

## **Dr. Leslie Allen, Daniel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31) Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. Leslie Allen's Lecture 16 focuses on Ezekiel 34:1-31, interpreting it as a series of messages using the metaphor of sheep and shepherds. The lecture explores how Ezekiel builds upon earlier prophetic texts, particularly Jeremiah 23, to critique Israel's leaders. Allen explains the dual application of the shepherding metaphor, both political (kings) and theological (God's covenant with Israel). The lecture discusses God's judgment of negligent shepherd-kings and the promise that God himself will assume responsibility for his flock. It further analyzes how Ezekiel addresses social exploitation among exiles, promising a future Davidic king to restore unity and security. Finally, Allen connects Ezekiel's themes to New Testament depictions of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, drawing parallels in John, Luke, and Matthew.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Ezekiel).**



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on16.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31)**

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Leslie Allen's lecture on Ezekiel 34, "Israel's Good Shepherd."

#### **Briefing Document: Ezekiel 34 - Israel's Good Shepherd**

##### **Overview:**

Dr. Allen's lecture focuses on Ezekiel 34, a chapter rich in the metaphor of sheep and shepherd. He breaks down the chapter into three main messages (verses 1-16, 17-22, and 23-31), exploring the political and theological implications of this metaphor, particularly in the context of the exiles in Babylon. The chapter critiques the failures of the pre-exilic kings of Judah (the "bad shepherds"), promises that God himself will take on the role of the Good Shepherd, addresses social injustices within the exilic community, and looks forward to a restored monarchy under a Davidic king. The lecture concludes by drawing parallels between Ezekiel 34 and the New Testament, highlighting how Jesus embodies the Good Shepherd figure.

##### **Main Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. Critique of the "Bad Shepherds" (Pre-Exilic Kings):**

- Ezekiel 34 draws heavily from Jeremiah 23:1-2, which condemns the kings of Judah for scattering and neglecting their flock (the people).
- The kings are accused of self-service: "You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the sheep." (Ezekiel 34:3)
- They failed to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strayed, or seek the lost. Instead, they ruled with "force and harshness." (Ezekiel 34:4)
- Dr. Allen emphasizes the rhetorical force of this address to the kings, even though they are dead, highlighting the continuing impact of their actions.
- "The end of Judah's pre-exilic monarchy is interpreted as a necessary reprisal for gross incompetence on the part of the shepherd kings."

### 1. **God as the Good Shepherd:**

- Verses 11-16 mark a shift, promising that God will take over the responsibilities of the monarchy and care for his sheep: "I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out." (Ezekiel 34:11)
- This reflects the theological use of the shepherd metaphor, representing the covenant relationship between God and Israel, as seen in Psalms 23, 80, and 100.
- God promises to seek the lost, bring back the strayed, bind up the injured, and strengthen the weak (Ezekiel 34:16), directly reversing the failures of the previous rulers.
- The return to the land is depicted as a time of rich grazing, security, and blessing, emphasizing God's direct care for his people.

### 1. **Social Justice within the Exilic Community:**

- Verses 17-22 address injustices among the exiles themselves, where some (the "fat sheep") were exploiting others (the "lean sheep").
- God promises to judge between the sheep, saving the flock from being ravaged: "I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep." (Ezekiel 34:20)
- This highlights that God sees the exilic community as not homogeneous, but containing both exploiters and victims, and that He has to do something about that situation."

### 1. **Restoration of the Monarchy under a Davidic King:**

- Verses 23-24 introduce the promise of a future shepherd, "my servant David," who will feed and lead the people.
- "I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them. He shall feed them and be their shepherd." (Ezekiel 34:23)
- This echoes earlier prophetic promises of a restored Davidic monarchy, one that will uphold justice and righteousness. This figure was referenced again later in Ezekiel 37:24-25
- Dr. Allen emphasizes that this Davidic king will be a "servant" of God, a vassal king obedient to God's covenant, in contrast to the pre-exilic kings who acted independently.

