# Lesson Commentary

## Winter Quarter, 2019

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About the Writers

Recognized for their knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the Holy Scriptures, the writers of the *Adult Lesson Commentary* are faithful pastors, teachers and spiritual leaders among the Lord’s churches. The following are biographical notes about these men.

Larry Crouch wrote the narrative for this quarter. He was born in Toulumne, California in 1942, was saved in 1952 and baptized by the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Sacramento. He surrendered to preach on August 4, 1957, at the Bayshore Missionary Baptist Church in Vallejo, California. The Landmark Missionary Baptist Church in South Gate, California ordained him in May of 1963. He has pastored in the states of Washington and California. He received his Bachelor of Theology Degree from California Missionary Baptist Institute in Bellflower, California, and his Master and Doctor of Theology degrees from Fresno Missionary Baptist Institute, in Fresno, California. The school in Fresno also conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1998. He is a member of the California and the American Baptist Association History and Archives Committees. He has taught Prison Epistles, Hermeneutics and Journalism. He has taught Systematic Theology, Church History, Major and Minor Prophets and the Pentateuch at the seminary in Fresno.

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Mark Thornton prepared the *Adult Lesson Commentary* word studies. He was saved in 1970 and baptized by Emmanuel MBC of Malvern, AR. He surrendered to preach in 1977 at age 16, and has served as pastor: Big Creek MBC of Malvern, AR, 1980-1986 and 2005-present; Liberty MBC of Little Rock, 1986-1997; First Baptist Church of Bryant, AR, 1997-2005. He has taught at the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock since 1989. His classes have included English, Hebrew, Greek, and Hermeneutics. He has written for the Searchlight, including a series on “Where We Got Our Bible.”

In 2004 he earned a Doctor of Bible Languages degree from the seminary and attended the University of Haifa in Israel where he studied Hebrew in a summer intensive language school. He has also completed online Hebrew courses from Israel. He and his wife, Brenda, have two sons, Matthew and Steven, and three grandsons, Landon, Luke and Micah. They also have a granddaughter named Avery.

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The book of Ezekiel ranks fourth in size among the sacred writings of the Scriptures. Ezekiel’s use of visions and symbols makes it one of the least studied and most neglected books in the Bible. Many students falter at the first chapter with its complex vision and details. One cannot be a casual reader or student of Ezekiel and hope to glean the spiritual and up-to-date applications found in the book. The so-called higher critics have assailed this book from beginning to end, making it the subject of songs with blasphemous words. Science fiction fans claim they have found in Ezekiel proof of flying saucers and outer space beings who came to earth as gods. These attacks and erroneous views should challenge us to carefully study to silence the ignorance of foolish men who are vain talkers out to deceive. All of the Bible was given by the inspiration of God and is profitable study for His children. The book of Ezekiel declares God’s sovereignty, grace, holiness, justice and man’s individual responsibility. The final and complete victory of God’s people is clearly presented. The fervent student will find a spiritual gold mine in this quarter’s study.

What we know of the book’s author, Ezekiel, is found within the book itself. “Ezekiel” means God strengthens. He was from a noble family of priests living in Jerusalem. He was born in the year 622 BC and was about twenty years younger than Jeremiah. Ezekiel’s father, Buzi, was a priest whose lineage could be traced through Zadok. Zadok was a faithful priest during the reigns of David and Solomon (1 Kings 1:32-34), whose family line went through Eleazar and Aaron (1 Chronicles 6:3-8). Ezekiel made mention that Zadok and his family remained faithful to their charge (Ezekiel 48:11). Abiathar sided with Adonijah in his attempt to usurp David’s throne. Because of this, Solomon sent him and his family of priests to live at Anathoth (1 Kings 2:26). Since he was a priest, Ezekiel would have been highly educated. It is clear from his prophecies that Ezekiel was well acquainted with the priestly orders and traditions. He knew all the details of their holy duties before God and the people. No doubt he looked forward to his days of service in the Temple.

