

Ezekiel 33-34

- Our long-anticipated start to the second part of Ezekiel has finally arrived
 - Today we begin studying prophecies concerning the future glory and blessings the Lord has planned for His people, Israel
 - This is a welcome change from Chapters 1-32, which were a series of oracles pronouncing judgment
 - In those chapters the Lord told Israel that the nation was on the verge of complete destruction
 - The city, the walls and the temple were going to be destroyed by Babylon
 - The Leadership would be removed, the people would be taken out of the land, and their exile would last for some time
 - Finally, at the end of those chapters the Lord spoke judgment against Israel's enemies that surrounded her
 - But now we've come through all that, and the Lord is ready to show His people that better things awaited them in the future
 - Now remember, the calamity Israel has just experienced in Ezekiel's day came as a result of the Mosaic covenant
 - In that covenant the Lord gave His people a law that came with strict requirements and harsh penalties for disobedience
 - The nation agreed to those terms, and now the Lord has acted to hold them accountable to that covenant
 - But before the Lord gave His people the Old Covenant through Moses, He had previously given them a very different covenant through Abraham
 - The Abrahamic covenant, unlike the Mosaic Covenant, promised Abraham's descendants only blessings
 - And also unlike the Mosaic Covenant, the Lord's promises to Abraham were unconditional
 - God asks absolutely nothing of Abraham and his descendants

- The promises of the Abrahamic covenant would come to pass regardless of what Abraham or any of his descendants did or didn't do
- So in a sense, the prophecies of the first part of Ezekiel are related to the Mosaic Covenant (though not exclusively)
 - While the promises of the second part of Ezekiel are related to the Abrahamic Covenant (though also not exclusively)
 - So despite the magnitude of Israel's sin evidenced by the first part of the book, nevertheless we will now see the magnitude of the Lord's grace to His people
- As I mentioned last week, this story begins slowly though
 - In fact, the initial chapters may seem similar to what we've been studying in the first part
 - That's because Lord moves the narrative carefully away from the story of judgment and toward a story of restoration
 - What God tore apart in Chapters 1-32 He now explains how He will restore in Chapters 33-48
 - But that story moves in stages that roughly correspond to the stages of Part 1's prophecies
 - The first half of Chapter 33 is actually a continuation of the prophecy that started in Chapter 32, dated to March of 585 BC
 - Then in the middle of Chapter 33, we begin the thirteenth prophecy that God gives to Ezekiel
 - That prophecy runs all the way until Chapter 39
 - Then the fourteenth and final prophecy runs from Chapter 40-48
 - The structure of the thirteenth prophecy follows a pattern we saw in Part 1
 - That is in Part 1, the Lord systematically tore down the nation because of their sin
 - First, the Lord took aim first at Ezekiel himself, warning the prophet to be faithful with the message
 - Part 2 begins the same way here in Chapter 33

- Then in Part 1 the Lord told the people they were responsible to heed what the prophet told them...that also happens in Chapter 33
- Then Part 1 moved to convicting the leaders and their role in corrupting Israel
 - So in Part 2, Ezekiel tells Israel about new leadership God will raise up
 - And in Part 1 God said Israel would lose access to the blessings of the covenant including their prosperity, their security, and their land
 - So in Part 2 He tells Israel that He will restore those things in new and better ways
- Finally, in Part 1 we saw the nation vacated, the city destroyed, the people scattered
 - So in Part 2 the nation is brought back to life
 - And instead of falling to a foreign enemy, the Lord will protect the nation from devastating foreign attack
- So let's begin that journey with the Lord preparing the prophet and the people for what He will reveal to them

[Ezek. 33:1](#) And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

[Ezek. 33:2](#) "Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, 'If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman,

[Ezek. 33:3](#) and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows on the trumpet and warns the people,

[Ezek. 33:4](#) then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head.

[Ezek. 33:5](#) 'He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life.

[Ezek. 33:6](#) 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.'

[Ezek. 33:7](#) “Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them warning from Me.

[Ezek. 33:8](#) “When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand.

[Ezek. 33:9](#) “But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life.

