

# EZEKIEL

## *Cry Me a River*

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,  
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion  
Psalm 137:1*

Text  
34 & 35

Topic  
The LORD calls-out the leaders of Judah by describing them as abusive shepherds.

Title  
***"Sheepwrecked"***

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**Most of you could quote the opening nine words of Psalm 23.**

***"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."***

David goes on from that to skillfully & beautifully exalt the Great Shepherd and His sacrificial care of His flock.

**What happens when the human leaders appointed to under-shepherd God's flock are selfish, immoral men?**

They recite the little-known "dark" Psalm 23.

*The Lord's sheep are mere property;  
I don't care what they want.  
I make them lie down in barren pastures;  
I lead them beside muddied waters.*

*I command their fear  
and drive them on paths of self-righteousness.  
I force them through the valley of death*

*with no regard for their lives.*

*My rod and my staff - they bruise and break them.*

*I prepare a feast for myself  
disregarding their hunger.  
I anoint my head with oil;  
meanwhile their cup runs dry.*

*Surely corruption and cruelty shall follow them  
all the days of their lives,  
And they shall dwell in desolation forever.*

We are going to be among some of these shepherds, enough to make us a little bit sick to our stomachs. Like we Italians say, we *skeev* them.

**Ezk 34:1 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,  
Ezk 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?  
Ezk 34:3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.**

Ezekiel was God's prophet to exiled Jews in Babylon. He warned of Jerusalem's fall and the Temple's destruction. None believed him until a messenger arrived shouting, "*The City has fallen.*"

The remainder of Ezekiel's prophesying looks to the End Times. Before we press on, here is a glossary of End Times terminology:

- **Resurrection and Rapture of the Church**

The dead in Christ are raised, and living believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (before the Great Tribulation begins).

- **Seven-Year Great Tribulation**

A time of unprecedented judgment on the entire Earth, divided into two 3½-year periods. God's wrath is poured out, Israel is saved, and the world is prepared for Christ's return.

- **Second Coming of Jesus Christ**

Christ returns bodily and visibly with His saints to defeat His enemies, deliver Israel, and establish His kingdom on Earth.

- **One Thousand-Year Kingdom on Earth (The Millennium)**

Jesus reigns from Jerusalem in perfect justice and peace. Satan is bound, Israel is restored, and the nations worship the Lord.

- **Eternity**

After the final judgment, God creates a new heaven and new earth. Believers dwell forever with Him, and all sin, death, and sorrow are gone.

**Ezk 34:4 You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty.**

In what these shepherds *did do*, and in what they *didn't do*, we can see what God wanted them *to do*.

The Lord wants you to be a healthy, well-fed, well-loved, and protected sheep - safe in His care and fruitful in His service. Pastor Chuck Smith used to encourage Calvary Chapel pastors to see to it the sheep under their care were "the best-fed, most-loved flock." He also often said, "Healthy sheep beget other sheep." When you're spiritually nourished and well cared for, you'll not only grow stronger in your own walk, but you'll be able to encourage other believers - and naturally share the love of Jesus with those who don't yet know Him.

**Ezk 34:5 So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal.**

**Ezk 34:6 They have wandered through all the mountains and all the hills, across the face of the earth, yet no one has gone to search for them.**

They were exiled, but not scattered. This is a prophecy we have seen fulfilled. When Rome destroyed the Temple around 70AD, Jews were scattered all over the Earth. It is called the *diaspora*. It continued until May 14, 1948, when Israel became a nation in a day.

**Ezk 34:7 "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:**

**Ezk 34:8 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you abandoned my flock and left them to be attacked by every wild animal. And though you were my shepherds, you didn't search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of yourselves and left the sheep to starve.**

**Ezk 34:9 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD.**

**Ezk 34:10 This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I now consider these shepherds my enemies, and I will hold them responsible for what has happened**

**to my flock. I will take away their right to feed the flock, and I will stop them from feeding themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths; the sheep will no longer be their prey**

**Ezk 34:11 "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search and find my sheep.**

**Ezk 34:12 I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on that dark and cloudy day.**

- The scattered Jews return on "that dark and cloudy day."
- The LORD "will hold [the shepherds] responsible" for how they treated His flock.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus returns after the "dark and cloudy" Day of the Lord to judge unbelievers for how they treated the Jews.

