



# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 34

*Theme: Israel's false shepherds;  
God's true shepherd*

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## Note John10:16

**Theme:** Israel's False Shepherds; God's True Shepherd

**Missler Introduction:** Chapter 34 deals with wicked shepherds. The concept of a shepherd was not just that of a spiritual leader; it was also used of kings and leaders in general (Psalm 78; Isaiah 44 and 63; Zechariah 11 and 13). You will even find the antichrist spoken of as the wicked shepherd, and see a physical description of him in Zechariah.

In contrast to that, here in this chapter we are going to see the Lord as the Good Shepherd. This is where we will see a shifting to the message of blessings, and see more of the Messianic flavor to Ezekiel's message.

Up until this time most of his messages were "Judgment is coming..." For chapter after chapter, Ezekiel was burdened with letting Judah know that God had ordained Babylon to be his arm of judgment, and his mission had been to explain why they were being judged.<sup>1</sup>

Previously the Lord had said that the Israelites would not occupy the Promised Land because they had disobeyed the Mosaic Covenant. This disobedience was clear from the behavior of the people still in the land (33:25-26) and the Jews in exile (33:31-32). In this message He laid the burden of responsibility for the Israelites' failure at the feet of their leaders (cf. 13:1—14:11; 22).

**Ron Daniel: Review** We have come to the third and final section of the book of Ezekiel. However, before we hear all the wonderful promises of God's blessings upon Israel's future, He has some "housecleaning" to do for a couple of chapters.

In chapter 33, the Lord told Ezekiel that he was about to be given the job of watchman by the Israelites. Now that they believe he is a prophet, they are going to look to him for the Word of God. The Lord reiterated to Ezekiel what a grave responsibility that was. Now, in chapter 34, He is going to tell Ezekiel to get in the face of some certain folks...<sup>2</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** Now in chapter 34, God speaks out against those faithless shepherds of Israel. Those men that were the spiritual leaders, those men to whom the people looked for spiritual guidance, who had left the real concept of the ministry. The Lord said to His disciples, "The heathen or the Gentiles do love to exercise lordship over each other, but it shall not be so among you. For whosoever would be chief among you, let him become the servant of all" (Mark 10:42-44). You remember how when Jesus took a towel and washed His disciples' feet and then He said unto them, "You see what I have done. Now if I being your Lord am a servant, then you also should be servants." And Christ taught the servanthood of the ministry, and that's actually what the word minister means—a *servant*. And God intends that those who are the ministers are really the servants to the body of Christ, not lords over the body of Christ. But the servants to the body of Christ. But it is easy to get an attitude of lordship or superiority and start abusing your position and seek

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>2</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

to exercise lordship over the people rather than to continue in that attitude of servant. Now whenever you do turn and get this lording attitude, and you begin to look at the... you begin to get greedy, really, for gain, for fancy homes and cars, and things of this nature. Then you begin to misuse that position that God has placed you in.<sup>3</sup>

### **HART: BAD SHEPHERDS VERSUS GOOD SHEPHERDS**

<i>Bad Shepherds</i>	<i>Good Shepherds</i>
Take care of themselves	Take care of their flock
Worry about their own health	Strengthen the weak and sick, search for the lost
Rule harshly and brutally	Rule lovingly and gently
Abandon and scatter the sheep	Gather and protect the sheep
Keep the best for themselves	Give their best to the sheep

Because the shepherds or rulers in this allegory have been neglectful and selfish, the Lord will punish them (vv. 1-10). He will himself search out the sheep and be the Good Shepherd (vv. 11-16). He will judge between one sheep and another, protecting the weak from the violent (vv. 17-22). The Lord will set up David as the one shepherd (vv. 23, 24), and will make a covenant of peace for the land (vv. 25-31).<sup>4</sup>

The false prophets of Israel have now been shown to be liars because the destruction of Jerusalem as prophesied by Ezekiel has become a reality. God has a word to say about these false prophets.<sup>5</sup>

In the parable of the evil shepherds Ezekiel described the corrupt leadership which was responsible for Judah’s national destruction. As in Jeremiah 23 the term “shepherds” includes such persons as kings, princes, judges, priests and false prophets. In contrast to the evil shepherds, the prophet depicts the work of the divine Shepherd in regathering his sheep. Building on that thought, he predicts the coming of the messianic Shepherd.<sup>6</sup>

**ESV 1–31:** Shepherds and Sheep. The move toward restoration continues by way of further warning and indictment. Ezekiel develops the picture of the community and its leaders as flock and shepherds (used throughout Jeremiah). In Ezekiel, the metaphor is seen only in this chapter and in 37:24. The brief oracle in Jer. 23:1–4 focused only on the shepherds, and this is Ezekiel’s starting point (Ezek. 34:1–16)—but here Ezekiel goes on to address the sheep (vv. 17–31).

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<sup>3</sup> Chuck Smith, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries>, Commentary on Ezekiel.

<sup>4</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>5</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 33:33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 34:1–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

## **Ezekiel 34:1**

**And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

### **Judgment on Selfish and Neglectful Shepherds. 34:1-10.**

The word shepherd, *rô·eh*, occurs sixteen times in this chapter. 2. **The shepherds of Israel.** Rulers, like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. See 19:1-9; Jer 22:10–23:4; see also Jer 25:34-38; Mic 5:5; Zech 10:2, 3; I Kgs 22:17. (Cf. Homer *Iliad* i. 273; ii. 85; Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, “Paradise,” xxvii, 55, 56; Milton, *Lycidas*, 112ff. On king and god as shepherd in other lit., cf. G.E. Wright, “The Good Shepherd,” *BA*, 2 (1939), 44-48.)<sup>7</sup>

**McGee 1-2:** Ezekiel did not say these things about the false prophets—God said them.

Very candidly, I have always been opposed to promotion—that is, furthering the growth or development of a Christian work. This does not mean that there aren’t many very wonderful and fine works which deserve our financial support. My point is that they should not be just a promotion agency; they should be feeding the people—they should be giving out the Word of God. I feel that an organization has no right to fleece people for an offering when it has not given the people something first. We should be able to support ministries where we ourselves have received a blessing. The business of the ministry is not to beg for money all the time, but to give out the Word of God and to be feeding the sheep.

This was God’s criticism of the false prophets—they had not given the people the Word of God. I feel this should still be the standard by which we judge a ministry today.<sup>8</sup>

### **OTS: Evil Shepherds (34:1–22).**

God directed Ezekiel to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, i.e., the leaders of the nation. These men were under a divine “woe.” They were guilty of four crimes. (1) They used the flock of God for their own purposes. They ate the fat, i.e., the choicest parts of the animals. They clothed themselves with the wool. (2) They showed no concern for the flock of God. They did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, nor go after those who strayed. (3) They ruled the flock with force and rigor. (4) They were responsible for the scattering of the flock. The straying sheep became prey to every beast of the land, i.e., to the Assyrian and Babylonian kings who took the nation captive. They were scattered over the face of the land. No one searched them out (34:2–6). In short, the shepherds were both unfaithful and unconcerned.

Because of this dereliction of duty, the Lord pronounced a word of judgment against the evil shepherds. The threat contained therein was certain to come to pass for it was sealed with a divine oath. The Lord found the sins of the shepherds intolerable. He announced his opposition to these shepherds. He held them accountable for the fate of the flock. Therefore, God would remove these evil shepherds from office. They would not feed the sheep any more, nor would the sheep be food for those shepherds again (34:7–10).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:3–8). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>8</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 34:1–22). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**ESV 1–16:** Wicked Shepherds and the Good Shepherd. The passage moves from condemnation (vv. 1–10) to restoration (vv. 11–16). As in Jeremiah, the punishment of negligent shepherds (the leaders of the people) precedes the promise of a faithful shepherd, although the two prophets differ on details. The passage is emphatic that the role of the shepherd is to ensure the safety and well-being of the flock. This has been the distinctive failure of Judah's leaders.

**ESV 1–10:** Often in Ezekiel a concise accusation leads to a lengthy description of consequences and punishments. Here, the proportions are reversed. The situation is presented in vv. 1–6, it is summarized in vv. 7–8, and judgment is announced in vv. 9–10.

### **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?**

Whenever God says, "Woe," look out, because someone is in trouble.

**Missler:** Was he talking about literal shepherds that were on the hills with the sheep? No. He was speaking of the leadership. He was using it idiomatically. The sheep were the people of Israel; the shepherds were the leaders. They were supposed to be taking care of the flocks; but they were really taking care of themselves first.<sup>10</sup>

**Constable:** The Lord gave Ezekiel a message for the shepherds (leaders, rulers, cf. Ps. 23) of Israel. Ancient Near Easterners often referred to kings and leaders as "shepherds" (e.g. Num. 27:17; 2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Kings 22:17; Isa. 44:28; Jer. 3:15; 10:21; 23:1-6; 25:34-38; Mic. 5:4-5; Zech. 11:4-17). Prophets and priests were also called "shepherds," but here kings are also in view. God pronounced judgment on them for three reasons. First, they fed themselves rather than the people; they were selfish. They were more interested in providing for themselves than for the people whom God had placed in their care (cf. John 10:11-13; 21:15-17). They exploited their followers.

