

# CHAPTER 34

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 34

In the former chapter the prophet prophesies against the people of the Jews, both those of the captivity, and those who were not; and here against the shepherds of Israel. This he is bid to do, (<sup>330B</sup>Ezekiel 34:1,2), whose cruelty to the flock, negligence and unfaithfulness are exposed, (<sup>334B</sup>Ezekiel 34:3-6), for which reasons they are threatened to be deprived of their office, (<sup>330E</sup>Ezekiel 34:7-10), and the Lord promises to take the care of the flock upon himself, to seek out his sheep, and feed them, and do every kind office to them, (<sup>334B</sup>Ezekiel 34:11-16) and then the strong of the flock, that oppressed the weak, are threatened with punishment, (<sup>334E</sup>Ezekiel 34:17-22) and the promise of the Messiah, as the shepherd of the flock, is made, under whom all prosperity and happiness might be expected, (<sup>332B</sup>Ezekiel 34:23-31).

**Ver. 1.** *The word of the Lord came unto me, &c.]* The date of this prophecy is not given; however, it seems to have been delivered after the destruction of Jerusalem; the causes of which are mentioned, the sins of the people and their governors, which the prophet is directed to expose:

*saying:* as follows:

**Ver. 2.** *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, &c.]* Or, “concerning”<sup>f587</sup> them; the governors of them, as the Targum and Jarchi; their political governors, their kings, princes, and civil magistrates of every order and degree; so Kimchi interprets it of kings; and it was common with the eastern nations, and with the Greeks, to call kings shepherds; and one and the same word; in the Greek language, signifies to feed sheep, and to govern people; (see <sup>318E</sup>Psalms 78:72 <sup>334B</sup>Isaiah 44:28), also their ecclesiastical governors are intended, prophets, priests, Levites, scribes, and Pharisees; these were bad shepherds, or they would not have been prophesied against; and though they were shepherds of Israel, this must be done:

*prophesy, and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds:* that the message to them might be the more regarded, it is ordered to be

delivered in the name of the Lord; otherwise they would have been apt to have despised it, and charged the prophet with impertinence and rudeness:

*woe be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves!* that is, themselves only, and not the flock: had they fed the flock, as well as themselves, they would not have been blamed; but they took no care of the people over whom they were set only minded their own affairs, to get riches and honour, but neglected the good of the people, yea, cruelly oppressed them:

*should not the shepherds feed the flocks?* undoubtedly they should; it is their duty, the business of their office, so to do; kings to rule over their subjects, defend their persons and property, and secure their privileges and liberties to them; and ecclesiastical rulers, ministers of the word, should feed the flock or church of God committed to them with knowledge and understanding; (see <sup><4185></sup>Jeremiah 3:15 <sup><4215></sup>John 21:15,16 <sup><4402></sup>Acts 20:2).

**Ver. 3.** *Ye eat the fat,* &c.] The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, render it, “the milk”; the words for fat and milk differ only in the points; and this was not unlawful, for

*who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?* (<sup><4407></sup>1 Corinthians 9:7), provided it was done with moderation, that they ate some, but not all; but these rulers milked their subjects too much, oppressed them with heavy taxes, and got their substance into their own hands. The Targum is,

“ye eat the good;”

they got possessed of the best of their substance; as did also their ecclesiastical rulers, who were greedy shepherds, that could never have enough; they looked for their gain from their quarter, and even devoured widows’ houses, (<sup><2581></sup>Isaiah 56:11 <sup><4234></sup>Matthew 23:14):

*ye clothe you with the wool:* the pure wool, as the Targum, the finest of it; they fleeced the flock, and stripped the people of their riches; and minded nothing but their own backs and bellies:

*ye kill them that are fed;* or, that “are fat”<sup>f588</sup>; the richest of the people they brought accusations and charges against for capital crimes; and so put them to death under a colour of justice, that they, might get their estates into their hands:

*but ye feed not the flock*; did not govern the people well, by doing justice and judgment among men, as became civil magistrates; did not deliver out words of faith and sound doctrine, to feed the souls of men with, which is the duty of those that preside in the church of God.

**Ver. 4.** *The diseased have ye not strengthened*, &c.] Such, in the civil polity, who were poor, and in necessitous circumstances, were not relieved; such who were injured and oppressed by others were not vindicated; and such as were forced to flee to other countries, or were carried captive, no care was taken, or methods used, to ransom them, and, bring them back; all which may be meant by this and the following metaphors, taken from the evil things that befall a flock of sheep: and such who were weak through spiritual diseases, their prophets and teachers took no care to cure them of their diseases, and to strengthen these feeble minded ones with divine cordials and spiritual food, and confirm them in the faith:

*neither have ye healed that which was sick*; by directing them to the great Physician of souls, and to his precious blood for healing and pardon of sin:

*neither have ye bound up that which was broken*; whose consciences were wounded, and hearts broken, with a sense of sin; or who had fallen to the breaking of their bones, and should be restored in a spirit of meekness and dealt gently with, as surgeons do in setting and binding up broken bones:

*neither have ye brought again that which was driven away*; or, “was gone astray”<sup>f589</sup>; being seduced by false teachers; and yet, though it was known they were, no care nor pains were taken to reclaim and restore them:

*neither have ye sought that which was lost*; that wandered of their own accord, and perished for want of knowledge, and were lost for lack of a guide to direct them, and no one would do this good office to them:

*but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them*; in an arbitrary and tyrannical way, lording it over God, s heritage, (~~418B~~ 1 Peter 5:3).