Ezekiel was a young boy when Josiah’s reformation was sweeping the outward signs of idolatry from Judah. He would have witnessed the great Passover and spiritual renewal that took place under the leadership of the young king. But with the death of Josiah the revival was short lived. Therefore, Ezekiel also was witness to the rapid decline back into idolatry under Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. Just five years after the death of Josiah, Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the summer of 605 BC. This was about the time of Habakkuk’s prophecy.
At that time, Nebuchadnezzar had his army carry many of the Temple vessels back to Babylon along with the choice young men and princes of Judah. Daniel and his companions were among this number (Daniel 1:1-7). The last three kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, were puppet kings ruling under the strong hand of Babylon.

God called three courageous young men to stand in the gap during this time of turmoil. Jeremiah stayed with those who were left in Judah and ministered and prophesied among them. Daniel was quickly established as a leader in Babylon and ministered and prophesied to the Babylonian and Persian kings as well as to Judah and the Gentile empires of the world. God sought out a special young man to live among and minister to the captives in Babylon, this was Ezekiel. Rebellion brought Nebuchadnezzar and his armies back to Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoiachin. Ezekiel was twenty-five when his life was interrupted and greatly changed. In March of 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar’s army took Jehoiachin, his mother and ten thousand leading citizens (mostly craftsmen) captive to Babylon. Ezekiel was among this number of captives (2 Kings 24:8-16). His hope of ever becoming a priest was cut off. His life must have seemed to lose much of its meaning. Ezekiel and others may have hoped for an early return to Jerusalem and a restoration of Temple worship. However, Jeremiah’s letter addressed to the elders, priests and prophets in captivity concerning the fate of the false prophets Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah (Jeremiah 29:1, 8-10, 21, 32) revealed there was no hope for his return to serve the Lord as a priest in Jerusalem until Judah spent seventy years as captives in Babylon. But God had a plan for Ezekiel’s life. When Ezekiel was thirty years old, the age priests began their service (Numbers 4:1-49), God called him to be a prophet and watchman unto the house of Israel. Ezekiel lived in his own house in a settlement called Tel-abib by the river of Chebar (Ezekiel 3:15, 24). He was married, but was widowed in the ninth year of his captivity at the young age of 34. God instructed him not to mourn as a sign to Israel concerning the loss of their sons and daughters (Ezekiel 24:16, 17). Ezekiel was likely acquainted with both Jeremiah and Daniel before the Babylonian invasion. His unselfish nature is noted as he never bemoaned his calling or place of ministry. He voiced no desire to change places with Jeremiah in Judah or Daniel at Nebuchadnezzar’s palace. Daniel had already been in Babylon for thirteen years, and was already high up in the palace when Ezekiel was called to be a prophet among the captives. Ezekiel had surely investigated as to what kind of young man Daniel was. Had he given in to Babylonian ways? Was he remaining true to God and Judah? Ezekiel’s mention of Daniel commends his righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20). Jeremiah’s message was centered on the judgment of God. Daniel’s message was centered on the absolute sovereignty of God. Ezekiel’s message was centered on the glory of God.

The Jews, long before the birth of Christ, included this book as part of the sacred writings. The book came from Ezekiel’s own hand and was completed by him. It is one of the most orderly, logical and chronological books of the Bible. Almost every event and prophecy is dated by the day, month and year that it happened or when it was given to Ezekiel. His message, at first, was
not popular with the captives. But, as time proved his message to be true, the elders afforded him the respect due his office and calling (Ezekiel 8:1). Ezekiel is referred to as “son of man” ninety-three times without the definite article the. Ezekiel is thus reminded of his humanity as he was permitted to commune with God. Jesus is called “the Son of Man” some eighty-six times in the New Testament. This does not simply note His lowliness in taking on the fashion of man, but by this title is declared the divinity of the Messiah, the sinless and glorified Man, the heir-redeemer of humanity. Ezekiel’s message is one of redemption, not just for Judah, but also for all those who repent and turn to God.

