Ezekiel 34

The Shepherd Who Comes: God Seeks His Scattered Flock

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God's flock was scattered because the men who should have cared for them only cared for themselves. So God fires the shepherds and takes the job Himself — searching for the lost, binding up the broken, and setting His own Shepherd over them. The bad leaders don't get the last word; the good Shepherd does.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

EZEKIEL 34 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word

⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the ⇄ shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the ⇄ shepherds; Woe be to the ⇄ shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the ⇄ shepherds feed the flocks?

3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but ⚠ with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

5 And ⚠ they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and ⚠ none did search or seek after them.

7 Therefore, ye ⇄ shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

8 ▲ As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my ⇄ shepherds search for my flock, but the ⇄ shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

9 Therefore, O ye ⇄ shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the ⇄ shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the ⇄ shepherds feed themselves any more; for ★ I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, ▲ I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered ◷ in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and ★ will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 ★ I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

16 ▲ I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and ▲ will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but ⚠ I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

17 And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, ▲ I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.

18 Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?

19 And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

20 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.

21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and ⚠ pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

23 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.

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

25 And I will make with them ★ a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods .

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; ★ there shall be showers of blessing.

27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and ★ none shall make them afraid.

29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.

30 Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD.

31 And ▲ ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.

Marked in the text

- **v2** ⇄ shepherds *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** ⚠ Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves
- **v2** ▮ should not the shepherds feed the flocks
- **v4** ⚠ with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them
- **v5** ⚠ they were scattered, because there is no shepherd
- **v6** ⚠ none did search or seek after them
- **v8** ▲ As I live, saith the Lord GOD
- **v10** ▲ Behold, I am against the shepherds
- **v10** ★ I will deliver my flock from their mouth
- **v11** ▲ I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out
- **v12** ◷ in the cloudy and dark day
- **v13** ★ will bring them to their own land
- **v15** ★ I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down
- **v16** ▲ I will seek that which was lost
- **v16** ▲ will bind up that which was broken
- **v16** ⚠ I will destroy the fat and the strong
- **v17** ▲ I judge between cattle and cattle
- **v21** ⚠ pushed all the diseased with your horns
- **v23** ★ I will set up one shepherd over them

- **v23** ▲ my servant David
- **v25** ★ a covenant of peace
- **v26** ★ there shall be showers of blessing
- **v28** ★ none shall make them afraid
- **v31** ▲ ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 34:2 (KJV)

2 Son of man, prophesy against the ⇄ shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the ⇄ shepherds; Woe be to the ⇄ shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the ⇄ shepherds feed the flocks?

Setting

Ezekiel is an exile in Babylon. The chapter before ends with the news he had waited years to hear: "The city has been taken" (33:21) — Jerusalem has fallen to Nebuchadnezzar. With the judgment complete, Ezekiel's message turns from doom to hope, and chapters 34–37 are oracles of restoration. Chapter 34 is not dated; it begins with who is to blame for the scattered flock — Israel's leaders.

Structure

- vv1–6 — **woe to the shepherds:** "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?" (v2). "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool" (v3). "The broken you have not bound up … nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them" (v4). The sheep were "scattered for lack of a shepherd" (v5), and "there was no one to search or seek for them" (v6).
- vv7–10 — **God against the shepherds:** "As I live" (v8). "Behold, I am against the shepherds" (v10). God will take His flock out of their hands — "I will deliver My flock from their mouth" (v10).
- vv11–16 — **God Himself the Shepherd:** "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out" (v11). He will gather them from the places they were scattered "on a cloudy and gloomy day" (v12), bring them home, and "feed them in a good pasture" (v14). "I will lead them to rest" (v15). "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick" — but the fat and the strong He will destroy; "I will feed them with judgment" (v16).
- vv17–22 — **judgment between sheep:** "I will judge between one sheep and another" (v17). Some sheep eat the good pasture and trample the rest, drink the clear water and muddy what's left — "Is it too slight a thing for you" (v18). God will judge "between the fat sheep and the lean sheep" (v20), because they "thrust at all the weak with your horns" (v21). "I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey" (v22).
- vv23–24 — **one shepherd:** "I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David … he will feed them himself and be their shepherd" (v23). "My servant David will be prince among them" (v24).