### 1. **Covenant of Peace and Security:**

- Verses 25-30 describe a "covenant of peace" that God will make with his people, banishing wild animals and providing security in the land.
- The key word here is "secure/securely," which appears repeatedly, contrasting with the anxiety and loss of the exile.
- This section draws on Leviticus 26, referencing the Exodus and looking forward to a "second Exodus" from Babylon, where God will break the bars of their yoke.
- "They shall be no more 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."  
(Ezekiel 34:28)
- The full covenant formula is restated: "They, the house of Israel, are my people."  
(Ezekiel 34:30)

### 1. **New Testament Parallels:**

- Ezekiel 34 provides the source material for the shepherd and sheep imagery used by Jesus in the New Testament, particularly in John 10:1-18.
- Jesus embodies the Good Shepherd, doing the will of the Father and having a close relationship with his flock.
- Luke 19:10 ("The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost") echoes Ezekiel 34:16.
- The parable of judgment in Matthew 25:32-46, where the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, draws from Ezekiel 34:17.

### **Key Quotes:**

- "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, says the Lord." (referencing Jeremiah 23:1, which is the basis for Ezekiel 34)
- "You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the sheep." (Ezekiel 34:3 - indictment of the bad shepherds)
- "I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out." (Ezekiel 34:11 - God's promise to be the Good Shepherd)

- "I will seek the lost, I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and I will feed them with justice." (Ezekiel 34:16 - God reversing the failures of the kings)
- "I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep." (Ezekiel 34:20 - God's promise of justice within the exilic community)
- "I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them. He shall feed them and be their shepherd." (Ezekiel 34:23 - promise of a restored Davidic king)
- "You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 34:31 - restatement of the covenant relationship)

### **Conclusion:**

Ezekiel 34 is a complex chapter that uses the powerful metaphor of sheep and shepherd to address themes of leadership, justice, covenant, and restoration. It critiques the failures of the past, offers hope for the future, and challenges the exiles to live responsibly in the present. Its imagery and themes resonate throughout the Old and New Testaments, particularly in the figure of Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

## 4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31)

### Ezekiel 34: Israel's Good Shepherd - Study Guide

#### I. Key Concepts & Themes:

- **Shepherd Metaphor:** Understanding its dual application – political (kings responsible for their subjects) and theological (God's covenant relationship with Israel).
- **Judgment & Salvation:** Recognizing the cycle of accusing negligent shepherd kings and then promising God's direct care for the exiled people.
- **Responsibility:** Understanding the responsibilities placed upon both the leaders (kings/shepherds) and the exiles.
- **Justice:** Recognizing the ideal of justice and righteousness within kingship and God's intention to enact justice.
- **Covenant Relationship:** Understanding the significance of "I will be their God, and they will be my people" as the covenant formula.
- **Restoration & Security:** Recognizing the promise of return to the land and the importance of security for the exiled people.
- **Social Justice within the Exile:** Recognizing the issues within the exilic community such as the exploitation of the weak.
- **New Testament Connections:** Recognizing the parallels between Ezekiel 34 and the ministry of Jesus, particularly in John 10, Luke 19, and Matthew 25.
- **"Day of the Lord":** Understanding the significance of the "Day of the Lord" and how it was used in Ezekiel.

#### II. Quiz (Short Answer)

1. What are the two primary applications of the shepherd metaphor in the Old Testament, and how does Jeremiah 23:1 combine them?
2. According to Ezekiel 34, what specific actions did the shepherd kings fail to do for their flock, leading to judgment?
3. How does Ezekiel 34:11-16 shift the focus from judgment to salvation, and what specific promises does God make to the exiles?

