

# Ezekiel 33-34 • Ezekiel a Watchman/ A Prophecy for the Shepherds

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Ezekiel chapter 33. I got to once again, commend you for staying with Ezekiel because we're entering into kind of a new phase of Ezekiel starting here in chapter 33. You know, we have been through a lot of difficult passages. I mean, difficult really to read through, not as difficult to study through.

We tend to get a little bit more out of it when we do. But you know, there were chapters 1 through 24, all those oracles that God gave to Ezekiel related to the word of judgment upon the people of Judah who were about to see their city fall to the Babylonian army and the prophecies related to that. And then we dealt with all those prophecies spoken against the nations that were covered in chapters 24 through, or rather, 25 through 32 and boy, there was just a lot of challenging stuff to go through.

But now that we are here in chapter 33, we're going to see that Ezekiel is going to give a series of prophetic messages that will now take us through the completion of the Book of Ezekiel, but we're going to see that the theme, the tenor, the attitude of this whole thing is going to be transformed. And there's still some words of judgment that are to come, but those are going to be fewer now in these chapters. What I'm going to do is put up kind of an outline up on the screen for you so that you can see this is what we have remaining here and you can kind of see in these chapters of Ezekiel.

## **The Remaining Chapters of Ezekiel**

- Ezekiel is named a Watchman (Chap. 33)
- False shepherds condemned (Chap. 34)
- The downfall of Edom (Chap. 35)
- The restoration of Israel (Chap. 36)
- The dry bones live again (Chap. 37 – Part 1)
- The reunification of Israel and Judah (Chap. 37 – Part 2)
- The destruction of Israel's future enemies (Chap. 38-39)
- The Millennial Scenes (Chaps. 40-48)

Tonight we'll deal with Ezekiel being named a watchman and we'll talk about what that means. He's going to get into a condemnation of the shepherds of Israel who he refers to as false; those who did not take care of the flock as they ought to have. We're going to read about the downfall of Edom in chapter 35. When we get to 36, the Lord is going to begin to speak of the restoration of Israel and we'll get into that.

The first part of chapter 37, we'll get into that famous passage from Ezekiel about the valley of dry bones. A lot of people are aware of that and even know what it means, but we'll talk about it. In the second part of that chapter, we're going to talk about the reunification of Israel and Judah. Remember those are the 2 separate kingdoms. Israel got into basically a civil split, a civil war, and the kingdoms were divided and God's going to talk about the reunification of those. And then in 38 and 39, He will deal with the destruction of Israel's future enemies, and that is yet future, by the way.

And then finally, in the last 9 chapters of Ezekiel, we're going to see various millennial scenes and by that, I mean, speaking of the Millennial Kingdom, or we refer to it as the Messianic Kingdom, which is going to come directly on the heels of the great tribulation. Remember the Millennial Kingdom is that 1,000-year period of time after the great tribulation when Jesus will return to the earth and establish His kingdom upon the earth.

Actually, tonight we're even going to get into a little bit of references to the Millennial Kingdom and I'll make you aware of that when we get to it. But let's get into chapter 33 here of Ezekiel because this is where Ezekiel is told by the Lord, that he has a calling on his life of a watchman.

It says, *“The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, (and that of course refers to an attacking enemy) and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, <sup>3</sup> and if he sees the sword coming upon the land (and of course that means, if he sees the enemy approaching enemy; the armies of their enemy) and (he) blows the trumpet and warns the people, <sup>4</sup> then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, (well) his blood shall be upon his own head.”” (ESV)*

And then He explains why in verse 5, *“He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.”* In other words, he would have known that the enemy was coming or responded to the fact that the enemy was coming.

He would have taken steps to prepare and to protect himself from the attacking army, and he would have been able to defend his land and his family, all right. So you can see that the Lord is giving Ezekiel a picture, an example of what a watchman is and does.

