

## #2 SHEPHERD LEADERS (Ezekiel 34:1-16)

A. In our text we will see shepherd leadership at its worst & at its best.

B. Ezekiel wrote during the Babylonian exile.

**1<sup>st</sup> part:** *the reasons for their exile.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> part:** *the hope beyond their exile – the return of the exiles under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra & Nehemiah.*

C. Chapter 34 divides up in a similar way.

**1<sup>st</sup> part:** *the fact that Israel's exile was due in part to poor shepherd leadership (34:1-10).*

**2<sup>nd</sup> part:** *the fact that their only hope was in God, their true shepherd leader, who would provide for their long term care (34:11-31).*

[Even though Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled in the return of the remnant to Judah, the prophet's message also pointed to Jesus the true Shepherd leader (34:17-31).

We will begin with the false shepherd leaders (34:1-10).]

### I. FALSE SHEPHERDS

A. Do Not Feed The Flock (1-3).

1. Sheep don't find food on their own, so when shepherds don't lead sheep can starve.

a. Such is the case of many elders today & the fate of many churches too.

2. A church needs shepherds who can "feed" the flock as well as "lead" (Jn 21:15-17; Acts 2:42; 6:2, 4).

a. But often they do more planning for the flock's movement than actual feeding of the flock.

3. Spiritual shepherds (elders) should read Paul's letter to the Ephesians often (Eph 4:11-16).

a. Paul explained the good result of instruction, & the bad result of being untaught.

[Spiritual shepherds lead the sheep to green pastures & still waters –symbols of spiritual nourishment & refreshment that come through teaching God's word (cf. Job 23:12; Matt 4:4; 1 Tim 4:6; 1 Pet 2:2; Heb 5:12-14; Jer 15:16).]

## B. Selfishly Use The Flock (2-3).

1. The saying, "power corrupts" is generally true.
2. So elders must never view their work as a position of power but as an office of service.
3. In earthly leadership, "perks" are seen as an acceptable privilege of position (give examples).

4. But shepherd leadership doesn't come with "perks", but with opportunities of service.

5. There are at least two areas where elders must be careful not to use the flock selfishly.

a. **Contributions:** to feed their personal desires for the church (evangelism, building, landscaping), to feed their personal desires (paying themselves, borrowing).

b. **Relationships:** to exclude others from service (teachers, elders, deacons), to obtain privileges (discounts, freebies), to take advantage of the vulnerable (widows, married women).

[When a shepherd (elder) uses the flock selfishly, the sheep will themselves be selfish.

The result will be the scattering of the sheep, as each one seeks his own welfare.]

### C. Don't Care For The Needs Of The Flock (4).

1. It's easy to associate with the members who have no needs.
  - a. A false shepherd will surround himself with the members who have very few needs.
2. But true shepherds are marked by the way they involve themselves with those in need.
  - a. After services & throughout the week you will find them with the spiritually weak & the emotionally weary (Matt 9:12).
3. A shepherd's care for his flock is depicted by the term "overseer".

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**1 Peter 5:2 – Shepherd the flock of God** which is among you, **serv**ing as **overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

- a. A spiritual shepherd (elder) is not an overseer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sense – during the industrial revolution – to refer to the boss man (foreman).
- b. A spiritual shepherd is watching over his flock to look for those sheep with special needs.
- c. That is why James says, "When you are sick called for [shepherds]" (Jas 5:14) – *they are most interested in your well-being.*

[When a shepherd has a selfless love for the sheep, he will have a sincere desire to care for their needs, & he will be willing to make many personal sacrifices to do so (1 Thess 5:14; Jude 22-23; Luke 19:10; 15:2-3).]

### D. Rule With Force Their Flock (4).

1. Shepherd leadership is not for the cowboy at heart; sheep are not driven, they are led.

2. Sheep are best led by the shepherd who has an obvious concern for their welfare (1 Thess 2:7-12).
3. So being an elder is not about “lording” but “leading” souls to heaven through patient instruction & example (1 Pet 5:3).
4. Israel split apart because of the harsh leadership style of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12).

[One thing that ought to encourage elders in the church to be true shepherd leaders is to consider the consequences of not being the type of leader God has called them to be.

For Judah the price was exceedingly high.]

## II. THE PRODUCT OF FALSE SHEPHERDS

### A. The Sheep Were Scattered (5a).

1. The people of Judah were uprooted from their homes, taken captive to a foreign country to live

as outcasts in a different culture, among people with a different language & religion.

- a. This happened in large part because their shepherds were not real shepherds.
2. How many Christians have gone back into the world, the bondage of sin, because there were no shepherds caring for their needs?

### B. The Sheep Were At Risk (5b).

1. Christians who are not rightly shepherded are easy picking's for Satan (Acts 20:29).

### C. The Sheep Had No Direction (6).

1. God's people are left leading meaningless lives without proper spiritual guidance.

[If what we have said doesn't motivate the shepherd to live up to his calling, then perhaps the judgment that awaits the false shepherd will snap him awake to serve rightly.]

### III. THE JUDGMENT OF FALSE SHEPHERDS

#### A. Judged For The Condition Of The Sheep (7-8).

1. To the extent that the sheep have suffered because of the shepherd's inactivity, he will be held accountable (Heb 13:17).

#### B. Removed From Shepherding The Sheep (9-10).

1. One reason the Babylonian captivity had an element of grace about it, was that it freed the people from their selfish, inept leadership.
2. Because if they had been left in that condition, they would not have had a future & God would not have completed His plan of redemption.

### IV. GOD THE TRUE SHEPHERD LEADER

- A. I will search for my sheep & seek them out (11-12a).
- B. I will deliver them from the places where they were scattered (12b).
- C. I will bring them out from the people, & gather them from the countries (13a).
- D. I will bring them to their own land (13b).
- E. I will feed them in all the inhabited places of the country (13c).
- F. I will feed them in good pasture (14).
- G. I will feed My flock, & I will make them lie down (15).
- H. I will seek what was lost & bring back what was driven away (16a).
- I. I will bind up the broken & strengthen what was sick (16b).
- J. I will destroy the fat & the strong, & feed them in judgment (16c).

### V. THE COMING SHEPHERD & COVENANT (34:17-31)