

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 341

The Book of Ezekiel in John 10

September 12, 2020

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

John 10 is one of the more familiar passages in the Gospel bearing that name. The chapter presents Jesus in bold ways. Listeners have already heard Dr. Heiser's thoughts on the latter item (John 10:30-38), where Jesus quotes Psalm 82 in defense of his deity-oneness with the Father. In this episode of the podcast we take a closer look at John 10 and its treatment of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, specifically in terms of how Jesus / John repurpose material from Ezekiel 34 and 37.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 341: The Book of Ezekiel in John 10. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. We are on the cusp of our Fantasy draft tomorrow.

TS: Yeah, we are.

MH: And Mori is eager. He's been studying. He's been looking over the player profiles and looking at the ADP trends. So he'll be ready.

TS: That's good. Ready to go down, as usual.

MH: [laughter] No, all he can think about is revenge. [laughs] From last year.

TS: Oh, okay. I see how it is. Alright, alright. Well, Mike, we were talking about music before the show, and you were telling me how...

MH: No, *you* were talking about music.

TS: Okay, yeah. Let me rephrase that. *I* was talking about music, changing some settings here, treble and bass. And you didn't know what I was talking about. So that led into a music discussion—how you got out of growing up with having any

musical knowledge, or settings on the stereo, things like that. What happened? You didn't listen to music at all growing up?

MH: Well, I did occasionally, but I never cared. You stick the thing in and it plays. That's good enough for me. I don't know what any of the terminology means.

TS: You didn't have any favorite music growing up? You didn't have a favorite song? Nothing?

MH: No, not so much. My kids make fun of me all the time for how little I have on my iPhone. But that's okay. I can take it.

TS: Well, what *do* you have on your iPhone?

MH: I have... Gosh, let me think here. I have a song by Weird Al, which I really like, because it's clever. [laughter] It's the eBay song. It's, like, the perfect song. He's just so talented.

TS: So are you a fan of the UHF movie from the '80s?

MH: Of what?

TS: His movie, UHF.

MH: I didn't even know Weird Al made movies.

TS: He made one in the '80s.

MH: Really?

TS: Yeah.

MH: And it's called UHF?

TS: Yeah. He made it in 1989. It was a parody movie of all of his... If you like Weird Al, you have to see UHF, 1989, his movie.

MH: Okay, I'll have to look it up and see what it's... Does it matter what it's about? Or it's just Weird Al?

TS: Yeah, it's just Weird Al. I can't even tell you what it's about. It's been literally since 1989 since I've seen it.

MH: It sounds compelling. [laughter]

TS: Well, it's Weird Al. So you know what you're getting into.

MH: Yeah.

TS: So yeah, if you like him... So other than that, what's another song?

MH: I have some movie themes. I have Handel's Messiah. I have a couple of John Denver songs.

TS: Oh, yeah.

MH: It's really eclectic. It's just, like... If I hear something and I kind of like it, then I might put it on... If I think I might listen to it again, then I'll do that. I've got some choir stuff. I don't know. There's not a whole lot on it, which is why I'm the butt of jokes. But that's okay.

TS: That's alright. As long as you've got some John Denver, that's okay with me.

MH: Yeah, I'm not a fan of any genre or individual or group per se. Just...

TS: Anything modern? Anything in the last ten years?

MH: Oh gosh. Probably not. Yeah, I'll have to say no. Well, *Lord of the Rings*. I have a couple of selections of music from the movie on there. Is that more than ten years? Probably.

TS: Yeah, that's more than ten. And scores from movies don't count.

MH: I'd have to say no then. What was that?

TS: Scores from movies don't count. Movie scores don't count.

MH: Okay, then I'd have to say no.

TS: Although I did have a John Williams *Star Wars* cassette growing up.

MH: Yeah, I had that. Which is why I have some of that on...

5:00

TS: Gotcha. That makes sense. I hear you. Well, alright, Mike. I don't know how this relates to the book of Ezekiel in John 10, but...

MH: Thankfully, it doesn't. Now that we've mortified [laughs] our listenership... [laughs] They should be in sufficient pain, waiting for this week's episode.

TS: You're good at connecting dots, so you're going to have to find this dot here. I don't know where it is, but...

