

The Shepherd King: Hope for the Scattered and Broken

By Jason Wade

*Jason Wade, preparing to pursue a PhD
in Old Testament Hebrew Biblical studies in Scotland,
delivered a sermon at Christ Community Church, Chuluota, Florida,
on July 6th, 2025.*

My name is Jason Wade, as Mark just said, and I'm excited to worship with you and to bring God's word. We're going to be in Ezekiel 34

So if you have your Bibles, I want to ask you to stand because it's going to be a longer chapter. We're in Ezekiel 34 and we will be looking at the Lord as our shepherd this morning. So hear God's word - this Word is living and breathing. It's alive. It's meant for us today.

The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; 6 they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. 7 "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. 11 "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among

his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.[a] I will feed them in justice. 17 “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet? 20 “Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, 22 I will rescue[b] my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. 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. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken. 25 “I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. 26 And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. 27 And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. 28 They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. 29 And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. 30 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God. 31 And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God.”

This is God's Holy Word, and he has given it to us because He loves us.

Some of you may have heard about the TAM Luong cave rescue in Thailand back in 2018. This was a soccer team that was trapped inside the cave for 17 days. The team was originally out there for a fun day's excursion, and then it went south really quickly. They went to explore these caves for a fun day out in their lives. That changed forever as they went cave exploring. The weather behind the scenes played a big role. It started to rain, it started to pour, and then a heavy monsoon began to approach and block the entrance to the one way out. So to survive, they had to go deeper and deeper and deeper into the caves so that they could find higher ground. The caves were dark and tight, and they began to realize they were stuck. They were trapped. Now these boys were 12 to 17 years old.

It was hopeless. They couldn't swim out of this one alone. They needed help. Not only did they need help, but they needed experts. The Thai Navy SEALs were involved. But even that wasn't enough. They needed two expert divers by the names of John Valathan and Rick Stanton, and they were expert divers. These divers were pushed to their limits themselves. It took them time and energy. But eventually they found the boys. Then came the hard part, getting them out.

The normal options were waiting for the wet season to stop digging them out from the top or teaching them to be divers themselves. But these options, one by one, would not fit the situation. They had to be creative. They called doctors and other divers until they came up with their plan, which was to sedate them and bring them out one by one. And they did it. They saved the whole team. These top divers risked their lives to navigate those dark passages and strong currents. And despite these challenges, they were able to save all 12 lives, the whole team. They were trapped, and they had no way out. They couldn't get out themselves.

Have you ever reached a point in your life when you thought you couldn't get out of something on your own? That you couldn't run on your own strength that had already failed? This passage today reminds us of who our Shepherd is, because the Lord is our shepherd King. We're invited to follow Him with our whole lives. We're invited to trust Him, to approach him and to realize we're not really in control. And the most dangerous times in our lives is when we think we are. But this passage reminds us of who our shepherd King is, and we'll see this in three ways. The shepherd King is the deliverer, the shepherd King is the Messiah, and the shepherd King is covenantal.

And before we see how Ezekiel 34 shows us our shepherd King. I want to first look at the background of this book to show you what's going on. Ezekiel prophesied to the people of God in exile. That means they were taken out of their homes for 70 years and brought into a foreign land.

Ezekiel himself is not just a prophet, but he's also a priest. In the beginning of the book, you will see that it's the 30th year of his life, and that signifies priesthood in

the Old Testament, and this exilic Prophet begins his journey in while he's in exile. He becomes a prophet while he's in exile, and if you're new to the Bible, or if you're new to Christianity, Judah, the people of God were taken out of their homes, and separated for 70 years. That's a lifetime. The people of God were worshiping other gods, and because God is a just God, He is punishing them by sending them into exile.

Now, when we read these passages about God's punishment, it could be very scary, right? But something to keep in mind is God never delights in punishment. He never delights in judgment, but he always delights in showing mercy, and actually, every time he does display His justice, he gives a chance for repentance to turn back to himself

In this foreign land, this prophet, Ezekiel, was prophesying to the people of God, that God has not left them alone in exile, but he was actually with them, bringing his word to them. He is their shepherd king, and he has not forgotten them. If you have your Bibles, would you turn back to the text verses three and five and verse 10?

