

## UNFAITHFUL SHEPHERDS AND GOD'S INDICTMENT EZEKIEL 34

The God of Israel leads Ezekiel to use the metaphor of the shepherd and sheep in His statement and resulting judgment against the leaders of Israel. *"Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock"* (2-3). They had failed to properly shepherd His people who are regarded as His precious sheep.

### The Indictment

God's indictment against these unfaithful shepherds is found in verses one to six. The shepherds fed themselves and neglected to feed the sheep. They used the sheep to satisfy their needs -- eating the fat, clothing themselves with the wool and killing the fat sheep without feeding them.

They neglected to care for the diseased and broken; the lost and scattered they did not seek. These shepherds have dominated them with severe force and have

not protected them from predators that have ravaged the flock.

God declares His judgment against these unfaithful shepherds in verses seven to ten. God's sheep became a prey for every beast of the field. Because of their neglect God says that He is against these shepherds and will take His flock away from them so that they may not continue to take advantage of the sheep and feed off of them any more.

### The Sheep Judged

God will also judge the fat and the strong sheep who take advantage of the lean and weaker sheep in verses 16b-22.



God will judge between one sheep and another and between the rams and male goats that dominate by eating the best of the pasture and fouling the waters so that the weaker suffer loss. He promises to judge the stronger who mistreat the weaker by causing them to stray thereby becoming prey to predators. Not only will these shepherds suffer God's judgment, but also will the sheep that take undue advantage of fellow sheep and mistreat the flock.



### God's Promised Rescue

God promises to rescue and gather His sheep unto Himself in verses 11-16a. He will search and seek for His sheep from wherever they have been scattered. He will care for them as a shepherd and will gather them from all nations. He will pasture and feed them on the

mountains of Israel. His sheep will be able to lie down in peace; the broken will be bound up and the sickly will be strengthened.

### God's Promised Deliverer

God promises to send His Shepherd David (Messiah) to provide and protect His precious sheep in verses 23-31. He will be their God and David (Messiah) will be the prince among them. He will eliminate all harmful beasts, and the sheep will dwell in peace and safety.

God will make His sheep a blessing to all of the surrounding peoples, showering His blessing upon them. The trees and fields will be fruitful and plentiful; the sheep will be secure knowing that the Lord is their deliverer from all of their enemies. They will no longer be prey of the nations and will know the Lord is their God enjoying fruitfulness. They are truly His people -- the sheep of His pasture, "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God" declares the Lord God" (Ezek. 34:31).

### Enter Jesus – The Faithful Shepherd

Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, recognized this failure of the leaders of Israel to shepherd God's people. He encountered first-hand the fallout that was being experienced by the Jewish people, "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast\* like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers

are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest'" (Matt. 9:34-38).

The Gospel of Mark adds the phrase, "and He began to teach them many things" (Mk. 6:34).



Jesus saw the people as sheep directionless, downcast,\* confused and scattered over the landscape. He was not speaking of a harvest of grain, but of a crop of lost sheep and lambs who needed gracious, loving shepherds to gather and care for them.

Mark's addition shows that Jesus not only wanted to save them, but also feed them and nurture them to spiritual maturity.

### Today's Leaders/Undershepherds

The implications for Christian leaders today should be quite clear. They are for our example (1 Cor. 10:6,11). God holds those to whom He has entrusted His precious sheep accountable for how they shepherd and treat His flock. The undershepherds who use and misuse His flock for their own selfish benefit will incur God's discipline and justice.

### Individuals in the Flock

This is also true of individuals within the flock who take advantage of those who are weaker

for their own selfish benefit. The Apostle James says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (Jas. 3:1). However, the Apostle Paul commends those who desire to lead God's people in a pleasing manner, "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do" (1 Tim. 3:1).

Paul further instructs the elders in Ephesus, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). It is indeed an awesome privilege to shepherd God's people when Jesus' shepherding grace leadership design is carried out -- for His glory.

\*Downcast -- discouraged, depressed  
Cast sheep -- a sheep on its back who is helpless to aright itself thus needing a shepherd to set it aright on its feet so it will not suffocate and die.

**We regret to announce  
that there will be no  
CUPbearers/Gracestoration**

**Memorial Day  
Retreat  
this year, 2008.**

**The  
Spring Canyon Retreat  
Center  
is not available.**