4. What is the significance of the phrase "I will be their God, and they will be my people" in the context of Ezekiel 34, and where does this come into play in the text?
5. According to Ezekiel 34, what social injustices were occurring *within* the exile community, and how does God plan to address them?
6. In Ezekiel 34:23-24, what is the significance of the phrase "my servant David," and what does it imply about the restored monarchy?
7. What is the importance of the word "securely" in Ezekiel 34:25-30, and what does it promise the exiled people?
8. How does Ezekiel 34 draw parallels to the Exodus narrative, and what does this imply about the exiles' situation?
9. According to Dr. Allen, how does Jesus draw from Ezekiel 34 in John 10 to describe his relationship with his flock?
10. How does the parable of the separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 relate to the themes found in Ezekiel 34?

### III. Quiz Answer Key

1. The two primary applications are political (kings responsible for their subjects) and theological (God's covenant relationship with Israel). Jeremiah 23:1 combines them by criticizing the (political) kings for failing to care for the (theological) sheep of God's pasture.
2. The shepherd kings failed to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strayed, and seek the lost. Instead, they ruled with force and harshness, prioritizing their own needs over the flock's welfare.
3. The focus shifts as God promises to take over the responsibilities of the monarchy and care for the sheep directly. He promises to seek out, rescue, and feed the sheep, ensuring they lie down in good grazing land, reversing the irresponsibility of the human kings.
4. This phrase represents the covenant relationship between God and Israel. It signifies God's commitment to protect and provide for his people, with Ezekiel referencing it in verses 24 and 30, reinforcing this concept in the context of the coming restoration.

5. Powerful exiles (the "fat sheep") were exploiting weaker ones by shoving them out of the pasture and muddied the drinking water. God promised to judge between the sheep, saving his flock from those who were victimizing them.
6. The phrase emphasizes the king's role as a servant of God, distinguishing him from the pre-exilic kings who acted independently. As a vassal king who obeys God, he will be obedient, implying a just and righteous rule aligned with God's will.
7. "Securely" (and related words such as "safety") promises an end to the anxiety and instability of exile, offering reassurance and comfort to those who had lost everything. It counters the trauma of invasion, deportation, and loss of property.
8. Ezekiel 34 draws parallels through the mention of breaking the bars of the yoke, echoing the Exodus from Egypt. Here, Babylon is seen as the new Egypt, and the return to the promised land is portrayed as a second Exodus, representing the end of their exile.
9. Jesus draws from Ezekiel 34 to describe himself as the Good Shepherd who knows his own sheep and whose own sheep know him. Jesus does the will of the Father and is obedient to him.
10. The separation of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25 echoes Ezekiel 34:17, where God judges between sheep and sheep. It emphasizes the role of Jesus as the agent of divine judgement.

#### **IV. Essay Questions:**

1. Explore the significance of the shepherd metaphor in Ezekiel 34, analyzing its political and theological dimensions and how they contribute to the overall message of the chapter.
2. Analyze the cycle of judgment and salvation in Ezekiel 34, explaining how the prophet uses this pattern to address the failures of the past and offer hope for the future.
3. Discuss the theme of responsibility in Ezekiel 34, examining the responsibilities of the shepherd kings and the exiles themselves, and how this theme contributes to the chapter's message.



4. Compare and contrast the roles of the "bad shepherds" (pre-exilic kings) and the promised "servant David" in Ezekiel 34, explaining how the ideal of kingship is redefined in the context of exile and restoration.
5. Analyze the New Testament parallels to Ezekiel 34, particularly in the Gospels, and explain how the figure of Jesus embodies the ideals of the Good Shepherd.

## V. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Shepherd (Metaphor):** A symbol used in the Old Testament to represent both human kings responsible for their subjects and God's care for Israel.
- **Exile:** The forced removal of the Judean people from their homeland to Babylon following the Babylonian conquest.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement between God and his people, establishing mutual obligations and promises.
- **Covenant Formula:** The phrase "I will be their God, and they will be my people," encapsulating the essence of the covenant relationship.
- **Davidic Dynasty:** The line of kings descended from King David, who ruled over Judah and were promised an everlasting kingdom.
- **Justice:** Moral equity; fairness; righteousness. A key ideal expected of Israelite kings.
- **"Day of the Lord":** A prophetic phrase referring to God's intervention in judgment upon the covenant people for their disobedience.
- **Second Exodus:** The concept of the return from exile as a new act of deliverance, echoing the original Exodus from Egypt.
- **Fat Sheep:** In Ezekiel 34, a metaphor for the powerful and exploitative members of the exile community who mistreated the weaker ones.
- **Vassal King:** A ruler who is subordinate to a more powerful overlord and bound by treaty to obey them.