**Ver. 5.** *And they were scattered because there is no shepherd*, &c.] No good one; there were shepherds, but they were idol shepherds, good for nothing, and it was all one as if there were none: so, in Christ’s time, there were the Scribes and Pharisees; yet, since these did not feed the people with wholesome doctrine, they are said to be as sheep without a shepherd, and scattered abroad, as here from the fold, and from one another;

dispersed here and there, seeking food, and none, which moved his compassion, (<sup>4086</sup>Matthew 9:36), in the political sense it may refer to their captivity, and their dispersion among the nations, having no king: So the Targum,

“and they were scattered without a governor.”

*And they became meat to all beasts of the field when they were scattered;* the Targum is,

“and they were delivered to all the kingdoms of the people to be consumed;”

such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Ammonites, Moabites, and others; and may be applied to false teachers, those grievous wolves, which spare not the flock, into whose hands members of churches, professors of religion, fall, when neglected by their shepherds.

**Ver. 6.** *My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill, &c.*] As sheep do, when gone astray, go from mountain to hill; so the people of Israel fled from place to place, through the cruelty of their rulers, or through the force of the enemy, being carried captive into many kingdoms and nations, signified by mountains; and perhaps there is some allusion, to their worshipping of idols on hills and mountains, being drawn into it by the false prophets:

*yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth;* so great and general was the dispersion by the several captivities: the Lord has sheep, or some of his elect, some that belong to his flock, in all parts of the world:

*and none did search or seek after them;* but he will himself, as in (<sup>3341</sup>Ezekiel 34:11), for he will lose none of them; but this does not excuse the shepherds.

**Ver. 7.** *Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.*] Or, “ye governors”, as the Targum, both civil and ecclesiastical; ye kings, princes, and magistrates; ye prophets and teachers of the people, who ought to have attended to the word of grace, to the doctrines of the Scriptures, and fed the people with them; but, since you have not, hear the word of threatening from the Lord, and the just punishment that shall be inflicted on you.

**Ver. 8.** *As I live, saith the Lord, &c.*] It is an oath, and which he swore in his wrath, being provoked with the shepherds for their misadministration:

*surely, because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd;* a prey to all the kingdoms of the people, being without a governor, as the Targum; or to false teachers, there being no spiritual pastors to take care of them:

*neither did my shepherds search for my flock;* that was scattered, and carried captive, and became a prey to others; even those that were of God's appointing, as the kings of Israel, their priests and prophets; for both their civil polity and ecclesiastical hierarchy were of God, though the ends thereof were not answered, or the persons put into office did not do their duty:

*but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock:* (see Gill on "<sup>354D</sup>Ezekiel 34:2-3").

**Ver. 9.** *Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.*] This is repeated, that it might be observed, and for the confirmation of it; it might be depended upon that what follows would be accomplished, unless they changed their conduct and behaviour; and, to leave them inexcusable, they are again called upon to hear what the Lord should say unto them. The Targum is,

“therefore, O ye wicked governors, return to the law, and I will have mercy on you; hearken to the doctrine of the law, and receive the word of the Lord.”

**Ver. 10.** *Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds, &c.*] His heart was against them; his hand was against them; his face was against them, to cut them off. The Targum is,

“behold, I will send my fury upon the governors;”

and there was good reason for it, they were against him and his glory, against his flock, his people, his cause, and interest; sad it is for any to have God against them, and to be against God; for none ever hardened themselves against him and prospered, (<sup>380B</sup>Job 9:4):

*and I will require my flock at their hand;* the full tale of them that have been committed to their care, and will punish them for the neglect of them;

their blood, their life, and the loss of them, I will require at their hands; thus he punished Zedekiah and his princes, and the priests and prophets:

*and cause them to cease from feeding the flock*; take the kingdom from them, as he did from Zedekiah; abolish the ecclesiastical hierarchy among the Jews; cut off three shepherds in one month, the priests, prophets, and scribes of the people; and put the flock into other hands, the apostles and ministers of the Gospel:

*neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more*; enrich themselves with the substance of the people:

*for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them*; who, instead of being shepherds to feed the flock, were no other than wolves in sheep's clothing, and ravenous lions and bears, which devoured the flock; but this they should do no longer.

