

Introduction: The word shepherd is used numerous times in the New Testament by Jesus and the apostles to describe the leaders or elders of God's people (John 10:1-18). This word was chosen because the people of the Holy Land were familiar with how a good shepherd attended his flock.

### Old Testament Model (Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34)

Key ideas from Psalm 23: The Old Testament Model of the Good Shepherd (a parallel to John 10:1-18??). From this passage the attributes and functions of a shepherd include the following:

- 1) keeps the lamb from being in "want" (vs 1);
- 2) Shall provide high quality food and drink (vs 2);
- 3) Restores the soul and leads into a righteous way of life, for the sake of the Lord's name (not for the shepherd's glory!) (vs 3)
- 4) Will keep the lamb from fear, even in fearful circumstances (vs 4a). The shepherd does this by being present with the lamb, providing comfort and protecting the lamb with his tools (the staff = direction and correction, the rod = protection and discipline (prod the sheep in the direction they need to go)) (vs 4b)
- 5) The shepherd doesn't let the presence of enemies of the lamb cause a halt or interruption in the lamb's nourishment (vs 5a)
- 6) The shepherd provides honor and abundance for the lamb (vs 5b)
- 7) The shepherd provides assurance of God's goodness and love and welcome in the very presence of God - not just for a Sunday meeting, but forever (vs 6)

Key ideas from Ezekiel 34: How God does NOT want his people to be shepherded is spelled out here - also included are some critical attributes and functions of a good shepherd

- 1) A bad shepherd takes care of himself instead of the flock. He nurtures himself on the sheep he is supposed to be nurturing (curds, wool, meat - vs 3). He fails in the key tasks of a shepherd - strengthening the weak, healing the sick, binding up the injured, bringing back the strays, searching for the scattered (vss 4-6), protecting from wild animals (vs 8).
- 2) A bad shepherd rules the flock harshly and brutally (vs 5)
- 3) A good shepherd does all the things the bad shepherd failed to do (vss 10-16). Notice the extent of the good shepherd's care:
  - "I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered" (vs 12);
  - "I will pasture them on the mountains, ... in the ravines and in all the settlements of the land. I will tend them in a good pasture" (vs 13-14);
  - "they will lie down in good grazing land, and they will feed in a rich pasture" (vs 14);
  - "I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down" (vs 15);
  - "I will search for the lost and bring back the strays" (vs 16)
  - "I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak" (vs 16)
  - "I will shepherd the flock with justice" (vs 16)
  - "I will judge between one sheep and another" (vs 17)
- 4) A good shepherd will oppose the bad shepherd(s) and hold them accountable for their actions (vs 10)
- 5) A good shepherd will remove the bad shepherd from his position so that the flock will no longer suffer (vs 10)

Notice the similarity between the terrible things the bad shepherds do here in Ezekiel 34 and Paul's warnings about bad shepherds in the New Testament (Acts 20:29-30).

Finally, notice that God promises to place over His people one shepherd, David. Remember that Ezekiel was written hundreds of years after David died, so this is obviously a prophecy about Jesus - No wonder Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd in John 10.11 and 14! He obviously had studied Ezekiel 34 and knew what a good shepherd does!

## The New Testament Model (John 10:1-18; 1Pet 5:1-4)

Key ideas from John 10:1-18: Every shepherd of God's people should surely try to emulate Jesus, the Good Shepherd! Here are differences between the false shepherd and the Good Shepherd:

## The Thief and Robber

- 1) Enters the sheep pen some other way besides the gate (vs 1) - (popularity, intimidation, politics, ???)
- 2) Has no other purpose with the sheep but to steal and kill and destroy (vs 10)
- 3) Deserts the sheep when the wolf attacks (vs 12-13)
- 4) Works as a shepherd only for what he can get out of it - He doesn't care about the sheep themselves (vs 13)

## The Good Shepherd

- 1) Enters the sheep pen by the gate (vs 2) - (made a shepherd by God (Ezek 34:23; Acts 20:28; cf Heb 5:4-6) and recognized as such by the flock)
- 2) Goes ahead of the sheep (vs 4) = he leads, he doesn't drive!
- 3) Has a close personal relationship with the sheep - they know his voice and he calls them by name (vss 3-4, 14). The sheep will not listen to or follow a stranger (vss 5, 8) - they will run from him (vs 5) - (no wonder a bad shepherd devastates and splits churches today - when the sheep leave, they are only doing what is natural for sheep to do when a false shepherd has come into the pen!)
- 4) Provides a way for the sheep to enter and leave and find pasture when needed - that the sheep might have abundant life (vss 9-10) - a good shepherd's desire is to lead and feed his sheep!
- 5) Lays down his life for his sheep and does it by his own choice - not because someone else makes him do it (vss 11, 15, 18)!
- 6) Protects the sheep against enemies and never deserts them (vs 12)
- 7) Works to keep the sheep together (one flock) (vs 16)

Key ideas from 1Peter 5:1-4: A high calling for the sincere servant of God's people!

- 1) An elder is a shepherd (vss 1-2)!
- 2) Shepherd (= feed, lead, guard, protect) **God's** flock that is among you (= the shepherds mingle and mix with the flock!) (vs 2).
- 3) A shepherd must oversee (watch over carefully, be responsible for) the flock because that's what is right and that is what they want to do ("eagerly" or "willingly"), not because of any kind of reward, benefit or compensation (vs 2).
- 4) A shepherd must be an example, not a ruler (vs 3) - compare Matt 20:25-28.
- 5) A good shepherd will receive an eternal, unfading crown of glory for the Good Shepherd when He returns (vs 4)

## Miscellaneous Notes

Matt 9:36 = Mark 6:34; Luke 2:8: A good shepherd has compassion on the sheep!

Matthew 2.6 and the idea of shepherds ruling:

To shepherd is NOT to rule! Many people misunderstand and misapply Matt 2.6, which was very poorly translated by the KJV and many older translations, "for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" - Here the word translated "rule" is the Greek word for "shepherd" (the verb). (a reference to passages like Ps 2.9 and Micah 5:2). This has been corrected in the NIV (as well as McCord) to "for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel". It is certainly true that David was both a shepherd of God's people and a ruler. However, the basic meaning of the word shepherd is definitely NOT to rule! It is to feed, guard, protect, lead, tend and mend. When did you (or the shepherds either, for that matter) see a shepherd in a pasture with his sheep and think, "Well there is that king of the sheep and his subjects?" - The word picture is ridiculous! David had a dual role. The reason for God's choosing a literal shepherd boy and reminding him that he was to shepherd was so that while David was ruling God's people, he would not forget to feed, guard, protect, lead, tend and mend them as well. Keep in mind the great picture of Psalm 23. This same confusion by many is made in regard to Jesus. Jesus was truly the good shepherd of John 10. However, he is also the King of Kings and Lord of lords! We are not! We are not rulers, we are simply humble but important SERVANTS of each other (Matthew 20:20-26-28). When elders start thinking about ruling the flock instead of serving (feeding, leading and protecting) the flock, they have ceased to follow God's model of the shepherd and started trying to make themselves into little Christs - What a tragedy! There is only one head of the body and that is Jesus (Eph 1.22, 4.15; Col 1.18; )!