And then He goes on to say in verse 6, *“But if the watchman sees the sword (and once again, it's the attacking armies of their enemy) coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.”* All right, I want you to stop there for just a moment because in these first 6 verses you can see that the Lord is now defining for Ezekiel the role of a watchman.

And we might refer to this person today as a sentry, a lookout, something like that. But either way he's given a task of sounding a warning if he sees an enemy approaching the city. And his responsibility is really very simple; keep watch and warn the people if an enemy is coming. And once he does that, his responsibility is essentially finished. He's done what he was told to do, now it is the responsibility of those who hear that warning to respond, all right. So this is the picture that God has given to Ezekiel related to this.

Now in verse 7, the Lord speaks to Ezekiel personally and here's what He says. *“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup> If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.”* And what that means is, Ezekiel would be made to answer for the life of the individual who perished through his, Ezekiel's negligence of remaining silent when the Lord had given him a warning to sound.

It's a very simple, very simple concept. But He goes on to say in verse 9, *“But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.”* In other words, the person was warned, but he chose to do nothing about that warning and essentially Ezekiel now is off the hook because he gave the warning that the person didn't respond.

And so this is the picture, if you will, that God is giving to Ezekiel. Now the apostle Paul actually made reference to this, we won't turn to it. But in one of his epistles, he actually makes reference of this saying, I am innocent of the blood of all men. (Acts 20:26)

And so he was thinking along the lines of what Ezekiel is being told here by the Lord; you have a responsibility to give a warning to people, to tell them about what is to come, the judgment that is to come. And it is your responsibility, once you've done that, you have discharged your responsibility, now the responsibility is on the part of the hearer, they must respond, alright? So the ministry or the calling of a watchman.

Now, I don't know if you've ever heard of Christian ministries that take up this idea and they'll actually use this term watchman and they'll even cite this passage in Ezekiel and say, we are doing, or we feel called to the same ministry that God gave to Ezekiel to be a watchman.

I remember when I was back in Bible college up in the Seattle area, this was a very popular sort of a ministry. There was a flurry of ministries that cropped up during that time and they essentially took up this sort of a banner or a calling to do this sort of a thing, but they called themselves Discernment Ministries.

Maybe you're aware of some of those, I could name some, but I won't. But they believed that it was their calling to warn the body of Christ. But in their case, they warned the body of Christ of doctrinal errors. And so what they did is they usually publish newsletters and of course, back then when I was in Bible college, that was before the days of the internet, so things had to be done in print form usually or spoken to a group or whatever.

But they would call out Christian ministries that they felt had fallen into error and had introduced aberrant teachings or something of that. And these were the discernment ministries that were going on at the time and there are still some today that are happening, but they seemed particularly popular back then.

I think it's important to note here that sniffing out errors is not what Ezekiel was called to do, he was told to warn the people of the coming judgment, okay. He was told to receive a word from the Lord concerning a warning for the people so that they might repent of their ways and get right with the Lord and thus deal with the issue of that judgment, which would otherwise come.

And so Ezekiel was given the task of declaring the truth of the impending judgment of the Lord, should they choose not to repent. He did not take time to expose errors; that wasn't necessarily his calling as it relates to a watchman, okay, at least as it relates to being a watchman. And the reason I bring all this up is because I guess, I've seen some issues arise out of what has come up as discernment ministries over the years. Because what I have seen is that these

discernment ministries, eventually tend to see themselves in a somewhat exalted light.

In other words, they become kind of the keepers of the truth of God; the protectors of God's truth and they begin to actually go and seek out errors. In other words, they're looking for error, their issue is not to declare truth, their issue is to expose error, right? And it really bears no resemblance to what God called Ezekiel to as it relates to his ministry or calling as a watchman. Being the one who calls others out on their errors, it can very easily appeal to a man's pride and that's where I think it has to become, we have to become very careful about this.