You eat the fat. You clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the fat ones. But you do not feed the sheep the weak. You have not strengthened the sick. You have not healed the injured. You have not bound up the strays. You have not brought back the lost. You have not stopped with force and harshness. You have ruled them so they were scattered because there was no shepherd and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered. Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds. I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding of the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them.

This chapter begins with a description of Israel's shepherds, which were their kings at the time in the ancient Near East, where the Old Testament takes place. Kings were known as shepherds. So don't think little shepherd boy. Think warrior kings.

A good shepherd takes care of his people. He puts their needs first, because he is their king. But that's not what the kings of Israel are doing. Although a few have been faithful, most of them have been unfaithful. Some have been puppet kings to the other nations. They have just done what the other nations have wanted. Some have encouraged idolatry. They've turned away from God, their shepherd. They are described as taking away the milk, imagery that depicts the taking away of nourishment from the sheep. They're also described as removing the wool, most likely ripping off the wool from the sheep. They're also slaughtering the sheep and the scripture says they have no care for their flock. They have no care

for the stray. They are feeding on the sheep. They only care for themselves, even at the cost of the sheep.

One commentator writes that to have such leaders is worse than being shepherdless. It's better to have no leaders at all, than to have these leaders. But the Lord does not forget his people. He is their deliverer. He announces this delivery from the evil shepherd. And later on, we'll see the goal of this deliverance is because He is our God. The Lord does not leave his people, but instead, moves towards them. The Apostle Paul talks about this in Romans eight:

What then shall we say in response to these, these things, if God is for us, who can be against us, He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen is God who justifies, who, then is the one who condemns. No one, Christ, Jesus, who died more than that, who is raised to life, is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ so trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword.

This is Christ Jesus, our shepherd, King, who is the one who delivers us. He cares deeply for his people. He seeks out the one who goes away, leaves the 99 to chase the one. And what does this mean for Christians today?

Well, first, it means our Shepherd King is our deliverer. We can hope in His salvation, hope in the work of Jesus Christ, that He died for his bride the church. It means to trust them when things are hard and when it's so hard to trust it means to pray for strength: "Lord I believe, but help my unbelief." I pray that regularly. It's a prayer that says, "Lord I believe, I want to hope, but it's hard to reach out in those times of darkness."

Instead of avoiding God, another is to reach out to the church, not just Pastor Mark, but maybe your small group, or those who you talk to after the service. This is why community is so important. We need each other. We need each other for the hard times. We need each other when we're weak. I wouldn't be standing here today if it weren't for the Church of Jesus Christ. If it weren't for the people of God stepping into my life. We need each other.

And when I think about trusting and hoping in someone, I often think of The Shawshank Redemption. Now I will say I don't condone the entire movie, but there are some helpful parts in it. "Shawshank" is a movie about life in prison, but it's really about hope. Spoiler alert, the whole movie, the main character, Andy Dufresne, is teaching his friend Red how to hope. Red, throughout the movie, is telling Andy that to hope is a dangerous thing - that the hope in prison is the most dangerous thing.

Andy himself gets beaten up. He gets thrown into the hole. He gets wrongly accused at the beginning of the movie. It would make sense that Andy himself would not want to hope, but he becomes the teacher to Red, from buying him a harmonica to playing classical music on the public address system. Andy is teaching Red, his friend, how to hope. And at the end of the movie, when Red finally gets out, and finally thinking about giving up on life, Andy writes him a letter, and it reads: "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies."

This is all the more true for the Christian, whatever life has thrown at you. We don't live without hope, but in one we can trust, one who is our deliverer, who comes for us and for the Christian. We don't hope the same way unbelievers do. We don't hope that we'll get the raise. We don't hope that we'll get the house. Those things are good to hope for. But this hope is not contingent. It is finished. Jesus Christ has given us new life and invites us to be heavenly minded. Put his kingdom first, because he is our shepherd King. This hope will happen. This hope has happened. The shepherd King has delivered us on the cross.

