

**Ezek. 34:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
Ezek. 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?**

The Lord is painting a word picture of His relationship with Israel. The people of Israel are pictured as a flock of sheep (identified as His in verse 6) and the religious leaders as undershepherds. The Psalmist made the same comparison between God and His people.

Psa. 80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.

So did the prophet Jeremiah.

Jer. 50:6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

This message from the Lord to Ezekiel is directed to the religious leaders of Israel in particular, which from God's perspective included the governmental leaders as well since they were all supposed to be serving their people as unto the Lord. God is denouncing these *shepherds* as self-serving and failing miserably in their God-given responsibility to care for His people.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

The charges are leveled: They are feeding and clothing themselves at the expense of the sheep with complete disregard to the needs of the sheep in those areas. They have neglected to minister to those that are sick, hurt, and broken. They haven't bothered to seek out those who had been outcast or wandered from the flock. They had ruled the people with unnecessary harshness, taking advantage of their positions of authority.

I can't help but make comparisons to some of the "so called" leaders of the church today who fleece the flock to their own profit. They occupy positions established by the Chief Shepherd, yet they abuse their positions to the detriment of the flock and the benefit of self.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

God is saying that because of the lack of spiritual leadership to keep His flock grazing under His protective provision, the sheep had wandered off and in some cases been pushed away to graze in dangerous fields. The undershepherds never bothered to go after the lost or wandering sheep and provide the

leadership and protection that they needed. In the end, their actions had brought the hand of God's judgment crashing down, and the people were scattered "upon all the face of the earth."

Ezek. 34:7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Ezek. 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;

Ezek. 34:9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Ezek. 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.

In these verses God is basically saying that because the undershepherds had not served in their positions of authority faithfully as unto the Lord, and in fact had not performed as shepherds at all, He was removing them from those positions. He was not going to let His people suffer at the hands of these leaders who were abusing their authority at the expense of the people. No longer would they be able to profit at the expense of the people.

This verse provides a strong warning to those who occupy positions in the church today as "shepherds." God will hold you accountable for your actions on behalf of His people. God will hold you accountable for how you represent Him to His sheep.

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

Ezek. 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.

Instead, God says, I, the Chief Shepherd, will seek out my lost and wandering sheep. He will personally deliver them "out of" all the places where they have been scattered by the stormy dark day of His judgment.

Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end *is* it for you? the day of the LORD *is* darkness, and not light.

Is. 29:6 Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

Nah. 1:3 The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

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

I think it is obvious that this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. The Lord is speaking of a time that He will regather His people from out of all the nations of the world and bring them home to Israel to possess their land under His protective hand of leadership and provision where they can lie down in peace and security forever.

Ezek. 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.

As the Good Shepherd, God is going to take care of His people's every need. He is going to ensure that the flock stays healthy and safe, and He is going to get rid of those in leadership that have abused them.

"I will feed them with judgment" – I can read this phrase two different ways. Either He will destroy the fat and the strong with His judgment, or He will sustain His flock with righteous judgment. I think both are true statements.

I can't help but think of the passage in John 10 where Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd.

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

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

John 10:15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

In direct contrast to the worthless shepherds to whom Ezekiel is speaking, the Good Shepherd loves His sheep to the point of willingly dying for them.

Ezek. 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" = properly, strength; hence, anything strong; specifically a chief (politically)

"he goats" = (figuratively) leaders of the people

This verse declares God's authority to judge the sheep and those who are in authority over them. In other words, He knows the sheep that belong to Him and will be able to separate His flock out from among the greater population of sheep. It also implies to me that there are many who claim to be part of His flock but do not really belong to it. It would seem that a great many of those who are part of the leadership will be found not to belong.

This immediately brings to mind the judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25 where the Lord is determining who will enter His millennial kingdom.

Ezek. 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?

Ezek. 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.

The accusation continues. These evil shepherds have taken of the best and left the scraps for the people. In fact, they have taken of the best and spoiled the residue that they left to provide for the people.

Another comparison came to mind. The shepherds had been given the privilege of eating good pasture and drinking from deep, clear water. This speaks to me of their privilege of being trained and taught from the scripture, and they were to share with the people of their treasure of learning. Instead they took the teaching of the truth and “tread it down” and “muddied it up.” What they passed on to the people was not the wisdom of God, but the wisdom of God according to the desires and purposes of men—and that is no wisdom at all. The people could not look to their leaders for direction in spiritual wisdom.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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;

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

In context it would seem that the fat cattle would represent those in leadership and the lean cattle would represent those whom they had abused. They have used their authority abusively to take advantage of those who were weak and sick. The result of the ministry of these “fat cattle” is that the flock had been scattered abroad. God had determined that He was the only fit shepherd for His flock and He would identify those that were His and separate them out of the larger cattle population.

Ezek. 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.