MH: I don't know. I think this dot is disappearing over the horizon. But it's a good thing. Today, we *are* going to talk about more Old Testament in the New. If the dot rises up here, that I can connect to, Trey, I'll let you know while we're talking about this. But I doubt it. Don't hold your breath.

But yeah, we telegraphed this last week. We're going to continue doing Old Testament stuff in the New Testament. And out of that... We're not going to say anything now, but we'll announce something in the near future. But out of that, a sort of strategy has emerged for doing something long-term here (but I'm just going to leave it there) that will surprise and perhaps delight (maybe even appall) [laughs] the audience. But for today, we're going to talk about John's use of Ezekiel in chapter 10.

Now I have to confess that we're going to take a bit of a foray out of Ezekiel at some point, and it's going to be early in this episode. But we'll spend the bulk of our time in Ezekiel. But what I aim to do here, just like we've been doing, is as you read through the New Testament... And your modern English translation should telegraph this in some way, either by a typeset or setting things off with indentations... It's going to give you some clue that the Old Testament is being cited here. And if it does give you a visual clue, that's great. But you should be looking up cross references too, because a lot of the language of the New Testament is (surprise, surprise) drawn from the Old Testament. And this is a good case in point. I kind of like this chapter, because this is going to be really familiar but its connection back to the Old Testament will probably be quite *unfamiliar*.

So today, we want to focus on Ezekiel (specifically chapters 34 and 37) in John 10. I'll be looping in a little bit from Numbers 27 since John does. And as I typically do, I'm going to give you a source for the kind of discussion that we're going to have. Gary T. Manning has a book called *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period*. It's a 2004 title. This book is terribly expensive. It's \$230 on Amazon. So don't get it. Get the Logos version and pay less than \$30. This is not a commercial for Logos. But hey, if you've already hooked into the software, this is an easy call. Do not spend \$230 on not only this book, but any book. That's just too much. But that's what scholarly publishing does. They just charge an arm and a leg for stuff. But if you can get it in other media, go get it.

So John chapter 10 is where I want to start here. This is the Good Shepherd—the sheep and the shepherds... really familiar. This is the kind of passage that you're going to hear preached on a given Sunday. You've probably heard more than one sermon on it. But it has a pretty significant Old Testament background. So I'm going to start here just by reading John chapter 10, just so that it's fresh in our minds. And then we're going to talk about “What in the world is John doing and why?” in terms of what he cites—what he draws on—from the Old

Testament. So in John 10, this is going to be the first 18 verses. Jesus says here, in verse 1:

10:00

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Now the next verse is talking about how this creates a division among the Jews. They think he’s crazy, or “Why should we listen to him?” They get angry. And we’re going to see why in a moment.

I want to jump in here with something Manning says in his book in the chapter that’s about John 10. His book is quite expansive. It’s not just John 10. It’s the whole Gospel of John, which uses Ezekiel a lot. But Manning starts (in regard to this passage) this way:

The discourse and debate of John 10 are the culmination of the controversy over Jesus' identity in John 7–10. John 7 begins with Jesus' brothers who 'do not believe in him' (Jn 7:5). The crowds at the Feast of Tabernacles debate Jesus' identity (Jn 7:12, 26–27, 31, 40–43, 45–46), but most of the leaders reject his teaching...

So the crowds debate over his identity. Most of the leadership rejects it. That's also John 7...

(7:3, 25–26, 32, 47–52). Jesus makes a number of claims about himself (Jn 8:28–29, 37–38; 8:12), which results in a debate about Jesus' identity and the source of his authority (Jn 8:12–30). Jesus eludes capture on three occasions during this series of conflicts (Jn 7:32, 44–45; 8:20, 59), and then ends this period of teaching in the Temple.

So that's Manning's introduction to this. So John 7-10 is all about "Who is this guy?" And you get these varied reactions. Manning also notices that in John 8, many of the themes from John 8 are repeated in John 10. And if you had his book, if you were looking at it, he has a series of about ten parallels between John 8 and John 10. So again, a lot of the discussion here is really geared toward who this guy is—his identity. Manning has a comment about what happens after John 8. (We're leading to John 10 here.)