- vv25–31 — **a covenant of peace:** God will make "a covenant of peace" (v25), remove the wild beasts, and send "showers of blessing" (v26). He will have "broken the bars of their yoke" (v27); "no one will make them afraid" (v28). He will give them "a renowned planting place" (v29). "The sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God" (v31).

Repeated words

shepherd(s) (vv2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 23); feed (vv2, 3, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23); My flock / My sheep (vv6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 31); scattered (vv4, 5, 6, 12, 16, 21); seek / search (vv6, 8, 11, 16); judge (vv17, 20, 22); prey (vv8, 22, 28); declares the Lord GOD (vv8, 15, 30, 31).

Contrasts

shepherds who feed themselves (v2) ⟷ the Shepherd who feeds His flock (v15). "There was no one to search or seek for them" (v6) ⟷ "I Myself will search for My sheep" (v11). The broken not bound up (v4) ⟷ "bind up the broken" (v16). Ruled "with force and with severity" (v4) ⟷ "I will lead them to rest" (v15). Fat sheep that trample (v18) ⟷ lean sheep that are pushed aside (v20). A prey to every beast (v5) ⟷ "no one will make them afraid" (v28).

Chapter theme (my words)

God's flock was scattered because the men who should have cared for them only cared for themselves. So God fires the shepherds and takes the job Himself — searching for the lost, binding up the broken, and setting His own Shepherd over them. The bad leaders don't get the last word; the good Shepherd does.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 34:16 (KJV)

16 ▲ I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and ▲ will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but ⚠ I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

The shepherds of Israel (vv1–6)

In the ancient Near East "shepherd" was a common title for a ruler. Guzik notes that it covers civil leaders like Joshua and David as well as spiritual leaders, and Ezekiel's word includes both — the kings, princes, priests and prophets who led Judah into ruin. Jeremiah had charged them the same way (Jer 23:1–4). Block, in Guzik: "the shepherd holds office for the sake of the ruled." These shepherds reversed it. They took the milk, the wool and the meat and gave nothing back. Guzik says it is right for a flock to support its shepherds (1 Cor 9:7–14), but never at the flock's expense, and that the main way a shepherd feeds the flock is by teaching God's Word. Feinberg, in Guzik, says they had "but one objective in mind" — their own pleasure.

What a shepherd is supposed to do (v4)

The charge is a job description in reverse: strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring back the strays, seek the lost. Instead they ruled "with force and with severity" — the very thing Jesus forbade His leaders (Matt 20:25–28; 1 Pet 5:2–3). Notice God keeps calling them "My flock" and "My sheep." Guzik warns leaders against treating God's people as their own possession. Smith, in Guzik: the shepherds were "both unfaithful and unconcerned."

God against the shepherds (vv7–10)

"As I live" is an oath. God will "demand" His sheep from their hand — they will answer for every one (Heb 13:17; Jas 3:1). The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile were, in part, God removing these shepherds.

"I Myself will search" (vv11–16)

This is the heart of the chapter. God does not merely appoint better managers; He comes Himself. The "cloudy and gloomy day" (v12) is the day of Jerusalem's fall. The promises are concrete — gathering from the nations, bringing them to their own land, feeding them on the mountains of Israel. Guzik sees this as partly fulfilled in the return from Babylon, with a larger, final fulfillment still ahead; he calls the 1948 State of Israel "an important milestone" but says the promise is "yet to be completely fulfilled," and quotes Feinberg that the promises should not be spiritualized away. Many other Christians read the gathering as fulfilled spiritually in Christ gathering His people from every nation (John 10:16; 11:52). Either way, Jesus picks up this very language: "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; Luke 15:4–7). When He says, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), He is claiming the role God reserves for Himself here. Note too: the Shepherd who heals also judges — "the fat and the strong I will destroy" (v16).

Judgment within the flock (vv17–22)

Not all the blame belongs to the leaders. Some sheep were bullies — eating the best, trampling the rest, muddying the water, shoving the weak aside with shoulder and horn. Guzik says the sheep bear responsibility too, and applies it to church members who consider themselves mature yet make life hard for others. Taylor, in Guzik: the flock "will in fact be purified" of bad members as well as bad leaders (compare Matt 25:31–33).