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

After separating out His flock (in context speaking of the nation of Israel), He would gather them into His pen (the land of Israel) and will personally oversee their care. I think you can also make a legitimate larger application to the gathering together and oversight of all believers to dwell in the safety of His Millennial Kingdom when He comes as King of kings to rule on earth.

The Lord states that He will set up “one shepherd” over them to feed them; then He identifies that shepherd as His servant David. He then goes on to qualify that He, YHWH will be their God, and His servant David a prince among them.

“one” = united, i.e., one; a man, from the root “to unify”

“David” = loving, the youngest son of Jesse

“prince” = an exalted one, a king

I just thought the meanings would be useful in considering the possible explanations of these verses. As stated in my comments on chapter 37 (cf 37:24-25), I have no problem in identifying this prince with King David of old. One of the reasons is that in context the Lord is speaking of a shepherd, a prince that He will place over Israel. This in no way detracts from the position that Jesus will occupy as King of kings and Lord of lords. Nor does it take away from Jesus occupying the throne of His “father” David. Jesus will be THE authority on planet earth period during that time. He will appoint whomsoever He chooses to occupy other leadership positions under His authority. There are scriptures that refer to the Son of God, Jesus, as “Shepherd” and “Prince.” One passage that came to mind to check was Isaiah 9:6-7.

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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, **The Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The Hebrew for the word “Prince” in this passage of Isaiah stated “a head person” from a root that states, “to have dominion.” In other words, He will be a person that possesses the ultimate authority; that is a precise definition of the Jesus, the Son of God in flesh, the Messiah who will return to set up His earthly throne.

The important truth of this verse is that God’s specifically chosen shepherd will oversee His flock with truth and faithfulness. He will lead them according to the will of God.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

“evil beasts” – I think in context this applies to the “fat cattle” referenced above, those that are looking to fulfill their fleshly desires and without regard for the needs (both material and spiritual) of the people. Because I believe the time being referenced is the millennial kingdom, I think this also legitimately makes reference to the removal of the curse on the animal kingdom referenced by Isaiah.

Is. 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

Is. 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Is. 11:8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

Is. 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

“them and the places round about my hill” – This has to be a reference to Mt. Zion and the land of Israel.

Psa. 2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

“season” = “time, especially (adverb with preposition) now,” from the root that states “properly, a (peremptory) terminus, i.e. (by implication) duration, in the sense of advance or perpetuity (substantially as a noun, either with or without a preposition):—eternity, ever(-lasting, -more), old, perpetually, + world without end.”

This entry stretched my understanding. The *season* for the shower to come down is “now...for the duration...perpetually.” In other words the showers of blessing would be a predominant feature of the millennial kingdom. The prophet Zechariah spoke of this time.

Zech. 8:3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

Zech. 8:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.

Zech. 8:5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Zech. 8:6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.

Zech. 8:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

Zech. 8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

Zech. 8:9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

Zech. 8:10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither *was there any* peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

Zech. 8:11 But now I *will not be* unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

Zech. 8:12 For the seed *shall be* prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these *things*.

Verse 27 is a declaration of the future fruitfulness of the land of Israel that the people will be able to enjoy in safety. That has been a primary concern of the Jews throughout their time of dispersion. Although they have experienced periods of security and success in the lands in which they have lived, there has always been an overhanging cloud of how long it would last before they were again to experience persecution from their fellow countrymen. The countries in which they have lived have benefited from their hard work and expertise only to turn on them in hate.

Ezek. 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.

This verse emphasizes that the context of this chapter is in relation to the nation of Israel. Israel will no longer suffer at the hands of the heathen/Gentile nations. In other words, their time of judgment is ended and they are now under the new covenant.

Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Jer. 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Jer. 31:33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer. 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.*

“plant of renown” – This appears to be a reference to the Messiah. Isaiah makes a similar comparison.

Is. 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Is. 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground:

When Jesus the Messiah returns, Israel will occupy a place of honor among the nations and will no more suffer from either physical or spiritual hunger. They will be under the protection and provision of the Chief Shepherd. Israel will be established as a land of blessing among the nations; they will never again “bear the shame of the heathen.”

Zech. 8:13 And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.

Verse 30 emphasizes again that the context of this message is for the nation of Israel. Though there are many applications that can be made to the church, this message is to the nation of Israel.

Verse 30 affirms the truth of the new covenant as quoted in Jeremiah 31 above. Once the Messiah returns, the people of Israel will know, never to doubt again that God is their Lord for He will dwell in the midst of them.

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

“my flock” = nation of Israel

“my pasture” = Israel’s sustenance, our sustenance as believers, will be provided by God

“are men...” – This is a statement on which all God’s children can base our trust and comfort. We are but mere humans. Our God is the self-existent eternal God.

Col. 1:17 And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

This is totally beyond my understanding, and that is how He has purposed it.

Is. 55:8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

Is. 55:9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.