After the debates of John 8, the controversy continues as Jesus performs another Sabbath healing. The healed blind man is the focal point of the next controversy. The Pharisees, unable to directly attack Jesus, put the blind man on trial as a means of condemning Jesus. The once-blind man openly acknowledges Jesus' power, and as a result is expelled from the synagogue. The 'trial' of the blind man illustrates that the Pharisees are guilty both of rejecting Jesus and of misusing their authority over their 'flock.'

As we're going to find out, they're the evil shepherds—essentially the hired hands that Jesus is talking about in John 10. And they're rejecting the real shepherd, the Good Shepherd. Back to Manning, he says:

A brief conversation between Jesus and some Pharisees (Jn 9:39–41) provides the transition from the trial of the blind man to the shepherd discourse [MH: in John 10].

15:00

Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and said to him, 'Surely we are not also blind?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind,

you would not have sin; but now that you are saying, “We see,” your sin remains.’

This exchange makes it clear that the shepherd discourse that follows begins as a polemic against the leaders of Israel. The immediate situation to which Jesus responds is the Pharisees’ rejection of him and their mistreatment of the blind man. More broadly, Jesus is denouncing the entire political and religious leadership of Jerusalem. During Jesus’ stay in Jerusalem (John 7–10), the Temple leadership and the Pharisees have rejected his authority and tried to arrest him. In the shepherd discourse, Jesus uses two (or three) linked pastoral metaphors to condemn the unjust judgment of the leaders of Israel, to proclaim himself as the only reliable judge and leader of Israel, and to again call people to follow him.

Now all that is lead-up to John 10. And in John 10, most of the imagery in that chapter comes from Ezekiel 34 and 37, which is where we’re going to focus. So most of the imagery here is from Ezekiel 34 and 37, which is where we’ll focus, but the passage in John 10 opens in a different way. John actually uses a different passage to begin John 10 and then he’s going to go off into Ezekiel. The passage he uses to begin is Numbers 27. So I don’t want to exclude this. It’s going to have some of the same “sheep and shepherd” language, but its origin point is actually the book of Numbers. So I’m going to include it here. If you were comparing Numbers 27 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament material) with John 10—if you were actually looking at Greek, obviously—you would see immediately that there’s a lot of shared vocabulary in John 10:1-18 and Numbers 27. So just by way of a couple of examples... John 10 opens this way:

Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter through the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs in from outside, he is a thief and a bandit. ² But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep (ποιμήν ἐστὶν τῶν προβάτων).

You have two terms there: shepherd and sheep. If you’re looking at Numbers 27:

Moses said to the Lord, “Let the Lord God... [MH: I’m skipping a few words here] appoint a man over this congregation... and the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep who have no shepherd.” (ὥσει πρόβατα, οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν ποιμήν)

So the Septuagint of Numbers 27 has the same words for sheep and shepherd that you’re going to find in John 10. But that’s just the beginning. Keep reading in John 10:

[John 10:3] To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice (τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούει) and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out (ἐξάγει αὐτά).

Over in Numbers 27:21, this leader that Moses is talking to God about, “Lord, please appoint a leader (a man) over this congregation...” Because Moses knows his time is short here. And Moses describes this man this way:

[Numbers 27:21] ...at his word (ἐπὶ τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ) they will go out, and at his word they will come in...

So you have the same “going out and coming in” vocabulary. You have the same idea of calling to the sheep in Numbers 27 and in John 10. In John 10, of course, the sheep know his voice. The real shepherd (the True Shepherd) fits this description in John 10:9:

I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved, he will go in and out (εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται), and find pasture.

Over in Numbers 27:21 [which we just saw], you had the same verbiage:

... at his word they will go out (ἐξελεύσονται), and at his word they will come in (εἰσελεύσονται)...

Okay, the Good Shepherd (the real shepherd) will go out (ἐξελεύσεται) before them and he will go in (εἰσελεύσεται) before them. At his word, they will go out. Again, there’s a lot of shared vocabulary here. So we have to ask ourselves the question. It’s kind of interesting that Jesus (and, of course, John) would hearken back, as this discourse starts. It’s a direct challenge to the Pharisees (the Jewish leadership). What’s Numbers 27 about? Well, it’s Moses praying for a successor. So it’s about the successor to Moses. And I’m just going to read part of Numbers 27, just that you get the feel for it here. We’ll start in verse 12.

20:00

¹² The Lord said to Moses, “Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. ¹³ When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was...