A review of the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel's rulers reveals a consistent string of corrupt leaders, and Ezekiel pointed out earlier that Judah was worse than her sister Israel (ch. 23).<sup>11</sup>

**LAN:** Ezekiel called the exiles "Israel," referring to all Jews in captivity from both the northern and southern kingdoms. Ezekiel criticized Israel's leaders for taking care of themselves rather than taking care of their people. He outlined their sins (Ezekiel 34:1-6) and pronounced judgment upon them (Ezekiel 34:7-10). Then he promised that a true shepherd (the Messiah) would come who would take care of the people as the other leaders were supposed to do (Ezekiel 34:11-31). This beautiful message portrays the fate of the present shepherds, the work of the new shepherd, and the future of the sheep.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Life Application Bible Notes, Life Application Bible

**BKC 1-6:** God charged the prophet to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. The rulers of the people were often called shepherds (cf. Ps. 78:70-72; Isa. 44:28; 63:11; Jer. 23:1-4; 25:34-38). They were to be strong, caring leaders who guarded their nation like a flock. Ezekiel first explained the sins of the shepherds (Ezek. 34:1-6), then pronounced judgment on them (vv. 7-10).

Israel's leaders did not serve their flock. Their first error was to put their own interests above those of the people (vv. 2-3). Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Israel's kings had added to their wealth at the expense of the common people. They viewed the flock as a source of wealth to be exploited rather than a trust to be protected.

The second error of the leaders was their harsh treatment of the people. A shepherd was to lead his sheep to food, protect them from attack, nurse to health the injured sheep, and search for any that strayed and got lost. However, Israel's shepherds did not gently nurture the people. They ruled ... harshly and brutally.

The third error of the rulers was their flagrant disregard for the people, letting them be scattered without looking for them (vv. 5-6). Three times in verses 5-6 Ezekiel mentioned that the sheep were scattered. The chief job of a shepherd was to prevent such a catastrophe. Ezekiel was probably alluding to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities which had scattered Israel and Judah among the nations. The shepherds had been unable to prevent the very thing they were appointed to guard against.<sup>13</sup>

**ESV:** The metaphor of shepherds for the rulers of the community has ancient roots and was widespread in the ancient Near East (e.g., on Tammuz, 8:14-15). In the OT, David is the shepherd-king par excellence (2 Sam. 5:2; Ps. 78:70-72), but preeminently, it applies to God himself (e.g., Ps. 80:1). Jesus identifies himself as the "good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14). feeding yourselves. The failure here is not simply a matter of neglecting the sheep but of benefiting at the cost of the flock.

**Ron Daniel 1-4, Shepherds And Sheep:** Throughout the Scriptures, God compares His people to sheep.

**Psa. 78:52** ...*He led forth His own people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock*

**Psa. 95:7** ...*He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.*

**Is. 53:6** *All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...*

Logically then, those who oversee His sheep are called shepherds. God's shepherds have a big responsibility, because they are to be His representatives, doing things like He would. After all, God is

**1Pet. 2:25** ...*the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

He is also called...

**John 10:14** ...*the good shepherd...*

**Heb. 13:20** ...*the great Shepherd of the sheep...*

..the Chief Shepherd...

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<sup>13</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 34:1-6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

God is the true Shepherd of His people, and those who are assigned by Him to shepherd the sheep must do the job the way He does it. Unfortunately, this is not what was happening.

#### Shepherds Who Feed Themselves

In Ezekiel's day, God was rebuking the shepherds for their failure to shepherd like He shepherds. These leaders and rulers were caring for themselves, not God's sheep. In figurative language, the Lord describes what they were doing: feeding themselves by eating the fat, clothing themselves with the wool, and slaughtering the fat sheep. What do these things mean?

They refer to the fact that these rulers were in that position only for what they could get out of it. They failed to serve the people, and were only serving themselves. Every benefit they derived was at the sheep's expense - many times, at the expense of the people's lives.

We see this philosophy continue in our own age. Picture some of the regimes we have seen and continue to see in the world today – corrupt leaders who live in opulence while stealing from their own people and watching them starve. Some recent examples include Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq; General Joseph Mobutu of Zaire; Idi Amin of Uganda; Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; and Nicolai Ceausescu of Romania. Unfortunately, the list goes on and on and on - both past and present.

#### Shepherds Should Feed The Flock

However, shepherds are not just the governmental leaders of a nation. They also include the religious leaders of a nation. The Lord often refers to pastors, elders, and priests as shepherds of His flock. And He is just as concerned about their shepherding methods and faithfulness of the priests and pastors as He is about the presidents and politicians.

When Jesus restored Peter to the ministry after having been denied by him three times, He asked Peter three times whether or not he loved Him (John 21:15-17). Jesus' response to these three inquiries was:

**John 21:15** ...“Tend My lambs.”

**John 21:16** ...“Shepherd My sheep.”

**John 21:17** ...“Tend My sheep.”

The words for lambs and sheep Jesus uses are diminutive, in other words, "Feed My little sheepies. Tend My little lambies." God views His people as His little sheepies, His little lambies. In the same way that we diligently care for a little puppy or kitten, God expects that His shepherds will care for His sheep.

Unfortunately, one of the major sins that these shepherds were committing is that they were not feeding the flock. That is, after all, the primary job of a shepherd, isn't it? And how long will a little sheepie survive without food? It is the responsibility of the shepherds to feed the flock

With what food must a shepherd feed the flock? Jesus said,

**Matt. 4:4** ..."*man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of god.*"

The bread we eat is to be the Word of God. Job said,

**Job 23:12** ..."*I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.*"

And Paul told Timothy to be...

**1Tim. 4:6** ...constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine...

Peter instructed us...

**1Pet. 2:2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word...

The milk and meat of the Word (Heb. 5:12-14) is what will sustain us and feed us. When Jeremiah tasted the Word of God, he wrote,

**Jer. 15:16** *Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;*

Unfortunately, today there is a famine.

**Amos 8:11** " ...Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD."

### **Caring Or Severity?**

The shepherds were also treating the sheep with severity instead of caring. Shepherds are supposed to strengthen the weak sheep, heal diseased sheep, bind up the broken sheep, bring back the scattered sheep, and seek the lost sheep.

Jesus, in speaking a parable to the Pharisees and scribes, said,

**Luke 15:4-6** "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'"

Even men with evil hearts will search for their own lost sheep. But not Israel's shepherds. These guys were using force and severity, dominating the sheep. They didn't care how many they lost, how many ran away, how many were wounded, or how many died. They only cared about themselves.

I have heard of far too many modern-day shepherds in churches around our world that live like this. No heart for God, no concern for His people. Just occupying the position of shepherd for what they can get out of it. They scatter the flock, inflict injuries on the sheep, and never have a tinge of the fear of the Lord for what they are doing to His little lambies.<sup>14</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** Men who are using the ministry for their own gain, rather than using the place of a minister to bring gain to the people. It is sad, but it is true that there are many men in the ministry today who are only fulfilling a psychological need in their own lives. They're not really called of God, and do not really have the true aspect of the ministry at heart. Woe unto those shepherds who use the ministry as a means of just feeding themselves, enriching themselves. "Should you not be feeding the flock?"

**BSB:** "Shepherds" is a reference to the kings, prophets, or priests of Israel. As the responsible leaders of the people, they were to protect and to provide for the "flocks," i.e., the people. The "shepherds" or rulers of Israel had been guilty of seeking only personal gain (vv. 3-8). The failure of these leaders is documented in great detail in the verses which follow. The greatest sorrow is that though the sheep are scattered, no one

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<sup>14</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

was concerned, and no one searched for them. By contrast one may observe the love of God for His people in this passage.<sup>15</sup>

**[that do feed themselves]** (Dake) Fourteen sins of the shepherds of Israel:

1. They feed themselves without feeding the flocks of Israel (Ezekiel 34:2).
2. They eat the fat and clothe themselves with wool, but do not feed the flock (Ezekiel 34:3).
3. They kill them that are fed.
4. They have not strengthened the diseased (Ezekiel 34:4).
5. They have not healed the sick.
6. They have not bound up the broken.
7. They have not brought again that which was driven away.
8. They have not sought the lost (Ezekiel 34:4,6).
9. They oppressed their subjects (Ezekiel 34:4).
10. They scattered the flock (Ezekiel 34:5).
11. They have not been true shepherds.
12. They caused flock to be destroyed.
13. They have not protected the flock.
14. They ignored the true condition of the flock (Ezekiel 34:6).

**Clarke: Prophecy against the shepherds of Israel**—The shepherds include, first, the priests and Levites; secondly, the kings, princes, and magistrates. The flock means the whole of the people. The fat and the wool, the tithes and offerings, the taxes and imposts. The reprehensible feeding and clothing with these, as to the priests and Levites, the using these tithes and offerings, not to enable them the better to fulfill the work of the ministry, but to pamper their own bodies, and support them in an idle voluptuous life; and in reference to the state, the employing the taxes and imposts, not for the support and administration of justice and good government, but to subsidize heathen powers, and maintain their own luxury and idolatrous prodigality.<sup>16</sup>

### **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.***

**Constable 3-4:** Specifically, these unfaithful shepherds ate the best parts of the sacrifices rather than offering them to God (cf. 1 Sam. 2:12-17). They used the wool of sheep to make clothing for themselves rather than offering these animals as sacrifices to God.

