

Ezekiel 34

Co-conspirators

Read Ezekiel 34:1-6: We have been through many chapters describing the reasons for God's judgement against the Jewish society. Most of the chapters in Jeremiah were about the people of Judah, and: their idolatry, violence and treachery to the own countrymen.

Ezekiel has been somewhat similar, except that it expands the view and reveals who else had a hand in the downfall of Judah. We have read about the contributing roles of the neighboring countries. We have read about the betrayal and damage from the false prophets. We have read about the *sellout* kings. Now we read about the phony local leaders. Now we are getting down to local influencers. A shepherd is comparable to the pastor. The word for pastor actually means shepherd. Jesus described the servant leader, not an overlord.

ποιμήν — 4x

ποιμήν — 3x

Dictionary Aids

Vine's Expository Dictionary: [View Entry](#)

TDNT Reference: 6:485,901

KJV Translation Count — Total: 18x

The KJV translates Strong's G4166 in the following manner: shepherd (15x), Shepherd (2x), pastor (1x).

Outline of Biblical Usage [?]

- I. a herdsman, esp. a shepherd
 1. in the parable, he to whose care and control others have committed themselves, and whose precepts they follow
- II. metaph.
 1. the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church
 1. of the overseers of the Christian assemblies
 2. of kings and princes

Pastor/shepherds are critical for the church body. The scriptures compare us to sheep, not cattle. We must have someone checking in on us. We are not able to do

well on our own. Sheep are dumb, self-defeating, and prone to injury and entrapment, etc..

Careers of Confusion

The scriptures describe Jesus as the prototype of a good shepherd. What is a good shepherd? It comes from the perspective of the owner of the sheep. It is hard to find good shepherds who are willing to spend enough time with their sheep. It's a bygone career; only existing a few cultures. You cannot hire a 9:00-5:00 guy to do be a shepherd. Nobody wants to live in a little trailer amidst a caravan out in the middle of nowhere. Shepherds typically stink like sheep; because they are with them all of the time.

This chapter asks a rhetorical question: “Shouldn't the shepherd feed the sheep instead of himself?” It's a dumb question that is self-evident. That question has an obvious answer for a shepherd. The application here is for the local church leadership. Local church leadership were based in homes in those days. The idea of becoming a central figure in the local church can be appealing to some people. Many pastors are there for the wrong reasons.

People go into ministry for a variety of reasons. They can merely be attracted to the intellectual stimulation of learning. Here are a few current observations of our seminaries:

“We find today that more seminary students come to do graduate theological education with less knowledge of the Bible and theology than ever before. Fifty years ago, students came, they'd read through the Bible many times, they'd memorized a lot of the Bible, they had done their catechisms, they had been schooled in theology in their home churches.” Today, however, churches are not “equipping people in the same way with a knowledge of the Bible and a theology,” he argued. “So if people who know less Bible and less theology think that knowing more Bible, more theology is irrelevant to ministry, we're in trouble,” he warned. Theology professors have also long been warning that biblical illiteracy in America has reached a “crisis point.”

I found that there are more liberal seminaries than there are sound ones. That is, most seminaries today do not hold a high view on God, or the Bible and even on Jesus Christ. It is appalling to me that seminary professors with doctorates who have studied the

Bible do not fully believe in the Bible. That seems amazing to me! They teach what they themselves don't even believe.

With few exceptions, seminary enrollments have declined sharply with several having closed. Others, even some of those which might have been thought strongest, have had to retrench sharply, some selling beautiful tree-lined campuses to take up residence in faceless office buildings, and others selling dormitories. Some of this is a domino effect, extending from the precipitous decline of the so-called "mainline" denominations. As those denominations have lost members and income, their seminaries have withered in harmony with them. As serious as the apparent decline is, the situation is more serious than that. The issue strikes at the heart of what a seminary is supposed to be. Historically, seminaries have been professional schools. That is, like a law school, they have existed to prepare their graduates for a profession, the profession of church ministry. And the bulk of seminary graduates have sought ministerial degrees, most recently the master of divinity (M.Div.) degree. But that is no longer the case. In most seminaries today, students are not seeking to be trained as pastors. They are looking to become professors, counselors, or leadership trainers (whatever that may be), or they simply want to study religious subjects with little idea how that might contribute to their future. One major denominational seminary which receives over a million dollars in subsidy from its denomination graduated *a total of 11* M.Divs. in 2021.

My New Testament professor was an avowed atheist. My systematic theology professor rejected the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Greek and Hebrew weren't required classes, but "Religious Pluralism" and "Social Justice" were. I don't recommend the seminary I attended to others. But while it failed to teach me all it should have, here are five important lessons I did learn during those formative years. Though my seminary was

the most diverse community I'd ever been part of, everyone shared one thing in common: We were all captivated by the Christian faith academically. I suspect there was as much intellectual curiosity and talk *about* Jesus, the Bible, and the church as you'd find at any religious institution. But interest in Jesus isn't the same as devotion to him. Studying the Bible isn't the same as believing and practicing it.

