

# ***After 4:Before 5***

## ***Before 5th Session:***

### ***1- Preparing for John 10***

*Ezekiel 34*

*Caring for sheep*

*God is the shepherd of his people*

### ***2- Bad shepherds of the flock of God***

*Shepherds should not feed themselves but the flock*

*Shepherds have neglected the flock*

*God is against the shepherds*

*God himself will take over*

### ***3- People need deliverance from shepherds***

*The Lord's judgment*

*Lord will give them one Shepherd*

*New covenant*

## ***Preparing for John chapter 10***

### **Caring for sheep**

A shepherd with some sheep is an obvious picture. For the middle-eastern shepherd, we need to think of shepherds as a leader, not a driver, of his sheep to good pastures – they are dependent on him for sustenance. He stays with them all day and, when far from home, often at night. Several flocks, at night, each with their own shepherd, were often corralled together in a large pen with one entrance. The walls kept the sheep from wandering and also protected them from predators. The pen had a watchman who did a night shift so that the shepherds could sleep. We need to remember that the flock of the Near eastern shepherd is small. Small enough for him to know his flock by name, and each of them would know the sound of his voice.

### **Caring for persons who are God's flock**

As applied to the shepherding of persons, the symbol portrays a person who is an authorized leader, often of royal descent, who is the caretaker of God's people.

God himself is often called the shepherd of Israel as in Psalm 80 where he is pictured as leading Joseph like a flock. The appeal of the Psalmist, Asaph in this case, is that God would come and restore them. We also have the beautiful Psalm 23 of David, who, as a young man, was a shepherd himself of animals. Later as the royal leader of God's people, he is speaking as a sheep might, receiving from his shepherd Lord, all the benefits that a shepherd brings for the flock - and so for himself.

Isaiah speaking of the way the Lord will care for his people as they return from the exile in Babylon, states in chapter 40:

10 "Behold, the Lord comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs into his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

## ***Bad shepherds of the sheep***

*Read Ezekiel 34*

There is a strong word of the Lord, prophesied by Ezekiel against the shepherds of Israel – those appointed to care for the God's people. The message has a number of elements. It breaks into two parts: first [34.1-16] the shepherds are addressed as a separate element of the flock.

Second, [34.17-22] they are addressed as incorporated into the flock itself for they are sheep of God as well.

### **1. Shepherds should not feed themselves, rather they should feed the sheep. 34.2-4a**

Here the issue is that the shepherds of Israel are actually living off the people they shepherd. They eat the fatlings, but the weak, crippled, sick and lost they have not strengthened, bound up, healed or searched for.

### **2. Shepherds' neglect means the flock suffers 34.4b-6**

Shepherds have ruled the people with force and harshness. So the flock has become scattered, a prey to predators and wanders wherever they will with no one to seek for them or bring them back.

### **3. God is against the shepherds 34.7-10**

Because the state of affairs is so bad for the flock, God will have to rescue them from the shepherds themselves. He will put a stop to their being in such a position so as to feed off the sheep. He will rescue the sheep from their mouths.

### **4. God himself will take over this matter 34.11-18**

He will search for his scattered sheep. He will bring Israel out from among the peoples. It will be the gathering of a scattered flock from the various countries they have ended up in and he will gather them on the mountains of Israel in the vicinity of local waters and He will feed them with good pasture.

He will feed them properly, seek for them, bind them up when they can't walk, strengthen the weak ones, and watch over the fat and the strong. He will feed them in justice. This last statement indicates that the shepherds have not been just, not doing things right in regard to the sheep of

the Lord.

## ***People needs deliverance from the shepherds***

### **5. The Lord brings a judgment between the sheep and the shepherds 34.17-19**

God had given them good pasture and clear water, but the shepherds foul the pasture and the water with their feet - and it is this that the sheep have to eat and drink. So the shepherds actually block the good things that the Lord has provided and they defile the material He has given for the sheep.

Further, the shepherds actually push the weak ones away from the water and the feed. It is because they have done this until the sheep actually move away from this pushy attitude and subsequently they are scattered. God will save them from becoming the prey of the shepherds.

### **6. The Lord will save them and give them one shepherd 34.23-24**

This shepherd that God will set over them is:

[a] God's servant David: who will feed them and be their shepherd

[b] The Lord will be their God and his servant David will be a prince – leader – among them

### **7. These conditions will indicate a new covenant 18.25-31**

The nature of this new covenant is outlined:

[1] It will be a covenant of peace insofar that the wild beasts will be banished and they won't oppress the flock any more. So this is peace in the sense of security from oppression.

[2] The seasons will bring forth their appropriate blessing to the flock. This is the provision of the Lord.

[3] The trees will produce their fruit, and the land will yield well.

[4] The people will know that God is their God when He breaks the yoke of slavery, and delivers them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall not be afraid of the nations or the wild beasts.

They shall be well fed, not hungry and not suffer the reproach of the nations.

They shall know that the Lord is with them - they shall know his presence with them. They shall know God as their shepherd and they shall be happy to be sheep of his pasture. They have the abundant life He provides.