Second, rather than feeding God's sheep they slaughtered them; they were oppressive. They had not restored those that needed restoring nor sought those that had wandered away and needed finding. They had dominated God's flock rather than providing loving,

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<sup>15</sup> Believers Study Bible

<sup>16</sup> Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Old Testament

self-sacrificial leadership. The primary responsibility of a leader is to care for the needs of those he leads, even if this requires sacrificing his own desires.<sup>17</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** Jesus said to Peter, "Feed My flock" (John 21:15). Peter later writing to the elders in the church said, "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (I Peter 5:2). The most important need in the church today is that the people be fed. "Feed the flock of God"—the commission of Jesus unto Peter.

“The priests,” says Calmet, “ate the tithes, the first-fruits, and the offerings of the people; the princes received the tributes and imposts and instead of instructing and protecting them, the latter took away their lives by the cruelties they practiced against them: the former destroyed their souls by the poison of their doctrine, and by their bad example. The fat sheep point out the rich to whom these pastors often disguised the truth, by a cruel condescension and complaisance.”

**Ye eat the fat.** Or, the *milk*; i.e., curds (so LXX, Vulg.).<sup>18</sup>

**ESV 3–6:** These verses pointedly describe how the shepherds misused their power by using it for their own gain rather than for the good of the people. Because of this covenant neglect (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64) the sheep were scattered.

### **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.**

They were lording over the flock of God. They weren't caring for those that were weak or sick or broken or lost. But they had misused the position, and as the result,

**[diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick]**

Healing of the body has long been the concern of God. In every age men have been promised physical healing upon meeting certain conditions.

**Clarke: The diseased have ye not strengthened**—No person is fit for the office of a shepherd, who does not well understand the diseases to which sheep are incident, and the mode of cure. And is any man fit for the pastoral office, or to be a shepherd of souls, who is not well acquainted with the disease of sin in all its varieties, and the remedy for this disease, and the proper mode of administering it, in those various cases? He who does not know Jesus Christ as his own Savior, never can recommend him to others. He who is not saved, will not save.

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<sup>17</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:3). Chicago: Moody Press.

**Clarke: Neither have ye bound up that which was broken**—If a sheep have broken a leg, a proper shepherd knows how to set the bones, and splint and bind it till the bones knit and become strong. And the skillful spiritual pastor knows, if one of the flock be overtaken in a fault, how to restore such. Those sudden falls, where there was not a strong propensity to sin, are, to the soul, as a broken bone to the body.

**Clarke: Neither have ye brought again**—A proper shepherd loves his sheep: he feels interested for their welfare; he acquaints himself with them all, so that he knows and can distinguish each. He knows also their number, and frequently counts to see that none is missing; if one be lost or strayed, he goes immediately and seeks it; and as he is constantly on the watch, it cannot have strayed far before he is apprised of its absence from the flock; and the less it has strayed, the sooner it is found and brought back to the fold.

The shepherds of Israel knew nothing about their flock; they might have been diseased, infirm, bruised, maimed, their limbs broken, strayed, and lost; for they watched not over them. When they got fat sheep and wool for their table and their clothing, they regarded nothing else; as they considered the flock given them for their own use, and scarcely ever supposed that they were to give any thing in return for the milk and the wool.

**Clarke: But with force and with cruelty**—Exactng tithes and dues by the strong arm of the law, with the most ungodly feeling; and with a cruelty of disposition that proved it was the fat and the wool they sought, and not the safety or comfort of the flock.

**LAN 4-6:** God would judge the religious leaders because they were selfishly caught up in their own concerns and were neglecting their service to others. Spiritual leaders must be careful not to pursue self-development at the expense of broken, scattered people. When we give too much attention to our own needs and ideas, we may push God aside and abandon those who depend on us.

**Diseased ... sick ... crippled ... strayed ... lost** (RSV). Five cases of the shepherd's neglect. Cf. verse 16; Jer 50:6; Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:4; 19:10.<sup>19</sup>

**McGee:** All of us are needy people, and the only thing which can minister to our deep needs is the Word of God. If a minister is not giving the Word of God, he is not ministering to the people. The Word *must* be given out. These little sermonettes delivered to Christianettes by preacherettes are not quite doing the job today.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:3). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>20</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 33:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **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.**

**Constable 5=6:** Third, the rulers allowed the people to scatter over the earth instead of keeping them safely together; they were negligent. The Israelites scattered because they lacked leadership and became prey for the enemies of God's flock. They wandered everywhere, but there was no one to seek them out (cf. Matt. 9:36; John 10:12-13).

### **Ron Daniel, 5-8, My Flock Has Become A Prey**

When sheep are scattered and alone, when they don't have a shepherd watching over them, they become food for beasts. They fall victim to predators. Elsewhere in the world at this time, the Lord said to Jeremiah,

**Jer. 50:6-7** *"My people have become lost sheep; Their shepherds have led them astray. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; They have gone along from mountain to hill and have forgotten their resting place. All who came upon them have devoured them..."*

In the church, the shepherds have been commanded to insure that this doesn't happen. They are commissioned to guard God's sheep from predators. Paul warned the Ephesian elders,

**Acts 20:28-31** *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert..."*

Some pastors, preachers, and priests don't like this part of the job. It makes them uncomfortable. It makes them unpopular. It can be dangerous. My response? "So what? It's your job, given to you by God!" Jesus said,

**John 10:11-13** *"...the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep."*

A hireling is not a shepherd, and shepherd must not behave as a hireling. A hireling is only doing the job for the paycheck. A shepherd will lay down his life to protect the lives of the sheep. These men had not done so.<sup>21</sup>

**Clarke: And they were scattered**—There was no discipline kept up; and the flock, the Church, became disorganized, and separated from each other, both in affection and fellowship. And the consequence was, the grievous wolves, false and worldly interested teachers, seized on and made a prey of them. Of the communion of saints such shepherds know nothing, farther than that it makes a part of the common creed.

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<sup>21</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

**Scattered ... no shepherd.** Cf. I Kgs 22:17; Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34.<sup>22</sup>

**McGee:** “Meat” could also be translated “food.” In other words, when people are not being fed in a church, they will scatter. They’ll go find some place where they can be fed. There is no point in criticizing them, because sheep want to be fed. That is also the nature of the child of God: he wants to hear the Word of God.<sup>23</sup>

### **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*.**

There is an interesting possessive here. God never relinquished His right to those that were under the shepherds just because they failed. These were still God’s sheep.

### **Ezekiel 34:7**

**Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;**

**7-10:** The Lord repeated His accusation against Israel's leaders (vv. 7-8) and then announced what He planned to do about the situation (vv. 9-31).

**Constable 7-8:** These false shepherds needed to listen to God's word to them because they had let the Israelites become prey for their enemies, and rather than seeking the lost they had fed themselves.<sup>24</sup>

**BKC 7-10:** The shepherds had neglected their task, and the sheep were scattered. It was now time to call the shepherds to judgment for their actions. Holding the shepherds ... accountable for His flock, God would judge the rulers and remove them from their positions of power. They would no longer have opportunities to profit at the people’s expense. God said, I will rescue My flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them, in the sense of the leaders taking advantage of the people. This statement was a bridge to the next section. The false shepherds had brought Israel to ruin. So God Himself would intercede and rescue His people.<sup>25</sup>

**McGee:** God holds these false shepherds responsible. He says, “I am against them, and I am as much opposed to them as I am to any sinner or any sin. I’m going to hold them responsible.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:3). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>23</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 34:7–10). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>26</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **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;***

When God begins to speak like this, you know that it's powerful. "As I live," more or less swearing by Himself because He can swear no higher. "As I live, saith the Lord God,"

#### **Dake: Six reasons for judgment upon shepherds:**

1. The 14 sins of the note above.
2. Because My flock became a prey (Ezekiel 34:8).
3. Because My flock became meat for the beasts of the field.
4. Because there was no (good) shepherd.
5. Because the shepherds (false ones) did not seek out the flock.
6. Because the shepherds fed themselves, and not the flock.

**As I live.** Cf. 5:11. **Beast of the field.** The exploiting nations, especially Babylon.<sup>27</sup>

### **Ezekiel 34:9**

**Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;**

**Constable 9-10:** The Lord swore to oppose these shepherds, to hold them accountable for His sheep, to stop them from leading them further, and to rescue His sheep from their influence (cf. Matt. 20:25-28).<sup>28</sup>

#### **Ron Daniel, 9-10; I Am Against The Shepherds**

Because the shepherds had done this, God was against them. He would demand His sheep from them and would fire the hirelings. They will not be allowed to stay in those positions for long.

The Lord told Jeremiah about this time,

**Jer. 23:1-2** *“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD.*

You have heard of jobs in government, unions, and colleges where it practically takes an act of God to fire someone. Well, no matter how secure the shepherds thought their jobs were, there is about to be an act of God...<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:8). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

**LAN 9-10:** Those shepherds who failed their flock would be removed from office and held responsible for what happened to the people they were supposed to lead. Christian leaders must heed this warning and care for their flock, or total failure and judgment will be the result (see 1 Cor. 9:24-27). True leadership focuses on helping others, not just on getting ahead.