I don't know too many men who can call out others, or call out the error of others, without giving into a prideful attitude over a period of time. Because I become the one who calls out everybody's error and the implication is I have none. And that's why I am in the position of calling out error because I am never in error and I am the source of the true way. And that is, I think that could be a very dangerous sort of a posture to place oneself in. And once again, it really doesn't bear any resemblance to what God called Ezekiel to do.

Now, as we get into verses 10 through 20, the Lord is going to confront an attitude among the people of Israel related to how they viewed God's judgments and whether they believe that His judgments were fair or not. Have you ever come across anybody who didn't believe God's judgments were fair? I'd be shocked if you didn't, because it seems like I come across that stuff all the time. You know, people will write to me or talk to me and ask, you know, is this really fair? In fact, I had somebody once write a note and say, you know, is it fair that God sends people to hell just because they don't acknowledge Him?

Well, that's one of those loaded questions, you know, that accuses someone of wrongdoing before you've even had a chance to answer the question. It's like me walking up to some husband and saying, so have you stopped beating your wife? You see, the question itself is accusatory and it assumes that there's a predefined issue that really hasn't even been defined yet.

So, this often happens when people are troubled by God's judgments and I'll guarantee you, there are issues in the Bible that we read through and we kind of go, wow! wow! you know? But we have to recognize that God is God and we're not. And that because of that, and because of the fact that He has even told us ahead of time, my thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my ways higher than your ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

He's already given us that insight and yet we think that shouldn't be the case. We think that when we read something or hear something related to the judgments of God, it ought to always make sense to us and it ought to always seem to us, to be perfectly fair. We never doubt our ability to reconcile fairness and unfairness, we don't question that, isn't that interesting?

We never say, well, maybe I'm wrong but, you know, we just don't do that. We go, that's not fair, that's not fair, thinking that we know exactly what fair always means. Anyway, this is an interesting conversation that deals with that basic premise.

Look at verse 10 with me in your Bible, it says, *“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’”* Now stop for a moment, this may sound like a word of brokenness and sorrow over sin and repentance, it really isn't.

As we're going to get into the chapter, we're going to find out this is a word of complaint and the people are essentially raising a question against the Lord against what they perceive to be the fairness of what is happening to them related to the overall sin of the nation. And they're basically saying, in essence, they're saying God's judgment is so harsh that there's, we have no hope of recovering. We have been literally beat down, we've been brought to a place where we will never recover, all right. That's what they're saying.

Well, what does that translate into? Very simply this, God, you're not fair, whatever judgment you gave to our nation, it isn't fair because we don't have a fighting chance of recovering from your judgment, all right.

Now God is going to respond to that complaint through Ezekiel. He says, *“<sup>11</sup> Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”* Now, guys, don't move too quickly past verse 11, because this is important.

We have a revelation of God's character given to us in this single verse of the Bible. You'll notice that the first thing God says related to their accusation that He's unfair, that His judgments were too severe, and there's no way that they can recover. He says, well, first of all, let me just explain something to you, I absolutely take no pleasure from bringing judgment into the lives of my people, absolutely no pleasure, all right. That's the first thing you need to know. Secondly, the Lord says, and He makes it plain by what He says, that all the

judgment that they have experienced needn't have happened if they would have responded to the messages that God brought through the prophets, repented, and turned of their ways, right? And gone the right way. This is, guys, this is similar to a child who disobeyed, did something foolish, stupid, or whatever, was punished for it, knows that he is guilty, has no intention of changing, and yet says to his parents, that's too severe, this is too severe of a judgment.

Actually, it's the same response that Cain had after he murdered his brother. God, you know, told him that he would be a wanderer and he would struggle to make his living from the land and this... and what did Cain say? He didn't say, oh, I'm so sorry, I'm so broken. He just said, that's too severe, people will kill me wherever I go. (Genesis 4:13-14)

You know, that was all he had to say, there wasn't, there was no repentance, no desire to turn the right way, simply a complaint: this is too harsh. But you know, in response to that, God asks a rhetorical question in this verse, and it is simply this. He says, *why will you die?* In other words, why do you choose to go this way?

