

A New Shepherd – Discussion Notes¹

(Updated 12/2019; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: Ezekiel 34:23-31

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is God has a new shepherd and many blessings for His people after their season of being punished. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to trust the blessed plans that God has for us as well as work on our sins, so we don't have to be punished.

Summary Highlights: Ezekiel declares that God will place a shepherd over His people. The Shepherd will be similar to David and take care of them. The Lord will be with His people also. There are a number of great promises made. A covenant is to be made that commits God to supplying land, food, and safety. God will also stop the scornful reputation of His people among other nations. When the things of the text are complete, the people will know their relationship with God. They will know that God is their God. And they will know that they are His people.

Key Points:

1. God's plans. Notice in vs. 23 that even as God punishes His people because of their sins, He is also planning for their blessed future and restoration. God is such a loving God. We should strive to live so that we can experience more of God's blessings and less of His punishment. The core of obedience is to love God, our selves, and others, as saved people. *Let's obey God like we trust His plan.*

2. God's use of people. Notice in vss. 23-24 that God will use human agents in His plan. We must be careful how we treat people, because God often uses people to carry out His plan to bless us. This means that we should be careful how we treat leaders in our church, in our families, and in our communities as well as those who are not leaders. The person we mistreat may be the one that God was sending our blessings through. /// Take a closer look at how God still shows favor towards David, even after David did his dirt with Bathsheba and Uriah. We should be so careful about how we treat people, even those we think have done so much wrong. *Let's trust God's use of people.*

3. Turning things around. Notice in vss. 25-26 that God can turn a land that is suffering from so much famine and difficult times into a situation of great abundance. God can turn the worst of situations around. *Let's live as if we believe that God is still in the miracle making business.* The recession, sending a new Pastor, and even our health challenges are no match for God's miracle making power. Living as if we believe this includes obeying God. We can start with basics like tithing, being enthusiastic in worship, helping others be disciples, and urging others to step up and be great leaders in this church.

¹ Prepare to discuss the following: What is the point, what scripture supports the point, what is the application sentence, and what is an example of living by the material? After the material is covered, be prepared to answer the following: Which point do you want to spend extra time on, why do you think this point is so important, and what tips do you have for living by this material, in spite of the challenges? **What is one thing you will take from this session and work on, in regard to your discipleship goals?**

4. Our enemies don't have the last word about us. Notice in vs. 29 that God, not our enemies, have the last word. There may be people in our lives who have declared that we will never amount to much. But thank God, God, not our enemies, have the last word. *Let's live as if we believe that God has the last word.* This kind of living will include joy about God, instead of so much anger towards our enemies.

5. God's love. Notice in vs. 30 that just as God loved the Jews in our text, God loves believers through Christ. *Let's live as if believe that God really loves us.* This kind of living should be noted for hope in the midst of despair, joy in times of sorrow, and peace in times of conflict. When we are conscious of God's love then the lack of love shown by others become so insignificant.

6. Skipping over the "sin and punishment" part. Notice in vss. 23-32 that the people of our text were to know that God was their God and that they were God's people, after so much drama. They were to be in the captivity and under the domination of Babylon for generations. And then they had to go through the hard work of being restored. They could have simply obeyed God and skipped over so much drama. We should learn from their mistakes. *Let's just obey God and be blessed, instead of waiting until after we have been punished to obey.* We should obey God now, instead of waiting until we lose our job, lose our house, have life threatening health challenges, or lose a loved one.