



Mustard Seed Children's Summary for March 8, 2009
Released on Wednesday, March 4, 2009

"God Gives New Leaders"

Background Scripture: Ezekiel 34.

Lesson Text: Ezekiel 34:23-31.

Memory Verse: "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David" (Ezekiel 34:23).

Ezekiel 34:23-31

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

24 And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.

25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.

29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.

30 Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God.

31 And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Have you noticed how much emphasis the Bible places on leadership? Throughout the Old Testament God called, counseled, directed, enabled, warned, disciplined, and used one leader after another in order to get His work done.

It is the nature of human beings to need and want leadership. Countries and institutions have presidents, schools have principals, classrooms have teachers, and businesses have CEOs. Why did Paul appoint elders in every church? Because every local church body needs leadership.

The people of Israel experienced a wide array of leaders in their history, some good (Moses, David, Hezekiah) and some far less than good (Rehoboam, Manasseh, Ahab). On one occasion, likening His people to sheep, God told His prophet Ezekiel

that His "flock" (Ezek. 34:31) had become "a prey" (v. 28) because their human shepherd leaders had been interested only in advancing themselves and not the people's welfare.

The Lord promised to remove those unworthy shepherds from leadership. He Himself would act as the people's shepherd. He would find His scattered sheep. He would take them home, prosper them in their homeland, and keep them safe from further attack and deportation. The Lord said His servant David would be their King.

This King is not David resurrected but is rather God's promised Messiah, whom the New Testament would declare to be Jesus. As He entered Jerusalem the week before the crucifixion, the crowds shouted that He was the "son of David" (Matt. 21:9).

Who is more qualified to be His people's shepherd than Jesus? He is the good Shepherd indeed. He leads both justly and compassionately. He takes responsibility for providing for His flock. He knows every need. He intends for His sheep only experiences that from His eternal viewpoint are good. His rod and His staff are always enough when His people need defense. Following this Shepherd is never a mistake.

Children understand the need for good leadership. The leaders they know (parents, teachers, principals, policemen, crossing guards, librarians) help, teach, or tell them what is right to do. Perhaps they do all three. It is only one step away from seeing Jesus as their wise, loving, and capable Shepherd and wanting to follow Him.

Let us use every opportunity to remind our boys and girls that they can always trust their heavenly Shepherd, no matter what their situation.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Teach that boys and girls who belong to Jesus can depend on Him to be their good Shepherd.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. God knows His people need good leaders.
2. The best Leader of all is Jesus.
3. Jesus is the good Shepherd of all who belong to Him.

PLANNING VISUAL AIDS

For Beginning the Lesson, you will need pictures of a frowning face and of an Israelite crowd.

For Telling the Lesson, find flannelgraph figures or pictures of a flock of sheep with their shepherd, a flock with no shepherd, a small group of Israelite leaders, and Ezekiel. Make a flash card that says "Jesus." You will also need your Bible.

For Helping to Remember, provide for each student crayons, a half sheet of light-colored construction paper, and an 8-inch piece of yarn. Take a paper punch for your use. The children will make hangings to remind them that the Lord is their Shepherd.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Did it ever seem to you that things were not going the way they should and that nobody was doing anything right? (Show frowning face.) Well, God's people in the Bible must have felt that way one time. They needed someone to make things right.

Last week we talked about what had happened to them. (Show crowd.) They had been foolish. They thought they knew better than God. They did not listen to His rules, so He could not take care of them the way He wanted to. What made things even worse was that they did not have good leaders to remind them to do what was right.

What happened? (Accept answers.) You are right. Enemy soldiers took them away from home and made them live in far-off places where they did not want to be. (With emphasis, lay aside crowd picture.)

A big problem was that the people did not have good leaders at that time to remind them of the Lord and His rules. Nobody was helping them do what was right.

TELLING THE LESSON

The book of Ezekiel in the Bible says the people's leaders were like bad shepherds. (Open your Bible to Ezekiel and point to the book.)

Now, think a minute. What does a *good* shepherd do for his sheep? (Show flock of sheep with shepherd.) You know. He finds green grass for them to eat; he takes them to a quiet place where there is clean water to drink; he makes sure they have good, grassy resting places; he keeps them safe from the lions and the bears and the robbers; he helps the sheep who get hurt; and he keeps the flock of sheep together. When one sheep does get lost, a good shepherd leaves the rest of the sheep in a safe place and goes to find it. A shepherd is supposed to take care of his sheep.

(Show flock of sheep without shepherd.) But what could happen if a flock of sheep did not have a shepherd? (Accept answers.) When there is no good shepherd for a flock of sheep, very sad things can happen.

The Lord knew that the people needed good leaders. (Show leaders.) He wanted His people's leaders to be like good shepherds. But some sad things did happen, mostly because the leaders they had were *not* good shepherds.

One day the Lord gave His friend Ezekiel a job to do. (Show Ezekiel.) He sent Ezekiel to tell those bad leaders something for Him. Ezekiel was to say, "You leaders have been taking care of yourselves instead of looking after the people."