Ezekiel made use of symbols and allegory more than any other Old Testament prophet. He recorded twelve symbolic actions that helped him in getting the message across to the people: (1) He was made dumb (Ezekiel 3:24-27); (2) He drew on the tile to picture Jerusalem’s fate (Ezekiel 4:1-3); (3) He lay on his side to bear the iniquity of Israel and Judah (verses 4-8); (4) He ate the defiled bread (verses 9-17); (5) He divided his hair (Ezekiel 5:1-4); (6) He moved all his belongings (Ezekiel 12:3-7); (7) He ate his bread with quaking and trembling (verses 17-20); (8) He sighed before Judah (Ezekiel 21:1-7); (9) He cried and howled at the terror they faced (verses 11, 12); (10) He boiled choice meat in a pot until it was scum and burned (Ezekiel 24:3-14); (11) He was told not to cry over the death of his wife (verses 15-24); (12) He placed the two sticks of Israel and Judah back together as one (Ezekiel 37:15-17).

The section of Ezekiel that we will be studying in this Commentary may be outlined as follows:

   A. False and true shepherds and the remnants return (Ezekiel 34:1-31).
   B. The nation regathered and restored (Ezekiel 35:1—36:38).
   C. Valley of dry bones and two sticks (Ezekiel 37:1-28).
   D. Godless nations destroyed (Ezekiel 38:1—39:29).

2. The millennial kingdom and Temple (Ezekiel 40:1—48:35).
   A. The Temple rebuilt (Ezekiel 40:1—43:27).
   B. The worship of Jehovah (Ezekiel 44:1—46:24).
   C. The Promised Land redistributed (Ezekiel 47:1—48:35).
Jerusalem had fallen just as Ezekiel prophesied it would (Ezekiel 24:25-27). Today’s message comes three years after Ezekiel’s prophecy of doom and fifteen months after the actual fall of the city of Jerusalem. One who escaped from Jerusalem finally arrived in Babylon with the alarming news (Ezekiel 33:21). For a time Ezekiel was silent. The captives in Babylon had given little heed to his message up to this point. The Lord prepared Ezekiel the night before the messenger arrived in Jerusalem (verse 22). This marked a turning point in Ezekiel’s ministry. His ministry had mainly been one of judgment. But this was now fulfilled. The Word of the Lord and Ezekiel had been vindicated. He was now free to proclaim a different message. His ministry was now concerned with consolation, restoration and God’s blessings.

The word “shepherd” is used five times and “shepherds” ten times in today’s study. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah and Zechariah also spoke of the Lord’s shepherds. In the fifty-six passages where the prophets spoke of either a shepherd or shepherds they used a form of the Hebrew word ra’ah meaning to tend a flock, pasture it; a herdsman, to keep sheep, pastor, a shepherd.

Seven times in Jeremiah it is translated “pastors” and one time as “pastor” in Jeremiah 17:16. This is the only passage where the word “pastor” is used. In the New Testament, the word “pastors” is used in Ephesians 4:11 and is from the Greek word poimen, meaning a shepherd, one who tends a flock. The other seventeen times it is used it is translated shepherd or shepherds. It is a great responsibility to have the oversight of others. This is even more so when it is the Lord’s flock. Jesus called His disciples a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). The apostle Paul identified the feeding of the church of God and the flock as being one in the same (Acts 20:28). No one should ever foolishly seek such a position. The Holy Spirit appoints men to the position of undershepherd. Shepherds in both the Old and New Testament were called and directed by the Lord. Isaiah saw the throne of God and the seraphims praising His name (Isaiah 6:1-10). Jeremiah’s encounter with the Lord made him understand that his calling was by divine
decree (Jeremiah 1:4-10). Amos was a herdsman and a picker of sycamore figs when the Lord told him, “Go, prophesy unto my people” (Amos 7:15). Jesus chose the twelve apostles from all walks of life (Luke 6:12, 13). The apostle Paul made it clear to the young man Timothy that the ministry was a calling from the Lord (1 Timothy 1:12). Shepherding one of the Lord’s flocks is not a professional call to a career such as a medical doctor, a lawyer or some other line of work. Your ministry must be a calling from God or it is doomed to fail. Every pastor today must consider this truth and examine it in his heart. There is a sense in which every ministry of the church is aiding in the shepherding of the flock. Therefore, every deacon, teacher, youth leader and music director should be chosen prayerfully.

