

Ezekiel 34 – Shepherds and Sheep: A Definition

By Holly Effiom

VV1-6

To whom is God telling Ezekiel to speak? Is it to the sheep themselves?

Who was the audience in Ezekiel 33:1-2?

What is the message to these people?

What were the shepherds doing with the sheep's blessings? Were they feeding the sheep?

What were the shepherds doing to assist the diseased sheep? What were they doing with the undesirable sheep?

How did the shepherds' behavior affect the sheep? Where did the sheep end up?

In what way have the shepherds ruled over the sheep?

What happened to the sheep as a result of this treatment by the shepherds?

What can be inferred from the phrase...

"...the diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken..."

"...they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered..."

"...wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill..."

"...none did search or seek after them..."

LESSON: It was within the power of leadership to do the things God expected – the leaders chose *not* to do them.

VV7-10

What are the three reasons for the judgment that will come upon the shepherds?

How would these failings appear in the day of the final Gentile power?

"...the diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken..."

"...they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered..."

"...wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill..."

"...none did search or seek after them..."

Ultimately, because the shepherds refused to do what they were created to do, what does this mean?

When God is against someone or thing, is that good for the individual or thing?

Where else have we read in scripture that God was "against" them? Eze 13:8; 26:3; 28:22; 29:3.

What were the reasons enumerated for God being against those noted?

What happened to those against whom God set Himself?

What is significant about these words being directed at the shepherds of Israel, in this section of scripture?

What is meant by "require my flock at their hand"? Eze 3:18; Eze 33:8

LESSON: So many amazing things happened this week in the news, but I want to call out 2 that, I believe, are relevant to this section of Ezekiel.

1. The 46th President announced the building of a section of a wall along the border with Mexico.
2. Hamas breached multiple sections of the wall between Israel and Gaza, and led a fast-moving, deadly assault on Israel.

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Ezekiel 13 makes clear God's position on border walls, yet the leaders of the glorious lands seek to hog the land all to themselves, instead of trusting God in His mighty work.

We learned in Ezekiel 33 that God's words were directed at the Gentile religious (i.e., church) leadership itself; and if we carefully look at Ezekiel 3, the same was the case with regard to temple leadership in Jerusalem's day. Here in Ezekiel 34, God is defining who "leadership" is in speaking directly to the "shepherds", in general. "Shepherds" of every stripe are leaders who rule over God's sheep of every kind – be it on a national, local, school board, in an office, a company, religious, or familial level – and the punishment for not performing the work of a shepherd is the loss of:

Position – "...cause them to cease from feeding the flock..."

Power – "...neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more..."

Authority – "...I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

VV11-16

What is significant about God's words in V11? Will a "servant" be sent to search and seek out the flock?

How are searching and seeking out different?

- What does "search for my sheep" mean?
- What does "seek out my sheep" mean?

What were the shepherds supposed to be doing?

What does God Himself plan to do?

When is He planning to search and seek out His flock?

What is meant by the "cloudy and dark day"? Where have we seen this phrase before? Eze 30. What did we propose this term meant then?

What is significant about the phrase being used again here?

So, who exactly is God talking about searching for and seeking out?

From where will God bring his flock out?

To where will God bring his flock? Is the goal to move all His flock to Israel?

What will happen to the rebellious shepherds?

LESSON: Where will God bring His flock? To a strange land where they will be used and abused because they are *different* and *hated* and *killed* for their difference? No, according to these scriptures, they will be taken to "...their own land..." where they can live in peace, *without* the people who try to oppress them. No, they aren't all going to move to Israel, where they still will be foreigners.

Why are people leaving their own homes to make the arduous and dangerous trip to be foreigners in some other hostile land? Because of the failure of shepherds in their own land.

And now, those who used and abused the stranger, taking for grant the bounty of the blessings of God, including good government, will become strangers themselves to all that bounty – strangers to *leadership*.

VV17-24

How is the term "my flock" being used, now?

To whom is God specifically speaking? How do you know?

What is significant in using the term "my flock" when addressing the shepherds?

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How does God describe what the shepherds were doing to their flock?

What would this look like in the time of the Gentiles? Revelation 11:2

- Treading down the pastures and
- Fouling the waters with your feet

How have the shepherds fallen short of expectations?

How does this failure manifest in the time of the Gentiles?

Why does God find the actions of His own flock offensive? Are these not His “chosen”?

Why is it noteworthy that God is taking a personal interest in His own flock’s correction?