"My servant David" (vv23–24)

David had been dead about four hundred years. Most interpreters take "David" to mean the Messiah, the Son of David — the one Shepherd (John 10:16; Heb 13:20; Jer 23:5–6; Hos 3:5). Guzik grants that this is the common view but prefers a literal reading: David himself ruling Israel as prince under the Messiah in the Millennial Kingdom. "If God did not intend David, He would not have said it." He notes David is called "prince" (*nasi*) rather than king. Either way, the promise is one shepherd over one flock, appointed by God.

A covenant of peace (vv25–31)

Guzik ties this covenant to the new covenant and the coming Kingdom (Isa 2; Jer 23). Block, in Guzik: *shalom* "signifies much more than the absence of hostility or tension." Safety from wild beasts, rain in its season, fruitful trees, broken yokes, no more shame among the nations — it is Eden language, and Guzik reads it as a future Millennial reality; Feinberg, in Guzik, adds that the refreshings of the Spirit

are often compared to a shower (Acts 3:19–20). The chapter ends where it began, with the flock — but now they are "the sheep of My pasture," and they are "men" (v31). God is not talking about animals; He is talking about people He has made, and He is their God.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **shepherd / feed — *raʿah* (H7462):** to pasture, tend, feed; as a noun, a shepherd. The same word does both jobs in this chapter.
- **flock / sheep — *tson* (H6629):** small cattle, sheep and goats, a flock.
- **woe — *hoy* (H1945):** ah! alas! — a cry of grief and doom.
- **fat — *cheleb* (H2459):** the fat, the best portion.
- **strengthened — *chazaq* (H2388):** to make firm, strengthen.
- **healed — *rapha* (H7495):** to heal, make whole.
- **bound up — *chabash* (H2280):** to bind, bandage a wound.
- **broken — *shabar* (H7665):** to break, shatter.
- **lost — *ʾabad* (H6):** to wander away, perish, be lost.
- **sought / seek — *baqash* (H1245):** to seek, look for.
- **search — *darash* (H1875):** to seek with care, inquire, require.
- **scattered — *puts* (H6327):** to be dispersed, scattered.
- **dominated — *radah* (H7287):** to rule, have dominion, tread down.
- **prince — *nasi* (H5387):** one lifted up; a chief, prince.
- **peace — *shalom* (H7965):** completeness, welfare, peace.

Cross-references

Num 27:16–17; Ps 23:1–6; Ps 100:3; Isa 40:11; Jer 23:1–6; Hos 3:5; Zech 11:4–17; Matt 9:36; Matt 18:12–14; Matt 20:25–28; Matt 25:31–33; Luke 15:4–7; Luke 19:10; John 10:11–16; Acts 20:28–29; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 1 Pet 5:2–4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 34:10 (KJV)

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the ⇄ shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the ⇄ shepherds feed themselves any more; for ★ I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

Command to obey — "Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"

(v2). Anyone God puts in charge of people is a shepherd — a father, a pastor, a boss, a sponsor, a man who disciples other men. The question is whether I'm feeding them or feeding off them. When I sit

across from a man, I'm there for his good, not my reputation. I'll feed him the Word, not my opinions.

Sin to confess — using people

The shepherds ate the fat and wore the wool. I confess the times I've looked at people for what they could do for me — my projects, my image, my comfort. And I confess being a fat sheep: grabbing the best, crowding out the weak, muddying the water for others.

Warning to heed — God will require His sheep

"I will demand My sheep from them" (v10). Every man God sends me is His, not mine. I will answer for how I treated him. Leaders who rule "with force and with severity" will meet a God who is against them.

Promise to trust — "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken."

(v16). This is for the man who thinks he has wandered too far — the addict who relapsed again, the man in a cell who thinks nobody is coming. Somebody is coming. "I Myself will search for My sheep" (v11). The Good Shepherd goes after the one (Luke 15:4) and binds up what is broken.

Example to follow — the Shepherd who comes Himself

God didn't send a memo; He came. Jesus left the ninety-nine. I want to follow that: make the visit, answer the call, sit with the man who is sick and broken, go looking for the one who stopped showing up.

Worship

The LORD is my shepherd. He searches, gathers, feeds, heals and leads me to rest. He judges with justice, makes a covenant of peace, and calls me His own. "I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

Prayer

Lord GOD, You are the Shepherd I need. Thank You for coming after me when I was lost. Bind up what is broken in me, and make me a faithful under-shepherd — feeding, not using; seeking, not ruling. Give me Your heart for the men who are scattered and afraid, and bring them home to You. In the name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Amen.