It is sad but true how many pastors and priests lose their faith in God but then just keep on trucking. In some cases it's because they value a kind of politics over any other consideration. But for most, it's just a sense of ennui about what one is supposed to do. Rod, you hit the nail on the head by highlighting that bit about the seminaries. Textual criticism will be the death of us. And I say this as someone who believes that historical criticism and form criticism and all the rest have great value and shouldn't be abandoned. But the problem is that these are ALL THAT IS TAUGHT in biblical classes in many seminaries today. And when the only approach that one ever learns towards the Bible is criticism, then all you know how to do is be a critic. Is it any wonder you lose your faith in what the Bible teaches? Imagine going into a marriage with the only approach you know that of constantly criticizing your wife and questioning her motives and her honesty. It would be a short walk to divorce.

Our Prototype Shepherd (Comparison/Contrasts)

A Good shepherd takes very good care of the sheep. He makes sure that they are well fed, well-watered, safe from predators, well doctored as needed, etc... This all happens before his own interests.

⁷ Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. ¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10)

This chapter is really about Pharisees, false prophets, weak pastors, compromised televangelists, etc..

¹³ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. ¹⁴ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. ¹⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. ¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ ¹⁷ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? (Matthew 23:13-17)

There are other similar observations and warnings in scripture about following the wrong church leaders. We just read about the crisis of biblical illiteracy out there, and the new false virtues. Beyond that, their intellectual motivations will cause them to become tribal about their views on different issues.

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many

will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. (2 Peter 2)

Is there also an application for everyday believers here? A person can be a true believer and be weak in their shepherding skills. You have pastor-teachers, pastor-shepherds, and various combinations of church leaders. A shepherd must be very involved with his sheep. Do we build others in the word, or just focus on our own devotionals? Do we take our living and seek opportunities from fellow believers? to what degree do we involve ourselves in the lives of others?

Are our own flock and family scattered and misled? Perhaps our circle of influence is misled by the degree that we make ourselves available. Relationship building is often missing where the Bible is taught. Jesus seeks the lost. Jesus finds those who have gotten onto a dangerous path. Fixing people can only happen by somehow redirecting them back to God.

Have I pursued the lost ones in our society? I know that many times I will just conclude that *this guy* wants money for drugs. I often conclude that a person just has self-defeating behavior. How can I interrupt that, if they are not willing? It requires prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5 played out in the previous chapter.

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. (Ezekiel 34:5)

This means that the Jews went for help abroad; and were killed for their misplaced confidences. They turned towards Babylon and their gods until the Babylonians came and captured these severely confused people. Their quest for status and significance got them really lost and into harm's way.

²¹ And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has been captured!" (Ezekiel 33:21)

Read Ezekiel 34:7-10 God told Ezekiel in the prior chapter that he was to be a watchman on the wall, crying out that danger was approaching. This chapter is about failed spiritual leaders.

A bad shepherd uses the flock for personal gain. The congregation is a means to accomplish their goals. A false shepherd may ignore the true needs while he fills

his pockets by telling them what they want to hear. Popularity in the flock is a tricky thing. A good pastor will not sugar-coat the truth. Some congregations may call for your resignation if you offend them. Bad shepherds go with the flow and appease the consciences of their listeners.

For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.
(Romans 16:18)

Doing your job can get you fired; but that is o.k. with God. Nobody really wants to hear the truth after they have invested themselves into a series of bad decisions. They want confirmations to continue; and not to be scolded or told to reverse course. God does not want us to yield to marketing strategies and soft selling hard truths. If the church attendance goes to zero, because they do not want to hear the unvarnished truth of scripture, God will not be upset with you at all.

God is basically holding the shepherds responsible for their flock. To lead people entails that you seek their best interests, not yield to their natural desires. God is saying that these church leaders stood idly by as the members pursued harmful ideologies and belief systems.

Read Ezekiel 34:11-16: Jesus will fulfill the role of the Good Shepherd in person during his millennial reign. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is working through flawed people to manage the flock. God is going to get rid of the worthless shepherds over Israel. We now have around 350,000 Messianic Jews worldwide. About 15,000 of them are in Israel. God purged out all of the false prophets and their followers during the Babylonian siege.

Since before 1948 God has already begun ingathering his sheep back to their Israeli homeland. We call it Aliyah.

Aliyah is a Hebrew word that means to “go up.” While originally it referred to ascending to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Feasts, today it has come to mean the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel.

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

(Isaiah 43:5-6)

God has used the church to help in this cause.

*“See. I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up My banner to the peoples; they will carry your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders.”
(Isaiah 49:22)*

What are the places that God has brought the lost sheep of Israel from?

The countries of origin of the largest numbers of immigrants this decade include Russia, Ukraine, France, the United States and Ethiopia. The year with the largest number of Olim was 2019, when about 34,000 immigrants arrived, according to Jewish Agency reports.