This question shows that the whole choice is theirs. They heard the message from, not just Ezekiel, but through many other prophets, and they chose to ignore those warnings. They chose to continue to go the way they were going in their sinful path and God said, why did you do that? You were told what would happen if you kept going that way? Why did you do it? Why did you keep going that direction? The choice was yours.

See, they're all complaining about how terrible this judgment is. He says, this judgment was completely unnecessary, I don't enjoy doing this, you ignored and rejected my repeated prophetic messages.

Now the Lord's going to continue, verse 12, and by the way, before you read on. When you get someone talking to you about their own personal complaints about hell and judgment and all the things that people like to complain about related to that, in order to try to cast God into a dim light, I suggest you take time to even think about this verse and how it equips you to be able to respond to someone who is complaining about God's judgments being so harsh.

And just maybe open them up to this chapter and this verse. God takes no delight in this and the only thing that comes to people is what they deserve from the standpoint of their rejection; their rejection of the Word of God, right? Even in the gospel of Jesus Christ, a person has to reject the gospel in order to find themselves in a position of judgment. They have to reject Jesus and reject the

gospel, which is a crazy ridiculous idea because the gospel is free, eternal life is free. It costs nothing from the standpoint of just receiving by faith, so why would someone reject it? Well, it's because, well, the Bible tells us why. People love darkness. rather, and they didn't want to come into the light for fear that their deeds would be exposed. (John 3:19-20) So they made a choice, right? They made a choice.

Now, verse 12, let's go on. He says, "*And you, son of man, say to your people, (and again, He's telling him to say this to the Israelites who are there in the Babylonian empire, who've already been taken into exile, here's the thing) The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, ...*"

Now, remember something people, the word transgress means to violate a known line of demarcation; a line in the sand if you will. You knew that when you stepped over that line, that was a sin, you are completely aware of the fact. That's what the word transgression means, okay. It's not a sin of ignorance, it's a sin of, yeah, I know that's wrong, I'm going to do it anyway, okay. So what's He saying here?

He says, "<sup>12</sup>... *The righteousness of the righteous...*" In other words, the man who is known for his righteousness in the past, He says, we'll not be spared judgment if he abandons that righteous life and turns to a life of sin, are you with me? Do you hear what God is saying to the people? If a man has lived a righteous life up to a certain point, but then he just turns his back on it and he says, I'm done and he just throws himself into a life of sin, God is saying, that earlier, righteous life isn't going to make a difference as it relates to him escaping judgment, alright.

So we're in the middle of verse 12, "*...and as for the wickedness of the wicked, (that man, or) he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, ...*" Now this is the flip side of the equation. This is the man known for his wickedness, he's a godless man, as far as people know, at least up to a certain point but then something happens. He turns from his godlessness, he turns to the Lord, he embraces the Word of God, he repents of his past life of sin, and he begins to live for the Lord. What is God saying? The Lord says, he will not be judged for his past sin, isn't this interesting?

Now, He's about to tell you that the people disagreed with this. They thought, oh, this isn't fair, so you can, you can't bank your righteousness? That's what they wanted, the Jews wanted to be able to bank their righteousness to the degree that if I fall away from the Lord, all my righteousness is still there and

that's part of the equation of God's judgment process. God says, oh no, no, no no. You turn from your righteous life into a life of sinful wickedness? All your righteousness from the past is gone, but here's God's mercy. He says, but if you've lived a life of righteousness or a man who has lived a life of wickedness, rather, turns to the Lord and begins to live for the Lord in repentance and sorrow over his past life, his past life will not be remembered.

How does that hit you? I mean, I'm not asking you to speak out, I'm just saying, think about that, how does that hit you, right? A man's past righteousness will not be remembered if he turns away from it. A man's past sin will not be remembered if he turns away from it. Let's see how, what the Jews thought of this.