### **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.**

This was an indictment on the ineffective leadership at that time. But now we are going to see a prophecy that is Messianic.

### **Ron Daniel 10-15; I Will Care For My Sheep**

The Lord declares that He Himself is going to step in and shepherd His people. He will deliver them. He will seek them out.

God is promising them that they will be gathered from the nations. They will be restored to the land of Israel. There will be a lot more spoken about this before the book is over.<sup>30</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** The whole religious system, the priesthood and all, was to be abolished. It's interesting, it has been abolished. And abolished because they were feeding themselves rather than the flock of God. Of course, in their history we find how it happened the sons of Eli, you remember, these evil boys. How that when people would bring their offering to the Lord, they'd take their meat hooks in and grab the best part of the meat. Anybody would object, they'd beat them up. Causing people to resent their worship of God by the greedy attitude of these men who were supposed to be God's representatives. Priests standing before God for the people, and yet, so misrepresenting God when they were standing before the people for God. And so God speaks about putting away this whole corrupted system. "They're not gonna feed off My flock anymore. My flock won't be meat to them any longer."

**[against the shepherds] (Dake)** When God is against any one person or group He has a just cause, and it is always the same—sin. Though sin may vary in kind it does not vary in essence. Many centuries had come and gone by this time, and God had longed to favor the people many times with His richest blessings, but they would not permit Him to do so. They sinned and rebelled until He had to destroy them, as seen in 2 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 25.

**[require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock]** This is the law of reaping (Galatians 6:7-8).

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<sup>30</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

[**shepherds**] The shepherds in this passage are the rulers of Israel (Ezekiel 34:2,7,9,10).

**Clarke: I will—cause them to cease from feeding the flock—**God, in this country, unpriested a whole hierarchy who fed not the flock, but ruled them with force and cruelty; and he raised up a new set of shepherds better qualified, both by sound doctrine and learning, to feed the flock. Let these be faithful, lest God cause them to cease, and raise up other feeders.

**ESV:** No punishment is identified except that this situation must stop, and divine intervention ensures that it does (see note on vv. 11–16).

### **Ezekiel 34:11**

**For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.**

If any passage was at the heart of Ezekiel's contribution to the ongoing promise [to Israel], it was Ezekiel 34:11-31.

**Constable 11-12:** The Lord further promised to search for His wandering sheep Himself, to care for them, and to deliver them from the places where they had scattered in the gloomy days of their national distress (cf. Jer. 30:17-22; Luke 15:4-7). There are several references to God as Israel's Shepherd in the Old Testament (e.g. v. 6; Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; cf. John 10:2-3, 14-16).<sup>31</sup>

**Chuck Smith 11-12:** Here God says, "I will take up the job of the shepherd. I will seek out these sheep that are lost and scattered." Aren't you glad that the Lord is our shepherd? And that He has sought us out, scattered and bruised He found us, and He drew us into His fold, and He put His arms around us and said, "Hey, I love you. You're My sheep; you're My people." Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The sheep know the shepherd's voice and they do follow him. And you who have heard the call of the Lord, you're part of His flock. You're following Jesus Christ. It's beautiful.

**LAN 11-16:** God promises to take over as shepherd of his scattered flock. When our leaders fail us, we must not despair but remember that God is in control and that he promises to return and care for his flock. Thus we know that we can turn to God for help. He is still in control and can transform any tragic situation to produce good for his kingdom (see Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28).

**BKC 11-16:** The flock was scattered because of cruel and indifferent shepherds (vv. 2-6). If the sheep were to be rescued and restored, the Great Shepherd would need to rescue them Himself. I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them. God would intervene personally on Israel's behalf.

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

God's first action would be to restore Israel to her land from the nations and to pasture her like sheep in good grazing land. God will do what the false shepherds had failed to do—tend... search ... bring back... strengthen, and shepherd ... with justice. This prophecy was not fulfilled when Israel returned to her land after the Babylonian Captivity. It still awaits future fulfillment in the Millennium.<sup>32</sup>

### **OTS: The Divine Shepherd (34:11–22).**

During the period of the exile, God himself would serve as the Shepherd of the flock. In this role he would take eight actions: (1) He would seek out his sheep. (2) He would deliver them from the places where they had been scattered “on a cloudy and gloomy day,” i.e., the dark day when they were carried away captive. (3) He would bring them out from among the peoples. (4) He would restore them to their fold, the land of Israel. (5) He would feed them upon the mountains and beside the streams “in good pasture, in rich pasture” (34:11–14).

The divine shepherd would also (6) lead his flock “to rest,” i.e., to safety. (7) He would give special attention to the weak among the flock by seeking out the lost sheep, bringing back the stray, binding up the the wounded, and strengthening the sick. (8) The fat and strong sheep, however, he would “feed with judgment” and thereby destroy them. The powerful and wealthy would receive no favoritism (34:15f.). Clearly these words predict the return from captivity triggered by the edict of Cyrus in 536 B.C. (cf. Ezra 1:1f.).

In the day of restoration the Lord would administer fair judgment in two areas: he would judge “between one sheep and another,” especially between the fat, i.e., the powerful, and the lean, i.e., the poor (vv. 17, 20, 22). He would also judge between “the rams and the male goats,” i.e., between true sheep and those who were not really members of the flock. Neither the fat sheep nor the male goats deserved any special favors from the Lord. They had seized the good pasture for themselves. They had ruined the rest of the pasture and water for the flock. They had used force against the weak with shoulder and horns. Therefore, the Lord would destroy these powerful ones and rescue his true sheep from oppression by them (34:17–22). These predictions may refer to the turbulent times of intertestamental history<sup>33</sup>

**McGee:** Here you have God's Shepherd—Jesus, who said “I am the Good Shepherd.” Ezekiel said that Christ would come, and, my friend, He is coming again because He has not yet fulfilled all the prophecies concerning His shepherding of this earth.

Now we begin to look into the future. These are God's words of comfort to the children of Israel in their captivity—they should listen to Him. He's the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd of the sheep. He says, “I will search out my sheep.” David said, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1).

The thing that impresses us in the rest of this chapter is the repetition of a wonderful statement by God, “I will,” which occurs eighteen times in verses 11 through 29. I get a little weary listening to men speak of what they have done. This is a new note here—God

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<sup>32</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 34:11–16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 34:11–22). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

says, “I will.” This is grace when God says this. The Good Shepherd one day said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will* give you rest [rest you]” (Matt. 11:28, italics mine). The Shepherd also said, “*I [will]* give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish ...” (John 10:28). That is what my wonderful Shepherd said.<sup>34</sup>

**BSB:** The sentence of judgment was pronounced upon these evil “shepherds” (v. 10). Ezekiel concluded that only God was the Shepherd for Israel. Since these shepherds have failed, God Himself would rescue the sheep. These words were a prefiguring of Christ as the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10:1-16), who would bring His sheep back “to their own land” (vv. 12, 13).

**ESV 11–16:** God intervenes to reverse, step by step, the process described above. He successively undoes the damage inflicted by the failed shepherds (vv. 2–6, 8) by seeking the scattered (v. 12), gathering (v. 13) and feeding them (v. 14), and ensuring they live in security (v. 15). On the announcement of God himself as shepherd (v. 15), see v. 23. The summary in v. 16 portrays the judgment of the shepherds and the restoration of the flock as two aspects of a single work of God. In John 10:9, Jesus speaks of the sheep finding “pasture” (evoking Ezek. 34:14).

### **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.**

**Clarke: Cloudy and dark day**—Times of general distress and persecution; in such times the shepherd should be especially watchful.

**McGee:** The Good Shepherd came more than nineteen hundred years ago, and He still says, “My sheep hear my voice ...” (John 10:27). Do you know why they hear His voice? There are two reasons: He is *calling* them, and His sheep *know* Him. They hear His voice, and they know Him. What a wonderful Shepherd we have!<sup>35</sup>

### **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.**

**Missler:** Clearly, some of this was a promise to their return from Babylon. They were going to be slaves in Babylon 70 years; and their return from there was what God began

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<sup>34</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>35</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

to focus on here. But then as we read on, we become aware that some of the language goes far beyond the return from Babylon that they experienced under Ezra and Nehemiah. Some of this is clearly Millennial, and we should be sensitive to the fact that this is literal.

This is not a figurative passage. Yes, the idioms of the shepherds is figurative; but notice the language: "I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land." Don't take for granted that everybody who studies the Bible really understands that Israel was prophesied to be regathered in her own land. For 1900 years there were scholars who debated as to whether this was supposed to be literal or not. Those debates should have ended on May 14, 1948. However, you can still find those who have a problem with the idea that Israel today in the land could possibly be fulfilment of prophecy.<sup>36</sup>

**Constable 13-14:** He would lead them out from among the peoples where they had gone and bring them back to their own land (cf. vv. 4-6). He would nourish them on the mountains, beside the streams, and in the best (inhabited) places of the land (cf. Ps. 23:1; John 4; 6:31-35). They would enjoy good pasture and would experience rest in good grazing ground, the richest pasture in the land.

