

Ezekiel 34
The Tale of Two Cities

1. City #1: Jerusalem circa 590 BC

A. Bad Shepherds

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.” -Jeremiah 23:1-4 ESV

B. Who Was Ezekiel Talking about?

The Kings: Jehoiakim and Zedekiah

The Priests and the Elders

“And he brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, there was a hole in the wall. Then he said to me, “Son of man, dig in the wall.” So I dug in the wall, and behold, there was an entrance. And he said to me, “Go in, and see the vile abominations that they are committing here.” So I went in and saw. And there, engraved on the wall all around, was every form of creeping things and loathsome beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel. And before them stood seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up. Then he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of pictures? For they say, ‘The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.’” He said also to me, “You will see still greater abominations that they commit.” Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the Lord, and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? You will see still greater abominations than these.” And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord. And behold, at the entrance of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east. Then he said

to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me still further to anger? Behold, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” -Ezekiel 8:7-18 ESV

2. The Promised Good Shepherd: Jesus 11-16, 23, 24

A. Jesus Has Come

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’” -Jeremiah 23:5-6 ESV

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”
John 10:14-18 ESV

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” -Luke 19:10 ESV

B. A Warning to the Flock 17-22
v.17-19, 21

“Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” -Matthew 25:32-34 ESV

C. Promise to the People of the Land and to All Who Will Live in God’s Peace 25-31

“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.” -Ezekiel 34:26 ESV

3. City #2: New Castle, PA circa 2026 AD.

“A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other.”

Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities, Book I, Chapter 3

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Hebrews 13:17 ESV

“I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.” -Jeremiah 23:4 ESV

A. Shepherds Today

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”” -1 Peter 5:1-5 ESV

B. As the Church Grows...

“When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?” And Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.” Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands,

of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.””

Exodus 18:14-23 ESV

Showers of Blessing

“There shall be showers of blessing,

If we but trust and obey;

There shall be seasons refreshing,

If we let God have His way.” -Daniel Whittle

Reflection: Is it easy or difficult to see yourself as a follower of Jesus, as a “sheep”? What about this is comforting and what is disturbing? Has God ever called you into that shepherding role in your work, church, or family?

Follow UP in the Word through the Week...

Monday: Jeremiah 23:1-4. What is the charge against the shepherds? Why did you think God was so strict with these leaders?

Tuesday: Ezekiel 8:7-18. What kind of ugly things were going on in the Temple? Why would this upset God so much? Think about this as the Holy Spirit counts you as the Temple, He dwells in today? What does He find in you?

Wednesday: John 10:14-18. What do we find out about Jesus here? What comfort can you take from this passage today?

Thursday: Matthew 25:32-34. What do we find out about Jesus’ shepherding duties from this passage? What is your response to this?

Friday: 1 Peter 5:1-5. Who is Peter addressing here? What is his instruction to each group and what is your part according to this instruction?

Saturday: Exodus 18:14-23. Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses. What was the plan that he put together for Moses to care for God’s people? How can you see this being a help to those under God’s care?