Now, first of all, at the end of verse 12, He's going to repeat himself related to the man knowing for living or being a righteous man. He says, "<sup>12</sup> ...and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins." All right, so the Lord is going to repeat these ideas to ensure clarity.

Verse 13, "*Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, (I tell him while he's living that life of righteousness that he will live) yet if he trusts in his righteousness (not in the Lord, that's the implication there) and does injustice, (that means he turns from a righteous life and he lives a life of wickedness) none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die.*" Wow, you're kind of looking at this and you're kind of going, wow is that fair? Is that fair?

Verse 14, "*Again, though I say to the wicked, (while he's obviously living his life of wickedness) 'You shall surely die,' yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, <sup>15</sup> if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. (look at this, verse 16) <sup>16</sup> None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.*"

But you're going to find out the people didn't like this at all, look at verse 17. "*Yet your people say, (this is God speaking to Ezekiel concerning the Jews) 'The way of the Lord is not just,' (in other words, it's not fair) when it is their own way (God says) that is not just.*" All right, stop there for just a moment. That's an interesting statement, isn't it? So God says to Ezekiel, so the people are saying the way of the Lord is not just, it's not fair, that's not fair, that's not fair. That you do it that way, God. You won't remember a man's righteous acts if he turns away from it, yet you won't remember a man's sin if he

turns away and walks in righteousness, that's not fair. And God comes back and He says, actually, you're the ones who aren't fair, the way you've devised it, the way you've come up with your own sort of a system of understanding righteousness, justice, wickedness and judgment, yours is the one that isn't fair.

Now, what's interesting about this is that, you know, this really shouldn't surprise us. We are the ones who are fallible, we're the ones who are operating on limited information, limited understanding related to these things and we're the ones who ought to question ourselves, not the God of the universe who created all things and is Himself perfectly righteous, holy and just, right?

And yet, isn't it interesting that in the arrogance of man's sinful flesh, he says to God, dude, you are wrong, you are wrong for doing it that way. Isn't that amazing what we are essentially doing people when we do that, and the Jews were doing it and I've heard people do it, I'm sure I've done it myself. We are arrogantly exalting our understanding of justice above God's and we are saying, I know more than you do about these matters, right? Rather than questioning ourselves, we're questioning God.

So this is, you know, pretty crazy. Have you noticed here in the last, well, I don't know how long it's been going on, but probably a long time. In our culture, somebody can be doing something that is very good for a long period of time but if we find a memo or an email or a letter or something that they said that was a little reckless, 10, 15, 20 years ago, and that comes to light, we will cancel them and we will not take into consideration anything they have done, you know. You know what that means? It means we kind of do the same thing, you know, we will kind of act that same way.

Now, before we move on here in the chapter, I think it's important that we understand how this relates to the gospel today because you've got to be careful here. First of all, you have to understand something, when God says, unless you repent, you will die, He's not talking about eternal death in the Old Testament here, at this case, He's talking about physical, temporal death, okay. It's the kind of death that Ananias and Sapphira suffered for their sin in the Book of Acts. We don't know that they lost their salvation or that they weren't truly saved or that they ended up in hell, we don't know that.

All we know is that they paid a rather drastic price for the sin that they committed, that's all we know. They suffered physical death, that's all we know. And in the Old Testament, the emphasis is on the physical, not the eternal, okay? So you can't take a passage like this in Ezekiel and assume that it just

automatically makes its way over to the New Testament to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because we're under a kind of a different dynamic.

Now, there are some consistencies here and the consistencies have to do with God and His character and His mercy. Why in the world would God allow an individual to live a life of sinful wickedness, then repent and turn from that wickedness and no longer have their sins counted against them? Why would God do that? Well, it's because He is a God of mercy, that's why.

He shows His mercy and in the new Testament, we see that same thing, we see God's mercy. You know, you may have even met, you might even be one of those individuals who lived a life of sinful pleasures up until the point that you came to know Christ is your Savior.