So that Shepherd King is our deliverer, and the shepherd King is also the Messiah. Look back with me at the text in verses 20 to 24:

Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them, "Behold, I myself would judge between the fat sheep and the Lean sheep, because you push with a side and shoulder and thrust all the weak with your horns till you have scattered them abroad. I will rescue my flock. They shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep, 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. My servant David shall be prince among them. I the Lord. I have spoken."

These verses we've just read are known as the Messianic text of this passage. I want to point out five things about what we just read concerning this coming Messiah.

First, he is chosen by Yahweh, not by the people. In your Bibles, you might notice that the word "Lord" is in all caps in some places and it's in the singular. In others, when it's in all caps, it's actually pointing out God's divine name, often known as Yahweh, a name that's his personal name. And this messianic figure is chosen by Yahweh by his personal nature. In the history of Israel, their problem was they never made Yahweh their king. They never made the Lord their king. They chose with their own eyes. They chose Saul because he was the tallest among them, but he turned out to be unfaithful. This coming messiah will not be chosen by the people, but rather the Lord Jesus, Christ Himself.

Second, it's in the singular. This means that there won't be many kings, but rather one shepherd.

Third, this Messiah is a servant of Yahweh. The Lord Jesus says, "I did not come to be served, but rather to serve and give my life for a ransom of many." He puts His sheep first. He doesn't prey on his sheep. He sacrifices himself for the sheep.

Fourth, he is David. It talks about David as the coming shepherd in the history of Israel, David's life has long been over. Are they talking about a resurrection of David? No, they're not. They're talking about the line of David. This king will come from the line of David. In Matthew's gospel, we see this connection in the first chapter, where David's name equals 14.

In Hebrew, they don't have numbers like we do. They use their letters. And so David has 14. In the genealogy that appears at the beginning of Matthew, There are 14 names before David and 14 names after David, leading to Jesus, showing that Jesus is fulfilling this prophecy, that Jesus is coming to be the Son of David. And the son of David is better than David.

And fifth, he's a prince, or, more precisely, a ruler. Christ is the Prince of Peace. The scriptures have this word "ruler" or Prince, because the author is setting this Messiah apart from the other kings in this time period. The Kings at this time were wicked, and this coming messiah is good. He is good, and he is with them. The people of God, remember, are in exile, and they are not alone. Their wicked rulers are devouring them, and they are in need of the Messiah, and God has given them a word from himself.

What does this mean for us today? It means we must live for the Messiah. Just like the people in exile, we too are longing for the coming Messiah to return. We live in a world with hardship, sadness, anxiety and sin. We so easily get consumed by the things of this world. And the calling for us Christians is to live for the Messiah. The remnant of Israel, who had chosen to follow the Lord, even in the worst conditions, is our calling as well.

We probably all would say we want to live for the Lord, but how do we do so? How do we live for our Lord, Jesus Christ? There are so many things to say, and nothing I tell you today will be new, but here are a couple ways we can live for God in the day to day. Read Scripture daily.

I know a good friend of mine who reads a chapter of the Bible to his kids every day, and he has done so since they were babies. And he told me his daughter has heard the whole Bible twice in her life. I know another friend who plays the Bible in his car on the way to work. He finishes the Bible twice a year.

Another way to follow Christ in the day-to-day is to pray when things are good. Pray especially when things are good. For me, it's far easier to pray when things are hard. In fact, hardships are sometimes a way for God to bring us closer to him, right? It's a gift that points in our lives. But pray when things are good. Pray

with your family. Pray in the car. Be in prayer daily. It's amazing. I feel like every time I'm here, you do the Lord's Prayer, and I might be part of your weekly routine, but lets pray the Lord's Prayer. When you don't know what to pray, pray the Lord's Prayer.

Also: Be a holy people set apart for God. And what I mean by that is, in a culture, we should have some different rhythms. That is based on our calling, what God has called us to in our lives.

