

WHAT SHEEP NEED (Ezekiel 34:1-24)

I. Sheep need to be fed (vs. 2).

- A. Sheep have to eat.
 - 1. It is said that one of the negatives of sheep is that they get restless when they get hungry.
 - 2. This is when they tend to wander off in search of food.
- B. As Christians we have to be fed the word of God (1 Peter 2:2).
 - 1. This is the only type of spiritual nourishment that will truly sustain us.
 - 2. The milk of God's word allows us to grow.
- C. Elders, of course, have the command to make sure the sheep are being fed (Acts 20:28).
 - 1. If you want to have a problem on your hands, let a congregation go with weak preaching and teaching in Bible classes for a while.
 - 2. The sheep will get restless.
 - 3. The strong sheep will be upset and the weak sheep will go into sin.
- D. The Lord told Satan that man can't live by bread alone (Matthew 4:4).
 - 1. He was speaking spiritually of course.
 - 2. The only way we can live is by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

II. Sheep need to be shorn (vs. 3).

- A. We know sheep produce wool.
 - 1. Have you ever noticed when sheep are white?
 - 2. It's only when they are newborns and when they have been shorn of their wool.
- B. Sheep wool is pretty nasty when you think about it.
 - 1. They don't bath, so any mud or feces they may lay in or walk through gets caught up in their wool.
 - 2. One person made the statement that sheep are like giant velcro strips.
- C. They have to be shorn of their wool for safety as well.
 - 1. Their wool can get so full of junk that they can get top heavy.
 - 2. If a sheep falls over or gets cast down.
 - 3. When it's like this, all top heavy, I've read that it can't get back up by itself.
- D. We need to be shorn, or made clean.
 - 1. We walk around in the filth of the world and, at times, it gets on us.
 - 2. We don't always watch where we step, spiritually speaking.
- E. If we didn't have the Lord, when we've been cast down, we would be top heavy with sin and unable to get back up on our own.
- F. Long ago, Isaiah said that God's people could be made as wool.
 - 1. Wool has to be washed once it is shorn of course.
 - 2. The only thing that can wash us from our sins is the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5).
- G. We must have all the sin and filth of the world removed from us or we will be weighted down and die.

III. Sheep need to be cared for and guarded (vs. 4).

- A. The leaders of Israel were rebuked for not strengthening the weak, taking care of the sick and failing to bind up the injured.
1. A weak sheep was often picked up by the shepherd and carried to wherever the flock was headed.
 - a. He was then laid down in the green, safe grass to feed or carried to still water, because sheep won't drink out of running water.
 - b. This should remind us of Psalm 23.
 2. Shepherds had to care for the sick sheep and cover up the cuts and injuries of any hurt sheep.
 3. Sheep have no ability to tend to themselves.
- B. Shepherds were very tender with their sheep and took great care of them.
- C. Each sheep was precious in the eyes of the shepherd.
1. One writer described sheep as a personal, prized, and precious possession of the shepherd.
 2. There weren't any big sheep or little sheep, important or unimportant sheep.
 3. All were important and cared for by the shepherd.
- D. As such, the shepherd guarded those sheep, even with his life.
- E. In John 10, Jesus described Himself as the Door of the sheepfold (John 10:7).
1. A sheepfold was an enclosure made by the shepherd to keep the sheep in and predators and robbers out.
 2. Some sheepfolds were permanent structures, while others were made out of brush stranded together to make the enclosure.
 3. A sheepfold had one entrance, the door.
 4. The shepherd would lay down in the doorway during the night and the sheep would not go past him and he would wake up if predators came near.
 5. They would be steadied by the voice of the shepherd if they became restless in the sheepfold, because they knew his voice.
- F. The shepherd guarded them carefully.
1. If a predator attacked, the shepherd would defend the sheep.
 2. David spoke of this with Saul (1 Samuel 17:34-35).
- G. Sheep have absolutely no defense mechanisms.
1. They have no ability to save themselves.
 2. They aren't fast or vicious at all.
 3. Without care and guarding they die.
- H. The Lord cares for us (1 Peter 5:7) and the very next verse tells us of the predator who is seeking (1 Peter 5:8).
- I. The Lord guards and keeps us (John 10:28-29).