Well, what happened to all of your sins when you came to Jesus? He wiped him out, didn't He? And He said, you're my child, I've saved you eternally, you are mine, you will live with me forever, right? He didn't... I don't know if you guys got a chance to listen to our live Q&A that we did yesterday, we did it at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

But we had a question come in, fascinating question. The question was, are there levels of heaven based on how much we've sinned in this life? Isn't that an interesting question? Are there levels of heaven? In other words, do you earn different levels of heaven or lose levels of heaven based on the sins that you've committed?

And I had to come back and I had to say, okay, this question misses the whole point of what Jesus did on the cross. It misses the whole point that in heaven, your sins don't figure into anything because Jesus bore them. He paid for them and He finished paying for them, right? So that when you are with the Lord in heaven, there are no sins for Him to consider as it relates to your life, they're gone.

But see, this is the thing that Christians struggle so much to get, to wrap their hearts and their minds around, you know. That I am free from sin in Jesus Christ and He does not count my sin against me, you know. He prophesied about this new covenant in Jeremiah chapter 31, and here's what He said. He said, and I will remember their sins no more. (Jeremiah 31:34) Your sins are not remembered by the Lord because in Christ the price has been paid and it was finished, right. Isn't it fascinating just kind of the way we kind of think through this sort of a thing.

So your sins are wiped out, well, but how long are they wiped out? Are they wiped out until I sin again? And then do I need to come to the Lord and repent or I'm not saved? I get that one a lot and no, that is not the way it works. You are forgiven past, present, and future because of your faith in Jesus Christ.

Now that doesn't mean that you don't continue to confess your sins. We do, but not to get re saved. We confess our sins to restore relationship with our Lord, because sin still have this nefarious effect on our relationship with God. Just like sins against human beings have an adverse effect on relationships. If I do something against my brother, if I've sinned against Jerry over here and I've done something wicked against him, it's going to cause a breach in our relationship.

If I go to Jerry and I say, I apologize, I sinned, I was wrong, would you forgive me? That's going to restore that relationship and that's why we confess our sins to the Lord, because the relationship needs to be restored after we sin. Our salvation does not need to be restored because you can't earn your salvation. It was earned for you by Jesus Christ on the cross, He did the earning, He did the work, you cannot work for your salvation. So, it's a very important thing that we understand that.

Now we come to the final word of this chapter in verses 21 and following, and it begins with a timestamp and here's what it says, *“In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, ...”* Now, what we know from that timestamp is that would put this prophetic message, 7 years after Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry. So he's 7 years into the work of prophesying to the exiles that are there in the Babylonian empire.

Here's what he says happened on that date, <sup>21</sup> *...a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been struck down.”*” And that means the Babylonian army has gotten into the city. They've invaded, they've broken down the walls, they've burned the place, they've destroyed the whole city.

Now you guys will remember that Ezekiel told us in a previous chapter that he was going to prophesy, prophesy, prophesy to the people up to a point and then God said to him, after that last prophecy, you are not to say another word. In fact, you're going to be mute until a fugitive arrives and gives you word that everything you've said up to this point has come to pass related to the destruction of Jerusalem. And then on that day, I'm going to hit the mute button, God says, and I'm going to, you're going to speak once again.

And so, look what it says in verse 22, it says, *“Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning, so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.”*<sup>23</sup> *The word of the Lord came to me:*<sup>24</sup> *“Son of man, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, ‘Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess.’”*”

Stop there, let me tell you what the people are saying and this is what God is confronting. Essentially, the people were saying, you know, Abraham was just one man and through his righteousness, God gave him all of the land. Which of course, Abraham, you'll remember never even possessed, but it was given to Abraham and his descendants. And the people are saying, he was just one man and through the righteousness of one man, all that land was given and we are many and through our many righteous people, you see what's wrong with this already. Surely God owes us what he gave to Abraham and more because we are many. And so the many righteous ought to garner more than the one righteous. Do you see what's going on? Boy, these people just have a hard time seeing their sin, don't they?