That was not all, either. When the people needed help, the leaders had not helped. They let enemy soldiers come and burn buildings and steal. They did not keep the people together in their land, and now soldiers had taken away the people to different far-off places.

God always wants what is good for the people who belong to Him, and one good thing is to have the right leaders. But the leaders in our lesson did not really care about the people they ruled over. (Show leaders.) They cared only about what they could get for themselves. And, of course, the Lord saw what was happening.

Now He told Ezekiel that He Himself would care for His sheep. He would look for them and would bring them back home again to their own land. He said, "And I will take care of them there in their homeland the same as a shepherd feeds and waters his sheep."

The Lord said the day will come when He will take away *all* the bad leaders and give His people one good Leader to be their Shepherd. He even said who that good Leader would be. He would be the Lord's "servant David," and that is another name for Jesus. (Show and keep on display "Jesus.")

Is there any better leader than Jesus? (Point to "Jesus.") No. Is there any better shepherd than Jesus? (Point to "Jesus.") No. One day He said, "I am the good Shepherd."

And what is it the good shepherds do for their sheep? They take care of them. Jesus does that. They protect them. Jesus does that. They make sure their sheep have all they need. Jesus does that. (Point to "Jesus" each time.) That is why the Bible says, "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not be without anything I need" (see Psalm 23).

TELLING HOW TO LIVE

Boys and girls who belong to Jesus (point to "Jesus") can wake up every morning and think, The Lord is my Shepherd today. He is my Leader. He will help me go to the right places and do the right things. He will take care of me too. He will make sure I have everything I need. Thank You, Jesus.

Does that mean He will always give us just what we want? No, because He knows what is best for us. But we will have all we need, because Jesus, the best leader of all, is the good Shepherd. (Point to "Jesus.")

That is a good thing to think about every morning when we wake up this week. Next Sunday I shall ask how many remembered to do that.

If you are not sure you belong to Jesus, it is important that you come talk to me after class. Jesus wants to take away your sins and be your Shepherd.

HELPING TO REMEMBER

Print on the chalkboard or hold up a sign that says "The Lord Is My Shepherd Today." Have the children print the words on their papers and then add flowers or designs to make an attractive wall hanging. Punch two holes in each paper for inserting the yarn. Give help as needed.

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE

"I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David" (Ezekiel 34:23).

This is a promise the Lord once made to His people. They had had some bad leaders, and now enemy soldiers had taken many of them away from home.

The Lord promised that someday He would give them a *good* Leader to be their King. That Leader would take good care of them. He would make sure they had everything they needed the same way a good shepherd looks after his sheep.

Today we call that special Shepherd Jesus, but another name for Jesus is Son of David.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

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The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, by Nelson Books.

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Crossword Puzzle

S H S F U Z E D S A L D D E O
F G F H E A R L X I A I E F W
B J N S O E G Q P H N V R F J
V P A I H W D B R O D A E N W
H F Y P S A E Q L H E D V I K
E W E Q K S A R Q E F P I A K
N H G T R F E M S A J Z L Q X
S L E A R S I L J T F O E M U
D W B A D R O L B H A H D B K
F O I F L O C K G E W K F O K
L D G L A O P E M N V J D N O
G H O Q Y X Y V M G J L M V D
W W N B N W S D O H E A K I I
F K Z X I T Y W A I L D X B U
C O V E N A N T Y Z F G E V T

AFRAID
DAVID
FLOCK
ISRAEL
PEOPLE
SHOWERS

BLESSINGS
DELIVERED
GOD
LAND
SAFE
YIELD

COVENANT
FEED
HEATHEN
LORD
SHEPHERD

17 of 17 words were placed into the puzzle.

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Crossword Solution

S + S F + + E D + + L D D + +
+ G + H E + R L + + A I E + +
+ + N S O E + + P + N V R + +
+ + A I H W D + + O D A E + +
+ F + P S + E + + H E D V + +
E + E + + S A R + E + P I + +
+ H + + + F E + S A + + L + +
S L E A R S I L + T + + E + +
D + + A D R O L B H + + D + +
+ O I F L O C K + E + + + + +
+ D G + + + + + N + + D + +
+ + + + + + + + + L + + +
+ + + + + + + + + E + + + +
+ + + + + + + + + I + + + + +
C O V E N A N T Y + + + + + +

(Over, Down, Direction)

- AFRAID (7, 6, SW)
- BLESSINGS (9, 9, NW)
- COVENANT (1, 15, E)
- DAVID (12, 5, N)
- DELIVERED (13, 9, N)
- FEED (4, 1, SE)
- FLOCK (4, 10, E)
- GOD (3, 11, NW)
- HEATHEN (10, 5, S)
- ISRAEL (7, 8, W)
- LAND (11, 1, S)
- LORD (8, 9, W)
- PEOPLE (12, 6, NW)
- SAFE (4, 3, SW)
- SHEPHERD (1, 8, NE)
- SHOWERS (3, 1, SE)
- YIELD (9, 15, NE)