**Ezk 34:13 I will bring them back home to their own land of Israel from among the peoples and nations. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel and by the rivers and in all the places where people live.**

**Ezk 34:14 Yes, I will give them good pastureland on the high hills of Israel. There they will lie down in pleasant places and feed in the lush pastures of the hills.**

**Ezk 34:15 I myself will tend my sheep and give them a place to lie down in peace, says the Sovereign LORD.**

Sure, since 1948 Jews have been & are returning. But notice that the Lord says "I Myself" will be with Israel, on Earth." Is He? No. This is a prophecy.

**Ezk 34:16 I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bandage the injured and strengthen the weak. But I will destroy those who are fat and powerful. I will feed them, yes - feed them justice!**

One-third of Jews will survive the Great Tribulation. So will a multitude of saved Gentiles. They will go on into the Millennium in their mortal bodies.

**Ezk 34:17 "And as for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to his people: I will judge between one animal of the flock and another, separating the sheep from the goats.**

*This is precisely what Jesus will do at the end of the Great Tribulation.*

**Ezk 34:18 Isn't it enough for you to keep the best of the pastures for yourselves? Must you also trample down the rest? Isn't it enough for you to drink clear water for yourselves? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?**

**Ezk 34:19 Why must my flock eat what you have trampled down and drink water you have fouled?**

**Ezk 34:20 "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will surely judge between the fat sheep and the scrawny sheep.**

**Ezk 34:21 For you fat sheep pushed and butted and crowded my sick and hungry flock until you scattered them to distant lands.**

**Ezk 34:22 So I will rescue my flock, and they will no longer be abused. I will judge between one animal of the flock and another.**

**Ezk 34:23 And I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David. He will feed them and be a shepherd to them.**

There will be a judgment after the Second Coming, separating "scrawny" sheep (believers) from "fat" goats (unbelievers). The sheep enter the Millennial Kingdom as its first mortal inhabitants. The goats "will go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46).

**Ezk 34:24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!**

The Old Testament saints, including David, will be raised at the Second Coming.

For those whose theology leads them to believe we are in the kingdom now, where is David?

**Ezk 34:25 "I will make a covenant of peace with my people and drive away the dangerous animals from the land. Then they will be able to camp safely in the wildest places and sleep in the woods without fear.**

Ezekiel's animals remind me of Isaiah's vision of the Millennium, where wolves live with lambs, lions rest with calves, and even snakes cause no harm. A world at peace under God's reign.

It will, however, be an enforced peace. The generations of children born to the original inhabitants will cause a lot of trouble, and finally rebel in the end against Jesus.

**Ezk 34:26 I will bless my people and their homes around my holy hill. And in the proper season I will send the showers they need. There will be showers of blessing.**

**Ezk 34:27 The orchards and fields of my people will yield bumper crops, and everyone will live in safety. When I have broken their chains of slavery and rescued them from those who enslaved them, then they will know that I am the LORD.**

**Ezk 34:28 They will no longer be prey for other nations, and wild animals will no longer devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will frighten them.**

**Ezk 34:29 "And I will make their land famous for its crops, so my people will never again suffer from famines or the insults of foreign nations.**

**Ezk 34:30 In this way, they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them. And they will know that they, the people of Israel, are my people, says the Sovereign LORD.**

**Ezk 34:31 You are my flock, the sheep of my pasture. You are my people, and I am your God. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"**

Some of this is recognizable today, e.g., Israel's thriving agriculture. That's merely stage-setting. It whets our spiritual appetite for prophecy.

You are going to encounter leaders in small & large groups who are somewhat like these men. Like Thanos, they are inevitable.

