

Ezekiel Part 40 (Ezekiel 34)

1. Chapter 34 is a sequel to chap. 22.
2. Both passages present the sins of the nation and the failure of its leaders. Instead of the figures of dross, the lion, or wolf and its prey, here they are compared to a flock and its selfish and corrupt shepherds.
3. Kings and leaders often were called “shepherds” in the ancient Near East.
4. These “shepherds” were more than military-political leaders - they also had the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual direction of the nation.
5. So - Chapter 34 comprises figurative messages to the leaders of Israel as shepherds (vv. 1-16), to the people as sheep (vv. 17-24), followed by a literal message to the people (vv. 25-31).
6. **34:1-6** Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy against the “shepherds” of Israel (v. 1).
7. Examination of the history of the Northern Kingdom beginning with Jeroboam I reveals the apostasy of the leadership that proved to be Israel’s ruin. (1 Kings 12:25-33)
8. Jeroboam immediately introduced idolatry by erecting two golden calves at Dan and Bethel.
9. Israel descended even further into the depths of sin and immorality until the nation was destroyed in 722 B.C.
10. Ezekiel already emphasized that Judah did not learn from the judgment that came to the Northern Kingdom Israel. (Ezekiel 23:1-49)
11. After Josiah the remaining kings of Judah were all corrupt. They led the nation to spiritual and political ruin. (1 Samuel 8:11-18 was a sobering prediction of these events)
12. The indictment against these shepherds is in vv. 1-6.
13. First, they did not seek to meet the needs of the people but only used the people for their own selfish ends. (v. 2-3)
14. Second, they did not take special care of those in need, the helpless members of society. Rather, they met weakness and injury with callous cruelty. (v. 4)
15. For lack of positive moral or spiritual leadership the people wandered from the Lord and became a prey to idolatry and immorality. (v. 5-6)
16. **34:7-10** Because of their irresponsible and selfish lack of leadership the Lord declares them guilty of violating His trust and announced their removal.

17. The Lord Himself would come to the aid of his flock and rescue them out of the mouths of their corrupt leaders.
18. **34:11-16** Ezekiel provides a contrast in verses 11-16.
19. Notice that God repeatedly promised, "I will" go after them, and "I will" meet the needs of my people.
20. While there is some overlap and repetition, there are twenty-five such promises in this and the following paragraphs of the chapter.
21. Ezekiel states that in the end times, the Lord will gather His flock "from all places where they have been scattered" and bring them back to their own land where He will be their Shepherd.
22. **34:17-22** Here the Lord moved from addressing the corrupt shepherds and began speaking to His flock.
23. Not only would he rescue and tend, but the coming divine Shepherd also would be a righteous judge.
24. **34:23-24** These verses are transitional to the final section on the covenant of peace (vv. 25-31).
25. The coming Shepherd will be known as "My servant David." (v. 23; see 37:22-26 for a parallel)
26. He was one from the line of David who was a fulfillment of the promise made in the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7:16.
27. The "prince" (v. 24) will not be King David, resurrected and enthroned, but the Jesus Christ whom Israel will receive and trust when they see Him.
28. He will establish an everlasting throne of David.
29. Unlike the corrupt former Davidic rulers who only served themselves, this new king will be a servant of the Lord. (Acts 4:25-30)
30. **34:25-31** Ezekiel concluded this series of messages with God's promise of a "covenant of peace" with His people. (v. 25)
31. This covenant is the same as the one promised in Ezekiel 16:60, which will establish an unbreakable bond between God and His people.
32. The phrase "I will bless them" (v. 26) begins a list of the benefits of the "covenant of peace."
33. This covenant anticipates events and promises never realized in the first return of the Jews from captivity.

34. When the people came back to the land after 535 B.C., they were under the control of every world-dominating power including Medo-Persia, Greece, and finally Rome until A.D. 70 when the nation was destroyed by Rome.

35. There are only two possible conclusions concerning the meaning of the “covenant of peace” and the promises here in verses 23–31.

Either the restoration Ezekiel envisioned was only an unrealistic hope and therefore never came to pass or the prophecy concerned some future return beyond the scope of the return in 535 B.C. under Zerubbabel and later returns under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Even the author of Ezra-Nehemiah recognized that the restoration community was not the final fulfillment of Old Testament promises of redemption.

Yet God’s promises themselves and the incomplete fulfillments that God’s people have experienced gave the people of Ezekiel’s day and later times renewed strength and courage to face daily trials, knowing that God is faithful and will bring it to pass.

The four remaining messages in chaps. 35–39 expanded the promises of the covenant of peace in 34:11–16.