

EZEKIEL: BLOSSOMING DURING LIFE'S MOST SEVERE CRISES
Part XVII: God's Work To Shepherd His People When Human Shepherds Fail
(Ezekiel 34:1-31)

I. Introduction

- A. God's people are organized into groups of shepherds and flocks: parents shepherd their children, husbands their wives, Christian employers their employees, Sunday School and VBS teachers their students, and Church leaders and pastors God's congregations.
- B. However, what happens when such human shepherds **fail** to shepherd well--what then? What is good shepherding so that we **know how** to obey God? Ezekiel 34:1-31 answers these questions:

II. God's Work To Shepherd His People When Human Shepherds Fail, Ezekiel 34:1-31:

- A. God had Ezekiel prophesy against Israel's shepherds for failing to take care of God's people, Israel, 34:1-2a. The complaint of the poor shepherding is as follows:
 - 1. The false shepherds of Israel had ministered unto their **own** welfare at the expense of the people committed to their care, Ez. 34:2b-4b. Instead of looking out for the welfare of others, they took from others for their own welfare.
 - 2. The false shepherds were **harsh** in their treatment of those under their care, Ez. 34:4c. Shepherds are to be gentle with sheep, not harsh.
 - 3. The false shepherds were not concerned about the **unity** of God's people, not seeking those who were scattered, Ez. 34:5-6. Israel's leaders had failed to keep the nation from being scattered into Assyria and Babylon due to not leading the people into righteousness.
 - 4. Accordingly, God promised to call the false shepherds to accounting, and to remove them from their positions of oversight for this shepherding failure, Ez. 34:7-10.
- B. **Opposite** this false guidance of Israel's national leaders, God would Himself take up the slack in guiding and shepherding His people (to be ultimately fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom), Ez. 34:11-31 :
 - 1. With **justice**, God promised to restore His people to their land and to take care of them as a good shepherd should do, Ez. 34:11-16.
 - 2. In applying His justice, God said He would judge **individually**, making distinctions between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats, 34:17.
 - 3. God would set up Messiah, the Son of David, to be this Shepherd, Ez. 34:24. As a result, God's blessings would flow on the flock of God, the people of Israel, Ez. 34:25-31.

Lesson: (1) *False shepherding as a parent, a husband, a teacher, a leader in a business or a church is guidance that is (a) selfish, (b) harsh, (c) unjust to individuals and (d) oversight that causes disunity.* (2) *God moves to replace such leadership with His own oversight through Christ which (a) administers justice on an individual basis (b) as a prerequisite for blessing from God.*

Application: (1) *If as a parent, a husband, an employer, teacher or church leader we are leading those under us selfishly, harshly, unjustly or without regard to the unity of those under our care, we are in store for divine discipline and possible removal from our position.* (2) *If we seek to CORRECT our past oversight errors, like Christ will do in Israel's Millennial Kingdom, we change the problems by (a) making fair judgments at the (b) individual level. This automatically implies also leading (c) selflessly and with (d) gentleness. (d) Following appropriate care of INDIVIDUALS with fairness, selfless oversight that is also gentle, we can build a unity with God's blessing!* (3) *If we are assigned a task of discipling where previous overseers left God's people disunited, biting one another, frustrated, etc., like Christ will do, start rebuilding by ministering (a) to individuals with (b) fairness, (c) using a gentle approach (d) with selfless concern. God will bless your efforts as a result.*