is not afraid of the sheep, but he is afraid of the shepherd. The shepherd drives the wolf away, and saves the sheep.

In the verse above, there is no shepherd. The sheep are easy prey. This is why a Christian needs fellowship in a church with other Christians, and to be under the care of a pastor. There is safety in the numbers, and the pastor protects the single member. The pastor is protector and guide.

The beasts of the field pictured here, picture the nations that prey on Israel (Dan. 7:3-7), though it could include actual wild beasts (as in 14:21, 34:25 and 28).

Ezekiel 34:6 "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek [after them]."

To hold a civil office or an office in a church carries with it a grave responsibility. We should not take the office, if we have not weighed the cost and are willing to sacrifice to do a good job. The lost of the world today are like those sheep on the mountains. We must go and get them.

To be saved yourself is wonderful, but God called His workers to seek out the lost. How can they be saved without hearing? They must hear the Word of God to be saved.

Ezekiel 34:7 "Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;"

This is not just an idle statement, but a warning to the ministers of today, and to the leaders of the Jews then.

Ezekiel 34:8 "[As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because [there was] no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;"

All who work in the ministry should be ministering because God called them to that task, not as a way of making a living. Of course, you must have a living, but it should not be your reason for accepting a certain job.

The food that the minister of God must bring the flock, is the pure Word of God. The Word cannot be watered down, or it will not nourish the sheep. The sheep will not be in much danger of straying away, when they are well fed. When they know the Word of God, they are not as easily drawn away to false prophets.

Ezekiel 34:9 "Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;"

This is no idle threat, as proven by the case of King Zedekiah (see Jer. 52:10-11).

Ezekiel 34:10 "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [am] against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

God will not allow a leader to go on, who does not care for the people. Those shepherds, who do not care for the sheep, will be replaced by some who do care for the sheep. The owner (God), does not want to lose his sheep. The key word, in the verse above, is mouth. He will deliver them from his mouth.

These are words he is delivering them from. The false prophet will say anything to enrich his own pocket. He is not interested in the sheep. They have not brought God's message to these people, so God will require them at the false prophet's hand.

Ezekiel 34:11 "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, [even] I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."

God will search Israel out and restore her to her homeland. God, the true Shepherd, would search out and find His sheep in order to restore Israel to their land for the kingdom which the Messiah leads.

Ezekiel 34:12 "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep [that are] scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."

This is specifically speaking of the house of Israel, which is scattered as captives in foreign lands. It is also, speaking of the Lord bringing His sheep into the church.

Acts 2:17 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:"

“A cloudy and dark day” is referring to the “day of the Lord” judgment on Israel.

Ezekiel 34:13 "And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country."

Babylon will be destroyed, and God's people will come home to their Promised Land. It is God who frees them. The land of Israel will again, be a land of milk and honey. With God's blessings upon it, it will flourish.

Verses 12-14: Here is the promise of a literal regathering and restoration of the people of Israel to their own land from their worldwide dispersion. Since the scattering was literal, the regathering must also be literal. Once they are regathered in Messiah's kingdom, they will no longer want (verses 15-16).

Ezekiel 34:14 "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and [in] a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel."

This is speaking of the beautiful pasture land where the shepherds tended their sheep. The 23rd Psalm gives a really good example of what this Scripture says. Israel will be restored to their God and His protection, as well as being restored to their land. The land would be no good without the blessings of God upon it.

Ezekiel 34:15 "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD."

The "lying down" speaks of peace. God brings them peace, as well as supplying their needs. He feeds their bodies and spirits. It will happen, because God promised it. This is like the grace that He gives the Christian. "Grace" means unmerited favor. This is what they received, and it is what the Christian receives as well.

Ezekiel 34:16 "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up [that which was] broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment."

The "fat" in the Scripture here, is speaking of the shepherd who took everything for himself. The fat and the strong are speaking of those who have abused others, to get what they wanted. The sick and broken are speaking of those who needed a Savior. This is that judgment day, when God separates the sheep which belong to Him, from the goats.

In contrast to self indulgent leaders who took advantage of the sheep, God will meet the needs of His people (sheep). This is clearly reminiscent (in the 23rd Psalm).

Verses 17-22: Once He has judged the leaders, God will also judge the abusive members of the flock as to their true spiritual state. This passage anticipates the judgment of the people given by Jesus Christ (in Matthew 25:31-46), where Christ separates the sheep from the goats.

Ezekiel 34:17 "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."

"Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats". Between the smaller and weaker cattle, the sheep and the lambs. And the larger and stronger cattle, "the rams and he goats". By which the latter may be meant persons of superior power and authority. Of

greater wealth and riches, and of more wisdom and knowledge, at least in their own conceits. And who were oppressive and injurious to the poor and common people, and less knowing, at least as they thought. Now, the Lord, as he observed a difference between them, he would make this known, and take the part of the one against the other. Even the part of the weaker against the stronger.

Ezekiel 34:18 "[Seemeth it] a small thing unto you 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?"

These are shepherds who have taken big salaries, and lived in huge homes, and driven expensive cars, when their people were just barely scraping a living. They had taken the best for themselves, and let some of their people go hungry.