So Moses is about to die. He’s not going to see the Promised Land...

¹⁴ because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of

Zin.)¹⁵ Moses spoke to the LORD, saying,¹⁶ “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation¹⁷ who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.”¹⁸ So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.¹⁹ Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight.

And so Moses does this. Now think about it. By using this passage (Jesus starts talking about the sheep and the shepherd, and the sheep having no shepherd and so on and so forth) the people within earshot (like the Pharisees, like the people who have rejected him—the religious authorities) know where this comes from. So by using this passage, John is telling his readers (and Jesus is telling his audience) that the new Joshua (the new Yeshua)... Because that's what Jesus' name is. Jesus is Greek and in Hebrew it's Yeshua, which is the same as Joshua. He's telegraphing the point that the new Joshua is here, the one whom Moses prayed for, the prophet like unto Moses, so on and so forth. We talked about that in Episode 339 [also in Episodes 330 and 315]. The new Yeshua (the new Joshua) is Moses' successor, and therefore he (Jesus) is the shepherd alluded to in Numbers 27. This is what he's claiming. He's just... Right to the face. The people of Israel would “go in and go out” by the word of the new Joshua. The sheep of Israel In John 10... Jesus is their way of going in and out. He is the door. The implications are clear. Jesus is throwing down the gauntlet. And Manning writes about this. He says:

Jesus is saying that he is the legitimate leader of Israel, as Joshua was, and he is calling on the people and the rulers of Israel to accept his leadership. The wilderness generation, including the high priest, made a correct judgment about Joshua [MH: in the Old Testament]. The beginning of the shepherd discourse rebukes the Pharisees and chief priests for their faulty logic in rejecting [MH: the new Joshua] Jesus and invites them to make a correct judgment about Jesus.

You know, “Get it right, fellas.” And of course, we know how this is going to go. They're not. They're going to become even angrier. And so not surprisingly... This is where it begins. So Jesus isn't just using mere pastoral metaphors. He's going to get into that. Because from this point on, he's going to get into Ezekiel 34 and 37 and he's really going to up the ante. But the sheep and the shepherd language in John 10 actually originates with the change of leadership from Moses to Joshua. And Jesus is basically saying, “Look, your forefathers at least had this much sense. They understood that Joshua was the successor to Moses. Well, I'm Yeshua.” And in John 10 he's going to... We've done an episode before on John 10, when Jesus quotes Psalm 82 a little bit later on to defend his deity... I mean, he's the son of God—all this sort of stuff. Jesus is going to let them have it here. “I am the new Joshua. I am the prophet like unto Moses. I am the

successor to Moses. Do you have the sense that your forefathers had? Do you understand? Leaders of Israel, do you understand what's happening here and who I am?" And of course, he knows they don't. He knows they've rejected the whole thing. And so he's going to go on from this successor language (the sheep and shepherd language in Numbers 27) to go into Ezekiel and make it even more dramatic and a bigger punch in the nose for them.

So as you keep reading through John 10, Ezekiel 34, which is the prophecy of Ezekiel against the shepherds (plural) of Israel... And Ezekiel 37, which has several lines about the Davidic shepherd who's going to lead the people... He doesn't skip any of it. He goes into both.

25:00

Let's go back and read Ezekiel 34, just so that you have a framework for where the language is coming from. So Ezekiel 34. And I'm going to read a good portion of it here, and then we'll jump over to Ezekiel 37. So Ezekiel 34 is the prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, who of course... When John's going to use this... When Jesus uses it in his teaching, they know exactly who he's shooting at. It's them. So Ezekiel 34 says this:

The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. ⁵So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; ⁶they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

⁷“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, ⁹therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

¹¹ “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep...

Now look at the transition here in Ezekiel 34. He’s castigating the shepherds. They have left the flock of Israel without a shepherd. They’re just illegitimate. They do the exact opposite of what a shepherd would do. They are sheep without a shepherd. They’ve abandoned the course... At least the generation of Moses and Joshua got this much right. But this bunch of leaders in Ezekiel’s day have just done the exact opposite. And so God says, “I’m against you. I’m against you. And what I’m going to do now...” Verse 11:

¹¹ “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I *myself* will search for my sheep and will seek them out.