Ezekiel, as God’s prophet and shepherd, was to deliver a three-point message: (1) He must remind the people why Jerusalem fell. (2) He must expose the false shepherds who betrayed the trust of the people and more so the Word of the Lord. (3) He was given a message of hope through the coming of the Great Shepherd.


Ezekiel 33:7-20

Ezekiel 33:7 declares, “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.” The work of the watchman is most important in relationship to the care of the sheep. The watchman must clearly hear the words of His commander and chief. In Ezekiel’s case, as well as ours, this is Jesus Christ. The Lord’s command to His watchman is simply this: “Hear the word at my mouth.” God spoke directly to His Old Testament prophets. The prophet Amos recorded that “the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). No true prophet of God ever made up his own sermon. It was always thus saith the Lord. The true prophets of God did not have to go into their study chambers and study for or prepare notes for their message. The Scriptures teach that the message was from God. Their job was to deliver the message as it was given to them. “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20, 21). God told Ezekiel and tells His pastors today “warn them from me.” Pastors are not to mince words. Pastors are God’s spokesmen to the lost sheep as well as to those sheep who are safe within the fold. The apostle Paul did not approach his ministry as though he was above those to whom he spoke. His goal was to present Jesus Christ in clear and simple language. He did not use worldly wisdom but relied on the Holy Spirit to use the power of God’s Word (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). If the watchman failed at his job, the blood of the unwarned would be on his hands. “But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is
taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand” (Ezekiel 33:6). The apostle Paul set the example for the elders at Ephesus and left us a wonderful picture of preaching the Word. Paul had not been hesitant in preaching “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

Once the watchman delivered the message, the responsibility of hearing and heeding it fell upon those he warned. The sheep are to hear, heed and do what the message states. Failure to do so will result in certain death. “If he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity” (Ezekiel 33:9). By preaching the message, thus saith the Lord, the shepherd would deliver his soul, or his life. Each and every person is accountable for what he does with the warnings from the Word. The captives of Israel and Judah finally agreed with the prophets that it was their sins that brought God’s judgment. They were wasting away because of them. The Lord had announced the ruin of the Promised Land, Jerusalem and the Temple. They were to pay the wages for their sin (verse 10; Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ is ready to forgive whenever we are ready to repent and call upon Him. Repentance and restitution are always in order. The Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. It is His desire that all men everywhere turn from sin and live. The question is clear and so is the answer. “Why will ye die?” (Ezekiel 33:11). It is our transgression and wickedness that goes unchecked without repentance. What little righteousness we may do shall not be remembered. We die because of sin. The little word “if” is important in this passage. We must be on guard constantly against the snares of the devil. He is a liar with the cunning of a sly fox. His snare for you will be a sin that so easily besets. The caution sign has been given; therefore, let us take heed lest we too be taken captive. Let us not be complainers, like the people of Israel, but accept His grace. He will judge each one after his ways. The captives were hypocritical, as well as foolhardy, by charging God with not treating them fairly. These were the folks who showed up for the morning oblation then turned with an olive branch under their noses and faced the rising sun in worship to a false god. “Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways” (Ezekiel 33:17-20). It is easy to be a finger pointer. This will generally direct folk’s attention to someone else. The Lord never honors finger-pointing and talebearing. The last person we want to be guilty of pointing our scrawny finger at is the Lord. Jesus, during His Sermon on the Mount, made it clear that we are to judge self and not others. The basic principle stated is this: what goes around, comes around (Matthew 7:1-6).

