

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Ezekiel 34:23-31

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, August 26, 2012

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 26, 2012**, is from **Ezekiel 34:23-31**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in ***The Oklahoman*** newspaper.

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Ezekiel 34:23-31

(Ezekiel 34:23) I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed

them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

God inspired Ezekiel to speak these words of prophecy a few hundred years after the death of King David and during Ezekiel's lifetime of exile with the Jews in Babylon (sometime after 587 BC). God promised that He would send the Messiah, His servant David, to lead His people as a shepherd leads sheep. God gave the Messiah, a descendent of David, the honorific title "my servant David." God said the Messiah would lead as a shepherd, as a person who would wisely meet the needs of His people and inspire God's people to follow Him. Jesus made wise choices when He led God's people, and His loving character and divine power influenced many to follow Him as their Shepherd, but He did not always do what the people wanted Him to do.

(Ezekiel 34:24) And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

Those who follow the Messiah, God's servant and descendant of David, will worship the LORD, or Yahweh, as God has revealed himself in the Bible by His actions and words in history. The title Messiah means "anointed one." In the Old Testament, priests and kings were appointed and anointed for their offices. As the "anointed one," the Prince or Messiah will serve under the direction of the LORD. Jesus

always insisted that He obeyed His heavenly Father in His words and deeds, and that He never said or did anything His Father did not want Him to say or do. Jesus claimed to live perfectly according to the will of God, Yahweh.

(Ezekiel 34:25) I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely.

Many of the Jews expected Jesus to do all of these things when He claimed to be the Messiah and Son of God, but Jesus will only fulfill this promise after He comes again. Jesus came the first time to reconcile people to God by His sacrificial death upon the cross, and to bring people peace of mind and heart as they establish a relationship with the LORD God by grace through faith and loving obedience to Jesus' commands as their risen Lord and Savior. Jesus promised: "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them" (John 14:21).

(Ezekiel 34:26) I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing.

Many people live and sleep securely because they live among God's people, because the vast majority of God's people love the Lord Jesus and their neighbors. God's people in such regions bless one another, and God can rightly shower blessings upon such people in these regions. After the Messiah comes again, all who trust in Him as their Shepherd and King will receive showers of blessing always and forever.

(Ezekiel 34:27) The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them.

In those places where Christian faith and obedience to God has greatly prevailed, believers have experienced the material blessings promised here by God through Ezekiel's prophecy. Over the centuries, those who have trusted in God have been freed from slavery in various places around the world. Even now, Jesus frees believers from spiritual slavery to Satan and sin. Jesus helps people find peace with God and peace within themselves. When Jesus comes again, He will fully fulfill the promise.

(Ezekiel 34:28) They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid.

More or less in different parts of the world, God's people still experience the suffering described here in Ezekiel's prophecy. Demonic powers and some people have sworn to destroy all Jews and Christians, and they try to do so daily. God describes those who want to afflict and devour His people as "animals of the land" or wild animals. Only upon the return of Jesus Christ will the world be free from liars, murderers, and oppressors who seek to destroy those who trust in the God of the Bible. Only upon Jesus' return will believers always live in the safety and peace described in the Bible.

(Ezekiel 34:29) I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations.

God inspired Ezekiel to preach these words of encouragement while the Jews suffered in exile in Babylon. From time to time throughout the subsequent history of Jews and Christians, God's people have experienced the lessons of this promise. But even today, Jews and Christians alike suffer from the insults of the leaders and people in the nations where they live. Someday, through the Messiah, God will bring suffering to an end in Israel and around the world. Yet, even today, where God's people have the freedom to work and worship according to the will of

God, they enjoy freedom from hunger and God's blessings upon their labors.

(Ezekiel 34:30) They shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord GOD.

Through their faith in Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul and the other Apostles, and those Jews and Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus the Messiah through the Apostles' message, have experienced the truth of this promise of God. This promise will only be fully fulfilled through Jesus the Messiah – today, through faith in Jesus; and later, after Jesus returns as He promised and every knee bows before Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Someday, all the house of Israel will see and know with certainty that Jesus is God's promised Messiah. Furthermore, all those who have despised and persecuted the house of Israel will know that those in house of Israel are included among God's people.

(Ezekiel 34:31) You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord GOD.

Through the prophet Ezekiel, Yahweh GOD, "the Lord GOD," declared to the Jews in exile in Babylon that no matter how bad or difficult their life seemed from their suffering in exile that they were still His sheep.

He had not abandoned them; He had needed to discipline them as wayward sheep, to help them follow the Lord GOD only and not be led astray by false gods, powers, shepherds or teachers. As their Shepherd, God took upon himself the responsibility for them. Even in Babylon, they were in His pasture, and He would lead them and feed them while He punished them for their sins. Through faith in Jesus the Messiah, anyone can become a sheep in the pasture of the Lord GOD. Because God loves us, He may need to discipline us, and that is one of the ways God cares for us.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. If you had been with God's people in exile in Babylon, or if you feel as though you are in some type of exile today, what is one truth that you would like to learn from God?
2. Today, how and where can you find the assurance of the truth you would like to learn from God? [The one truth that was your answer to Question 1 above.]
3. Jesus the Messiah is King of the universe and Lord over all. How does it make you feel to know that He wants to be your Shepherd?

4. If you consider Jesus to be your Shepherd, what are some things you can do to show Jesus that you are one of His sheep? Why is this important for you to do?

5. How do you know that Jesus will come again and fully fulfill God's promises through the prophet Ezekiel?

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