The Lord beautifully shows Himself as your Good Shepherd:

- Are you weak? Jesus strengthens you.
- Are you sick? Jesus heals you.
- Are you injured? Jesus binds you up.
- Are you straying? Jesus brings you back.
- Are you lost? Jesus seeks you.

The words "feed," "fed," or "feeding" occur about 18 times in this chapter. Obviously feeding is central to the health of the sheep.

God's Word is our spiritual food. We say it is all you need... And that is true so long as you are saved and have the permanent in-dwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

I've been working on a quote about this. So far, this is what I got: "Apart from God the Holy Spirit's in-dwelling, the Word of God may be grasped intellectually but not spiritually. Only the Spirit enables us to see its true meaning, respond in faith, and live

in obedience. Without Him, Scripture may inform the mind but it cannot transform the heart."

One more thing. No matter how you are being shepherded on earth, Jesus is *always* your Shepherd. Psalm 23 says the Lord **is** my Shepherd not that He will be after my trial is over or after I get out of my circumstance. Psalm 23 speaks of our enemies and our death.

Chapter thirty-five might seem out-of-place, but I think we will see why it isn't.

**Ezk 35:1 Again a message came to me from the LORD:**

**Ezk 35:2 "Son of man, turn and face Mount Seir, and prophesy against its people.**

Mount Seir is Edom, the country of the descendants of Jacob's twin, Esau. God judged them for their hatred of Israel and for taking their land after its fall.

**Ezk 35:3 Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: "I am your enemy, O Mount Seir, and I will raise my fist against you to destroy you completely.**

**Ezk 35:4 I will demolish your cities and make you desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.**

This prophecy can be put in the 'Fulfilled' column.

**Ezk 35:5 "Your eternal hatred for the people of Israel led you to butcher them when they were helpless, when I had already punished them for all their sins.**

**Ezk 35:6 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, since you show no distaste for blood, I will give you a bloodbath of your own. Your turn has come!**

**Ezk 35:7 I will make Mount Seir utterly desolate, killing off all who try to escape and any who return.**

**Ezk 35:8 I will fill your mountains with the dead. Your hills, your valleys, and your ravines will be filled with people slaughtered by the sword.**

**Ezk 35:9 I will make you desolate forever. Your cities will never be rebuilt. Then you will know that I am the LORD.**

**Ezk 35:10 "For you said, 'The lands of Israel and Judah will be ours. We will take possession of them. What do we care that the LORD is there!'**

**Ezk 35:11 Therefore, as surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will pay back your angry deeds with my own. I will punish you for all your acts of anger, envy, and hatred. And I will make myself known to Israel by what I do to you.**

**Ezk 35:12 Then you will know that I, the LORD, have heard every contemptuous word you spoke against the mountains of Israel. For you said, 'They are desolate; they have been given to us as food to eat!'**

**Ezk 35:13 In saying that, you boasted proudly against me, and I have heard it all!**

**Ezk 35:14 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The whole world will rejoice when I make you desolate.**

**Ezk 35:15 You rejoiced at the desolation of Israel's territory. Now I will rejoice at yours! You will be wiped out, you people of Mount Seir and all who live in Edom! Then you will know that I am the LORD.**

If you know a little geography, you know Petra is located in Mount Seir. A city hewn in the rocks, it is almost completely hidden. It is entered through the narrow Siq gorge, making it easily defensible.

**Now** this chapter feels very much in place. One commentary reads, "Evangelical dispensationalists [that's us!] believe that 3½ years into the Great Tribulation the Jewish remnant will flee to Petra (or the region around it) for several interrelated reasons, drawn from biblical prophecy, geography, and historical symbolism."

Petra is going to be the 'bug-out' location that Judean Jews flee to when the antichrist defiles the Temple smack in the middle of the Great Tribulation. He assaults them there, and they cry out to Jesus as Savior.

***He saves them. He'll save you...When you believe.***