**Ver. 11.** *For thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] Since the shepherds are so negligent, careless, and cruel:

*behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out*; as he did the Jews, in all countries where they were, so his elect in all places where they are: he is the omniscient God, and knows them that are his, and can call his own sheep by name; he knows the places where they are; for he has fixed the bounds of their habitation, and was delighting himself in the habitable parts of the earth, where he knew they would be, even before the world was; he knows the time of finding them, which he himself has fixed, and which is a time of love, and a time of life; and he can distinguish them, notwithstanding the filth they have contracted by their sins and transgressions, and from the crowd they are among: and he is the omnipotent God, that can take them out of what hands soever they may be, or in whatsoever state and condition they are; though in the hands of Satan, in the paws of that devouring lion, and in a pit wherein is no water, in a horrible pit, the mire and clay: he that says this is the owner and proprietor of them; and that is the reason why he searches and seeks them out; and which he repeats for the confirmation of it, and to show the vehemence of his affection towards them, and how bent he is upon it, and how eager and resolute in his pursuit after them: he searches for his chosen people among the ruins of Adam's fall, in whom they fell as others; among the men of the world, where they are; among the dust of the earth, where his lost piece of silver and those pearls lie; among the mountains of sin or

self-righteousness, where these sheep are wandering; and he never leaves off seeking and searching till he has found them: and what moves him to it is not their nature, for they are no better than others; nor their numbers, for they are few; but his love to them, the relation he stands in to them as their shepherd, his interest and property in them, his covenant on their account, and also his own glory.

**Ver. 12.** *As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, &c.]* That is, when they have been scattered, and are got together again; then he goes among them, to see if there are any missing, and in what condition they are, and what they want:

*so will I seek out my sheep, and deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day;* such as, in a literal sense, the time of the captivity was, when the Jews were dispersed in the various provinces of Babylon, and other countries; and which was a time of darkness and affliction to them. The time of Adam's fall was a dark and cloudy day; when all sinned in him, and were made sinners by his disobedience; when the sentence of condemnation and death passed upon all, and they became liable to utter ruin and destruction; when darkness and ignorance seized all human nature; when all mankind were separated from God, and set at a distance from him; in consequence of which the children of God, his sheep, were scattered abroad. A time of unregeneracy is a cloudy and dark day with God's elect; they are in darkness, and walk in darkness, and are darkness itself, till made light in the Lord: and so is a time of desertion; when the Lord's people are laid in darkness, and the deeps, and both sit and walk therein, and see no light; when they can neither see the Lord, nor hear from him, nor have any communion with him; when the sun of righteousness is withdrawn or eclipsed; and they cannot see their interest clear in spiritual and eternal things: as is also a time of persecution with the churches of Christ; when both ministers and people are scattered abroad, and their eyes cannot behold their teachers; and moon and stars are not seen for many days, Gospel ministers and Gospel ordinances: and the same is a time of blasphemy and error; and when it is neither day nor night, as is the present season; but there is no day so cloudy and dark but the shepherd can see his sheep, and will look them out, though they cannot see him.

**Ver. 13.** *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, &c.]* Which was in

part fulfilled when the Jews were delivered from the Babylonish captivity; and which may well be ascribed to the Lord, since it was he that stirred up Cyrus, king of Persia, to proclaim their liberty; and which raised the spirit of the people to go up upon it, and build the temple in Jerusalem, (~~1500~~ Ezra 1:1,5), though it will have a more full accomplishment in the latter day, when these people shall be gathered out of all countries where they are dispersed, and return to their own land, and embrace the true Messiah, and be all saved; of which there was a pledge and presage in the apostles' time, on the day of Pentecost; when some out of all nations were collected together at Jerusalem, and heard the wonderful things of God in their own language, and were converted; and afterwards, wherever the Gospel came in the Gentile world, it was first preached to the Jews, and was the power of God to salvation first to them; by which means the sheep of Christ, the elect of God among them, in each of the parts of the world, were gathered in: but this need not be confined to the Jews only; since the Lord had other sheep beside them, even among the Gentiles, in all parts of the world; whom he searches for, and effectually calls by his grace, and separates them from the rest of the world, and brings them into his churches, and among his people:

*and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers:* not upon the barren mountains of Sinai and Horeb, or with the works of the law; for there is no righteousness, life, and salvation by them, and so no peace and comfort, or food for faith; but upon the mountains of Israel, the churches of Christ, comparable to mountains for their height, visibility, immovableness, and for their pasturage: here the great Shepherd, the Lamb Christ Jesus, is, even on Mount Zion; here his under shepherds are, who feed the flock with knowledge and understanding; here the word of God is preached, the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus, by which souls are nourished up to everlasting life; in these mountains the feast of fat things is made; here the green pastures are, the sheep are made to lie down in; and here the lilies grow, among whom Christ feeds; and by these mountains run the “rivers” of everlasting love and covenant grace, the streams of Gospel doctrines, and the waters of Gospel ordinances, to the great refreshment of the saints; here the Lord feeds his people:

*and in all the inhabited places of the country;* in the private dwellings of the saints, as well as in public assemblies.



**Ver. 14.** *I will feed them in a good pasture*, &c.] Or with good food, as the Targum: such as the fulness of grace in Christ, where believers go in and out, and find pasture; and where they may feed to the full, have bread enough, and to spare; and may draw water with joy out of the full wells of salvation: this is good food; food indeed, in opposition to that which was typical, or is imaginary; this is spiritual food, suitable to the spirits of men, brought by the Spirit of God, and relished by a spiritual man; this is savoury food, soul satisfying and soul strengthening food; this is nourishing food, and what will endure to everlasting life: and such is the Gospel, the promises and doctrines of it, in which there is a variety of food; milk for babes, and meat for strong men; sweet to the taste, and health to the bones; salutary and nourishing, and which makes glad the heart; and of the same kind are the ordinances of the Gospel, the breasts of consolation, the goodness and fatness of the Lord's house; which he makes his people partakers of, and satisfies them with.

