

PREFACE

A few weeks ago I began class by posing the question: *Why did Jesus come?* I suppose that question could be repeated in almost every session, for that is the very nature of our study: As we search out and examine traces of the Christ in the Old Testament we discover the reasons He came to us in the first place. And as we examine His life and ministry on earth—the many roles He fulfilled, His accomplishments, His teachings—we discover more and more reasons for His coming. In this session we consider one more reason the Messiah came: to shepherd His people.

JOHN 10

This time I would like to begin with Jesus' own words. Let's begin with His own confirmation that He, indeed, is the Shepherd of prophecy. We find them in His extended treatise in John 10.

Read John 10:11, 14-15.

So Jesus confirms that He is the prophesied Shepherd, and twice He explains the ultimate reason He has come: to lay down His life for the sheep.

EZEKIEL 34

There is another, less exalted, more temporal reason the Lord God sent the Messiah as the "Good Shepherd." It's because the *first* shepherds He sent—the rulers: kings and governors—to watch over the people of Israel were so lousy at the job! We find the account of the transition from them to the new Shepherd in Ezekiel 34. These bad shepherds

- fed themselves without feeding the people (vv2-3);

Son of man [i.e., the prophet Ezekiel], prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock."

- did not take care of the people who were sick or injured (v4);

"Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them."

- did not protect the people from their enemies (vv5-6).

"They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them."

The Lord's solution to this situation is to take charge Himself. The change of command takes place in v10.

Read Ezekiel 34:10.

In verses 11-22 *Yahweh adonai* describes how things will be improved under His management—summarized succinctly in v16:

"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment."

The Good Shepherd

Then in v23 the Lord delegates the care of His people to "one shepherd."

shepherd = *raah* = a primitive root; **to tend a flock, i.e. pasture it**; intransitive **to graze** (literal or figurative); generally to rule; by extensive to associate with (as a friend) :- × break, companion, keep company with, devour, eat up, evil entreat, **feed**, use as a friend, make friendship with, herdman, **keep** [sheep] (-er), pastor, + shearing house, shepherd, wander, waste. [a strong emphasis on the shepherd *feeding* the sheep: 75 times in the KJV translated "feed"]

Psalm 78, written by Asaph, speaks of the literal King David in his role of a shepherd, and in the KJV translates *raah* as "feed" or "fed."

Read Psalm 78:70-72 in KJV.

Most versions (other than NIV) translate *raah* in the verb form in Ezekiel 34 "feed."

Read Ezekiel 34:23-24.

Since at the time of this writing, during the time of exile in Babylon [roughly 580 BC], King David has been dead for almost 400 years, we can safely conclude that "My servant David" does not refer to him literally but is, in point of fact, a way to refer to the Messiah.

This Christ will be a "shepherd"—He will watch over, He will care for, He will feed and protect Yahweh's flock. And this Christ will also be a "prince."

prince = *nasi* = or nasi', naw-see'; from <H5375> (nasa'); properly **an exalted one, i.e. a king or sheik**; also a rising mist :- **captain, chief**, cloud, governor, prince, **ruler**, vapour.

And here we see the unique dichotomy of the Lord's economy: This Shepherd/Messiah will be at once a *servant (ebed)*—a servant, a slave—and an exalted prince. This is akin to what Christ, the Good Shepherd, will tell His disciples in Matthew 20:

"...whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
(Matthew 20:26b-28)

In the rest of the chapter, beginning with v25, the result of being shepherded by the Servant/Prince Messiah is that Israel will at last know peace and plenty. And once again, this is a picture of the End Times, when Israel finally embraces Jesus as the true Messiah.

In the first part of Isaiah 40—vv3-4—the prophet describes the forerunner of the Messiah. In v5 he announces the Messiah Himself:

**Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.**

In v10 Messiah is described as a ruling king, but another side of His nature is described in v11.

Read Isaiah 40:11.

ZECARIAH 11: THE REJECTED SHEPHERD

Who doesn't love a good shepherd—a tender, affectionate, protective figure who puts the safety and well-being of his flock over his own? Who could possibly want to throw off such a compassionate ruler?

Well, the nation of Israel, for one. And one of the best OT prophecies for the rejection of Messiah the Good Shepherd is found in Zechariah 11. Unfortunately, as all commentators agree, it is also one of the most difficult to understand. Pastor Jeremy confirmed this as he prefaced his sermon on this passage. Our purpose, however, is not the detailed exposition of Zechariah 11, but to glean from it the pertinent information about the rejected Shepherd.