If the scattering were literal, and no one is foolhardy as to deny this, then the regathering must be equally so.<sup>37</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** And, of course, this is a prophecy concerning the nation Israel, but it does have also personal application, as far as that relationship of God to His people, Christ to His church. But this basically is a prophecy of Israel, the prophecy of the scattering of Israel. The scattering of Israel was precipitated by their crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which was the result of the conspiracy of the spiritual leaders of that day. Those spiritual leaders had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and they had conspired to put Him to death, because all of the common people were hearing Him gladly. And they said, "What are we going to do? If all of the people turn to Him then we're going to lose our jobs. We're going to lose all of this loot that we've been making off the people. The Romans may even come and take away our position. We've got to put Him to death." And the high priest said, "Don't you realize it's expedient that one man should die for the whole nation?" How little did he know what he was saying.

Now, because of these shepherds, false shepherds, who were guilty of greed, who scattered the flock, Jesus speaks of His gathering together that flock. And this we get into, of course, the prophecy and we see it being fulfilled today as God is drawing the Jews back into the land and is preparing to do a work among them there.

**Chuck Smith 13-15:** Remember that beautiful prophecy concerning Jesus, "He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the young in His arms," and so forth, "and carry them in His bosom. And gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). Beautiful prophecy. "I will feed my flock."

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<sup>36</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>37</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

**[their own land]** "Their own land" is the country promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this is to be theirs forever.

**[the mountains of Israel] (Dake)** "The mountains of Israel" is an expression peculiar to Ezekiel, being used 17 times in his book (Ezekiel 6:2-3; Ezekiel 19:9; Ezekiel 33:28; Ezekiel 34:13-14; Ezekiel 35:12; Ezekiel 36:1,4,8; Ezekiel 37:22; Ezekiel 38:8; Ezekiel 39:2,4,17). It is found only once elsewhere in Scripture (Joshua 11:21). Compare "the mountains of Judah" (Joshua 11:21; 2 Chron. 21:11; 2 Chron. 27:4) and "the mountains of Samaria" (Jeremiah 31:5; Amos 3:9).

**Clarke: I will—feed them upon the mountains—**When I bring back the people from their captivity, I will raise up to them a holy and diligent priesthood, who shall in all places give them sound instruction. But this, and some of the following promises, belong to the Christian Church, as we shall find below.

**McGee:** The Shepherd is talking about the nation of Israel, what He is going to do for them in the future. They are in captivity now because of their sin and because they listened to the false prophets. But He says, "I am not through with them. I have not thrown them overboard. You amillennialists ought to read the Book of Ezekiel; then you would find out that I am not through with My sheep—I intend to bring them back to their land."<sup>38</sup>

### **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.**

### **Ezekiel 34:15**

**I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.**

**Constable 15-16:** God Himself would feed His flock and lead the sheep to rest (cf. v. 3). He would seek the lost, return the scattered, heal the broken, and strengthen the sick (cf. vv. 4, 6; Isa. 61:1-2; Mic. 2:12; 4:6-8; Luke 4:16-21). He would also destroy the fat, strong shepherds who had failed Him by feeding these leaders judgment.<sup>39</sup>

He will feed them in a good pasture, and when they lie down they will be safe. Obviously this is for a future time. The land of Israel does not lie in safety at all today.

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<sup>38</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>39</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

### **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.**

This was referring to the shepherds that got fat at the expense of the sheep.

### **Ron Daniel 16-22; I Will Judge Between The Sheep**

This is at first a little difficult to understand, but it is important to realize that the shepherds God uses are also sheep. In God's view, He has fired them - they have had the title stripped from them, and have been removed from the position. Thus, they are referred to as sheep. Their behavior is the same - self-centered, selfish, demanding, abusing - but now they are being spoken of as sheep, rather than shepherds.

They are fat sheep - taking all for themselves. They tread down the pastures and muddy the waters - spoiling everything for the others around them. They push with their shoulders and thrust with their horns - abusing the other sheep. For all this, God will judge them.<sup>40</sup>

**Clarke: I will destroy the fat and the strong**—I will destroy those cruel and imperious shepherds who abuse their authority, and tyrannize over the flock.

**McGee:** When He has one lost sheep, this Shepherd goes out to find it. He will do that for the nation Israel, and He will do that for the church today. When our Lord told the parable of the lost sheep, that shepherd had one hundred sheep, and one sheep got lost. What did the shepherd do? Did he just forget about that sheep? Did he say, “Well, if one little one wants to run off, that’s all right; after all, ninety-nine sheep is a pretty good number to come through with”? No, this shepherd said, “I started out with one hundred and I am going to come through with one hundred.” My friend, Vernon McGee is going to be in heaven—not because he’s a smart sheep; all sheep are stupid—I am going to be there because I’ve got a wonderful Shepherd, and He says, “I will, I will,” again and again.<sup>41</sup>

### **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.**

“Rams and he goats” - cf. Matt 25.

**Constable 17-19:** The Lord announced too that He would distinguish among the members of His flock, judging them individually (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). Here the Lord viewed the exilic leaders as sheep among His sheep rather than as shepherds. They were, after all, also His sheep. Some of these leaders had not only eaten good pasture and drunk

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<sup>40</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

clear water but had made it impossible for the other sheep to eat good food and drink good water. The ordinary sheep had to get by with trampled grass and muddy water.<sup>42</sup>

**Clarke: And as for you, O my flock**—After having spoken to the shepherds, he now addresses the flock.

**Clarke: I judge between cattle and cattle**—Between false and true professors; between them that have only the form and them that have the power of godliness; between the backslider in heart and the upright man.

**LAN 18-20:** A bad shepherd is not only selfish but destructive. A minister who muddies the waters for others by raising unnecessary doubts, teaching false ideas, and acting sinfully is destroying his flock's spiritual nourishment.

The Lord will **judge between sheep and sheep** (RSV; *śeh*). That is, between the weak and the leaders, **the rams and the he goats**, who oppress the poor.<sup>43</sup>

**BKC 17-24:** In exercising His justice God said He would begin by judging between the individual sheep: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Before the millennial kingdom begins, God will sort out the righteous from the unrighteous (cf. Matt. 25:31-46) and allow only the righteous into the Millennium.

But how will God differentiate one from the other? The character of the sheep is seen in their conduct (Ezek. 34:17-21). The wicked sheep are those that follow the conduct of the shepherds, oppressing the weaker sheep. They trampled the pasturelands and even muddied the streams so that other sheep were left with less-than-desirable vegetation and drinking water. These fat sheep were successful in brutalizing the lean sheep. The wicked sheep even butted all the weak sheep with their horns, to drive them away. God will not permit these wicked practices to continue. Instead He will rescue the oppressed and will judge the aggressors. He will judge between one sheep and another (v. 22; cf. v. 17).

After judging the individual sheep, God will exercise His leadership by appointing a new shepherd (vv. 23-24). This shepherd, God stated, will be His servant David. Many see this as an allusion to Christ, the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10:11-18), who descended from the line of David to be the King of Israel (cf. Matt. 1:1). However, nothing in Ezekiel 34:23 *demand*s that Ezekiel was not referring to the literal King David who will be resurrected to serve as Israel's righteous prince. David is referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel (cf. Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5). Also Ezekiel indicated that David will be the prince (*nāśî'*) of the restored people (Ezek. 34:24; 37:25). This same "prince" will then offer sin offerings for himself during the millennial period (45:22; 46:4). Such actions would hardly be appropriate for the sinless Son of God, but they would be for David. So it seems this is a

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<sup>42</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:17). Chicago: Moody Press.

literal reference to a resurrected David. In place of the false shepherds God will resurrect a true shepherd to tend his sheep.<sup>44</sup>

Along with the evil shepherds, God also noted that there are some evil “sheep” in the flock who deserved judgment. Some consider this a foreshadowing of the judgment of the nations, i.e., the sheep and goat judgment (cf. Matt 25:31-46). However, the main thrust here is the Lord’s judgment between those rich and powerful who have abused their strength, and those weak and poor who have suffered from this abuse.

**ESV 17–31:** The Flock: Problems and Prospects. The remainder of the chapter is addressed to the flock in three stages: vv. 17–22 condemn victimization within the flock; vv. 23–24 return to the provision of a faithful shepherd; and vv. 25–31 attend to the implications of renewal for the natural world.

**ESV 17–22:** The structure is much like that of vv. 1–10. Behavior within the flock is described and condemned in vv. 17–19, and the consequent divine intervention is described (vv. 20–22), which includes a reiteration of the charges (v. 21). The “you” now addresses the flock rather than its shepherds.

**ESV 17–19:** The previous oracle concluded with a statement of “justice” (v. 16, Hb. *mishpat*); this pertains not only to the rulers but also to the people themselves. The selfish greed, which not only monopolizes but also squanders the resources of the community, is “judged” (v. 17, Hb. *shophet*, related to *mishpat*). Ezekiel's oracle anticipates Jesus' teaching in Matt. 25:31–46.

### **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?***

**Clarke: Have eaten up the good pasture**—Arrogate to yourselves all the promises of God, and will hardly permit the simple believer to claim or possess any token of God’s favor.