I mean, as soon as Jesus gets into Ezekiel 34 at this point and identifies himself as the Good Shepherd, he’s putting himself in the God slot of Ezekiel 34. Verse 12:

¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

Now he turns his attention [to the flock] itself:

¹⁷ “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. ¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water

with your feet? ¹⁹ And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

²⁰ “Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad...

I mean, you see what Ezekiel is doing here. The leadership... They're Jews too, just like the people (sheep and sheep). But there are sheep that are going to be judged and sheep that aren't.

30:00

²² I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³ And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

You realize this is Ezekiel. David's long dead. Jerusalem and the Temple are going to be destroyed imminently. This is Ezekiel 34. And after the days of Israel, you don't have anyone from David's line sitting as legitimate king over the twelve tribes of Israel. You don't have that. And that's the situation you have when Jesus shows up. So Jesus is already identifying himself as the son of David and in John, the Son of God. Now he's the shepherd of Ezekiel 34. He's the Good Shepherd. He's the one shepherd. He is the one shepherd, "my servant David." I mean, all these connection points are drawn on in John 10 (this real familiar thing). And what we typically do when we hear this preached is... It's not inappropriate to talk about how dumb sheep are and how cute sheep are. But there's just so much more going on here. I mean, this is not Jesus sort of doing a little soft shoe or a little stand-up comedy to make us chuckle at silly sheep and compare ourselves to silly sheep, even though that would be easy to do. This is a theological fistfight with the religious leadership. Because they know *exactly* who they are in the story (in the text and in his statements) and who he thinks he is. I mean, this is really ratcheting up the tension between these two sides. I mean, Jesus is not being cute here. He's being anything but cute. Let's go over to Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel 37, verse 15:

¹⁵ The word of the LORD came to me:

Now this is after Jerusalem is fallen. So let's just set the context here.

¹⁵ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶ “Son of man, take a stick and write on it, ‘For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.’

You realize Judah is the southern kingdom (the two tribes that have just suffered a devastating defeat at the hand of the Babylonians). Joseph (i.e., Ephraim)... Ephraim was one of the names used of the northern kingdom (the ten tribes who have long been scattered to the wind at the hand of the Assyrians in 722 BC). What's happened to Jerusalem here in 586 BC... It's exile for both. The ten tribes are scattered to the wind and expatriated all over the ancient Near Eastern world. The two southern tribes are going to go to Babylon and then they're going to be able to come back if they want to. And most of them don't. They stay in Babylon. This is where we get the whole Esther story. But anyway, he's talking about both wings (both kingdoms) of the divided kingdom (the divided monarchy, the North and the South). He says, "Take a stick that represents one and another stick that represents the other one." Verse 17: "And join them." (Join the two sticks.)

¹⁷ And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when your people say to you, ‘Will you not tell us what you mean by these?’ ¹⁹ say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰ When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹ then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. ²² And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. ²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

²⁴ “My servant David...

Again, there is no David right now. David is long dead, and so is the dynasty. But Ezekiel 37:24:

24 “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.

35:00

And then he talks about bringing them back into the land. Now what do we have here? There are over a dozen... If we were looking at the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and, of course, John’s Greek in John 10... There are over a dozen vocabulary connections between John 10 and Ezekiel 34 and 37—over a dozen different points of contact. Manning summarizes them this way. He writes:

The two passages share three phrases, eleven key words, five close synonyms, and four weaker synonyms. The amount of verbal parallelism makes it clear that John is not merely drawing on everyday shepherd life [MH: and that’s typically how this is preached], as a few scholars have claimed. Furthermore, no other shepherd metaphor in the OT comes close to having this many verbal parallels to John 10.

In other words, it’s very clear where this is coming from. Now he has a bunch of these things. If you get the book in Logos, he has a big chart of “Verbal Parallels between the Shepherd Images in John and Ezekiel” and all of the shared vocabulary. You have the term “shepherd” (ποιμήν poimēn) and that’s the same. You have the verb “to lead.” “I will lead them” or “bring them in.” It’s the same verbiage between the two. “To go out and to come in.” We already mentioned that. “To save.” The Greek terms here (ἀγῶ agō and ἐξάγω exagō) and “to save” (σῶζω sōzō)... Even sheep (πρόβατα probata)... They’re the same. They’re the same between John 10 and all these passages. And there’s well over a dozen of them (a dozen different ones). And then they’re repeated. Basically John 10 is peppered with Ezekiel 34 and 37. There’s no mistaking it. It’s very obvious that these passages put forth a portrait of God’s legitimate shepherd (and, of course, the illegitimate shepherds). And Jesus (of course John writing up the account) used Ezekiel 34 to create a stark contrast between the bad shepherds of Israel with really the two good shepherds (God and David). But of course, John is saying, “That’s Jesus.” Jesus occupies the God slot and of course he occupies the David slot. It’s all very intentional and very deliberate.