NOT TO BE HEARERS ONLY Ezekiel 33:21-33

God will not hear or answer hypocritical professors. The Israelites bragged about being the seed of Abraham. But for most of them their sins had lost for them any bragging rights they may have had. Yes, God promised Abraham and his seed a land. However, He also warned them what would happen if and
when they forsook Him and His Law. “Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance” (Ezekiel 33:23, 24). Their descendants were still doing this when Jesus was on the earth during His personal ministry (John 8:33). They lied! Had they forgotten about the many years in Egypt, the time spent under bondage during the days of the judges, or the captivity by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and the Romans? Actions always speak louder than words. Just saying it does not make it so. They broke the Law by eating blood, looking to idols and the strength of their own hands instead of the Almighty God to keep them in the land of promise. “Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour’s wife: and shall ye possess the land” (Ezekiel 33:25, 26). To rely on the flesh will always bring trouble and defeat. The apostle Paul made it a matter of the heart not of the flesh when he stated, “He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:29). The land of Israel was to be judged because of its sins. Where is America today by God’s standard? Where do we as Baptists stand in His view? Where are we individually? If we, like them, choose to live in the waste, we too shall be devoured. America today is quickly becoming a wasteland spiritually. Laws have been passed that contradict the Word of God. Laws that allow the premeditated murder of life in the womb are a disgrace in the eyes of God. Laws that allow what God’s Word calls an abomination to be forced upon society are enacted. Laws that remove prayer and the Bible from our schools, courthouses and other public buildings have made America ripe for God’s judgment. How can we sing or pray “God Bless America” when America keeps turning its back on God and His Word?

We, like Israel, are not just to hear but heed and be doers (Ezekiel 33:30-32; James 1:22-25). God, His prophets and ministers will be vindicated. His Word will not be made void or of none effect. God, either with us, without us, or in spite of us, will see to it that His Word accomplishes that which He pleases (Isaiah 55:11; Ezekiel 33:33).

**THE FAITHLESS SHEPHERDS WILL BE JUDGED**

The work of the Lord’s shepherds is clearly outlined in God’s Word. They are to feed the hungry sheep. In the New Testament, pastors are commanded to feed the church, which is the flock of God (Acts 20:28). The shepherds are to strengthen the weak in the flock. This is more than just praying. It is our duty to put God’s Word into action. The restoration of a weak or broken one helps to keep the flock strong. This is a huge spiritual plus for every ram, ewe and lamb in the fold (Galatians 6:1). The shepherd must take special care in his daily life to make certain that he is not offensive to others. To cause any of the Lord’s sheep to stumble, to offend or make them weaker is a sin against God.
Those strong in the faith are not to be condemners but edifiers to those who are weak and hurting (Romans 14:21—15:3). Without compromising doctrine or moral principles, we must learn to meet people where they are. Some like to clap, others do not. Some like drums and other instruments, while others prefer the organ and piano. Let us be careful not to confuse methods with doctrinal issues. There must be a willingness to help and gain the weak by being made all things to all, that we might save some (1 Corinthians 9:22, 23). Shepherds are to do their best to heal, which is making those who are sick whole again. “Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 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” (Ezekiel 34:3, 4). The context of the lesson clearly shows this is a matter of spiritual healing and care (James 5:13-15). The afflicted (James spoke of) are those who are suffering hardship. The sick is a reference to the feeble and weak. The prayers of the church shall save (deliver or protect) those who are tired and weary. The shepherds are to carefully and tenderly bind up the broken. The on guard shepherd will earnestly strive to see that things do not get broken. This could be broken pride or a broken heart. This takes special love and care. Jesus is the Great Physician for all our health needs (Psalm 103:2, 3; Luke 4:18). The shepherds are to bring back the strays and those driven away. The Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will bring His sheep home safely to the fold He has prepared (Ezekiel 34:13). We need to be ready to forgive and help. The shepherds are to seek those who are lost. Jesus told Zacchaeus the reason He came was “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The parables of Jesus in Luke 15 teach us the importance and joy of seeking those which are lost.