Ezekiel 34:19 "And [as for] my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet."

They have fed the flock with messages they had ruined. They had altered the food God provided. They have actually trampled on the Word of God. Then, they fed it to the sheep.

Ezekiel 34:20 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, [even] I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle."

On judgment day, the judgment is just, because Jesus is the Righteous Judge.

Ezekiel 34:21 "Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;"

This is pure and simple oppression of the rich over the poor. It could be those in high authority taking advantage of those who are of low estate. This would be those who are poor being removed out of social churches. "Horns" symbolize power.

Ezekiel 34:22 "Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle."

The fact that it says the cattle and cattle, just means they are supposed to all be Israelites. Some will be saved, and some will not. This also is speaking of those who call themselves Christians. Not all who call themselves Christians will be saved.

Matthew 7:21 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Ezekiel 34:23 "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, [even] my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd."

This is speaking of that great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(In John 10 1:18), we see who the servant David, mentioned here is. I will give just one verse. Jesus calls Himself the good Shepherd in the next verse.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

Read all of it to get a more full idea. Jesus is that One Shepherd. His entire concern was for His sheep.

Ezekiel 34:24 "And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken [it]."

This is speaking of God the Father. Jesus opened the way to the Father for each of us, when He gave His body on the cross. The veil in the temple in Jerusalem rent from the top to the bottom, giving all believers in Christ access to the Father.

Christ took on Himself the form of a servant on the earth. He is that promised King that will reign forever. Jesus Christ purchased us with His precious blood, and we are now sons of God, if we believe.

Romans 8:14-15 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Ezekiel 34:25 "And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods."

The covenant of peace is actually a gift offered to man. The old covenant has failed, because mankind did not obey God. The new covenant is the covenant of grace. We remember in previous lessons, how Israel had trouble during the siege with the wild animals. There will now be peace. Their safety is provided by God. This is speaking of actual animals that will be tamed in the kingdom (see Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9 and Hosea 2:18).

Ezekiel 34:26 "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing."

This is a reference to Jerusalem and Zion in particular, where the Jews will come to worship the Lord. "Showers of blessing": The "times of refreshing" (in Acts 3:19-20), when the curses of (Deut. 28:15-68 are lifted).

God controls the elements. It rains, when He tells it to. The blessings of God are now upon them, so the rain and the sunshine will come just at the right time for the crops to flourish. All good gifts come from God.

Ezekiel 34:27 "And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I [am] the LORD, when I

have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them."

God's blessings are back upon them. God will again be their protection. They are His people and He will pour out blessing on them as He has done in the past. His anger is gone. He loves them as a Father loves a son.

The faithfulness of the land is also indicated (in Amos 9:13).

Ezekiel 34:28 "And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make [them] afraid."

The enemy will not come against them now, because the enemy is afraid of Israel's God. The only time the beasts, or the heathen, could attack them before, was when God took His protection away. His protection is back now. They are His people, and He is their God.

God will stop other nations from subjugating the people of Israel.

Ezekiel 34:29 "And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more."

This "plant of renown" could have been speaking of Jesus as the Branch. It could also be speaking of the abundant food supply they would have, now that they are back in good graces with God. Many had starved during the famine, when Babylon attacked them. There will be plenty to eat now.

Ezekiel 34:30 "Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God [am] with them, and [that] they, [even] the house of Israel, [are] my people, saith the Lord GOD."

They were His people, even when they were in captivity in Babylon. He was chastising them as a Father does a misbehaving child. They had been unfaithful. Now, all of that is forgotten. God has forgiven them, and taken them back.

"The Lord their God": An oft repeated Old Testament theme. This speaks of the ultimate salvation of Israel (as in Romans 11:25-27).

Ezekiel 34:31 "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, [are] men, [and] I [am] your God, saith the Lord GOD."

This leaves no doubt that the sheep were speaking of God's people. They must choose to be His people, and He will be their God.

Ezekiel Chapter 34 Questions

1. In this prophecy, Ezekiel turns to the _____.
2. Prophecy against the _____ of Israel.
3. Who was this for the Jews?
4. Who is the Great Shepherd for the Christians?
5. Who are the shepherds under him?
6. What is the primary job of the shepherd?
7. What is verse 3 speaking of?
8. What was the complaint against these shepherds in verse 4?
9. What chapter, in the Bible, describes the Good Shepherd best?
10. What had happened to Israel, because she had no shepherd?
11. What should you do, before taking a high office?
12. Why should you choose to be a minister?
13. What is the food the minister should feed the flock with?
14. Why is God taking the sheep from these shepherds?
15. What is the key word in verse 10?
16. Who owns the sheep?
17. God seeks the sheep out as what?
18. What does the "lying down" in verse 15 symbolize?
19. What does "grace" mean?
20. What is verse 19 saying to us?
21. Who is the Righteous Judge?
22. How did Jesus open the way to the Father for us?
23. The new covenant is the covenant of _____.
24. Why will the enemy not come against Israel?
25. What two could the "plant of renown" be?

26. The flock of my pasture are _____.