

Showers of Blessing – Ezk 34:23-31

In our last message, we heard God's judgment on the selfish shepherds of Israel who enriched themselves at the expense of the people they were supposed to be caring for. After God declared His judgment on them, He then revealed Himself as the true shepherd, who would rescue and feed His sheep. This is where the book of Ezekiel really makes a transition from judgment to hope. The same Holy God who must punish sin is also the God of love and mercy, who wants to bestow His blessings on the people He has created. As we have pointed out before, even though Israel was the chosen people of God, His message of salvation was not only for them, but through them to the whole world. I want to pick up where we left off last time, as God makes a wonderful promise to His people Israel in verse 23.

"And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken." Back in 2 Sam 5:2, the elders of Israel told David, "In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" In 2 Sam 7:12-13, God said to David, "I will raise up your offspring after you...and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." God had promised David that one of his own offspring would become the great shepherd-king over Israel, with a kingdom that would last forever.

When we look at the New Testament, we find the fulfillment of this promise. In Matt 1:21, Joseph was told by the angel that Mary would bear a son, "and you shall call his name Jesus (Yeshua), for he will save his people from their sins." Joseph and Mary were both descendants of David, so there was a literal fulfillment of these things. Joseph was also given the further confirmation from Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth, in which the son born would be called "Immanuel," or "God with us." When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Mt 21:9) They acknowledged Jesus' lineage and the prophecy that went with it, calling for Him to save them.

In this passage, Ezekiel says that God Himself will be the shepherd coming to rescue, or save, His flock. The word is *hosati*, like the *Hosanna* that the people cried out. It comes from the root word *yasha*, and its noun form is *yeshua*. Throughout the OT, we find this word "Yeshua" translated as salvation, such as Is 25:9, "It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him: let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'"

Now, let's get back to Ezekiel's prophecy, v. 25-ff. What would be the result of this shepherd-king's arrival? A covenant of peace for the land. This is one of the reasons the Jews were so confused when Jesus came and claimed to be the Messiah. He did the miracles that were expected, and was from the family of David, and the timing was right, but where was the covenant of peace? What they could not have known at that time was there were to be two advents of the Messiah: one as the suffering servant, to bring salvation from sin, and then a second one as the glorious king, and this is what these verses are pointing to. (25-31)

When Christ comes again, to establish His glorious kingdom, the result will be peace between people and animals, abundance and prosperity with crops, and peace between Israel and the gentile nations. Until the true King arrives, there will be no lasting peace for Israel, there will be crop failures and pestilence, because we are still living under the curse of sin.

The last thing this prophecy points out is that Israel, who for so long has not recognized their Messiah, will finally know Him. In Ezk 34:27, it is “when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslave them.” Remember that verse I just read from Isaiah 25? “It will be said **on that day...**” The future Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns as the glorious Savior and King. Then they will know He is their God, and they are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Right now, during the time of the Gentiles, 2 Cor 3:14-16 says their minds are hardened, and there is a veil over their hearts, which is only removed when one turns to the Lord. Individual Israelites come to salvation as they hear the gospel today, but one day, when they see the glorious return of Christ, all Israel will recognize and follow their King.

What a great message of hope that God has given to His people, Israel! And what a great blessing we have, to be added in as His sheep, and to know Him as our God. He has showered us with love and grace. Jesus said in John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Then in v. 16, “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” We are those other sheep, added into the people of God by His grace. This first part of the prophecy has been fulfilled, and we can look forward to the day when all of the rest will be fulfilled, and we will enjoy the peace and prosperity of His kingdom forever, united with His chosen people through faith in Jesus, the Shepherd-Savior-King.