According to Jewish Agency data, more than half of the immigrants arriving over the last decade (approx. 130,000 people) came from the former Soviet Union; more than 55,000 from Europe (with more than 38,000 coming from France); around 36,000 from North America, according to data from The Jewish Agency and Nefesh B’Nefesh (of which over 32,000 were from the United States and more than 3,800 from Canada); around 13,420 from Latin America (with around 4,320 from Brazil and around 3,150 from Argentina); nearly 10,500 from Ethiopia; more than 2,560 from South Africa; more than 1,950 from Oceania, the majority of whom were from Australia; and around 1,700 came from the rest of Africa and Asia (among them around 1,180 from India and more than 190 from Hong Kong and China). The report also shows that over 3,040 new immigrants moved from other Middle Eastern states and other countries with which Israel does not have diplomatic relations.

Read Ezekiel 34:17-19: Believers are characterized as sheep, while unbelievers are called goats. Why is that?



Sheep have a strong flocking instinct, while goats are independent and curious. Sheep tend to ignore what is going on around them. If they feel threatened, they will gather together. Sheep seek peace; while goats are more rebellious. Sheep have no horns, but goats do. Goats are more agile and athletic.

God is speaking to his people like a shepherd now. A good shepherd would not allow his sheep to ruin a watering hole by lingering and urinating and muddying it. Sheep can trample their own food if left to wander aimlessly. They need to graze in tight areas and then move to the next. The symbolism here is that to disregard God's word is to trample it with your feet. We need to consider what is before us, and extract its value.

²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10)

Read Ezekiel 34:20-31: Jesus uses a little flock socialism to describe the interactions in his flock of followers. The naturally more aggressive sheep will

head butt and push other sheep away from the feed. Sometimes the more honorary and salty members will act abusively to the more gentle and easy-going sheep. The fat sheep are the ones that butt in and force their place in receiving the best food. The skinny sheep are the ones who get left out and pushed around by other's self-interests.

Jesus will make sure that the church is functioning as it should. There will not be politics and self-interests pushing aside the humble needs of others. He uses David here as his shepherd. The scriptures may show that King David will return to be the sub regent under Jesus to lead his people in the New Jerusalem. Here is one bible scholars opinion:

King David's Role In The Millennium

by Wayne D. Turner

From [BibleTrack](#)

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After carefully studying the Old Testament prophets Jeremiah, Hosea and Ezekiel, one cannot come to any other conclusion than this: King David will reign in Jerusalem under Jesus, the Messiah during the millennium.

Consider the following passages of scripture which address conditions during the millennium:

- **Hosea 3:5**

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and **David their king**; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

- **Jeremiah 30:9**

But they shall serve the LORD their God, and **David their king**, whom I will raise up unto them.

- **Ezekiel 34:23-24**

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

- **Ezekiel 37:24-25**

And **David my servant shall be king over them**; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and **my servant David shall be their prince for ever**.

Most Bible teachers race right past those verses and generally accept them as a reference to Jesus the Messiah, who was born into a Jewish family descended from King David. They assume that those passages are referring to David's descendant, Jesus the Messiah. However, that cannot be the case when we look more closely at Ezekiel's prophecies.

Let's take a look at Ezekiel 44:1-3.

1 Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut.

2 Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

3 It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

According to Isaiah 9:6-7, the Messiah, Jesus, will be known as "the mighty God" and "the everlasting Father." That means that Jesus, as the Messiah, is LORD. Yet, in these three verses, the LORD is differentiated from "the prince." Verse 3 tells us that the prince "shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD." So you see, the "prince" and the "LORD" are different here.

In Ezekiel 45:9-25 we have the prince offering sacrifices **for himself** and the people "to the LORD." As a matter of fact, Ezekiel 45:22 instructs, "And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering." We all know that Jesus, the Messiah, is without sin. This prince, however, is not without sin.

There are some interesting specifications in Ezekiel 46:18, "Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession." This prince shall have sons. Do you think that's talking about Jesus, the Messiah? Of course it isn't.

In Ezekiel 48:22 we are told that this prince shall have a land allotment along with the Tribes of Israel. Of course that's not a reference to Jesus as the Messiah either. In Ezekiel 45 and 46 we see that this prince will have a unique relationship with regard to the temple where he will be performing some priestly functions (Ezekiel 45:16-17,22 and Ezekiel 46:4, 12).

A careful examination of Jeremiah, Hosea and Ezekiel clearly leads us to the conclusion that, during the millennium, Jesus will be present as the Messiah, while David will be present fulfilling the role of the "prince." Obviously, he will be resurrected to fulfill this role. Now, that shouldn't really throw us. Jesus raised Lazarus after he had been dead for four days. Therefore, God is able to raise David to fulfill his millennial purposes if he so desires. And...apparently that's exactly what he does according to these passages.

The New Millennium under the protection of our good shepherd will have a corresponding natural peace and blessing.

But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." ¹¹ It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant

of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. ¹² He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. ¹³ Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, And Judah shall not harass Ephraim. ¹⁴ But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; Together they shall plunder the people of the East; They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; And the people of Ammon shall obey them. ¹⁵ The LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; With His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River, And strike it in the seven streams, And make men cross over dry-shod. ¹⁶ There will be a highway for the remnant of His people Who will be left from Assyria, As it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 11)