- This is a recommissioning of the prophet that mirrors the first one in Chapters 2-3
 - Back then we learned that Ezekiel was to act as a watchman, a sentinel who stands guard to warn the people of approaching threats
 - The prophet doesn’t respond to the threat, but merely warns
 - The Lord says that if a watchman does his job and issues a warning, then the response is out of his hands
 - It’s the responsibility of the people being warned to heed that warning
 - And in vs.4-5 the Lord assures Ezekiel that if the people hear but do not heed warnings, they will suffer
 - But their fate is not the watchman’s responsibility
 - The watchman has done his part, he has obeyed the Lord and given His message as the Lord intended
 - That’s the mission of a prophet...to open his mouth and speak what he’s told
 - And he should not concern himself with what comes next
 - On the other hand, the Lord reminds Ezekiel in vs.8-9 that if he’s given a word but doesn’t share it accurately, the Lord will hold Ezekiel accountable
 - The wicked will still die but now so would Ezekiel for failing to warn as instructed
 - But if Ezekiel should deliver the message faithfully, then even if the wicked doesn’t repent, at least Ezekiel would be spared

- This is the same warning that the Lord issued in Part 1 and it's always the way the Lord works with those He commissions
 - Do as you're told and let the results take care of themselves
 - But ignore God's instructions or think that you know a better way, and you will be accountable to God
- Now, the Lord turns to the people and reminds them of their responsibility

Ezek. 33:10 "Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus you have spoken, saying, "Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we are rotting away in them; how then can we survive?"'"

Ezek. 33:11 "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'

Ezek. 33:12 "And you, son of man, say to your fellow citizens, 'The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness; whereas a righteous man will not be able to live by his righteousness on the day when he commits sin.'

Ezek. 33:13 "When I say to the righteous he will surely live, and he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die.

Ezek. 33:14 "But when I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness,

Ezek. 33:15 if a wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Ezek. 33:16 "None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live.

Ezek. 33:17 "Yet your fellow citizens say, 'The way of the Lord is not right,' when it is their own way that is not right.

Ezek. 33:18 "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it.

Ezek. 33:19 "But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them.

Ezek. 33:20 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways."

- The Lord reminds the people as He did at the beginning of Part 1 that there is hope for those who heed the word of God and repent from their sin
 - The people might tell themselves that there was no reason to obey since they have no hope...God was set against them
 - But the Lord says He has no pleasure in their destruction
 - There was opportunity for the wicked who turned back to the Lord
 - And at the same time, there was no hope for the righteous who sinned
 - The Lord was speaking to two kind of hearts present in Israel, both of which were lost
 - First, there were the wicked in Israel who had knowingly and willingly transgressed the covenant
 - Their sin was self-evident and they stood condemned
 - But when you sin in the open and without regret, you set your heart against God and you sear your conscience
 - If ever you begin to consider returning to the Lord, you are stopped at the beginning because you assume that you're too far gone
 - The enemy will work to reinforce that thinking, producing guilt and hopelessness, which give further motivation to sin
 - Such a person tells himself that there is no point in seeking God because even if he returned, he would be rejected
 - So continuing in rebellion seems to be the only option
- Then there's the person at the other end of the spectrum
 - The self-righteous person who doesn't recognize their own sin, and as a result sees no reason for repentance
 - That person lives in an upright fashion, keeping the rituals of religion without understanding their own place in it
 - They view themselves as not needing the forgiveness God offers

- In v.13 the Lord says that if the righteous person hears that he will live yet goes out to commit sin, his prior good deeds won't save him
 - That person is equally guilty as the first person
 - And unless they too seek God's forgiveness, they will be condemned just as much as the wicked
- Conversely, if the wicked repent, the Lord says in vs.14-16, then he can be forgiven
 - The first person assumed they couldn't merit God's forgiveness
 - While the second person assumed they didn't need God's forgiveness
 - Both are equally condemned yet both have equal opportunity to repent
- Then the Lord echos what the people were saying, that the Lord's ways were not right
 - They were accusing the Lord of not treating Israel properly and fairly
 - But the Lord reiterates that His ways are more than fair and that each man will be judged by God accordingly
- The point is that we might complain now that we shouldn't be held responsible for our actions or that God is unfair
 - But when we face Him, our protests and excuses will count for nothing
 - The only thing that matters is what we did with the word of God
 - Those who hear and repent receive forgiveness
 - Those who don't will die, the Lord says
- With that, we move into the 13th dated prophecy with the Lord again reminding Ezekiel of his role and responsibility

Ezek. 33:21 Now in the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth of the tenth month, the refugees from Jerusalem came to me, saying, "The city has been taken."