*And upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they lie in a good fold*; of the same nature and use are the churches of Christ as a fold is to the sheep; as that they are separated, divided, and distinguished from others; as into a fold, the sheep of Christ are gathered into churches; where they lie together, are united and knit together in love, and where they have communion with one another, and keep each other warm, and stir up one another to love and good works; whereby the vitals of religion are preserved; here they are kept in the night season, and fed in the winter; these like a fold are a sort of fence unto them, and a preservation of them from wolves and bears; and here they lie down, and have spiritual rest, ease, and safety: and as in a fold there are lambs, and sheep, and goats, so in churches there are different sorts folded together, weaker and stronger Christians; and some only nominal ones, who will be separated at the last day. A fold may be taken down, and removed from place to place, and so may visible congregated churches; the candlestick may be removed out of its place, the word and ordinances; and so a Gospel church state may be carried from place to place; and there is but one fold for Jews and Gentiles, and this is a good one; (see <sup>6106</sup>John 10:16).

*And in a fat pasture shall they feed on the mountains of Israel*; on the feast of fat things there, and so become fat and flourishing; (see Gill on <sup>6513</sup>Ezekiel 34:13”).

**Ver. 15.** *I will feed my flock, &c.*] This is repeated for the further confirmation of it, that it might be depended upon that the Lord would feed his people in the manner before promised; and it gives a reason why he would do it, because they were his flock; he had a right unto them, a property in them; they were separated and distinguished from others by him, as the church of God is; and which is also purchased by Christ, and gathered out of the world by his Spirit and grace; and therefore he will feed them, or take care that they shall be fed, (~~418~~ Acts 20:28):

*and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord;* in the good fold provided for them; where they have both rest and safety, and also plenty of suitable food; (see Gill on “~~2644~~ Ezekiel 34:14”). The Targum is,

“I will govern my people, and will cause them to dwell safely, saith the Lord God;”

The Septuagint and Arabic versions add, “and they shall know that I am the Lord”.

**Ver. 16.** *And I will seek that which was lost, &c.*] As all men are in Adam, and through his fall, and by their own actual transgressions; and so the elect of God among the rest; who are lost not with respect to God’s knowledge of them, love to them, and care for them; but with respect to their knowledge of him, affection for him, and regard to his will, service, and glory; they are lost to themselves, they know not where they are, what is their state and condition, and how to get out of it; they cannot help themselves, nor can any other creature help them; and they see themselves to be in this lost and undone condition, when they are enlightened by the Spirit of God: but they are not irretrievably lost, for they are preserved in Christ Jesus; and he has been sent to seek and to save them; which he has done by redeeming them from sin, Satan, and the law; and, in the effectual calling, he goes after them, he sends his Gospel to them, and his Spirit unto them, and returns them to himself, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls; and whereas after this they go astray like lost sheep, he seeks and looks them up, and restores their souls, (~~4176~~ Psalm 119:176 23:3 ~~2910~~ Luke 19:10 15:3,4):

*and bring again that which was driven away;* through the power and prevalence of unbelief, from holding fast to the head Christ, departing at least partially from the living God; from dealing by faith with his precious person, blood, and righteousness; and from the precious promises, as not

belonging to them, and refusing to be comforted by them; but the Lord brings back such again, and causes them to believe: Thomas is a notorious instance of this, (<sup><418B></sup>John 20:24-28), such also who are driven away through the force of Satan's temptations from the throne of grace; from the word and ordinances; and from private conversation with the saints, being hypocrites, as he suggests unto them; these the Lord brings back, by rebuking the tempter, and delivering out of his temptations: likewise such as are driven out of the right way of truth, and carried away with the error of the wicked, through the influence of bad pastors or false teachers, (<sup><247B></sup>Jeremiah 23:1,2 50:6), these will he restore again; for it is impossible the elect of God should be finally deceived: moreover, such as are driven away by the force of persecution, and scattered abroad, in God's due time have rest, and return to their folds again; (see <sup><2517></sup>Jeremiah 50:17 <sup><400B></sup>Acts 8:1,2 9:31):

*and will bind up that which was broken;* such who have broken hearts, broken with a sense of sin; made truly contrite by the Spirit and grace of God, through the word; which is a hammer to them, that breaks the rocky heart in pieces; to these the Lord has respect; their broken hearts are acceptable to him; he dwells with them, to revive them; he speaks and restores comforts to them; pours in oil and wine into their wounds, like the good Samaritan, and binds them up; (see <sup><147B></sup>Psalm 147:3 51:17 <sup><250B></sup>Isaiah 61:1) and such who have broken bones, who have fallen into sin to the breaking of their bones, to the destroying of their peace, joy, and comfort, as David, Peter, and others have done; he sets their broken bones, and restores the joys of his salvation; and causes the bones which were broken to rejoice; at the discoveries of his pardoning grace and mercy, (<sup><150B></sup>Psalm 51:8,12):