Sidebar: To that end, I am convinced that you will be best-served by my sticking closely to the excellent explanation of the passage offered by Walter C. Kaiser, in his book, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*. If not word-for-word, much of what follows benefits mightily from Kaiser's respected scholarship.

Beginning in v4, Yahweh commands Zechariah himself to act out a prophetic parable for the people of Israel. So the prophet writes,

Thus says the Lord my God, "Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter." (v4)

In v7 he obeys:

So I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staves: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock. (v7)

"Favor" = pleasantness, agreeableness, beauty, grace

"Union" = cords, bonds, bands (i.e., bound together)

The two staves are so named to symbolize what Zechariah "hopes to achieve through his ministry. He wants God's favor [**—His grace—**] to rest on the people and for them to experience national unity again"—Israel and Judah reunited as a single kingdom, as it was under King David.

In v8 Zechariah declares, "my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me." Understand what is happening here: Zechariah is living out, in person, a Messianic prophecy. Just as the Lord had the prophet Hosea marry a prostitute so that he would be a living illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness, the Lord has Zechariah act out what would be happening later to the Shepherd/Messiah He would send.

So Zechariah gives up, and declares that he will no longer shepherd the flock.

Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh." (v9)

By the way, that last bit about "eating one another's flesh" had already occurred during the Babylonian siege in 587 BC, and would again during the Roman siege of AD 70.

In response to their rejection of him—the sheep rejecting their shepherd—the prophet breaks his staff "Favor," symbolically illustrating that the Lord was breaking His covenant with the nations—not His covenant with the patriarchs or David, but with "the peoples." Literally what this breaks is the protection the Lord had given Judah against the nations surrounding them. Now, without their shepherd, they would be at their mercy, and, as He had done before, the Lord Himself was free to wield these nations as a rod of punishment against His people.

Zechariah then requests payment for his shepherding, leaving it to the people to decide on a fair price. And they hand him an insulting wage: thirty pieces of silver—"the going price for a slave under the Mosaic law."

Read Matthew 26:14-16.

Read Zechariah 11:13.

Read Matthew 27:3-8.

Potters were indeed connected with the temple in order to make sacrificial vessels. Beyond that, however, the phrase, "throw it to the potter," is a proverbial expression that contains a note of contempt, meaning "throw it away."

Finally, in v14, instead of the staff named "Union" being the symbol of a reunified nation, by Zechariah breaking it it becomes the symbol of the broken brotherhood between Judah and Israel—apparently never to be united again.

But let's close with some *good* news, by reading the prophecy of Ezekiel that puts these two "staves"—in Ezekiel, "sticks"—back together again in his Messianic prophecy describing the end times when there will be a new heaven and new earth, when God and His Christ will dwell in the midst of His people.

Read Ezekiel 37:15-28.

As to the fulfillment, we find that in Revelation 21.

Read Revelation 21:1-3.

And remember in Zechariah, when he broke the staff "Favor" to break the covenant with "all the peoples"?

Read Revelation 21:22-24.

Ezekiel 34:10

“Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and **I will demand My sheep from them** and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.”

Ezekiel 34:16

“I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.”

Ezekiel 34:23-24

23 “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My **servant David**, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.

24 “And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My **servant David will be prince among them**; I the Lord have spoken.”

*The Good Shepherd***John 10:11, 14-15**

11 “**I am the good shepherd**; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
14 “**I am the good shepherd**, and I know My own and My own know Me,
15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

Matthew 20:26-28

26 “It is not this way among you, but **whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant**,
27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;
28 just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**”

Isaiah 40:3-11

3 A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
4 “Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
5 **Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together**; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”
6 A voice says, “Call out.” Then he answered, “What shall I call out?” All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.
7 The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.
9 Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”
10 Behold, the Lord God will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him.
11 **Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.**

Zechariah 11:7-14

7 So I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock.

8 Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me.

9 Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh."

10 I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples.

11 So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the Lord.

12 I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.

13 Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

14 Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

Ezekiel 37:24-28

24 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.

25 "They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.

26 "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.

27 "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

28 "And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever."

The Rejected Shepherd***The Good Shepherd Restored*****Matthew 26:14-16**

14 Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

15 and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him.

16 From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

Matthew 27:3-8

3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"

5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

6 The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."

7 And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers.

8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

Revelation 21:1-3, 22-24

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them..."

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.