I used to do youth ministry at the church I worked at in Citrus County. And when I did youth ministry, we had a couple of young families who would serve at night. They had kids that were two, five and four, and if you have had young kids, you know that's a big sacrifice to break up the rhythm of your week.

Now, rhythms are good. And I'm not saying "don't have rhythms," but I'm saying that they sacrificed their rhythm and their time to pour into middle school and high school students to show them Jesus week in and week out.

Where is that in your own life? Where is God? I ask you to break your normal rhythms of your culture, because if you do so, you'll find life. You'll find that in service, you're walking with Jesus, you're following him. And we won't be perfect at this, but living for the Messiah is taking part of his story and his calling to trust Him and to live for him.

So the shepherd is our Messiah. And lastly, the shepherd is covenantal. Would you look back with me at the text one more time? Ezekiel, 34:25 to 31:

"I will make them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I'll make them in the places all around my hill a blessing. And I'll send down the showers in their season. They shall be showers of blessing, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land, and they shall know that I am the Lord when I break the bars of their yoke and deliver them from the hand of those who have enslaved them, they shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beast of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely and none shall make them afraid. Now provide for them renowned plantations, so they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they the house of Israel and my people," declares the Lord GOD. "And you are my sheep, human, sheep of the pasture, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

Throughout these verses, you see a personal nature to God: "I, myself, will be their God, and they shall be my people." We call that the heartbeat of Covenant

Theology. This relationship, this “I will be their God. I will identify myself with these people,” this is what God says: “And they shall be my people.” He’s creating a covenant of peace.

A covenant of peace not just meaning that there won’t be any war, but that there’ll be wholeness. There’ll be completeness. The passage talks about rain coming down because of the Lord

Rain in the ancient Near East is life. Rain turns into crops and crops turn into food, and food turns into life. And so the other nations, they worshipped the rain gods of the ancient areas. Baal is the “rain god” of the Bible. And what God is saying is, he brings life, not these other gods, not these other idols, in our life. “And even though you’ve worshiped them, I will still be in a relationship with you, and I’ll make a covenant of peace, and I’ll promise you heaven. I’ll promise you myself.”

In John 10, it picks up on this covenantal nature. It says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.” “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as a father knows me and I. I know the Father, and I laid down my life for the sheep.”

You see the contrast between Ezekiel and John. Jesus is saying, not only will I lay down my life for the sheep, but I’m not like those who devour them. For this reason, “the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I might be may take it up again.” John 10:17: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” It’s relational. “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the shepherd’s hand, I and the Father are one.”

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. He is the covenant Shepherd, who moves towards his people in relationship. So church- run to him. Identify yourself with him. He is my God, and we are His people. He’s moving towards you.

I’ll end with a story of a hymn writer named George Matheson. Now, George Matheson is one of the greatest hymn writers, one of my favorites, and he wrote “A Love That Will Not Let Me Go.” George Matheson began to lose his eyesight in seminary, he was engaged to a woman, and she said, “I don’t want to be married to a blind man,” so she left him. So his sister began to take care of him. His sister took care of him for years, but she too became engaged, and she was about to marry. He knew that this would mean she would go to her new life, and she would leave him home alone.

On the night of his sister’s wedding, he wrote “A Love That Will Not Let Me Go.” It reads:

Oh, love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee.
I give thee back the life I owe
that in thine ocean, depths of its flow,
my richer, fuller be.

Matheson knew about his great Shepherd, who provides abundantly, who invites you to follow Him, to trust Him, to hope in him. "Take my sight and take my life. But you can never take my Shepherd Lord."

Jesus Christ, our shepherd King, provides for his people, and he does it through Jesus Christ, who came down, became man, suffered and died so that you can be invited to the feast. This is who he is, Jesus, our shepherd King, The Lord is our shepherd.

Would you pray with me?

Father, we thank you for your grace. We thank you for your kindness. We thank you for who you are, Lord. We pray that you would remind us in the day in and day out of our lives that you are with us, that you hold our right hand that you walk with us, Lord, that You are gracious, you are kind, and you are for us in Jesus name, amen, amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).