[Ezek. 33:22](#) Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me in the evening, before the refugees came. And He opened my mouth at the time they came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened and I was no longer speechless.

[Ezek. 33:23](#) Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

[Ezek. 33:24](#) "Son of man, they who live in these waste places in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was only one, yet he possessed the land; so to us who are many the land has been given as a possession.'

[Ezek. 33:25](#) "Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You eat meat with the blood in it, lift up your eyes to your idols as you shed blood. Should you then possess the land?"

[Ezek. 33:26](#) "You rely on your sword, you commit abominations and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife. Should you then possess the land?"

[Ezek. 33:27](#) "Thus you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "As I live, surely those who are in the waste places will 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 the strongholds and in the caves will die of pestilence.

[Ezek. 33:28](#) "I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and the pride of her power will cease; and the mountains of Israel will be desolate so that no one will pass through.

[Ezek. 33:29](#) "Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I make the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations which they have committed."

- You may remember that the last prophecy of judgment that came as Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city was in Chapter 24
 - As that prophecy ended, the Lord told Ezekiel he would remain mute until the city was destroyed
 - Now we hear that the exiles from that attack are finally making their way into the camp of the exiles
 - So now the time has come for Ezekiel's forced silence to come to an end
 - So on January 19, 585 BC word reaches the exiles that everything Ezekiel has foretold has come to pass
 - The siege of that city began on the tenth day of the tenth month in the ninth year of King Zedekiah

- Ten is the number of testimony while nine is the number of judgment
- So this is a testimony of God's judgment
- Now after many months later, the news of the city's fall reaches the exiles
 - So in v.22 the Lord has now put His "hand" upon Ezekiel indicating he could open his mouth again to speak to the people
 - And what Ezekiel says is intended to ensure the audience listened with an appreciation for what had transpired
- First in v.24 the Lord repeats what's being said by the few Jews still living in Judea
 - After the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and left, there were a scattering of Jews in the land
 - These were Jews who hid from Babylon in caves, lived in isolation in fields and on mountain sides rather than in the city
 - They escaped death and exile, and so now they were the only Jews remaining in the land
- These Jews looked at their circumstances and concluded they were God's appointed remnant in the land
 - They assumed they would restart the nation and repossess the land, like Abraham
 - In v.24 the Lord says they are telling themselves that they are like Abraham
 - Abraham was only one yet the Lord said he possessed the land
 - So they conclude they will be like Abraham...not mighty in number but nonetheless the Lord was working through them
 - This self-deception overlooked two big differences between them and Abraham
 - First, Abraham was told to dwell in the land by God
 - These people have been told by their prophets that God wanted them to leave the land

- Secondly, the promise God gave Abraham was that he and his descendants would possess the land in a future Kingdom
- While these refugees were telling themselves they would possess the land by themselves in their own lifetime
- So now the Lord tells the exiles that they should not expect those left behind to succeed in their folly
 - He reminds the people that these refugees were just as ungodly as the rest of Israel
 - And therefore, they would not receive God's mercy, though they remained in the land
 - Remember, earlier the Lord told Israel that any who refused to go willingly into exile would die
 - Only by submitting to Nebuchadnezzar's army could they expect to live
- So the Lord says in v.27 that all who remain in the waste places, meaning in the rubble of the city, or in the fields or in caves will die
 - In the course of events the Lord will sovereignly ensure that these people will die one at a time
 - Until His word has been fulfilled and the land is free of Jews as promised
- But then the Lord tells Ezekiel that the group in exile aren't much better

Ezek. 33:30 "But as for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak to one another, each to his brother, saying, 'Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the LORD.'

Ezek. 33:31 "They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain.

Ezek. 33:32 "Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.

Ezek. 33:33 "So when it comes to pass – as surely it will – then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst."

- The citizens of Israel in exile will tell Ezekiel what he wants to hear
 - After years of listening to him and seeing prophecies come to pass, the people are showing him a measure of respect
 - But the Lord warns the prophet that they are saying nice things about him in the public areas, as they meet and talk
 - The word goes out, “Ezekiel is talking again...let’s go listen to what he will say this time”
 - They treat him as a spectacle, a side-show at the circus
 - But as they come, Ezekiel needed to know that they were listening for reasons other than obedience
 - They sat before him to hear the word
 - Yet they went away and did the very same lustful things they had always done
 - This generation which has come out of Israel hasn’t turned from their ways
 - And in fact, until they stand before the Lord in judgment, they won’t get it, the Lord says
 - They see Ezekiel like one sees a carnival performer
 - Ezekiel’s mysterious prophecies were like a sensual song
 - It excited the people so they listened, just as someone listens to a musician singing or playing a musical instrument
 - But like a performance, when it was over, they went away having been entertained but essentially unchanged
 - This is how the Lord thinks about His people sitting under the word of God without actually putting that word into practice
 - The Lord is not impressed
 - He doesn’t reveal himself for the purpose of our entertainment
 - He speaks to us to move our hearts into obedience for His glory
- That prophecy serves as an interesting introduction to the prophecies of restoration