IV. Sheep need to be sought for (vs. 6).

- A. The Israelites had strayed off because of the lack of guidance from the earthly shepherds.
1. I have read that sheep have no sense of direction and get lost easily.
 2. They are also easily distracted, which causes them to wander after whatever has gotten their attention.
- B. When they wander off, a good shepherd would go find that sheep and not forget about him or allow him to off and hope he came back on his own.
- C. Jesus made this point in a parable when he spoke about 99 sheep staying

home but one sheep being lost and the shepherd going after the one sheep (Matthew 18:12-13).

D. Sheep were so precious that even one lost sheep was hurtful to the shepherd.

1. They provided income through their wool.
2. Any loss was damaging to the income of the shepherd.
3. Jacob made mention of the fact that Laban required him to pay for any sheep that was lost, whether by day or night (Genesis 31:38-39).

E. Sadly, we stray from time to time.

1. We need to be brought back to the Lord.
2. He calls out to us through His word and His people.

F. The Lord's church often does a poor job of bringing back the sheep that have wandered off.

1. Think of how many have wandered off from this congregation alone?
2. We have a lot at West Walker and many here recently.
3. Shepherds are to go after those sheep.
4. Unlike sheep, we have the strength and ability to resist the shepherd and some of have and do.
5. However, we still must go and especially elders who are called to shepherd (1 Peter 5:2), because they must give account (Hebrews 13:17).

G. It is not up only to the elders though (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

1. We need spiritually minded Christians to after these lost sheep as well.
2. We are to go after those that wander off as well, attempting to bring them back.

V. Sheep need to be led (vs. 15).

A. God told the Israelites that it would be Him that would lead them.

1. The beginning verses of the chapter are a condemnation of the leaders of Israel for failing to lead the sheep.
2. They didn't do what was best for the sheep, only for themselves.

B. Shepherds look after the sheep even at the expense of their own well being.

C. That is what leaders do.

D. Sheep wander off, go astray (Isaiah 53:6), thus they need to be led.

E. Again, Psalm 23 points this out to us.

F. This is true in the local congregation.

1. We sheep need to be led by the shepherds.
2. This shows us the awesome responsibility of shepherds.

G. Shepherds are to feed, lead and protect the sheep to the best of their abilities.

1. They are to use God's word as their guide in their efforts to lead us.
2. God's word is what strengthens us and them (Acts 20:32).

H. The truth is we need the leadership of shepherds and God's word because we aren't able to direct our own steps.

1. Jeremiah 10:23.
2. Proverbs 14:12.

I. The truth is, we are following someone.

J. We need to make sure the ones we are following aren't leading us into the ditch (Luke 6:39).

VI. Sheep need one Shepherd (vs. 23).

A. Sheep are unique in that once they get attached to a shepherd, they only heed his voice.

1. I've read of travelers in the Middle East who saw several herds gather together.

2. When time came to move the sheep, each shepherd called out to his sheep and each herd followed the voice of their shepherd and not one of the other shepherds.

B. Our Lord described Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:14).

1. The sheep, Christians, know the voice of the Good Shepherd.

2. The sheep, Christians, know the Good Shepherd.

C. Peter called Jesus the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

D. We must make sure that we are following the Good Shepherd.

E. He is the only true Shepherd that cares for His flock.

F. Satan has a flock, a flock of goats, and he does not care at all about what they do.

1. Goats don't need much attention do they?

2. They fend for themselves.

G. On the great day of judgment, the sheep and goats are going to be separated.

H. Who our shepherd is will tell us in which group we will find ourselves.

I. The Lord wants to be our Shepherd and has given His life in order to be such (John 10:11).