**Clarke: Ye must foul the residue with your feet?**—Ye abuse God’s mercies; you consume much upon yourselves, and ye spoil more, on which the poor would have been glad to feed. There are some who would rather give food to their sporting dogs than to the poor around them, who are ready to starve, and who would be glad of the crumbs that fall from the table of those masters!

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<sup>44</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 34:17–24). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

### **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.**

Callous wrongs of upper classes are pointed out. Cf. Isa 1:23; 3:14, 15; 5:8; Hos 4:7-11; 7:1-6; Amos 3:9, 10; 4:1, 6; Mic 3:1-3.<sup>45</sup>

### **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.**

The way that the rich oppressed the poor. Of course, the religious leaders had become the wealthy and they pushed and scattered the flock.

**Constable:** God would judge between the fat and the lean sheep, between those who fed themselves and kept others from eating and those who had to exist on poor food and drink.<sup>46</sup>

**Clarke:** **I will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle**—Between the rich and the poor; those who fare sumptuously every day and those who have not the necessities of life.

**McGee:** God is going to do the separating. In Matthew 13, the Lord Jesus gave the parable of the tares among the wheat. He told of a man who sowed good seed in his field, but an enemy came in and sowed tares among the good seed. The man's servant said, "Let's go pull up the tares," but the man said, "You let them alone; let the wheat and the tares grow together. I'll do the separating." I am glad that the separating is the Lord's job. That is His business. When someone comes to me and says, "Do you think So-and-so is a believer?" I have to say that I don't know. That's not my business; that's the Lord's business. He knows the ones who are His.<sup>47</sup>

**ESV 20–22:** The description of the classes of sheep implies oppressive exploitation apart from failed leadership. The assertion of judgment that begins and ends this oracle distinguishes it from the next element in the chapter.

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<sup>45</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:17). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **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;**

**Constable 21-22:** Because some of God's sheep suffered at the hands of their fellow sheep who pushed and shoved them around, the Lord would deliver even the weak, but He would distinguish the two types of His sheep. He would deliver His people from poor leaders as well as predatory nations.<sup>48</sup>

**McGee 21-24:** It is my firm conviction that the earth will be the eternal home of Israel and that David will rule here on this earth throughout eternity. He will be vice-regent of the Lord Jesus. I believe the church will be in the New Jerusalem with the Lord—the Lord Jesus said that He was coming again to take the church, "... that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). And throughout eternity when He comes to earth, we will come also, but just for a visit. Therefore, don't buy too much real estate down here—you won't be needing it—but be sure you are sending up plenty of material to build a good home in heaven!

"I the LORD have spoken it." My friend, He says He is *not* through with the nation Israel.<sup>49</sup>

### **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.**

This was continuing the charge on the leadership, how they would be judged, and yet the people would be restored.

### **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.**

**Constable 23-24:** The Lord promised to set over His sheep one shepherd, His servant David, who would personally feed them (cf. John 10:9; 14:6; Acts 4:12). Yahweh would be their God, and His servant David would be prince (Heb. *nasi'*, namely, king) among them. This the Lord assuredly promised (cf. 37:22-26). As mentioned before, Ezekiel customarily used *nasi'* in place of *melek*, the normal Hebrew word for "king," to stress the fact that someone had put the *nasi'* on his throne.

The term 'prince' is probably used here to facilitate a contrast with the 'princes' (i.e., kings) of the Davidic dynasty who are denounced in earlier oracles (see 7:27; 12:10; 19:1; 21:25; 22:6, 25).

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<sup>48</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In view of the promises that God Himself would shepherd His sheep and the promises that His servant David would shepherd them, it seems clear that a god-man is in view (cf. 37:24-25; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6; 30:9; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 5:2; John 10:30; 1 Tim. 2:5). Twenty out of Ezekiel's 38 usages of *nasi'* refer to the coming Messiah. Did God mean that He would raise David from the dead to lead the Israelites again? No, He probably meant that someone from David's descendants would lead them (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 55:3-4; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5). However a few interpreters have concluded that resurrected King David is in view here.<sup>476</sup> David was the model shepherd of sheep and the model king of Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 13:14).

. . . David was the man whom God chose and in whom He delighted; the king who triumphed against all his foes and who extended his kingdom in all directions; the man of Judah under whose genius the whole nation was for a time united.

Though the identity of this "David" may have been obscure to Ezekiel's audience, history demonstrated that it was one of David's descendants who proved to be the Good Shepherd, even Jesus Christ (John 10:11, 14).

In a sense Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Son of David, is in view here, but the eschatological orientation of the whole passage removes the setting from the period of His earthly ministry in the first century to that of His second advent when He will come to sit on the throne of David.<sup>50</sup>

### **Ron Daniel 23-24; David The Shepherd**

The Lord promises to raise up a shepherd who will tend them. He is called "My servant David." Of course, David had been dead for about 400 years at this point. God is obviously talking about a descendant of David.

He clarified this through the writings of Jeremiah:

**Jer. 23:4-6** *"I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD. Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'"*

This branch of David will shepherd the flock with God's heart. Micah said,

**Mic. 5:4** *And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.*

We have the promise in Revelation that...

**Rev. 7:17** *...the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."*

We recognize this Shepherd as the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of David. And how perfectly Jesus demonstrated God's heart in shepherding!

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<sup>50</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

**Mark 6:34** *When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.*

**Luke 19:10** *“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

**Matt. 9:36** *Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.*

**John 10:27-28** *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”<sup>51</sup>*

**Chuck Smith 23-24:** Now this, of course, is not a reference to king David being resurrected and becoming king again, but even as Jesus promised to David that there should never cease one from him ruling over the people, that prophecy to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So it is a reference to that righteous branch that shall come out of David, even Jesus. And in Jeremiah 23 you have Jeremiah giving the same prophecy in Jerusalem to the inhabitants there and he speaks about how the righteous branch out of David shall come and reign as king over them. As he indicts the false shepherds there and speaks of the glorious true Shepherd that shall come.

In Isaiah we read, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. And of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, to order it, and to establish it in righteousness and in judgment from henceforth even forever. For the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). So Christ, as Paul said in Romans 1, "Of the seed of David according to the flesh, but declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit," will come and sit upon the throne of David, and as David again shepherding over the people, or ruling over the people with a shepherd's heart.

Now people wonder, how could God say, "Well, David was a man after My own heart"? When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and David was a very violent man in many situations, and he had Uriah put to death. And yet, God says that David was a man after My own heart. How can that be? And that was because David had the heart of a shepherd. And when David ruled the people, he ruled them with a shepherd's heart. And that's what God desires. That those who rule have the heart of a shepherd where their concern and their care is for the sheep, not for themselves. But they are thinking of the sheep. And David had the shepherd's heart, and he ruled with the heart of a shepherd. Saul was lifted up in pride when God put him upon the throne, and that's why Saul was brought down and his family did not follow in the throne. But David, a man after God's own heart.

And so the prophecy concerning Christ and His coming and shepherding.

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<sup>51</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

**[one shepherd over them] (Dake)** David will be the chief under-shepherd of Israel—all Israel, all 13 tribes—under the Messiah (Ezekiel 34:23-24; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11). Christ will be the Chief Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4). The 12 apostles will reign over one tribe each under David and the Messiah (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30).

**[David] (Dake)** We are to take this literally and not as a symbolic name of Christ, for we do not have the slightest proof that this David refers to Him (Ezekiel 34:23-24).

**LAN 23-25:** In contrast to the present evil shepherds (leaders) of God’s people (Ezekiel 34:1-6), God will send a perfect shepherd, the Messiah (“my servant David”), who will take care of every need his people have and set up a kingdom of perfect peace and justice (see Psalm 23; Jeremiah 23:5-6; John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20-21; Rev. 21). “Peace” here means more than the absence of conflict. It is contentment, fulfillment, and security.

Instead of many worthless shepherds, there shall be **one** shepherd ... my servant David ... prince (vv. 23, 24). There is here no allusion to a resurrection of David. Rather, the ideal ruler of the future will be like David, a servant of the Lord, bearing universal rule, and securing peace for the people (Isa 55:3, 4; Jer 23:5, 6). He shall be the Lord’s viceroy or prince (*nāsî*) forever. Cf. 37:24, 25. Christ as the good shepherd (Jn 10:14-18) and the “Son of David” completely fulfills the promises found in II Sam 7:13; Jer 23:5, 6; Mic 5:2-5; Isa 9:6, 7; Dan 9:25, 26; Cf. Mt 1:1; 22:41-45; Lk 1:31-33; Jn 1:43; 4:25; Acts 2:29-33; 13:22, 23, to name but a few. Messianic prophecy denotes all prophecy which treats of the person, work, or kingdom of Christ. By extension it includes those passages which speak of the future salvation, glory, and consummation of God’s kingdom even where the mediator is not specifically named. The Messianic times comprise the era which Christ inaugurated and conducts as mediatorial king, whether viewed in its entirety or only in some of its aspects.<sup>52</sup>

**OTS: The Future Shepherd (34:23–31).**

At some point after the restoration, God would set up over his flock “one shepherd.” This shepherd is identified as “my servant David,” i.e., he would be a second David or one from the line of David. He personally would feed the flock. Yahweh would be their God, but this new David would be “prince among them” (34:23f.). Jesus of Nazareth, who was descended from David (Matt 1:1), claimed to be the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14). That God would restore the Davidic dynasty in the person of an incomparable king is a prominent teaching of Old Testament prophetic literature.