*and will strengthen that which was sick;* sick through sin, as all men are; sick of sin, as sensible sinners be; sickly and weak, and ready to die, as fallen professors, backsliders, are; sick of love, through want of the discoveries of it; long after them; cannot be easy without them, as Christ's spouse sometimes is; and sick for want of food, faint and languid for want of spiritual refreshment; as the persons were Christ had compassion on, being as sheep without a shepherd, (<sup><408B></sup>Matthew 9:36 <sup><409B></sup>Matthew 9:12 <sup><613B></sup>1 Corinthians 11:30 <sup><211B></sup>Song of Solomon 2:5 5:8) each of these the Lord strengthens with the discoveries and applications of pardoning grace; with the flagons of his love, and apples of his promises; with the food of the Gospel, which strengthens men's hearts; and with grace out of his

fulness, whereby they are strengthened against sin, snares, and temptations, and to exercise grace, and do the will of God:

*but I will destroy the fat and the strong;* that are full of themselves, lifted up with pride, conceited with their riches or righteousness, and despise others, whom they thrust with side and shoulder, and push with their horns, (~~330~~ Ezekiel 34:21). So the Targum interprets it of wicked men,

“and I will consume the ungodly and sinners;”

but the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it, “I will keep the fat and the strong”; in the plight and condition in which they are, and make them still stronger, and more fat and flourishing; so Jerom interprets it of saints and godly persons; and this agrees with the preceding clauses; only the original Hebrew text is against it, which does not admit of a various reading; and this rendering seems to arise in the Septuagint, the others follow, from the mistake of a similar letter: “I will feed them with judgment”; meaning either the whole flock, consisting of fat and lean cattle, making a distinction between them, (~~347~~ Ezekiel 34:17,20), feeding them with discretion, and judging them according to their deserts; or else the fat and the strong ones, by inflicting righteous vengeance on them, feeding them with wormwood and gall; or his own people and sheep only. So the Targum, “I will govern my people with judgment”; in righteousness, goodness, truth, and faithfulness.

**Ver. 17.** *And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God,* &c.] Having done with the shepherds, and the complaint against them, the Lord proceeds to take notice of the flock, or the people themselves, and the evils that were among them; for in the Lord’s own flock, in the nation and church of Israel, as now in the visible congregated churches of Christ, there were two sorts of persons, some good, others bad; some that behaved well, and others ill; some were sheep, and others goats:

*behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats:* between the smaller and weaker cattle, the sheep and the lambs; and the larger and stronger cattle, the rams and he goats; by which latter may he meant persons of superior power and authority, of greater wealth and riches, and of more wisdom and knowledge, at least in their own conceits; and who were oppressive and injurious to the poor and common people, and less knowing, at least as they thought; who may be intended by the former: now, the Lord, as he observed a difference between them, he

would make this manifest, and take the part of the one against the other; even the part of the weaker against the stronger. The Targum is,

“behold, judge between man and man, sinners and the ungodly.”

**Ver. 18.** *Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, &c.]* This is directed to the rams and he goats, to the people of power and wealth, or who had the key of knowledge and instruction; who, by their conduct, showed as if it was not enough for them to eat and drink the best of things themselves, to enjoy their wealth and riches, and keep their posts of honour and profit, and the revenues of them, in church and state:

*but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?* but they must oppress the poor, by taking away from them that little they have; or by making their lives uncomfortable to them, by their severities and exactions; so that that small pittance they had, they cannot enjoy with any pleasure, The allusion is to beasts in pasture, which tread down and put dung what they do not eat, which makes what is left unfit for others; and to cattle, at ponds of water, which having drank, foul the rest with their feet; as camels particularly are said to do; so that others cannot drink after them, at least not so agreeably: this may be applied to the Scribes and Pharisees, and such as they were, who devoured widows' houses, and made void the word and commandments of God, by their traditions; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; and so polluted the pure waters of the sanctuary; defiled the Scriptures of truth, and delivered out such doctrines as were not food and drink to the souls of men, and yet were obliged to receive them; and such are heretical persons, who sometimes arise out of the churches, are a part of the flock, that corrupt the word of God, pervert the Scriptures, and handle them deceitfully; and may be said to tread down and trample upon the wholesome truths of the Gospel, and to muddy the clear doctrines of grace; so that the children of God cannot, as they desire, have the pure, unmixed, sincere milk of the word.

**Ver. 19.** *And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, &c.]* They are forced to do it, not being able to come at any thing else; being as sheep without a shepherd, or worse:

*and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet;* which, as it cannot be agreeable and relishing, so neither wholesome; as the leaven of the

Scribes and Pharisees; the traditions of the elders; the false doctrines of false teachers, whose words eat as do a canker. The Targum of the whole verse is,

“and my people eat the residue of the food of your ministers, and drink the residue of the drink of your ministers.”

