

EZEKIEL Lesson 34

Ezekiel Chapter 34

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Introduction: We continue in our study on the book of Ezekiel. Last week we studied about Ezekiel being called to be a watchman to Israel and to vindicate God's justice. This chapter starts with a rebuke to the unfaithful leaders of Israel in verses 1-10. The focus then becomes eschatological, looking forward to the restoration of the nation in verses 11-16. Finally, the restoration of the throne of David in millennial Israel is foretold in verses 17-31.

I. Prophecy to Israel's Shepherds

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

Eze 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?

God here directs the prophet to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. The thought clearly is a figure of speech— a metaphor or parable. The shepherds of Israel were the leaders thereof, whether spiritual, political, or royal. These, no doubt, included their political governors, kings, princes, civil magistrates of every degree as well as priests.

God issued a malediction against the leaders of the nation. The flock clearly is a metaphor of the greater nation. The leaders thereof did not help the people, but rather abused and took advantage of them, all the while benefiting at their expense. In short, the leadership in Israel was corrupt and greedy.

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The upper class of Israel stole from the poor of the land and even dealt violently against them. The word translated as feed (her ra'ah) in its most basic sense means to 'shepherd,' 'tend,' or 'pastor.'

Rather than properly leading the nation, the upper class thereof 'ripped it off.' They increased their 'portfolio' at the expense of the common people. Not only was the upper

class of Israel corrupt and greedy, they also had become cruel. There was no compassion for their servants or employees. They had become utterly selfish, cold-hearted, and cruel.

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

Though allegorical, the greater thought is that the nation of Israel was being scattered (i.e., dispersed) and devoured across the face of the earth. The nation of Israel, from the time of Sennacherib to the present, have wandered across the face of the earth seeking refuge. Through the course of history, most nations have been hostile to the Jews with the notable exception of the United States and a few others.

The Jewish diaspora continues to this present hour. God laid the blame in considerable measure upon the leadership of the nation. They were the particular target of His indignation.

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

Eze 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;

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

Eze 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.

As Ezekiel thundered against the corruption of Israel, he delivered further warning from Jehovah God. Jehovah summarizes the charges He made above. Because of the greed, corruption, and cold hearts of the leadership of Israel toward their own people, God announced He would work against them. Lest there be any question as to the source of the pronouncement to be made, God reiterated it was His word and to hearken thereto.

Though referring to Israel throughout this section, the primary target was the Judah and its corrupt leadership still in Jerusalem. God warned the ruling classes of Jerusalem and Judah that He would hold them personally responsible for the destruction of His people. The leadership of Judah would no longer profit from the extortion of God's people. God was about to remove the remnant of Israel (i.e., Judah) from their grasp and free them therefrom. Though in captivity, no longer would Jews be so oppressed by their own leaders.

II. God Would Search Out His Sheep

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

Eze 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.

God vowed upon His own integrity to someday search for and seek out His sheep. The section here clearly moves into an eschatological context. The preceding portion of the chapter foretold immediate judgment against the corrupt rulers of Israel, now the focus shifts to the Day of the Lord. Israel would be regathered.

The day is coming, when the Lord, their Chief Shepherd will seek out dispersed Israel. Wherever they are scattered in the dark days of the Tribulation, God will find them to restore them to their land. In a limited measure, that has already commenced during the twentieth century as Jews have begun returning to the modern State of Israel. The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy will not be until the Day of the Lord, just after the return of Jesus Christ in power and great glory.

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

The day is coming when Jews dispersed the world around will be brought back to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There they will be planted and fed in the land of Israel forever. In that day, the Good Shepherd will feed His restored people with the best. The nation of Israel will at last be at home, permanently and in peace in their land. Jesus Christ, their Shepherd, will bless and prosper them in those days forever.

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

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

For the first time in human history, Israel will dwell in total peace and safety in their land. Not only will there be peace and tranquility, but blessing and exaltation as they have never before experienced. It is Jehovah God who will so bless them in that day.

Jesus Christ, as the Good Shepherd, will seek out persecuted and scattered Jews from their hiding places. Recall that the context is of the end of the Tribulation and early days of the Millennium. Jews will have been fiercely persecuted in the dark days of the end of the Tribulation.

When Christ returns, those persecuted, broken, and sick Jews will be gently and kindly restored in their land and fed by the Chief Shepherd. Those who had oppressed and persecuted them will be destroyed.

In verse 17, the thought here remains eschatological. The scene in view refers to the judgment of the sheep and goat nations, described by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-34.

Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

Mat 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

After the Tribulation and at the beginning of the Millennium (some think in the short interval between the two), there will be a judgment of the nations. A major criteria will be how they treated the Jews. Moreover, implied here is discrimination by God between sheep and sheep. Evidently, not all Jews will repent and turn to Christ. In that day, those Christ-rejecting Jews will be judged like ungodly gentiles.

Eze 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?

Eze 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 focus is now upon the goat nations and how they persecuted or took advantage of Jews. During the dark last half of the Tribulation, gentile nations will literally trample under foot the land of Israel, appropriating to themselves the good of the land. Like goats fouling a pool with their feet, so anti-Semitic gentile nations will overrun Israel.

If current world trends continue, Arabic and Islamic nations will lead the charge against Israel. Yet, they will someday stand before Jesus Christ and give an account how they hated the Jews. This undoubtedly will take place at the judgment of the sheep and goat nations as described in Matthew 25:31-34 which we just read. In those dark months of the latter portion of the Tribulation, Jews in Israel and elsewhere will struggle to survive. Again, the analogy of goats fouling the drinking water of sheep is set forth. So the sheep of Israel will suffer in those days.

Eze 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.

Eze 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;

Eze 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 the day of the judgment of the sheep and goat nations, Jehovah God in the person of Jesus Christ will judge between those who become prosperous at the expense of persecuted Jews. Because gentile nations (Arab and Islamic nations) have abused, hated, and terrorized Israel (especially during the last half of the Tribulation), God promised special judgment against them. In that day, Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd, will deliver Israel both nationally and individually.

Never again will other nations prey upon them either militarily, by terrorists, or by extermination. In that day, God will judge between the various herds (i.e., nations and peoples). The unrighteous will perish. The Jews and those who have befriended them will be allowed to enter the Millennium. See Matthew 25:34-46.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Mat 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Mat 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Mat 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Mat 25:42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

Mat 25:43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Mat 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Mat 25:45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

III. God Will Set Christ Upon the Throne of David

Eze 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.

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

As Israel enters the millennial kingdom, the throne of David will again be restored. In the millennial kingdom, Jesus Christ is king over all the earth. In that day, Jehovah God in the person of Jesus Christ will be God over Israel. In that day, not only will they turn back to their God, but they also will trust in and submit to Jesus Christ. David will be their immediate prince or ruler. The integrity of the word of Jehovah God was and will be their surety.

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

In that day, God will bring peace to such an extent in Israel that even the predatory, carnivorous animals of the wild will not attack. Those conditions evidently will extend all over the earth, but especially so in Israel. Truly, “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” (Isaiah 11:6). See also Isaiah 11:7-9, 35:9 and Hosea 2:18, 26.

God’s hill, without doubt, refers either to Jerusalem or the Temple mount therein, likely both. The thought is in that in that day, Jerusalem and vicinities will be specially blessed by God. Life-giving, gentle rains will fall in the right amount at the right time round about Jerusalem. The implication is of great prosperity. Moreover, God will rain goodness down upon His people as sweet showers of blessings.

The perspective is of an agrarian paradise. The orchards, vineyards, groves, and fields of Israel in that day will yield their fruit in abundance. Moreover, there will be peace and security. In that day, Israel will know from sweet experience that Jehovah God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is their God. He will break the yoke of terrorism, persecution, and trouble which Jews have faced for ages.

Eze 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.

Eze 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.

In that day, Israel will never again face hostile enemies. Never again will they see war. Even the wild animals of the countryside will be docile. God’s people will dwell in safety and security. Fear will no longer abide them.

The “plant of renown” undoubtedly is another name for the Branch who is the Messiah. See Isaiah 11:1, 53:2; Jeremiah 23:5, and Zechariah 3:8, 6:12.

Zec 3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

Zec 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

When Jesus Christ, the Branch of God, rules and reigns; Israel will be prospered and exalted as never before. Conditions there and then will be essentially heaven on earth.

Eze 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.

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

In that blessed day, redeemed Israel will know that Jehovah God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is in the midst of them. Furthermore, they will know from experience that they are His people. Though abused by their own leaders as noted earlier in this chapter, in the Day of the Lord, Israel will be the personal flock of Jehovah. They as men will be His and He their God. What a blessed day that will be.

We as the gentile church will be present in the midst as the bride of Christ as He rules over His people Israel.

John Gill said this about verse 31.

Ezekiel 34:31

And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men,.... This is observed, to show that all that had been said in this chapter concerning sheep, and a flock of sheep, was to be understood, not in a literal sense, but in a figurative one, of such as were rational and spiritual persons; a set of men whom the Lord had chosen, and separated from others, as his peculiar flock; and whom he took a special care of, and led them to, and fed them in, green pastures of his own providing; they are the souls of men that Christ is the Shepherd.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Email: KjvBibleStudiesmail@gmail.com

Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.