The Lord was against the faithless and lackadaisical shepherds for several reasons. Their labor was selfish and not motivated by truth and love. They were getting rich off the flock, but yet, they neglected its care and forsook its needs. The primary task of the shepherd is to see that his flock is properly fed. This is part of taking the oversight of God’s flock. Look closely at Peter’s admonition to the shepherds. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [episkopeo, ep-eeskop-eh’-o: to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after or care for] thereof, not by constraint [anagkastos, an-ang-kas-toce: by force or against your will], but willingly; not for filthy lucre [aischrokerdos, ahee-skhrok-er-doce: sordidly, eager for base gain], but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples [tupos, too-pos: a die stamp, proper shape
or resemblance] to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:2-4). A self-willed shepherd will be ruinous to the flock (Ezekiel 34:5, 6). Without proper shepherding the flock will become easy prey and end up as meat for the wolf and lion. Without a caring shepherd, the sheep will scatter which will leave them most vulnerable to attack. Without a shepherd, the people of Israel and Judah wandered to all the mountains and hills following every idol and false doctrine that came along. This is also true of Christianity and churches today. The Lord told Ezekiel that not one of these faithless shepherds took the time to search or seek after them. Sad, but we are often guilty of either shooting our wounded, or watching them go off elsewhere to die! Paul’s love and care for Onesimus is the Christian example and thing to do (Philemon 18). Paul’s experience with the young John Mark shows how we are to forgive and be accepting of those who have made mistakes in the past but have grown in grace and have proven to be useful in the Lord’s ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

The Lord disowned these careless shepherds (Ezekiel 34:7-10). They proved themselves to be hirelings who ran in the face of danger; therefore, they were fired. God’s sword of judgment will fall on the idol shepherd (Zechariah 11:17). We must remember who called us to be a shepherd and not run away from our duties like a frightened hireling (John 10:12, 13). The sheep are also responsible to listen to, heed and follow their shepherd.

**THE CHIEF SHEPHERD**

Every undershepherd should strive to follow the example of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. His promise that He would personally search and seek out His sheep is still good today (Ezekiel 34:11, 12). Jesus told Zacchaeus that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. His promise included bringing back those who had been driven away (verse 13). The fact that the nation of Israel exists today is proof that He is still their Shepherd. What are we doing to bring the wandering and hurting sheep back to the fold of a New Testament church? The apostle Paul was a good example of a faithful shepherd. For Corinth, Paul was willing to spend and be spent (2 Corinthians 12:15); for Onesimus, Paul was willing to pay the
The Duty of a Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:11-16): The kings of Israel and Judah, the appointed shepherds of those flocks, were responsible for their spiritual deterioration. The sheep were scattered, wandered off, lacked protection from their enemies and were basically ignored in their necessary provisions. Ezekiel contrasted their ineptness with that of the promise of the true Shepherd of Israel, Jehovah. He promised them that He would protect them, search for those who had strayed and ultimately regather them from the other nations. Once that took place, He promised them that He would provide and care for them as a loving Shepherd. He would then restore them to their own land and place them in the lush pastures and mountains.

By the loving Shepherd, the injured and sick would be healed, those scattered would be reunited with the flock, and those who were weak would be strengthened.

debt (Philemon 18); and for the nation of Israel, Paul was willing to be accursed from Christ (Romans 9:3). Shepherds must continually confirm their love for the sheep and seek to restore the wanderers in the spirit of meekness.

Seven times in today’s lesson the Lord spoke of feeding His sheep (Ezekiel 34:13-16, 23). It is an awesome responsibility and, yet, it is a wondrous privilege to be called of the Lord to feed His sheep. Their diet must be made of healthy food (sound doctrine). This is what will strengthen the weak. The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and be willing to do whatever the Lord may require that we may save some. Good shepherds take special precautions never to offend or put a stumbling block before those who are weak (1 Corinthians 8:9-12).

The Great Shepherd will judge the unfaithful shepherds who have trampled down the grass and muddied the waters (Ezekiel 34:17-19). There were those who thought this was a small thing. But the Lord held them responsible for depriving the sheep of the good grass and cool, clear waters. Today’s shepherds who trample under foot the pastures of sound doctrine and muddy the waters with their own brand of the gospel will be accursed. Faithful shepherds and flocks are to withdraw from both the false shepherd and his teachings. The Lord will judge both shepherd and sheep by looking closely at both the fat and the lean (verse 20). The word “judge” in this verse means he would bring matters to the rule of light. The unfaithful shepherds pushed and shoved their way around through the flock until they were scattered (verses 21, 22). The Lord promised to save His sheep and to deal with troublemakers.