In conjunction with the rise of the Davidic Prince the Lord promised to make a new covenant with his people (cf. Jer 31:31). The covenant would be one characterized by “peace.” The implications of this covenant of peace were presented in word pictures appropriate to the pastoral and agricultural mindset. (1) Vicious beasts which threatened the flock would be eliminated from the land. Therefore, the flock of God would be able to dwell safely in wilderness and woods alike. (2) The inhabitants of Mt. Zion and the region around that hill would be blessed of God. Ezekiel described this blessing in terms of rains which come at appropriate times. “Showers of blessing” would fall throughout

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<sup>52</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

the land. (3) Abundant crops would make food plentiful thus eliminating the insecurity of uncertain harvests (34:25–27a).

In slightly less metaphorical language the Lord repeated the promises of blessing and security. God would set his people free from the yoke of bondage. No longer would Israel be “a prey to the nations, the beasts of the earth.” They would live securely and no one would make them afraid. Shame would give way to fame, for God would “establish for them a renowned planting place,” i.e., a place famous for its fertility. Famine would be a thing of the past. No more would they have to endure the insults of the Gentiles who were confident that Yahweh had failed his people in times of dire need. They would be secure in the knowledge that the Lord had redeemed them and was with them. They would understand that they were the sheep of God’s pasture (34:27b–31). Some believe that these predictions are yet to be fulfilled, that they will not be realized until the Millennium. Others with more probability see in these words poetic descriptions of the new Israel of God, the church of Christ, which enjoys peace, security and blessing under the present-day rule of the scion from David’s house.<sup>53</sup>

The promise of the “one shepherd” whom God will set over Israel unmistakably refers to the Messiah. Jesus claims this title as His own (John 10:11, 14, 16). This familiar messianic figure in the Prophets (37:24; Isa 40:10, 11; Zech 13:7) is used consistently in application to the ministry of the Lord Jesus (Matt 25:31-46; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:4). The reference to David is interesting. David had been dead for more than 300 years when Ezekiel prophesied. Therefore, the “David” mentioned here is the Son of David, namely, the Messiah. The conditions which Ezekiel saw have never been completely fulfilled, but they will have a future fulfillment in the millennial era.

**ESV 23–24:** Ezekiel's announcement of a Davidic shepherd (v. 23; cf. 37:24) is similar to Jeremiah's (Jer. 23:5–6). The covenant formula in Ezek. 34:24 affirms the relationship of God and people. Because it is in such close proximity to v. 15, some commentators see a tension between those taking up the role of shepherd: is the shepherd divine (v. 15) or human (v. 23)? The dilemma may be solved by appeal to editorial layering, or in assuming a hierarchy of divine shepherd over human shepherd. A Christological reading finds here an anticipation of the divine-human nature of the Messiah. Such a reading explains John 10:11–18, where, in claiming to be the “good shepherd,” Jesus claims to be both the Davidic Messiah (Ezek. 34:23) and the incarnate God of Israel (v. 15; cf. John 1:14). Ezekiel's uneasiness with any king except God is seen in designating David as **prince** (Hb. *nasi*’).

### **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, of course, is Messianic. See John 10:14-16 for a cross reference. We would do well to read that whole chapter speaking of the Good Shepherd which God is referring to here

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<sup>53</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 34:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

in Ezekiel 34. It talks about the Lord Jesus Christ in his role as the Good Shepherd, and how he is the door for the sheep, and how he protects them and so forth.

Now getting back to Ezekiel 34, when it said that he will set up One Shepherd over them, even his servant David, do not presume that has reference to the resurrection of literal David himself. What God was talking about was the Root which came out of David: The Davidic Dynasty. It is referring to none other than the son of David, the Great son of David, Jesus Christ.

You will find Messianic references to Jesus Christ as the son of David in Jeremiah 23:5, 30:9; Hosea 3:5; Isaiah 55:3-5; 2 Samuel 20:1; 1 Kings 12:16. But what we are seeing here in Ezekiel is a prophecy of Jesus as the root and offspring of David, the Messiah.<sup>54</sup>

### **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.**

There will be no fear.

**Constable:** The Lord also promised to make a covenant of peace (i.e., resulting in peace) with Israel (cf. 16:60; 37:26-28; 38:11-13; 39:25-29; Isa. 54:10). This is probably a reference to the New Covenant that God promised to make with Israel in the future (Jer. 31:31-34).

Some commentators believed that this covenant is not the same as the New Covenant.<sup>480</sup> Alexander believed that the Jews would enter into the covenant of peace when Israel accepts the New Covenant.<sup>481</sup> My view, and that of others, is that the New Covenant was inaugurated at the Cross and now governs all believers. When Israel repents as a nation, she will enter into the benefits of this covenant that God has specified for Israel, including dwelling in peace in her land.

The word *peace* [Heb. *shalom*] is used to describe the harmony that exists when covenant obligations are being fulfilled and the relationship is sound. It is not a negative concept, implying absence of conflict or worry or noise, as we use it, but a thoroughly positive state in which all is functioning well.

The provisions of this covenant that Ezekiel mentioned here included, first, removing threats to the Israelites' safety from the land so they could even live at peace in its formerly dangerous parts, for example, the wilderness and woods (cf. John 10:27-29).<sup>55</sup>

### **Ron Daniel 25-31; Security For The Sheep**

When Christ returns and establishes His millennial kingdom on this earth, God's sheep will no longer be in danger. They will dwell securely in the midst of the nations.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>55</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Ron Daniel < Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3401.pdf>

**Chuck Smith:** The Kingdom Age, the beasts will be tame. The lion will lie down with the lamb, and a little child will lead them. I've always thought what a tremendous pet a lion could make. Wouldn't that be exciting for a kid to have a lion for a pet? Man, to jump on its back, grab hold of the mane and just take off. The Kingdom Age when God restores, then there will be peace, the covenant of peace among the animal kingdom, among men. Beautiful Kingdom Age, the evil beasts will cease out of the land.

**[covenant of peace]** The Messiah will make the covenant of peace with Israel at His second coming (Ezekiel 16:60-62; Ezekiel 20:37; Ezekiel 34:25; Ezekiel 37:26; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 55:3; Isaiah 57:8; Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 10:16).

**[sleep in the woods]** This is expressive of perfect safety and peace. No more wild animals to attack and no enemies to cause fear.

**Clarke: And will cause the evil beasts to cease**—These false and ravenous pastors. Christ purges them out of his Church, and destroys that power by which they lorded it over God's heritage.

**BKC 25-31:** God's care and protection will result in peace for His people. I will make a covenant of peace with them. The peace that Israel has always longed for will be experienced. The uncertainties associated with desolate places, wild animals, other nations, and unpredictable weather will be alleviated. The land will enjoy peace and prosperity. Trees will bear fruit and the ground will yield its crops, and the people will be secure in their land, living in safety.

God's "covenant of peace" looks forward to the blessings Israel will experience in the Millennium. This covenant will establish Israel in her land permanently with David as her shepherd. Later Ezekiel stated that the covenant of peace will also involve the rebuilding of God's temple as a visible reminder of His presence (37:26-28).

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.<sup>57</sup>

It is quite interesting that the land and the people of Israel go together in Scripture. When they are in the land and being blessed, that means that the people are in a right relationship to God.

The new age of the "one shepherd" (v. 23) will be governed by a "covenant of peace" which God will enact through Him. Isaiah envisioned the same covenant (Isa 11:1-10). Note especially in v. 27 the mention of Israel's safety "in their land." If such a lucid statement can be allegorized, as it is by amillennialists, then words have no dependable meaning at all. Actually the prophecy is to be interpreted literally. The themes in this promissory passage are more fully developed in the oracles that follow in chs. 35-39.

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<sup>57</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 34:25-31). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Election, God's Purpose**—Bad leadership could not prevent God from achieving His election purposes. He judged and disciplined false kings, prophets, and priests to establish Himself as the Good Shepherd and prepare the way for the new David with a covenant of peace. God wants a secure people enjoying His blessings because they serve Him faithfully. The basis of security is God's presence. Over seventy times Ezekiel used the recognition formula "You will know that I am Yahweh" to show God's election purpose of introducing Himself to and seeking personal relationship with His people.

**ESV 25–31:** The covenant of peace announced in v. 25 extends the renewal of life from the human community to the natural world. These effects also come in tandem with the messianic age in Isa. 11:1–9. Covenant curses have been prominent until this point, but the covenant also entailed blessings (cf. Lev. 26:4–6; Deut. 28:8–14). They shall be showers of blessing refers not only to literal rain but also to abundant blessings from God. Ezekiel 34:31 returns explicitly to the pastoral metaphor to draw the threads of the chapter together.