So I’m going to just try to summarize this in some focus points here with the implications of what John is doing here. And again, the whole exercise is, when you read through your New Testament... Again, this is a commonly heard passage, a commonly read passage. You hear this one preached. It is about more than simple, pastoral, shepherd, “Oh, look at the sheep, those silly sheep” imagery. There’s a serious confrontation here and a very explicit identification of Jesus as God the Good Shepherd and as David the good shepherd. This is the kind of thing... Again, I hate to keep referring to the village atheist out on YouTube, or the person, “Ah, this whole... Jesus didn’t know who he was. Oh, this is a shame. Oh, it’s such a mystery.” No, it isn’t. It’s very explicit. If you’re

going to run around and claim that the people in Jesus' day and the people who had the Gospel of John (or any of the Gospels, for that matter) were befuddled as to whether Jesus was claiming to be God or not, it shows that they have a very shallow understanding of what the New Testament is saying and where it's getting its material from, just point-blank. You've got poor thinking and poor research if those are the conclusions you've drawn.

But anyway... Sorry for the little diatribe there. Focus points and implications. Let's start off with the most obvious first.

40:00

1. God is the Good Shepherd in Ezekiel 34:11-16. We just read that. So Jesus is cast as fulfilling (occupying) the God role. He is the Good Shepherd in John 10:7-16. This, of course, means in turn that the present leaders of the people (the Pharisees, the scribes, and whoever else) are bad shepherds. And not only are they just bad (like inept), they're sinister. They're the ones, if you recall reading through the passage in Ezekiel 34, they're making themselves fat. They're making the sheep suffer. They're not taking care of them. They're abusing them. The religious leadership here of the Jewish community... I mean, look, they don't have a monarchy. They're under Rome. They don't have political leaders. Their only leaders are these religious guys—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, so on and so forth. They don't have a political representation. These are their leaders of the community. And they're garbage. Jesus is saying, "Let me tell you who I think you are." And he starts drawing this stuff out of Ezekiel 34. "You're just terrible people." [laughs] "You're just terrible." So again, by doing this, there's just no ambiguity here. Jesus isn't being cute. He's not being clever. He's not trying to say enough words so that the crowd likes him and the religious leaders aren't too upset, or they don't quite know where he's at. No, everybody within earshot is going to know exactly where he's at. And they're going to know where they're at, too.

2. In Ezekiel, God rebukes the leaders of Israel. In John, that role is fulfilled by Jesus. He's the rebuker as well. As a result, in Ezekiel, God leads and saves the sheep. But in John, it's *Jesus* who says, "I will lead and save the sheep (the people). I'm going to do the job that Ezekiel described God as doing. I'm going to lead them and save them." John 10:3, John 10:16, John 10:9. I mean, the language is drawn right out of Ezekiel 34. The present leadership that Jesus is confronting are not good people. They're not capable but just, "Oh, they had a bad day." No. They're abusive. And they're just terrible.

3. Third, in Ezekiel, God delivers his sheep from their bad shepherds. That's Ezekiel 34:7-10. "I'm going to deliver the sheep from these terrible shepherds." And they get delivered from the predators who seek their harm (Ezekiel 34:28). In John, it's Jesus who protects the sheep (the people) from thieves (John 10:8-10) and predators, even at the cost of his own life (John 10:11, 13-14). "I lay down my life for the sheep." He says, "I'm going to take it up again, but I in fact.... I'm this serious about it, that I will lay down my life for the sheep."

4. Now, as a fourth observation, Manning also notes... I'm going to refer to Manning here, because I like the way he summarizes this. I think he can do this better than I can. But he summarizes the vocabulary of personal relationship that occurs between the two passages. So Jesus and God... Here's his quotation.

