

**The Good Shepherd Returns:
 The Salvation of YHWH's Flock
 Ezekiel 34:1–22
 Veritas Adult Community
 March 13, 2021**

Preamble

^{34:1} The following message of YHWH came to me: ² Human, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them: O shepherds! Thus has the Lord YHWH declared:

The Announcement of Deliverance

Hey! Shepherds of Israel, who have been tending themselves alone. Surely it is the flock that shepherds ought to tend. ³ The milk you consume, the wool you wear, and the fatlings you butcher. But the flock you do not tend, ⁴ the weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the stray you have not fetched, and the lost you have not sought.

With harshness and ruthlessness you have mistreated them. ⁵ They have been scattered for lack of a shepherd; they have become prey for every wild animal. ⁶ My flock wander about among all the mountains and on every high hill. My flock have been scattered over the entire face of the earth, with no one to search and no one to look for them.

⁷ Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of YHWH! ⁸ As I live—the declaration of the Lord YHWH—surely . . . Because my flock has become spoil, and my flock has become prey for every wild animal, for lack of a shepherd, and my shepherds have not searched for my flock, and the shepherds have tended themselves instead of tending my flock—

⁹ Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of YHWH! ¹⁰ Thus has the Lord YHWH declared: “Look, I am against the shepherds! I will hold them responsible for my flock and terminate their tending my flock. The shepherds will not tend themselves any longer. I will rescue my flock from their jaws, so they will no longer be prey for them.”

The Nature of the Deliverance

¹¹ For thus has the Lord YHWH declared: Here I am! I will seek the welfare of my flock and examine them carefully. ¹² Just as a shepherd examines his herd, when he is present among his scattered flock, so I will examine my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. ¹³ I will lead them out from the peoples, gather them from the countries, and bring them to their own land. I will tend them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴ In lush meadows I will tend them, and on the lofty mountains of Israel will be their pasture. There they will lie down in lush pasture, and feed on rich meadows on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my flock, and I myself will let them lie down—the declaration of the Lord YHWH—. ¹⁶ The lost I will seek; the strays I will fetch; the injured I will bind up; and the sick I will strengthen.

But the fat and the healthy ones I will police (rdg. אֶשְׁמֵר); I will tend them with justice. ¹⁷ Now as for you, my sheep, thus has the Lord YHWH declared: Look, I will judge between one sheep and another, that is between the rams and the bucks. ¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to feed on the lush pasture, that you must trample the rest of your pastures with your feet? And is it not enough for you

to drink the clear water, that you must foul that which is left with your feet? ¹⁹ Meanwhile my flock must feed on what your feet have trampled, and drink what your feet have fouled.

²⁰ Therefore, thus has the Lord YHWH declared to them:

Look! I myself will judge between the fat and the scrawny sheep. ²¹ Because you throw your weight around with flank and shoulder, and you butt all the weak with your horns, until you have scattered them abroad, ²² therefore I will save my flock, so they will no longer be prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.

Exposition

A. Introduction

1. The Historical and Theological Context of Ezekiel 34.

The Pillars of Israel's Security in Ezekiel's Day

- a. YHWH had entered into an eternal covenant with his people.
- b. YHWH had given the nation the land of Canaan as their eternal territorial possession.
- c. YHWH had chosen Jerusalem as his eternal residence among his people.
- d. YHWH had promised the Davidic house eternal title to and occupancy of the throne of Israel.

2. The Rhetorical and Literary Context of Ezekiel 34

- a. Earlier Hints of Ezekiel's Gospel
- b. The Grand Apologetic Scheme of Ezekiel's Gospel
 - (1) Restoring YHWH's role as divine shepherd/king of Israel (34:1–31)
 - (2) Restoring YHWH's land (35:1–36:15)
 - (3) Restoring YHWH's honor (36:16–38)
 - (4) Restoring YHWH's people (37:1–14)
 - (5) Restoring YHWH's covenant (37:15–28)
 - (6) Restoring YHWH's supremacy (38:1–39:29)
 - (7) Restoring YHWH's presence among his people (40:1–46:24).
 - (8) Restoring YHWH's presence in the land (47:1–48:35).

3. The Literary Structure of Ezekiel 34

- A. The Announcement of the Flock's Deliverance (vv. 1–10)
 1. The Indictment of the Shepherds of Israel (vv. 1–6)
 2. The Sentencing of the Shepherds of Israel (vv. 7–10)
- B. The Nature of the Flock's Deliverance (vv. 11–22)
 1. Deliverance from External Threats (vv. 1–16)
 2. Deliverance from Internal Threats (vv. 17–22)
- C. The Goal of the Flock's Deliverance: YHWH's Covenant of Peace (vv. 21–30)
 1. The Messianic Agent of Peace (vv. 23–24)
 2. The Holistic Covenant of Peace (vv. 25–30)

4. The Linkage to Jeremiah 23:1–6.

O shepherds, who are destroying and scattering the flock of my pasture! The declaration of YHWH. Therefore, thus has YHWH the God of Israel declared concerning the shepherds, who are tending my people: “You have scattered my flock and driven them away. You have not attended to them. Take note! I am about to attend to you for the evil of your misdemeanors. The declaration of YHWH. I myself shall gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them; I shall bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful, and multiply. I shall also install over them shepherds, who will tend them. They will be afraid no longer, nor will they be terrified, nor will they be unaccounted for. The declaration of YHWH. Take note! Days are coming—the declaration of YHWH, when I shall install for David a Righteous Branch. He will reign as king, and he will act wisely. He will exercise justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be delivered, and Israel will dwell securely. This is his name by which he shall be called: ‘YHWH Our Righteousness.’”

B. The Announcement of the Flock’s Deliverance (vv. 1–10)

Ezekiel’s Portrait of Israel’s Shepherd Kings

C. The Nature of Israel’s Deliverance (vv. 11–22)

Ezekiel’s Portrait of Israel’s Divine Shepherd King

1. The Rescuer from External Threats (vv. 11–16a)
2. The Savior from Internal Threats (vv. 16b–22)

D. Lessons from Ezekiel’s Message about Royal Shepherds and YHWH the Divine Shepherd

1. When YHWH extends his grace to Israel again, the disintegrated deity-nation-land triangle is restored.
2. Whereas YHWH is a perfect Shepherd, even those who are chosen by God as leaders of God’s people have a horrific propensity to abuse the divine calling, to forget their role is to serve the people and self-sacrificially seek their well-being.
3. Psalm 23 offers a picture of divine shepherding (*kata theon*) that serves as a model for all godly leaders (cf. 1 Pet 5:1–6).
 - a. The Lord provides what his sheep need more than anything else: nourishment and rest.
 - b. The Lord leads his sheep in paths of righteousness.
 - c. The Lord walks with his people through the darkest valleys.
 - d. The Lord invites us to celebrate in his presence and to live with him in his house.
 - e. The Lord sends the hounds of heaven—his goodness and mercy—after his sheep.