- It's as if the Lord is saying that the generation of Israel who are listening to Ezekiel are not those who will heed the message
 - We know historically that this generation didn't return to Israel for the most part
 - They die in Babylon, and it falls to later generations to return to the land
- So it would seem that this prophecy was a footnote for those who left the land
 - The Lord would now present them with His promises of restoration, but these things would not come to this generation
 - They would hear these things, but they would not be the ones to see these promises fulfilled
 - Nor should they receive these good things, since their lustful hearts were responsible for the exile in the first place
 - And they were not repenting even now
- So now we move into the first area of restoration: leadership or shepherds
 - Beginning with a brief reminder of the problems that poor leaders have created among God's people

Ezek. 34:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

Ezek. 34:2 "Son of man, 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?"

Ezek. 34:3 "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.

Ezek. 34:4 "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.

Ezek. 34:5 "They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.

Ezek. 34:6 "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 principle sin of Israel's corrupt leaders was self-serving hearts, a desire to accumulate comfort and riches at the expense of the people
 - Leading God's people in any capacity is an inherently self-sacrificial role
 - And once again, a shepherd is a good analogy
 - A shepherd sacrifices a lot to care for a flock of defenseless sheep
 - A shepherd stays outside in the weather with the sheep, exposed to the elements
 - He moves away from his own source of food in the farmhouse so he can direct the the sheep to their food source in the field
 - He exposes himself to thieves, wild animals and other dangers to keep the flock safe
 - He can't spend time on his own interests and pursuits because the demands of caring for the flock are 24/7
 - And the same things are generally true for anyone who leads or shepherds God's people
 - Or at the every least the person is expected to have a heart that is willing to do these things
 - It's part of the job to be a servant to God's people, but you can't serve people and take advantage of them at the same time
 - In Israel's day, the shepherds saw their positions of power as opportunity for wealth and comfort
 - They were taking advantage of the sheep, consuming them, and taking their wool, so to speak
 - Those who were sick were not being healed, those who were broken were not bound and those scattered were not brought back
- In terms of the analogy, the Lord is saying that as the people wandered away from the Lord and were harmed by their sins, the leadership did nothing to rescue God's people
 - They didn't chase after them, correct their mistakes, counsel them on better ways and lead them in a better direction

- Instead, they manipulated the people, became rich from them and ultimately used them
- They treated them without care or love, dominating the sheep rather than protecting them
- Without a true shepherd, the flock of Israel became food for beasts and were scattered
 - That was an apt description of Israel in exile
 - They were scattered from the land, consumed by violence and disease because their shepherds mistreated them
 - And even now the Lord says there was no one to search for them
- It's even remarkable that the people of God survive, it's a miracle actually
 - They are outside their land, isolated and in captivity and without leadership
 - Under those circumstances they shouldn't survive, yet by God's power they will
- And now, in the first message of restoration, the Lord begins to tell His people that they won't be without a shepherd forever

Ezek. 34:7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

Ezek. 34:8 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;

Ezek. 34:9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

Ezek. 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.'""

Ezek. 34:11 For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.

Ezek. 34:12 "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.

[Ezek. 34:13](#) "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land.

[Ezek. 34:14](#) "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

[Ezek. 34:15](#) "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD.

[Ezek. 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.