Jesus and God both describe the people as 'my sheep', 'my own', 'my flock', or 'my people' (Jn 10:14, 16, 26, 27; Ezek. 34:3, 6, 30, 31, etc.). In the OT sheep metaphors, the owner of the sheep is always God, even when a human leader is given the title of shepherd.

Now that's important. "The owner of the sheep is always God, even when a human leader is given the title of shepherd."

The phrase 'my sheep' occurs only in Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 in the OT, and in both metaphors, the speaker is God.

So you have it here in Ezekiel 34. You go out to Jeremiah 23 (the only other place we have this "my sheep" language). And in both cases, the speaker is God. So it's uniform. It's a uniform idea.

Thus, when John's Jesus uses the phrase 'my sheep,' a reader familiar with the OT [MH: like the Pharisees were] is drawn to consider the close connection between Jesus and God. That connection must at least be an identity of purpose and function [MH: at the very least]; furthermore, it suggests a sharing of authority that transcends most OT messianic expectations.

So for sure, when it comes to messiah, they're expecting a deliverer, this Day of the Lord imagery, setting the captives free, and all this kind of stuff. But when Jesus does this and he refers to the people of Israel as "my sheep," he is, again, putting himself in the God slot. He is being identified with the God of Israel. Like Manning said, the language, to someone who's familiar with the Old Testament... This is going to be shocking, what this guy is saying, who he's casting himself as.

5. Fifth, there's an "end of exile" theme in Ezekiel 37 that is in play and uses the sheep/shepherd language. Ezekiel 37—this whole thing about the two sticks. Ezekiel. Put yourself back in Ezekiel's day. We did a whole book study on Ezekiel. Think back. He's in Babylon. He's part of the second wave of the captivity. By this time, the ten tribes to the north are already literally history. They don't exist anymore. They were destroyed, annihilated, dispersed, scattered by the Assyrians, who moved foreigners into Ephraim (that part of Israel or Canaan). They're already history. They're in exile. And now, in Ezekiel 37, Ezekiel has just said, "Well, the Temple's gone. It's destroyed. The city's destroyed. And there's another wave of exiles coming." Then the last two remaining tribes are in exile, too.

45:00

Now we comment a lot about exile on different episodes of the podcast. And for us... Exile isn't preached very often. The Old Testament isn't preached very often. But exile is a huge deal in the Old Testament. We tend to think (if the people in our churches ever even have heard of the exile) that it's like, "Oh, yeah, you know, they got taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. But then 70 years later they come back, and the exile's over!" No, it isn't. Ezekiel 37 makes that quite clear. The end of the exile defined in Ezekiel 37 (and a number of other passages, for that matter) is that all twelve tribes are back in the fold. There's only one family. There's one nation. There's one family. It's all twelve tribes back together. The two sticks are now one and there's one leader. There's one shepherd over them. David is over them. That's the definition of the end of the exile.

So if you're living in the first century, when Jesus shows up, and you have even a modest acquaintance with your Old Testament, you are not thinking about exile the way most evangelicals or whoever (biblically literate people of today) might be thinking, "Oh, that was over. They came back to the land. They built a second temple and everything was good. Maybe not quite as good as Solomon, but they were back. The exile's over." No. That is not what they're thinking. A biblically literate Jew would look at you and say, "Dude. Where are the tribes? Dude. Where's the messiah?" All this imagery that is... "Look, go read Leviticus 26, what's supposed to happen when we repent? God is supposed to be here. The presence of God is supposed to be *back in the land*." That's Leviticus 26. "I'll be their God; they'll be my people again. After the land vomits them out for apostasy, if they repent I will bring them back and I will dwell with them once more." And it's all the tribes. That is not the set of conditions in the first century. And frankly, it's not the set of conditions now. The tribes aren't back in Israel. Where's messiah? And frankly, even if you build another temple, where's the messiah? Show me all the twelve tribes. Show me the return of the Spirit of God. Show me how the new covenant... not only the coming of the Spirit... If you're having a conversation with a Jew that thinks 1948 is it, "and if we rebuild the Temple, we're back." No, you still have to have the coming of the Spirit. You still have to have messiah. You still have to have all the tribes back. You still have to have the conditions of Leviticus 26 present.