### **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.**

**Constable 26-27** Second, God would make His people and the places around His hill (Mount Zion, Jerusalem) a blessing to others (Gen. 12:3). God's seasonal blessings on Israel, both people and land, would be like the rain, and He would send His blessings down in showers (cf. Acts 3:19-20). The gospel song "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing" comes from this expression. Fruit trees would bear abundantly, and fruits and vegetables and flowers would proliferate in the land (cf. Hos. 2:22; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-14; Zech. 8:12). Even the plants would be secure.<sup>58</sup>

Now we sing that in the church, but actually we're only borrowing from what God is declaring is going to happen when Israel is restored.

**[my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season]** The mount of the house of the God of Jacob in Jerusalem, from which blessings will flow to the whole earth during the eternal reign of the Messiah (Ezekiel 34:26-28; Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4; Zech. 14:15-21).

**[showers of blessing]** The whole earth will be fertile; it will produce abundantly in its seasons as God originally intended when He created it. The desert will even blossom as a rose, waters will spring forth in the wilderness, and there will be showers of blessing for all men (Ezekiel 34:26-27; Isaiah 35:1-2,6-7; Isaiah 65:20-25; Joel 2).

**Shower ... in his season ... showers** bringing **blessing**. The common words for rain are: *yôreh*, "the early rain," from the last of October to the first of December (Hos 6:3);

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<sup>58</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

*malkôsh*, “the latter rain, spring rain,” of March–April (Hos 6:3); *geshem*, “shower,” the word used here; and *māṭār*, “rain” (Ex 9:33), both of which are used of the heavy winter rains of mid-December to March. 27. Cf. Hos 2:22; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; Zech 8:12.<sup>59</sup>

### **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.**

**Constable 27-29:** Third, when God broke the yoke that held His people in captivity and freed them from their oppressors they would know that He is Yahweh (v. 27b).

Fourth, the Israelites would live in complete security. They would no longer be a prey to the nations or to the beasts of the earth that previously devoured them (cf. Isa. 11:6-9). The beasts may be a figure for the Gentile nations that sought to devour Israel. The Israelites would live without fear of molestation. God would provide for them a place where they could put down roots, a place that would become famous. Famines and the insults of the other nations would cease forever. There are 17 "I wills" in verses 11-29 indicating Yahweh's commitment to be involved in the lives and destinies of His people personally.<sup>60</sup>

And so as God brings His people back again they will know that He is the Lord, when He establishes His reign.

### **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.**

**Chuck Smith:** Look at how the Jews have been persecuted among the nations, wherever they have gone. They've been a persecuted people. They've been a curse and a byword. Anti-Semitism, and it is rising again throughout the world. You read of bombings of Jewish synagogues in Europe. There's again rising in Germany strong sentiment against the Jews, and even here in the United States we're beginning to see more and more anti-Semitism. The unfortunate things that are happening up in the Hollywood area even against the Jewish community. But, "They'll be no more a prey to the heathen."

The animals will be all docile.

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<sup>59</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 34:26). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

**McGee:** The day will come when Israel will “no more be a prey to the heathen [the nations].” They are still that today, but God says, “I will,” and when He says that, He is going to do it, my friend.<sup>61</sup>

### **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.**

That plant of renown, of course, is none other than Jesus Christ.

**Chuck Smith:** They won't be cursed or bear that shame among the heathen.

We were talking with our Jewish guide who grew up in Argentina. And we were seeking to witness to him about Christianity, and he said, "Do you want to know what my first impression of Christians were?" And we said, "Sure." He said, "Well, every day going home from school I would have to run as fast as I could or else those boys who said they were Christians would beat me up and call me a Jesus killer." And he said, "They would throw rocks at me and they would beat me up every chance they got, calling me a Jesus killer." And he said, "That was my first impression of Christians." And no wonder it's hard to witness to them if that's what has been represented by Christianity to them. And it is indeed sad and tragic that much of the anti-Semitism has had its origins in the church. But we as Christians owe a great debt to Israel, to the Jews. After all, they gave us our Messiah.

**[plant of renown]** This refers to the Branch of the Lord, which Isaiah (Isaiah 4:2; Isaiah 11:9), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 23:4; Jeremiah 33:15), and Zechariah (Zech. 3:8; Zech. 6:12) all said would come.

**[no more consumed with hunger in the land]** No more famine will ever be in the land, for all will be obedient to God eternally (Jeremiah 31:34).

### **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.**

**Constable:** Fifth, Yahweh would be their God and they would be His special people in the fullest sense that the nation had ever experienced (cf. Jer. 31:33; Rom. 11:25-27). Everyone would know that He was with them and that they were His Chosen People.

This covenant anticipates events and promises never realized in the first return of Israel from captivity. When the people came back to the land after 535 B.C., they were under the control of every world-dominating power including Medo-Persia, Greece, and finally Rome until A.D. 70 when the nation was destroyed by Rome.

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<sup>61</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 34:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Millennial conditions are in view.<sup>62</sup>

### **Ezekiel 34:31**

**And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.**

These verses from 25 on are obviously Millennial. They correspond to Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21. The concept of the plant being raised was an idiom Isaiah used of the Messiah in his chapter 11. Jeremiah 23:5 speaks of the Messiah as the root out of the dry ground.

**Constable:** The sheep in view, God clarified, were people, not real sheep. He was describing His relationship to them as people in the figure of a shepherd and sheep.<sup>63</sup>

**Constable:** There are basically three views concerning the meaning of literal interpretation that may be helpful to clarify as we proceed in the eschatological portions of Ezekiel (chs. 34—48). First, some who claim to interpret the text literally do so but deny the existence of many figures of speech. In Ezekiel 34, for example, they might not recognize "shepherd" as a figure of speech but might conclude that God was speaking of the literal shepherds of literal sheep in Israel. Obviously there are few who deny all figures of speech, but interpreters of this persuasion do not recognize as figures of speech many that other interpreters do. This is "wooden literalism," "letterism," or "literalistic" interpretation that seeks "a straightforward reading of the text." Most interpreters of this type are premillennial in their understanding of the future.

A second group of interpreters who consider themselves literal try to recognize figures of speech where they occur in the text, the understanding of the original readers, historical perspective, contextual clues, the progress of revelation, the analogy of faith, etc. They seek to discover what the original readers understood when they read the text as a basis for understanding how we should understand it. The interpretations that I have advocated above in my comments on Ezekiel 34 and elsewhere in these notes illustrate this approach. Many interpreters in this group like to use the term "normal" to describe their hermeneutics (principles of interpretation). Most of these interpreters are also premillennial.

A third group interprets most portions of the text literally but believes prophetic material is mainly symbolic and figurative, not to be interpreted in a normal, straightforward manner. They depend heavily on the New Testament to understand the meaning of the Old Testament and read New Testament revelation back into the Old Testament as the Old Testament meaning. They understand, for example, some of the references to God blessing Israel in the future in Ezekiel 34 as fulfilled in His blessing the church. They do not look for an eschatological fulfillment of these promises in the Jews. For example, the promises of God regathering Israel to her land are not taken to mean that God will eventually re-gather the Jews to the Promised Land. Rather He will gather His people (i.e., all the redeemed) to heaven, the land that He has prepared for us. Thus

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<sup>62</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

they "spiritualize" the Old Testament prophecies while taking the rest of the Old Testament more or less literally. Most interpreters of this type end up with an amillennial or postmillennial understanding of the future.

Most interpreters who hold the first and third hermeneutical positions also claim to hold the second one and sometimes argue that those who hold the other positions do not.

Various facets of chapters 33—48 may be used as analogies, illustrations, and object lessons in the NT; but such does not demand that the NT is necessarily giving a 'fulfillment' of these chapters.<sup>64</sup>

### **Missler: Fulness of the Gentiles**

This is properly related to Romans 11, where Paul deals with the destiny of Israel. See Romans 11:25-27. "Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," is a phrase we could spend a lot of time on. In Genesis 15:16 we have the passage saying Israel could not go back to the land 'until the iniquity of the Amorites' was full. There is a concept we see occurring in Scripture several times where God withholds reaching some goal until something else is accomplished first.

Paul here (in Romans 11) says that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. "Until" is an important connector for us. This means that Israel's spiritual and national blindness would end when something else has first been accomplished. He was referring, of course, to the calling of the Ecclesia, the Church.

There is a number that will make the Church "full," or complete. But it is a number that only the Father knows, and when that number is reached, He will tell His Son to go get them. Satan does not know what that number is; but he does know that when that signal is sent, he will have but a short time; so it is in his interest to keep that number from being fulfilled. Satan loves to hinder the progress of the Church.

If you study sin, you find it is a disease that gets progressively worse, and here is a guy who has been the embodiment of sin for eons. Read *The Invisible War* by Barnhouse. Satan knows that the longer he can prevent you and me from growing spiritually, the better it is for him; and we can begin to ascribe a motivation as to why he is getting in our way: it is his way of buying time.

There is a number God is looking for to make "the fulness of the Gentiles" complete; and once that number is reached, there will be a shifting of gears in terms of God's primary focus. He will once again return to Israel. Israel meantime is spiritually and nationally blind until "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

When Israel rejected Christ in Matthew 12, by claiming that He cast out devils by the power of the prince of devils, Jesus began to hide the truth from them by speaking in parables, and He began to set the groundwork for the Church.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

**John 10:14-17(KJV)**

<sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

<sup>15</sup>As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

<sup>16</sup>And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.