FUTURE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

EZEKIEL 34

BOOK OF EZEKIEL — OUTLINE

	INWARD → Personal	OUTWARD ← Peoples	ONWARD |→ Prophetic
CHAPTERS	1 — 3	4 — 24	25 — 32	33 — 48
	Ezekiel's Call to Ministry	**Sinfulness of Israel and Fall of Jerusalem**	**Judgment on Nations that Opposed Israel**	**Restoration of Israel in the Future**

	• Ezekiel Birth (623BC) and Ministry Years (593-571BC)
	• 597BC is the 2nd Deportation; Ezekiel taken at age 25
	• 593BC Ezekiel begins Ministry at age 30
		• A Disobedient Nation (**4-7**)
		• A Departed Glory (**8-11**)
		• A Disciplined Nation (**12-24**)
		  • The Futility of False Optimism (**12-19**)
		  • The History of Judah's Corruption (**20-24**)
			• Ammon (**25:1-7**)
			• Moab (**25:8-11**)
			• Edom (**25:12-14**)
			• Philistia (**25:15-17**)
			• Tyre (**26:1—28:19**)
			• Sidon (**28:20-24**)
			• Egypt (**29-32**)
				• Return of Israel to the land (**33-39**)
				• Restoration of Israel in the Kingdom (**40-48**)
				• Promised Land; Millennial Temple, and the Glory of God

593BC	**Given BEFORE the siege of Jerusalem**	587BC	**Given DURING the siege of Jerusalem**	586BC	**Given AFTER the siege of Jerusalem**	571BC
	The City Destroyed 7 Years Prophesying JUDGMENT			**The City Restored** 15 Years Prophesying HOPE



Author: Ezekiel ("God strengthens") **Place:** Babylonia **Time:** About 22 years (593-571BC)

Events:

605BC	— FIRST Siege upon Israel by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel taken)	Ezekiel 17 years old
597BC	— SECOND assault upon Jerusalem (Ezekiel taken)	Ezekiel 25 years old
593BC	— Ezekiel at age 30 called by God to testify against Israel	Ezekiel 30 years old
586BC	— THIRD assult upon Jerusalem (City & Temple destroyed)	Ezekiel 37 years old

INTRODUCTION: EZEKIEL 34

- The rulers of the people were often called shepherds (Ps.78:70-72; Is.44:28; 63:11; Je.23:1-4; 25:34-38).

- They were to be strong, caring leaders who guarded their nation like a flock. They did not serve their flock.

- Ezekiel first explained the sins of the shepherds (Ek.34:1-6), then pronounced judgment on them (Ek.34:7-10).



PRESENT FALSE SHEPHERDS

Ezekiel 34:1-10

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,



EZEKIEL 34:1



And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, (Ek.34:1)

- This is literally a marker for a new revelation.
- God charged the prophet to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel.
- Ezekiel called the exiles "Israel," referring to all Jews in captivity from both the northern and southern kingdoms.



Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

EZEKIEL 33:2

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (Ek.33:2)

- **Their first error was to put their own interests above those of the people (Ek.34:2-3).**
- **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.**
- **Ancient Near Easterners often referred to kings and leaders as "shepherds" (Nu.27:17; 2Sm.5:2; 1Ki.22:17; Is.44:28; Je.3:15; 10:21; 23:1-6; 25:34-38; Mi.5:4-5; Zc.11:4-17).**



Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (Ek.33:2)

- **God pronounced judgment on them for three reasons.**

1. They fed themselves rather than the people (v.2, selfish)
2. Rather than feeding God's sheep they slaughtered them (v. 3-4, oppressive)
3. They allowed the people to scatter over the earth instead of keeping them safely together (v.5-6, negligent)



You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.

EZEKIEL 34:3



You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. (Ek.34:3)

- **The primary responsibility of a leader is to care for the needs of those he leads, even if this requires sacrificing his own desires.**

- **The items in this verse are literal but the passage is used figuratively to illustrate the selfishness of the shepherds in their treatment of the flock.**



The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.



EZEKIEL 34:4



The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. (Ek.34:4)

- **Another 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.**
- **Israel's shepherds did not gently nurture the people. They ruled harshly and brutally.**



So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.



EZEKIEL 34:5



So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. (Ek.34:5)

- Another error of the rulers was their flagrant disregard for the people, letting them be scattered without looking for them (Ek.34:5-6).
- The chief job of a shepherd was to prevent such a catastrophe.
- The Israelites scattered because they lacked leadership and became prey for the enemies of God's flock.



My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.



EZEKIEL 34:6



My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them. (Ek.34:6)

- Three times in Ezekiel 34:5-6 he mentioned that the sheep were scattered.
- 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.
- They wandered everywhere, but there was no one to seek them out (Mt.9:36; Jn.10:12-13).