Verse 25, God's going to respond, *“Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: You eat flesh with the blood (and that's something they were explicitly told not to do. They were to always drain the blood from an animal before they cooked it and ate it. He says) and lift up your eyes to your idols and shed blood; (and that's another way of saying, you commit murder and so He says) shall you then possess the land?”* Do you really think that you're going to possess the land if you do these things?

He says, *“<sup>26</sup> You rely on the sword, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife; (so there's all this sexual immorality going on and so He asks once again,) shall you then possess the land?”*<sup>27</sup> *Say this to them, Thus says the Lord God: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence.*<sup>28</sup> *And I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and her proud might shall come to an end, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that none will pass through.*<sup>29</sup> *Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed.*

<sup>30</sup> *“As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother,*

*'Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.'* <sup>31</sup> *And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain."* And that lustful talk is all about just the things they want, right?

*"<sup>32</sup> And behold, (verse 32) you (he's talking to Ezekiel, you) are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice (your Bible may say love songs or sensual songs, it's basically, the Hebrew is saying, you are like one who sings songs that appeal to the flesh, okay) and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. <sup>33</sup> When this comes—and come it will (come)!—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."*

Now, we're going to do our best to get through chapter 34 here rather quickly in the time that we have left, we're going to read through this. And what chapter 34 is all about, is the Lord's accusation against the unfaithful shepherds of Israel and this is of course a word to the leaders, right? Spiritual and otherwise, who have not led the flock of Israel according to the Lord and a lot of these verses are just going to speak for themselves and so we're just going to read through them.

Verse 1, *"The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup> You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. <sup>4</sup> The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. <sup>5</sup> So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; <sup>6</sup> they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.*

*<sup>7</sup> "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>8</sup> As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, <sup>9</sup> therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>10</sup> Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their*

*feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.*

<sup>11</sup> *“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of (now this is important here, listen, on a day of) clouds and thick darkness.”* Now reason I read that rather slowly and pointed it out to you is because at this point in the prophecy, as God begins to speak about His sheep and how He's going to bless, restore them and so forth, He's going to begin to speak of the Millennial Kingdom.

Now, again, this is prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled and you're going to see that here. Because this reference to a time on a day of clouds and thick darkness refers to that end period of the great tribulation when the nations of the earth will come against Jerusalem; will come against Israel to destroy her. And He is saying here, I will seek out my sheep and I will rescue them and that is exactly what Jesus is going to do when He returns to this earth the second time. He's going to fight against the enemies of Israel.

Now, notice what He goes on to say in verse 13, *“And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. <sup>14</sup> I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.”*

Now look at verse 15, *“I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.”* Now, I want you to also notice as He finishes out this chapter here, He begins now to speak to the sheep themselves.

Verse 17, and *“As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. <sup>18</sup> Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? <sup>19</sup> And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?”*

<sup>20</sup> “Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup> Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, <sup>22</sup> I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep.” So there's a judgment, He says, that is coming related to Israel, right? And how they even treat one another, right?

And then He says, verse 23, and this is important that you see this. “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.” What is going on here? This is the Millennial Kingdom, this is the kingdom that God is going to establish on the earth. Now remember, where's Jesus going to be? He's going to be on the throne of the earth at that time, He's going to rule over the earth. Jesus will rule over the nations during the Millennial Kingdom.

But did you see what He said here about David? Remember that there's going to be a resurrection, right? Of the dead when Jesus returns. David himself is going to be prince ruling over the people of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom, that's what this passage says. He names him right out there, He doesn't say the son of David, this is not a messianic prophecy.