**Ver. 20.** *Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them,* &c.] To the rams and he goats of the flock, that use the pastures and defile the waters after this manner, and make them unfit for the lesser cattle; or that use the poor people of God after this sort:

*behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.* The Targum is,

“between the rich man and the poor man;”

this is repeated, and in very strong terms, for the confirmation of it: this the Lord promised to do, and he has done it by his son, to whom he committed all judgment; and who, in the days of his flesh, made a difference between those who were full of themselves, self-righteous persons; who were self-sufficient, and needed not repentance, nor any other righteousness but their own; who trusted in themselves, and despised others: and may be meant by the “fat cattle”: and between those who were low and mean in their own eyes, humble and meek, weary and heavy laden, hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of another: now for judgment did Christ come, that they which see not might see, and those who saw might be made blind; he called the one, and not the other, to repentance; made known the things of the Gospel to babes, and hid them from the wise and prudent; rejected the one, and had compassion on the other; (see <sup><B72></sup>John 5:22 9:39 <sup><B73></sup>Matthew 9:13,36 11:25,26), and when he comes a second time, he will judge between these, and separate them; and set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left, (<sup><B74></sup>Matthew 25:31-33).

**Ver. 21.** *Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder,* &c.] As the stronger cattle do the lesser:

*and pushed all the diseased with your horns;* as horned cattle do those they dislike, and bear an antipathy to; which to do to the diseased is great cruelty: sheep, it is said, will take some care of those that are diseased among them, and bring them to places of sunshine and shelter; but here the horned part of the flock, and in health, are represented as acting a

barbarous part to the weak and diseased: this may denote such as are in power and authority, using it to the hurt and detriment of those that are under them, and whom they should relieve and protect: it may be applied to the anathemas and excommunications of the Jews, who pronounced those an accursed and ignorant people that believed in Christ, and expelled such out of their synagogues that professed his name; and to their persecutions of the apostles and first Christians:

*till he have scattered them abroad*; or “without”,<sup>f590</sup>; that is, without the land. The Targum is,

“through the provinces;”

obliged them to quit their country, and go unto other parts, as the first preachers of the word did; who, upon the persecution at the death of Stephen, were scattered abroad everywhere, (~~440E~~Acts 8:1,4).

**Ver. 22.** *Therefore will I save my flock*, &c.] Or redeem my people, as the Targum; that is, by his son, after described, as his shepherd and servant:

*and they shall no more be a prey*: to Satan the roaring lion; nor to such horned cattle, their persecutors; nor to false teachers, who lie in wait to deceive; nor shall they ever perish, being the sheep of Christ, hand, and under the care of him the shepherd, spoken of in the next verse:

*and I will judge between cattle and cattle*; between man and man, as the Targum; that is, between good and bad men, the persecutors and the persecuted. (See Gill on “~~2547E~~Ezekiel 34:17, 20”).

**Ver. 23.** *And I will set up one shepherd over them*, &c.] Or governor, as the Targum; an excellent one of a thousand, the only one; in comparison of whom others are not to be named; for though there are under shepherds, as magistrates and ministers of the word, he is the principal one; that is, Christ, called the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, and the chief Shepherd, and the only one; and who became so by the constitution and appointment of Jehovah the Father; who chose him, called him, and intrusted him with all his sheep: who sent him to seek and save his lost sheep; for whom he died, rose again, and is accountable: he is more particularly called the one Shepherd, with respect to Jew and Gentile; (see ~~806E~~John 10:16):

*and he shall feed them*; the flock, even the poor of the flock, thrust at and pushed by others: he shall feed them by his ministers, as under shepherds in his churches, where his word is preached, and his ordinances are administered; he shall feed them with himself, the bread of life; with his flesh and blood, which are meat and drink indeed; with covenant grace, blessings, and promises; with the Gospel, and the doctrines of it; he feeds his babes with milk, his strong men with meat, and all with the wholesome words of faith and good doctrine, whereby he nourishes them up to everlasting life; and this he

*shall do*, not by force, but willingly: it denotes the certainty of it; it may be depended on:

*even my servant David*; not David himself literally; who though a shepherd, and the servant of the Lord, yet had been dead many years before this prophecy was delivered; nor Zerubbabel, who was of his seed; for though a servant of the Lord, and a prince or governor of Judah, yet not a king, and much less a king or prince for ever; as this person is said to be, (~~33724~~ Ezekiel 37:24,25), but the Messiah, as is expressly owned by Kimchi; who says, this is the Messiah that shall arise from his seed in the time of salvation: he is called David because his name agrees with him, which signifies “beloved”, he being beloved of God and man; and because the son of David, of his seed according to the flesh; and because David was an eminent type of him, in his person, offices, afflictions, wars, victories, and exaltation; and because he was David’s Lord and representative, and in whom his everlasting kingdom is established. The same is called the servant of the Lord, as he often is in Scripture, being so in his office capacity as Mediator; and because he took upon him the form of a servant; did the work of one; and was of the Lord’s choosing, calling, supporting, and glorifying:

*he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd*; which is repeated for the greater confirmation of it.

**Ver. 24.** *And I the Lord will be their God*, &c.] The God of them Christ is the shepherd of, and whom he feeds; the sheep and poor of the flock: this is the great blessing of the everlasting covenant, and than which there cannot be a greater, to have the Lord, the everlasting and unchangeable Jehovah, to be a covenant God and Father:



*and my servant David a Prince among them;* who should reside among them, dwell with them, by granting them his spiritual presence, and so rule over them, protect and defend them; even he who is the Prince of the kings of the earth, and is exalted, a Prince and a Saviour of his people Israel; he is such a Shepherd as that he is a Prince; and such a Prince as that he is a Saviour and under whose princely government is the greatest safety:

*I the Lord have spoken it;* and therefore it shall assuredly be. The Targum is,

“I the Lord have decreed it in my word;”

he had determined it within himself, and promised it in covenant, and spoke of it in prophecy, and it should be fulfilled.