- First, before the Lord may raise up a better shepherd, He must dispense with the corrupt shepherds
 - So in v.10 the Lord begins to tell Israel's corrupt leaders what they can expect
 - The Lord is the ultimate Shepherd of His people, so that even when corrupt men lead His people, the Lord remains concerned
 - And more than concerned, He remains engaged in their care
 - He will oppose the corrupt leadership, whether the kings or elders or priests of Israel
 - And rather than raising up better leaders over His people, the Lord says He will personally take over leading His people
 - He says in v.11 that He will search for His sheep and regather them
 - The Lord says that He will bring all Israel back, and as they return they will find a land that will care for them in a new way
 - In v.13 the Lord says He will feed them on the mountains of Israel
 - And He will give them rich pastures
 - Unlike the bad leaders, the Lord will heal the sick, bind up the broken, strengthen the sick
 - And He will bring judgment to the corrupt who profited off the people

- We know that these prophecies are looking ahead to the 1,000 year reign of Christ, Who is the Shepherd
 - At Jesus' return, Israel gains a righteous shepherd Who finally serves God's people as God intended
 - And we can see this clearly by looking at internal references in this passage
 - First, the passage sets these events in the time of Tribulation
 - In vs.12 we see that reference to a cloudy, gloomy day
 - That's an allusion to the seven years of Tribulation that precedes the start of the Kingdom

Zeph. 1:14 Near is the great day of the LORD,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the LORD!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.

Zeph. 1:15 A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,

Zeph. 1:16 A day of trumpet and battle cry
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.

Zeph. 1:17 I will bring distress on men
So that they will walk like the blind,
Because they have sinned against the LORD;
And their blood will be poured out like dust
And their flesh like dung.

- And earlier Ezekiel gave us the same description

Ezek. 30:2 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,
'Wail, 'Alas for the day!'

Ezek. 30:3 "For the day is near,
Even the day of the LORD is near;

It will be a day of clouds,
A time of doom for the nations.

- The day of the Lord, a reference to the Tribulation, is a day of clouds and gloom
 - That's the time we're talking about here in Chapter 34
 - In the day of Tribulation, Israel's scattering will be brought to an end
- Secondly, notice in v.11 the Lord says that He will do it in a personal way, not through a human leader

[Is. 40:9](#) 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!"

[Is. 40:10](#) 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.

[Is. 40:11](#) 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.

- The return of Christ is described as a Shepherd coming to tend to a lost flock of Israel
 - Isaiah is speaking of the same moment as Ezekiel, when the Lord returns to give Israel what the Lord has promised
- So we cannot see this prophecy as fulfilled in some earthly leader of Israel that has come since Ezekiel's prophecy
 - Nor can this prophecy be said to be fulfilled in Jesus' first coming

- Remember in Matthew 9 we studied that the Lord looked upon Israel as a flock without a shepherd
- That's Matthew's way of telling us that Jesus' first coming wasn't a fulfillment of Ezekiel 34
- Israel's flock must await for Jesus' return to set up the Kingdom
- Furthermore, the Lord says in v.12 that He will gather the people of Israel from *all* the places where they were scattered
 - Once again, this promise cannot be understood to be fulfilled in days after the captivity or even in our day today
 - This promise means that all Jews on earth will be present in the land with their Shepherd at the same moment

Is. 11:9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.

Is. 11:10 Then in that day
The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;
And His resting place will be glorious.

Is. 11:11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord
Will again recover the second time with His hand
The remnant of His people, who will remain,
From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,
And from the islands of the sea.

Is. 11:12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations
And assemble the banished ones of Israel,
And will gather the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.

- Isaiah says that at the start of the Kingdom, the root of Jesse, a reference to Christ, will rest in a glorious place in Jerusalem
 - And at that time, the Lord will seek and find all Israel
 - All dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth, will return

- Obviously, the earth is round and doesn't have corners
- So this phrase is a euphemism meaning every part of the entire earth
- In other words, Isaiah confirms that the regathering at the start of the Kingdom will be a complete return of all Israel from everywhere
 - But also notice this will be the "second time" that a regathering happens
 - We know there have been multiple minor re-gatherings over history
 - But in prior re-gatherings, like the one that followed the exile to Babylon, the return was limited in range and in the number of people
- But Isaiah says there will be two *worldwide* re-gatherings of Jews back into their land, the greater coming at the end of Tribulation
 - The one we see happening today is the first worldwide regathering
 - It's the first time that Jews from all over the world have come back into the land
 - This regathering started at the end of the 19th century and continues today
 - Ezekiel told us earlier that this regathering would happen in preparation for Israel to experience Tribulation

Ezek. 20:33 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

Ezek. 20:34 "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

Ezek. 20:35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

Ezek. 20:36 "As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you," declares the Lord GOD.