He says David will rule over them. In the restored messianic kingdom, David is going to rule in Jerusalem, over the Jews, over Israel, right? Where is Jesus going to be? He says, I will be their God and my servant David will be prince over them. And it's interesting how people, I've talked through this before, and I've even made reference before to the fact that David is going to sit on the throne over Jerusalem and all of Israel during the millennial kingdom.

And people are just weirded out by that, they're like, what! David? And they assume that, well, David died. David is alive with the Lord, just like all who else have gone before him in faith or after him. And he will be raised just like your body, you're going to receive your new body when the Lord returns at that time; your resurrection body and David is going to...

Is it so hard to believe that David is going to be restored to a position of rulership in the Millennial Kingdom? And why is that difficult to understand when the Bible says that we too will reign with him? The Bible says that when Jesus returns, He's going to come with his Holy ones and we will reign. Now, I don't know where you're going to reign, it might be over a city block, but David is going to rule over Jerusalem and all of Israel, right? I don't know where the rest of us are going to reign, you know, but this should not be hard to believe at

all when we see it in the Word of God. And so God says, “<sup>24</sup>...*I am the Lord; I have spoken.*”

Finishing out the chapter. <sup>25</sup> *“I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, ...”* You guys remember that the anti-Christ is going to do a counterfeit covenant of peace with Israel at the beginning of the great tribulation, remember that? And then he's going to renege on that halfway through the great tribulation and he's going to set up his own image and say, you got to worship me.

But see, everything he's doing is a counterfeit of what he knows that Jesus is going to do in the Millennial Kingdom and that's what He's saying here. At this time, I'll make a covenant of peace with them and boy, does the Middle East need a covenant of peace, I mean, a real covenant of peace. And it's not going to happen until the Prince of Peace is ruling there.

He even says He's going to banish wild beasts and look at this, “<sup>25</sup>...*so that they may dwell securely* (He says, at the end of verse 25) *in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.*” They can't even sleep securely in their bedrooms today, but now they're going to be able to sleep securely everywhere.

*“<sup>26</sup> And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. <sup>27</sup> And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. (this is speaking of Israel being secure in their land) And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.*

<sup>28</sup> *They shall no more be a prey to the nations, (look at that, no more, in other words, it's done) nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid.*” You can see that this is a prophecy for the future, because it has not yet come to pass for Israel.

*“<sup>29</sup> And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. <sup>30</sup> And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God. <sup>31</sup> And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God.”* You might be reading through some of these passages or prophecies concerning the Millennial Kingdom and say, well, why doesn't He mention the church? Why doesn't... , you know, He's talking a lot about Israel

here, but why doesn't He mention the church? Why doesn't He mention the saints?

It's because the church isn't mentioned in the Old Testament. We've said that over and over again, you're not going to find the church in the Old Testament. Paul refers to it as a mystery and that means something previously unrevealed that has now been revealed. So anyway, with that, we're going to finish our study for tonight and we will pick it up in chapter 35 next time. So let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for giving us time tonight to dig into the scriptures and Lord it's very apparent that you have good things in store for your people. And we know that your people, is regarding your people Israel, but also the body of Christ, the bride of Christ.

And we know, Lord God, that you have a plan and that plan will be fulfilled and we're thankful for that, especially, Lord, in these difficult days. And these days when there is much groaning and the birth pangs of literally the universe. And we see it, Lord, we see so much of what is happening today in preparation for the things that will to come.

So Father, we pray that you would ready our hearts to be steadfast. Steadfast in Christ, holding our position, refusing to compromise, refusing to bend, but in the strength and power of the Lord, trusting in you with all of our hearts, leaning not upon our own understanding, walking in humility, serving the Lord.

Lord ready us to give an apt response to those who ask us to give the reason for the hope that we have and may we do it with gentleness and respect, knowing that it is your kindness that leads people to repentance. Fill us Lord with your Spirit, equip us in all of our ways with the power that we need from on high to serve you in these dark days and to shine the light of your glory, that people would be attracted to the cross. For we ask it in Jesus precious name, amen.