**Ver. 25.** *And I will make with them a covenant of peace,* &c.], Such the covenant of grace is, made with Christ from everlasting; in which Jehovah proposed terms of peace, and which Christ undertook to answer, and became the peacemaker; and from this article concerning the peace and reconciliation of men the covenant is so called; (see <sup>2540</sup>Isaiah 54:10), this the Lord promises to make known to his people his flock, to show them their interest in it, and to make it good unto them; for otherwise it was made with Christ, and with them in Christ from all eternity. The Septuagint and Arabic versions read,

“I will make with David a covenant of peace:”

*and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land;* which was literally fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon; during their captivity, the land being uninhabited, evil beasts increased in it, and possessed it; but upon their return these ceased, being either destroyed, or driven away: but figuratively these design wicked men, who, for the malignity of their nature, manners, and conversation, are called evil beasts, as the Cretians were, (<sup>5012</sup>Titus 1:12), particularly false teachers may be designed; those grievous wolves that spare not, but wrong the flock; but now shall be no more, being either forced to quit their place, or truly converted; so that the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; which will be the peaceable and comfortable state of the church in the latter day; when there will be none to hurt and destroy in the Lord’s holy mountain, (<sup>2316</sup>Isaiah 11:6-9):

*and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods;* not only in their houses, but in the fields, and even in the wilderness, and in the woods, where wild beasts used to resort; but now being clear of all, and under the protection of such a Shepherd and Prince as David the servant of the Lord, they shall have no dread upon their mind, no fear of any danger; but dwell in the utmost security, lie down and sleep in peace and safety, the Lord sustaining them; and whom they shall serve without fear of any enemy all their days, in righteousness and holiness, being delivered out of the hands of them all.

**Ver. 26.** *And I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing, &c.*] Alluding either to the city of Jerusalem, and the places adjacent; or to the temple, and the houses about it. So the Targum,

“I will cause them to dwell round about the house of my sanctuary;”

and so Kimchi interprets it of the temple. Some Christian interpreters, by the “hill” or mountain, understand Christ; and not amiss; who may be compared to one for height; he being higher than the kings of the earth, or than the heavens and angels there, as man and Mediator; as well as is God over all, blessed for ever; and for fruitfulness, from whom the saints have all theirs, either in grace or good works; and for shade, he being the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; which yields delight and refreshment, and is a protection from the heat of a fiery law, flaming justice, the wrath of God and man, and the fiery darts of Satan; and for shelter and security, there being salvation in him, when none in other hills and mountains; and for duration and immovableness, being the same today, yesterday, and for ever: and now the persons about him are such who are made nigh by his blood; brought to him by his powerful and efficacious grace; are worshippers about the throne where he sits; such as cleave to him, and follow him wherever he goes, and shall be with him to all eternity; these he makes a blessing, or most blessed. So the Targum renders it,

“and they shall be blessed;”

they are blessed in Christ their head; they are blessed through him as their Redeemer and Saviour, who was made a curse for them; they are blessed through being in him, and by the imputation of blessings to them from him, and through the application of them by his Spirit; their persons are blessed, and so are the places or habitations where they dwell: or rather this may be

understood of the church of God, often compared to a hill for its height and eminence; for its fertility and fruitfulness; for its stability and firmness; and in allusion to the hill of Zion for its holiness, and being the place of the divine residence; (see <sup><1951></sup>Psalm 15:1 24:4 68:15,16) now, the persons about this hill are those who are come to Mount Zion the church of God; being brought there by the Lord himself, and who take up their abode there; who lie about this hill, as flocks of sheep, in their several folds or congregated churches; (see <sup><227B></sup>Jeremiah 23:3 33:13) and these the Lord makes a blessing to one another, by their spiritual conversation, prayers, and services of love; and to the world, to kingdoms and states, to cities, towns, and neighbourhoods, and to particular families, where they are placed; and even to the world in general; for they are the light, stay, and stability of it; and without which it would be in darkness, corrupt and putrefy, and not continue long:

*and I will cause the shower to come down in his season*; which, in the spiritual sense, may design the Gospel; which, like a shower of rain, comes from God; descends from heaven; is a gift of God; which falls according to divine direction; refreshes, revives, and makes fruitful; brings a plenty of divine blessings with it; and comes in season, at its proper time; and is a word in season to weary souls:

*there shall be showers of blessings*; which the Gospel brings with it; spiritual blessings, blessings of grace; such as peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life: these, like showers, come from God; are free grace gifts of his, of which there is a large abundance; and which descend on Mount Zion the church of God; which is another Gerizim, on which the blessings are pronounced, (<sup><192B></sup>Psalm 133:3 <sup><265D></sup>Isaiah 55:10,11 <sup><810E></sup>Zechariah 10:1).