Who specifically will be judging the behavior of these shepherds? Why?

Is God anywhere in these scriptures threatening to “kill” the shepherds? Why or why not?

What is God promising to do as a result of the shepherds causing division *instead* of unity? VV22-24

So, considering Ezekiel 7:20-27, how will this judgment manifest in the time of the Gentiles?

LESSON: In these scriptures, God is giving us His opinion on many of the policies and attitudes He is seeing in the shepherds in these final days of the time of the Gentiles.

I proposed in Ezekiel 13:10-14 that He was giving His opinion on “border walls” and those that encourage their construction, saying He would expose “...the foundations...” of those walls. The week I wrote that, Steve Bannon was arrested on the boat of a Chinese billionaire, and his grift exposed for what it was – a scam to raise money from “conservative” adherents, sold on building a border wall to keep the “foreigners” out.

Here in Chapter 34, I propose that God is discussing the part His “chosen”, shepherds, play in the destruction of the earth’s environment, in describing how leaders extract the earth’s wealth and enjoy the benefits of the land and waters, while fouling them with their feet for the flock – leaving the rest of the world to live on *dregs*. God is asking in verse 18 if the shepherds believe destroying the earth and poisoning His children are a “...small thing...” to Him?

God speaks of Himself as a Shepherd in these scriptures, which makes the behavior of His shepherds all the more *aberrant* – they are *supposed* to be representations of God *Himself* before the flock. The image that the shepherds represent of God is a destructive lie and, therefore, the punishment for that lie is severe. Recall, Moses was disallowed from entering the promised land because of his failure to represent God accurately, in striking the rock multiple times, not just once, as directed (Numbers 20:12).

The vision of self-rule is removed from Adam. Ezekiel 7:20 speaks of “...the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty...” being set “...far from them.” I had proposed that God was discussing Adam’s system of government of that final Gentile power. In Ezekiel 34:22-24, God is making it plain that Adam’s experiment with democracy is coming to an end because Adam’s leadership was bent on dividing instead of unifying; it was more interested in position, power, and authority than in ruling in the righteousness of God.

No, God does not specifically say He will kill the shepherds in these verses, but He is clear that they will not enter into the rest promised to His flock.

VV25-31

When true leadership is restored, what does God plan to do with these leaders?

What is meant by a “covenant of peace”?

How will the “covenant of peace” manifest, after the day of the Lord?

“...dwell safely in the wildness, and sleep in the words...”

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“...I will make them and places round about my hill a blessing...”

“...there shall be showers of blessings...”

“...the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase...”

“...when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them...”

“...no more 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...”

“...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 same of the heathen any more.”

How frequently is some version of the term “safe” used in these final verses of the chapter?

What are the ways, noted in these verses, that people feel *un*-safe?

“...the evil beasts to cease...”

“...the shower to come down in his season...”

“...and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land...”

“...the bands of their yoke, and... the hand of those that served themselves of them...”

“...be a prey to the heathen...”

“...beast of the land devour them...”

“...shall make them afraid...”

“...bear the shame of the heathen...”

“...consumed with hunger in the land...”

LESSON: Notice that there seems to be a repetition in verses 25-31 – God is discussing two different groups among his flock – those in leadership and those being led. Notice also that they experience the *same* fears and long for the *same* blessings.

These final verses of Ezekiel 34 are great equalizers. Adam’s attempt at self-government, even with the democracy-iteration, invariably fails because *some* people are being made *more* equal than others, and *this* is among *equals*! The understanding that *all* people are created in the image of God means that *all* people are, not only capable of but, entitled to good leadership. And *not-so-good* leaders learned that as long as Adam can be *defrauded* – through ignorance or deception – into abdicating their own right to power, these ones can enjoy the perks of position, power, and authority... for a *time*.

I remember taking an upper-division, Soviet Society course prior to completing my bachelor’s degree. So, this required reading the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and my biggest criticism of the Communist economic theory was that it did not adequately take into consideration man’s *greed*. God knows His creation (for we were made in His image), He knows and understands our natural inclination to wanting more, bigger, better. And, as God, He knows there will always be some who delude themselves into believing they are entitled to more, bigger, better than their neighbor. He has given these ones time to run their course. Perhaps this is the 500 years mentioned in the Book of Enoch. (1 Enoch 10:10)

Whatever the case, by the end of this journey, all Adam – regardless of their position, power, or authority – will know who they are and their place in God’s kingdom. “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. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.”