

# **Ezekiel 34: the Shepherd Prince**

## **Member Guide- 12/20/09**



**Small Group Study** – Each week our small groups team works alongside Pastor J.D. to create a small group study which corresponds to his sermon that week. The study examines a related passage of scripture to the text he preaches through with the goal of challenging small groups to grow both in their confidence in studying the bible and in their application of the truths brought out in the sermon.

**Introduction:** During the last few weeks of sermons and small groups, Summit has been studying the prophecies that foretell Jesus Christ. As the sermons have mentioned, about 25% of the Old Testament are prophetic texts. Like Isaiah 9, many of these prophetic texts have meaning and instruction for the original hearers, providing insight into God's activity in the world, while also foretelling the future. Seeing the big picture of God's activity, present and future, is meant to help God's people be "firm in their faith (Is. 7:9)."

The principle guiding the "foretold" series is expressed in Luke 24:44: "these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." When the Apostles preached about Jesus, as seen in Acts and the ministry of Paul in the synagogues throughout the lands of Exiled Jews, they almost always did so with references to the OT. Every page of the New Testament has either a quotation or a direct reference to the Old Testament. This connection is crucial to understanding the Apostles' message about Jesus. Knowing the Old Testament will provide you with a textured picture of Jesus and the lofty expectations that He fulfilled as the Christ/Messiah. Seeing this prophecy fulfilled gives us assurance that God is in control of history and will eventually fulfill every promise.

**Context:** Ezekiel 34 talks about the coming Messiah as a New David, which is a theme of Isaiah, Jeremiah, other prophets, and the Gospels. Verse 23 says "I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd." These words were written about 400 years after David's glorious reign on Israel's throne. David had been a shepherd before he was king, and his leadership style reflected this. As a king he was attentive to the will of God and the needs of the people.

In the centuries leading up to Ezekiel's day, unfortunately, such attentive rulers were few and far between as the kingdom fell into moral, spiritual, and physical decline. As a result, God took His protective hand away from Jerusalem and sent the people away into Exile. The Temple was defiled and the people of Israel were scattered throughout the nations. False prophets assured a quick return (Jer. 29), but Ezekiel and Jeremiah preached that the rest of Israel would fall and stay in Exile for a long time. Ezekiel's prophecy proved true (hence, His words are prophetic Scripture according to the standards in Deuteronomy 18). Ezekiel 33-48, however, reminds the people of the mercies of God which will eventually result in a glorious salvation.

**Theme:** The merciful act described in Ezekiel 34 is that God will send a leader who cares for the people like a shepherd attending his sheep. God Himself will be their shepherd, but He will also send a human shepherd like David. This David-like Prince will rule the land in peace and with righteousness. He will gather the lost and be attentive in caring for the people. God's return will mean mercy for the people, but judgment for those rulers who have been a burden to the people. The bad shepherds will be removed from their place of authority.

The Gospels record that God sends Jesus to be the Good Shepherd (John 10). Throughout Luke, we see Jesus oppose the Pharisees and teachers who have laid a heavy burden on an already burdened people. Jesus says that His own ministry is to "seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10)" and teaches parables describing his ministry this way (Luke 15). He also eats with sinners and preaches to exiles. Just like the Shepherd mentioned in Ezekiel 34, Jesus has lifted up the humble, gathered the lost, bound up the hurt, opposed the bad shepherds, and preached good news to the poor. These are the recurring themes of Luke's Gospel, which confirm Jesus' identity as the Ezekiel 34 Good Shepherd.

**Prayer:**

- Pray that our souls, and the souls of our friends and neighbors would find rest in Jesus
- Pray Summit church would be receptive to Christ's leadership and attentive to needs in the community
- Pray for more Christ-like leaders in churches and communities all around the world

Aim: Entrust your life to Jesus' leadership, like a sheep to its shepherd.

Study Questions:

What have you been learning about the Old Testament in these last few weeks?

[34:1-10]

In your own words, what are the bad leaders doing to the people of Israel?

What are some of the results of their bad leadership?

[34:11-16]

How will God oppose the bad shepherds?

Read Luke 4:16-21 and answer: how does Jesus' ministry fulfill Ezekiel 34?

[34:17-31]

What verses in this passage show that God is an attentive Shepherd?

What will the new David's ministry be like?

How would this prophecy be meaningful for those who originally heard it?

Read John 10:1-18; how else does Jesus' ministry fulfill Ezekiel 34?

Why are the people compared to sheep?

Why do people need a shepherd?

How can Summit provide good spiritual leadership to this community?