

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 15: Shepherds of Israel and the One Shepherd -- Ezekiel 34:1–31

Chapter 34 turns from the false prophets to the false shepherds, the kings, princes, and leaders who were charged to feed and guard the flock of God. The LORD brings a solemn woe against these shepherds of Israel because they fed themselves and not the sheep. They took the wool and the fat for their own comfort while the flock starved, scattered, and was torn.

The LORD lists the duties the shepherds neglected. They did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strayed, or seek the lost. Instead they ruled with force and harshness. Because the shepherds failed, the sheep were scattered over all the earth and became food for every beast of the field, with none to search or seek for them.

Then the chapter turns to grace. The LORD Himself declares, I will search for my sheep and will seek them out. He will rescue them from the places where they have been scattered, gather them, feed them on good pasture, bind up the injured, and strengthen the weak. What the hireling shepherds would not do, the LORD will do Himself, judging between the fat sheep and the lean and saving His flock.

At the heart of the chapter stands the promise, I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them. This is fulfilled not in a future earthly Davidic king but in Jesus Christ, the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and who reigns now over His one flock, the church. The covenant of peace He makes is the new covenant blessing realized in Christ, who seeks the lost and binds up the broken today.

Group Discussion: As a class, list the specific failures of the shepherds in 34:1–6, the duties they neglected, and the harm that came to the flock. Then trace how the LORD answers each failure when He Himself becomes the shepherd in 34:11–16. Discuss who the one shepherd, my servant David, is, and show from John 10 and other passages that this is Jesus Christ reigning now over His church, not a future earthly king.

Personal Reflection: Examine whether you have been more concerned to be fed than to feed, more eager to take from God's people than to serve them. Then bring your own weakness, sickness, straying, or lostness to the good shepherd, trusting that He still searches for the scattered and binds up the broken, and resolve to follow His voice in His one flock the church.

Read Ezekiel 34:1–31

Study Questions

1. What woe does the LORD pronounce on the shepherds of Israel in 34:1–6, and how does the charge that they fed themselves and not the sheep expose the heart of false leadership?

2. In what ways are you tempted to take from God's people what you ought to be giving to them, seeking your own comfort rather than their good?
3. The shepherds did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strayed, or seek the lost (34:4). Why does the LORD measure shepherds by their care for the weakest sheep, and what does this teach about true spiritual leadership?
4. Who are the weak, the sick, the injured, the strayed, and the lost around you, and how have you either neglected or cared for them?
5. Because the shepherds failed, the sheep were scattered and became food for every beast (34:5-6). How does the failure of leaders bring real harm to God's people, and how does this warn those who would lead today?
6. When you have been hurt or scattered by the failure of those who should have cared for you, how have you been tempted to respond, and what does this chapter call you to instead?
7. The LORD declares, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out (34:11-16). What does it reveal about God that He does not abandon the flock to faithless shepherds but comes Himself to gather, feed, bind up, and strengthen them?

8. Where in your life do you most need the LORD to seek you out, bind you up, or strengthen you, and will you let Him?

9. The LORD promises, I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them, and I will make with them a covenant of peace (34:23–25). Show from John 10:11–16, Hebrews 13:20, and 1 Peter 5:4 that this one shepherd is Jesus Christ, the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Explain why my servant David must be understood as Christ reigning now over His one flock the church, and not as a future earthly Davidic monarch over national Israel. How does the covenant of peace find its fulfillment in the new covenant in Christ, and what does it mean that the one shepherd seeks the lost and binds up the broken today?

10. After studying this chapter, what does it mean for you to know Jesus as your shepherd, to hear His voice, and to belong to His one flock, and how should that change the way you live and the way you care for others?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: John 10:11–16, Jesus the good shepherd lays down His life and gathers one flock under one shepherd; Hebrews 13:20, Christ the great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant; 1 Peter 5:1–4, elders feed the flock as Christ the chief shepherd appears; Luke 15:1–7, the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to seek the one lost sheep; Jeremiah 23:1–6, woe to the shepherds and the promise of the righteous Branch from David

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com