## **5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 16, Israel's Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:1-31), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions: Ezekiel 34 and the Metaphor of the Good Shepherd**

#### **1. What is the main theme of Ezekiel 34?**

Ezekiel 34 primarily focuses on the failures of Israel's leaders (kings) as shepherds of the people and contrasts this with God's promise to become the true shepherd, caring for and restoring the flock of Israel. It addresses the neglect and exploitation by the "shepherds" (kings), God's judgment against them, and his promise to personally tend to his sheep, ensuring their well-being and security.

#### **2. How does Ezekiel 34 relate to earlier prophetic texts, particularly Jeremiah 23?**

Ezekiel 34 builds upon the message found in Jeremiah 23:1-2, which also critiques the "shepherds" (kings) for scattering and neglecting the flock. Ezekiel expands on this theme, elaborating on the kings' failings and the consequences for the people. Both texts condemn the leadership for their role in the deportations and suffering of the people.

#### **3. What are the two main applications of the shepherding metaphor in the Old Testament, and how does Ezekiel 34 combine them?**

The shepherding metaphor is used in two primary ways: first, to represent human kings responsible for their subjects (political usage), reflecting common ancient Near Eastern practice; and second, as a theological metaphor for the covenant relationship between God and Israel. Ezekiel 34 combines both, criticizing the human "shepherds" (kings) for failing to fulfill their responsibilities to God's "sheep" (the people), while emphasizing God's ultimate role as the true shepherd.

#### **4. According to Ezekiel, how did the "shepherd kings" fail in their duties?**

The shepherd kings are accused of feeding themselves instead of the flock, neglecting the weak, sick, injured, strayed, and lost. They ruled with force and harshness, leading to the scattering and suffering of the people. They exploited the people for their own benefit, prioritizing their own comfort and power over the welfare of the nation.

**5. How does God promise to remedy the failures of the "shepherd kings" in Ezekiel 34?**

God promises to personally take on the role of the shepherd. He will seek out the lost, bring back the strayed, bind up the injured, strengthen the weak, and feed the flock with justice. God will rescue them from all the places they have been scattered and bring them back to their home pasture, providing rich grazing land and security.

**6. What is the significance of the phrase "day of clouds and thick darkness" in Ezekiel 34:12?**

The phrase "day of clouds and thick darkness" refers to the "day of the Lord," a prophetic term used to describe God's intervention in judgment. In the context of Ezekiel 34:12, it alludes to the fall of Jerusalem and the exile, but it is framed as being in the past, signifying that the worst is over and God is now acting to restore his people.

**7. What social issues among the exiles does Ezekiel 34:17-22 address, and how does God intend to resolve them?**

This passage addresses the exploitation and mistreatment of the weaker members of the exilic community by the more powerful and influential ("fat sheep"). God promises to judge between the sheep, rescuing the victims from the oppressors and ensuring justice and equity within the community, even during the exile.

**8. How does Ezekiel 34 connect to the New Testament, particularly in the teachings of Jesus?**

Ezekiel 34 provides a foundational background for Jesus' teachings about the good shepherd. Jesus draws upon this imagery to describe his own ministry as one who seeks out and saves the lost, cares for his flock, and ultimately lays down his life for them. Key passages include John 10:1-18 (Jesus as the Good Shepherd), Luke 19:10 (seeking and saving the lost), and Matthew 25:32-46 (separating sheep from goats in judgment).