Therefore, you shepherds,
hear the word of the LORD:



EZEKIEL 34:7



Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: (Ek.34:7)

- The shepherds had neglected their task, and the sheep were scattered. It was now time to call the shepherds to judgment for their actions.

- 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.



"As I live," says the Lord GOD,
"surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"—

EZEKIEL 34:8

"As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"— (Ek.34:8)

- **Holding the shepherds accountable for His flock, God would judge the rulers and remove them from their positions of power.**



therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD!

EZEKIEL 34:9

therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! (Ek.34:9)

- **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 (Mt.20:25-28).**



[25]But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. [26]Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. [27]And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— [28]just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (**Mt.20:25-28**).



Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."

EZEKIEL 34:10

Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." (Ek.34:10)

- 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.
- The false shepherds had brought Israel to ruin. So God Himself would intercede and rescue His people.



FUTURE TRUE SHEPHERD

Ezekiel 34:11-31

For thus says the Lord GOD:
"Indeed I Myself will search
for My sheep and seek them
out.

EZEKIEL 34:11

For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. (Ek.34:11)

- What the false shepherds failed to accomplish because of their greed (Ek.34:1-10), God would bring to pass.

- He would care for His flock (Ek.34:11-16), judge between His sheep (Ek.34:17-24), and establish a covenant of peace (Ek.34:25-31).

- There are several references to God as Israel's Shepherd in the Old Testament (Ek.34:6; Ge.49:24; Ps.23:1; 80:1; Is.40:11; Je.31:10; Jn.10:2-3, 14-16).



As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

EZEKIEL 34:12





As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. (Ek.34:12)

- **The flock was scattered because of cruel and indifferent shepherds (Ek.34:2-6).**

- **If the sheep were to be rescued and restored, the Great Shepherd would need to rescue them Himself.**

- **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 (Je.30:17-22; Lk.15:4-7).**



And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.

EZEKIEL 34:13

And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. (Ek.34:13)

- **I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them. God would intervene personally on Israel's behalf.**

- **God would lead them out from among the peoples where they had gone and bring them back to their own land (Ek.34:4-6).**

- **God would nourish them on the mountains, beside the streams, and in the best (inhabited) places of the land (Ps.23:1; John 4; 6:31-35).**



I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.





EZEKIEL 34:14

I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. (Ek.34:14)

- 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.
- 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 audacious as to deny this, then the regathering must be equally so.



I will feed My flock,
and I will make them lie
down," says the Lord GOD.



EZEKIEL 34:15



I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.34:15)

- Ezekiel focuses on the ongoing promise of God toward Israel.
- God Himself would feed His flock and lead the sheep to rest (Ek.34:3).



"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."



EZEKIEL 34:16



"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment." (Ek.34:16)

- God will do what the false shepherds had failed to do — tend, 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.



"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment." (Ek.34:16)

- God would seek the lost, return the scattered, heal the broken, and strengthen the sick (Ek.34:4, 6; Is.61:1-2; Mi.2:12; 4:6-8; Lk.4:16-21).

- God would also destroy the fat, strong shepherds who had failed Him by feeding these leaders judgment.



And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.





EZEKIEL 34:17

And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. (Ek.34:17)

- **In exercising His justice God said He would begin by judging between the individual sheep.**
- **Before the millennial kingdom begins, God will sort out the righteous from the unrighteous (Mt.25:31-46) and allow only the righteous into the Millennium.**
- **Here the Lord viewed the exilic leaders as sheep among His sheep rather than as shepherds.**



And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. (Ek.34:17)

- **But how will God differentiate one from the other? The character of the sheep is seen in their conduct (Ek.34:17-21).**

- **The wicked sheep are those that follow the conduct of the shepherds, oppressing the weaker sheep.**

- **The Lord announced too that He would distinguish among the members of His flock, judging them individually (Mt.25:31-46).**



Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture—and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?



EZEKIEL 34:18



Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture—and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? (Ek.34:18)

- **Some of these leaders had not only eaten good pasture and drunk clear water but had made it impossible for the other sheep to eat good food and drink good water.**



And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet.



EZEKIEL 34:19



And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet. (Ek.34:19)

- **They trampled the pasturelands and even muddied the streams so that other sheep were left with less-than-desirable vegetation and drinking water.**

- **The ordinary sheep had to get by with trampled grass and muddy water.**



Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep.

EZEKIEL 34:20



Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. (Ek.34:20)

- These fat sheep were successful in brutalizing the lean sheep.

- 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.



Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad,





EZEKIEL 34:21

Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, (Ek.34:21)

- **An overbearing animal will push with its side, shoulders and horns in order to crowd out a weaker one.**

- **The wicked sheep even butted all the weak sheep with their horns, to drive them away.**



therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

EZEKIEL 34:22

therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. (Ek.34:22)

- God will not permit these wicked practices to continue.
- Instead He will rescue the oppressed and will judge the aggressors.
- 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.
- God would deliver His people from poor leaders as well as predatory nations.



I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd.

EZEKIEL 34:23

I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. (Ek.34:23)

- **After judging the individual sheep, God will exercise His leadership by appointing a new shepherd (Ek.34:23-24)**
- **This shepherd will be His servant "David."**
- **Many see this as an allusion to Christ, the Good Shepherd (Jn.10:11-18), who descended from the line of David to be the King of Israel (Mt.1:1).**
- **Nothing here demands that Ezekiel was not referring to the literal King David who will be resurrected to serve as Israel's righteous prince.**



I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. (Ek.34:23)

- David is referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel (Je.30:9; Ek.37:24-25; Ho.3:5).
- Ezekiel indicated that David will be the prince of the restored people (Ek.34:24; 37:25).
- This same "prince" will then offer sin offerings for himself during the millennial period (Ek.45:22; 46:4).
- Such actions would hardly be appropriate for the sinless Son of God, but they would be for David.



And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

EZEKIEL 34:24

And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. (Ek.34:24)

- It seems this is a literal reference to a resurrected David.
- In place of the false shepherds God will resurrect a true shepherd to tend his sheep.
- 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 references (Ek.7:27; 12:10; 19:1; 21:25; 22:6, 25).



And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. (Ek.34:24)

- 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 (Ek.37:24-25; Is.11:1; Je.23:5-6; 30:9; Ho.3:5; Mi.5:2; Jn.10:30; 1Tm.2:5).

- In a sense Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Son of David are in view here.

- This covenant will establish Israel in her land permanently with David as her shepherd.



I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.





EZEKIEL 34:25

I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. (Ek.34:25)

- God's care and protection will result in peace for His people.
- 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.
- God's "covenant of peace" looks forward to the blessings Israel will experience in the Millennium.



I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. (Ek.34:25)

- Later Ezekiel stated that the covenant of peace will also involve the rebuilding of God's temple as a visible reminder of His presence (Ek.37:26-28).
- This is likely a reference to the New Covenant that God promised to make with Israel in the future (Je.31:31-34).
- 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.



I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing.



EZEKIEL 34:26



I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing. (Ek.34:26)

- The land will enjoy peace and prosperity.
- God would make His people and the places around His hill (Mount Zion, Jerusalem) a blessing to others (Ge.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 (Ac.3:19-20).
- The gospel song "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing" comes from this expression.



Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

EZEKIEL 34:27





Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. (Ek.34:27)

- Trees will bear fruit and the ground will yield its crops, and the people will be secure in their land, living in safety.

- Fruits, vegetables, and flowers would proliferate in the land (Ho.2:22; Jl.3:18; Am.9:13-14; Zc.8:12). Even the plants would be secure.



And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid.



EZEKIEL 34:28



And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid. (Ek.34:28)

- **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 (Is.11:6-9).**



I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore.

EZEKIEL 34:29

I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore. (Ek.34:29)

- 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 Ezekiel 34:11-29 indicating Yahweh's commitment to be involved in the lives and destinies of His people personally.



Thus they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people," says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 34:30





Thus they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.34:30)

- **Everyone would know that God was with them and that they were His Chosen People.**

- **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 the "people" (Da.9:26) in the Roman army.**



"You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God," says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 34:31

"You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.34:31)

- **God will restore Israel because of her unique relationship to Him.**

- **This covenant anticipates events and promises never realized in the first return of Israel from captivity.**



LITERAL INTERPRETATION

- Some who claim to interpret the text literally do so but deny the existence of many figures of speech.
  - 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.
  - They would call this a straightforward reading of the text.
  - Premillennial understanding of the future.

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LITERAL INTERPRETATION

- **Some 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, and the progress of revelation provide the basis to understand the text.**
  - **Many prefer to use the term "normal" to describe their hermeneutics (principles of interpretation).**
  - **Premillennial understanding of the future.**



LITERAL INTERPRETATION

- **Some interpret the text literally but believes prophetic material is mainly symbolic and figurative.**
  - **These depend heavily on the New Testament to understand the meaning of the Old Testament and read New Testament revelation back into the Old Testament.**
  - **They understand some of the references to God blessing Israel in the future in Ezekiel 34 as fulfilled in His blessing the church.**
  - **Amillennial or postmillennial understanding of the future.**

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FUTURE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

EZEKIEL 34