**Ver. 27.** *And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit*, &c.] Such as are trees of righteousness, rooted in Christ, and planted in his church, and watered with his grace; these bring forth, bear, and are filled with the fruits of righteousness by him:

*and the earth shall yield her increase*; the fallow ground of men's hearts being broke up, and the seed of the word and of divine grace being sown in them, they bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold; (see <sup><195D></sup>Psalm 67:1,2,6,7), this, and what goes before, may be literally understood of the land of Canaan, and the fruitfulness of it, when the Jews shall again possess it; to which the next clause seems to have some respect:

*and they shall be safe in their land*; no enemy to disturb them, to invade or do any acts of violence to them: this will be when the Jews are converted, and become Christians; and antichrist destroyed; they will have none but Christian powers about them, who will be their protection. This is true, in a spiritual sense, of all the saints, who are under the care and government of Christ their Shepherd and Prince:

*and shall know that I am the Lord*; Jehovah their righteousness, Saviour and Redeemer:

*when I have broken the bands of their yoke*; of sin, Satan, and the law, and of all enemies:

*and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them*; or made them their servants, to whom they were subject; literally, the nations of the world, among whom they are dispersed; and figuratively, sin, whose servants men in a state of nature are; and Satan, by whom they are led captive; and the law, under which they are held as transgressors; and all other spiritual enemies; (see <sup><4174></sup>Luke 1:74,75).

**Ver. 28.** *And they shall no more be a prey to the Heathen*, &c.] To the Papists, who shall now be perished out of the land, (<sup><3906></sup>Psalm 10:16):

*neither shall, the beasts of the land devour them*; neither that beast which rose up out of the sea, nor that which came up out of the earth, (<sup><4101></sup>Revelation 13:1,11), the pope, both in his secular and ecclesiastic power, being destroyed. So the Targum,

“and the kingdoms of the earth shall not consume them;”

the antichristian kingdoms:

*but they, shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid*; (See Gill on <sup><2625></sup>Ezekiel 34:25”); (See Gill on <sup><2627></sup>Ezekiel 34:27”).

**Ver. 29.** *And I will raise up for them a plant of renown*, &c.] Or, “for a name”; or, “of a name”<sup>f591</sup>; a famous one: this is to be understood, not of the Jewish nation itself, as the Targum,

“and I will raise up for them a plantation for standing;”

or which shall continue; but of the Messiah, and not of his incarnation, when he sprung up as a tender plant out of the dry ground, and as a branch out of the roots of Jesse, being on that account often spoken of as a

branch; (see <sup><310></sup>Isaiah 11:1 53:2 <sup><308></sup>Zechariah 3:8 6:12), but of him in a more raised and exalted state, as grown up to a stately tree, a goodly cedar, as in (<sup><372></sup>Ezekiel 17:23) when his interest and kingdom should be great and glorious in the world, as it will be at the time of the conversion of the Jews; and it is spoken of his manifestation to them as a plant of renown, or as a renowned plant, the true vine and tree of life; or as a famous renowned person, one of name; whose glorious names and titles are Shiloh, the Messiah, Immanuel, Jehovah our righteousness, Jesus the Saviour, the Word of God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords:

*and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land;* the Targum is,

“they shall no more move from place to place through famine in the land;”

and which is to be understood, not of hunger through a famine of bread and water, but of hearing the word of the Lord; which they shall now have, and hear, and believe, and so have food for their souls, and hunger no more; as those do not who believe in Christ, (<sup><365></sup>John 6:35), for this plant raised up for them, and pointed out to them, the tree of life, Christ Jesus, bears all manner of precious fruit, sweet to the taste, and nourishing to the souls of his people; under his shadow they sit, and his fruit is sweet to them; and with him is bread enough, and to spare; so that there is no want, nor fear of consumption with hunger, where he is:

*neither bear the shame of the Heathen any more;* being called by them Jews, in away of taunt, a proverb, and a curse; and outcasts, whom none seek after; but now they shall no more be termed forsaken, or called desolate, but instead thereof Hephzibah and Beulah; (see <sup><307></sup>Jeremiah 30:17 <sup><304></sup>Isaiah 62:4,12).

**Ver. 30.** *Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them,* &c.] Granting them his gracious and powerful presence, by all the above instances of his goodness and favour to them:

*and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God:* and not utterly cast off, as they seemed to be; the divine Shechinah now being returned to them, which had departed from them; the “loammi” that was written on them being now wiped off from them.

**Ver. 31.** *And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men,* &c.] This is observed, to show that all that had been said in this chapter concerning sheep, and a flock of sheep, was to be understood, not in a literal sense, but in a figurative one, of such as were rational and spiritual persons; a set of men whom the Lord had chosen, and separated from others, as his peculiar flock; and whom he took a special care of, and led them to, and fed them in, green pastures of his own providing; they are the souls of men that Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop of, (<sup><4125></sup>1 Peter 2:25). The Talmudists<sup>f592</sup> frequently make use of this text, to prove that Israelites are only called men, and not the Gentiles; (see <sup><4156></sup>Matthew 15:26)

*and I am your God, saith the Lord God;* which is often repeated for the certainty of it, because a blessing of the greatest importance, and which includes all others in it; (see <sup><3924></sup>Ezekiel 34:24,30).