- The Lord promised to regather His people from their worldwide scattering for the purpose of bringing them under judgment

- This time is approaching, and the present regathering of Israel is a sign that the Tribulation is coming
- But after that period of judgment, the second regathering happens
 - A new regathering will be necessary after the turmoil of the Tribulation scatters Israel outside the land again
 - Some end up in places like Petra, others are hiding outside the land
 - And still others are in Heaven with Jesus awaiting His Second Coming
 - But after the Second Coming, the Lord brings all Jews together

[Matt. 24:29](#) “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

[Matt. 24:30](#) “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

[Matt. 24:31](#) “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- So the present-day regathering of Israel that we are witnessing now is merely a warm up act to the event Ezekiel is describing
 - But even today, notice that the people of God are choosing to return to their land without a single human leader prompting it
 - So even now we see the hand of God acting as a Shepherd of His people rather than human leaders drawing the people back
- But then the Lord tells those leaders of Israel who have misbehaved, that there will be an accounting one day

[Ezek. 34:17](#) “As for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats.

[Ezek. 34:18](#) ‘Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures? Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet?’

Ezek. 34:19 'As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!'"

Ezek. 34:20 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them, "Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

Ezek. 34:21 "Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad,

Ezek. 34:22 therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.

- Notice that the Lord says that even within the sheep and the goats there will be a judgment
 - He says He will judge between the sheep and another (non-sheep)
 - Between a ram (sheep) and a male goat
 - In v.18 the Lord asks, is it a small thing that Israel's leaders would enjoy the best of the land that the Lord gave to His people?
 - Yet at the same time, they made it impossible for God's people to enjoy it themselves
 - By their misdeeds, they led Israel into idolatry and other sin – leading the nation to suffer exile
 - So the Lord says He will ultimately judge between the lean sheep, that is the people who suffered, and the fat sheep, their corrupt leaders
 - This is a sober reminder that the Lord is aware of how men and women in leadership deal with His flock
 - And when leaders fail to take that responsibility seriously, when they fail to shepherd the flock properly, they are accountable to God
 - That accounting may not happen in this age, but it will happen
 - And better that it happen in the next age, when the consequences are even more severe
 - The first moment of this accounting happens at the Lord's Second Coming, as Matthew describes

Matt. 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

[Matt. 25:32](#) "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

[Matt. 25:33](#) and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

[Matt. 25:34](#) "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

[Matt. 25:41](#) "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

[Matt. 25:42](#) for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

- In that parable, the Lord uses the quality of care provided to His people as a measure of whether someone loved Him
- This is another reference back to Ezekiel, where the Lord says that those who refuse to care for the flock will be judged like goats
- Finally, the Lord says He will put an end to improper leadership over His flock one day

[Ezek. 34:23](#) "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.

[Ezek. 34:24](#) "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

[Ezek. 34:25](#) "I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

[Ezek. 34:26](#) "I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.

[Ezek. 34:27](#) "Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

[Ezek. 34:28](#) "They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid.

[Ezek. 34:29](#) "I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.

[Ezek. 34:30](#) "Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares the Lord GOD.

[Ezek. 34:31](#) "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

- In that future day the people of God will receive a new shepherd who will care for them as God intended
 - That shepherd will be David
 - This is not a reference to Jesus...this is a literal reference to King David resurrected to rule over Israel again as God promised to him
 - Notice in v.24 we're told that David will be prince over the people of God
 - In his earlier day, David was the king, but in this Kingdom age Jesus is the King
 - So the Lord calls David prince reflecting that he occupies a role under Jesus
 - David rules as prince over the people of Israel in the Kingdom as part of the government that Jesus establishes on the earth
- Furthermore, the Lord will establish a new covenant with Israel, a peace covenant
 - Notice in v.25, the Lord will remove all harmful beasts from the land during the Kingdom
 - So the people will live in peace and security in the wilderness
 - And in v.26 the lands around the mountain of God in Jerusalem will be a blessing for the people
 - The land will always get rain in the proper season, meaning no more drought and famine as a result of judgment
 - All the plants of the field will produce abundantly and without fail
 - Furthermore, the people of Israel will not be victim to oppression or attack, as they will have no enemies

- Because of the glory and peace of that time, the people of God will all know the Lord and be His people
- And the sheep of that field will be God's people in a true and loving sense
- And they will finally have a Shepherd who cares for them
- That's just a taste of the glory that's coming for Israel
 - When we get back next week, we'll come back to this description to fill in some details