The Great Shepherd will set up one shepherd over His flock (verse 23). This is in keeping with the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:19-21).
This promise will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ when He sits on His father David’s throne (Isaiah 40:10, 11). He will be their God (Ezekiel 34:24). “My servant David” has reference to the greater son of David, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The word “prince” is from a word meaning “an exalted one, or one lifted up.” This honor God the Father has promised to His Son, Jesus.

The Great Shepherd will make them His sheep (verses 25-31). He will establish a covenant of peace with them (verse 25). Under the new covenant His sheep will experience showers of blessings (verses 26, 27; Joel 2:23, 24). All of creation will go through a most glorious change when the Great Shepherd dwells among His sheep (Isaiah 65:25; Romans 8:18-25). The sheep will dwell safely without fear (Jeremiah 46:27; Ezekiel 34:27, 28). This dream, though greatly desired by the people of Israel today, will not be realized until the Lord returns. Then, and only then, will His sheep, both they of Israel and His churches, will no longer be ashamed (verse 29; 1 John 2:28). Israel will finally know “that I the LORD their God am with them” (Ezekiel 34:30, 31).

Faithfulness is commanded and expected of all God’s children (Luke 12:42, 43; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:9). It is important that we understand that God’s judgment of the unfaithful is necessary for the blessings of His people. Why will God judge the unfaithful? Because these faithless ones refused to trust Him and repent of their sins. Why is it necessary for God to judge the unfaithful? Because they cannot be allowed to pollute the dwelling of the righteous. Why will God bless His people? Because they

**Manna**

One Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:23): The prophet noted that the one Shepherd of Israel would be the right occupant of the throne of David, according to the Davidic Covenant. While it is obvious that David had died long before Ezekiel wrote the words of the prophecy and was thus not going to literally shepherd Israel in the ages to come, then the statement must refer to the prophetic fulfillment of the covenant; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ will most assuredly assume the throne of David and be the one true Shepherd of the flock.

A Covenant of Peace (Ezekiel 34:25): In view of the various dispensational covenants God had made with His people, Israel, the Lord promised them an additional “covenant of peace” (verse 25), which is not the same as the New Covenant. The Palestinian, Davidic, Abrahamic and New Covenants have been assured to be fulfilled in their order. The peace covenant guaranteed the people that they would see the ultimate removal of foreign nations (wild beasts) from their land. They would be able to live securely, have an abundant harvest from the unceasing yield of their land, know without question that Jehovah their God had been the One to deliver them and finally realize that they were God’s people and that He was their God. The peace covenant will be inaugurated by the Lord once the nation accepts the New Covenant instituted by the Mediator of that covenant, the Messiah.
have faithfully trusted Him for salvation.

What is required of us? We are to return and follow the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). We should let all those around us know that God will judge the unfaithful and the unsaved. Our lives will be an example to others either by God’s blessing or by His judgments. Any country will suffer because of the sins of its people (Proverbs 14:34). God will judge those who abuse His people (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). Every shepherd that has been called of the Lord to the oversight of one of His flocks should prayerfully memorize the shepherd’s code set down by the apostle Peter. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Heathen
Word Study #1471

Ezekiel 34:28. Commonly translated “Gentiles,” this word generally references nations, any nation, other than Israel. This could refer to a political entity of people, territorial group and so on. It does not necessarily refer to any particular religious beliefs although the word is commonly used to refer to pagan nations around Israel. However, this word is sometimes used to refer to Israel, too. The English word, heathen, commonly is believed to denote pagan or unbelievers of the true God of Israel. It, in fact, simply means nations.

Manna

No More a Prey (Ezekiel 34:28): Through numerous opportunities God had promised the security of the people of Israel, but, such was not fully realized due to their disobedience and the worship of other gods. Through their actions, the people of the nation forfeited the divine protections promised. Other nations overcame them, pillaged their land and even brought them into captivity for a time. Without divine protection, the nations were able to take evil advantage of them. When the Lord Jesus Christ establishes His rule during the millennial reign, the people of Israel will no longer have to be concerned with the nations taking advantage of them anymore. King Jesus, the Great Shepherd, will be unceasing in His care for His people so that they will peaceably dwell in the land which God had originally promised their forefather Abraham in peace without any more fear of attack or further reprisal.