Exile is still a reality in the first century. It's on everybody's mind (anybody who's biblically literate and who cares in the Jewish community). And Ezekiel 37 links the cure—links the end of the exile—with this shepherd stuff. It uses shepherd language in the description of the end of the exile and the arrival of David, the good shepherd. And here's Jesus, standing in front of this group of people who do know their Bibles. And he's using this language, both to tar and feather them for their corruption (and their theological illiteracy), and presenting himself as the answer—the counterpart—to these passages. I mean, do you see why... We have the New Testament. We have hindsight. But do you see why... Do you see how Pentecost fulfills this stuff? Jews from every tribe—all the tribes scattered

50:00

around the known world—come to Jerusalem. They see the Spirit arrive, which is a fulfillment of the new covenant. Jesus said in the Last Supper, “Here’s the bread and the wine. This is... I’m giving my body and blood for the new covenant.” And he’s told them, “Now after I rise from the dead and go back to the Father, then the Spirit is going to come who is-but-isn’t me.” And all this kind of stuff. The New Testament portrays the end of the exile happening with Jesus. It’s just that simple.

Now, like everything else in the New Testament that tends to be tied to Jesus, there is an “already” reality to it, but there’s a “not yet” culmination (or consummation) of it. It’s the “already, but not yet” that is consistent in the New Testament—present reality working its way toward permanence. It’s “already,” but it’s “not yet” in the sense that it’s not perfected and permanent. But when it is, you’re going to be able to see that the stuff that was the precursor is consistent with it. And here we go again.

So in Manning’s book, he has a nice little chart of how Ezekiel 37:19-23 is repurposed in John 10. John 10:16 says, “I have other sheep which are not from this fold.” Here’s the kicker. Not only has he insulted them for being the evil shepherds (the bad ones). Not only has Jesus stood there and said, “Look, if you want to know about the end of the exile, take a good look at me. I’m the good shepherd. I’m David. I’m in the God slot. I occupy this position. This is who I am.” But he goes even further to (in their minds) insult them. He’s going to loop in the Gentiles. [laughs] John 10:16, “I have other sheep which are not from this fold; and I must lead them, and they will hear my voice, and they will become one flock under one shepherd.” And if you’re thinking about that in John 10:16, if you have this stuff ringing around in your head, here’s Ezekiel 37:19ff:

The two sticks (Israel and Judah) will be one staff in my hand... And I will make them one nation in my land... and one ruler over them. I will raise up over them one shepherd... my servant David.”

Not only is it the linking of the tribes, but if this is the end of the exile, if this is bringing on the new covenant and the kingdom...

Remember, we quoted Ezekiel 37. We could go back to Ezekiel 36. What did Jesus... What did Ezekiel talk about before, the tribes all becoming one tribe again under David? Ezekiel 36, it’s the new covenant. It’s the arrival of the Spirit. With all this stuff going on, everything turns into one family. With his arrival, the exile will end. And when the kingdom begins, people are going to know that the kingdom described in the prophets also includes Gentiles. We’re going to get to more of that in a second. But I’m planting it in your mind now about this one family. Manning writes this:

There are some other important parallels between John's Jesus and Ezekiel's David. Although David is never called the 'good' shepherd, he is clearly presented as good in contrast to the wicked shepherds of Israel. The mention of 'one shepherd' (Ezek. 34:23; 37:24) likely not only refers to the united kingdom, but also to David's eternal reign—there will be no other king after him (Ezek. 37:25) [MH: Ezekiel 37:25 says it's going to be forever]. David's rule is clearly secondary to God's in Ezekiel, however. David is only appointed after God himself has eliminated the wicked sheep and shepherds, and God is the one who brings down the eschatological blessings on his people (34:25–30; 37:24–28) [MH: and God is always the owner]... David does exactly what God does—he is a faithful shepherd who feeds God's flocks. Although David is subordinate to God, their actions are united. As Eichrodt [MH: a famous Old Testament scholar] expresses it, 'One can see Yahweh himself at work in this servant ... what Ezekiel chiefly means by this servant David is that he is to be regarded as the fully reconstituted image of God, in whom the will of God ... is finally brought into effect.'

That's a good quote. Manning says:

55:00

The parallel to John's christology is clear. Jesus is God's faithful representative who fully carries out God's work (Jn 10:25, 37–38). As God appoints David over God's sheep, so God gives the sheep to Jesus (Jn 10:29). God makes a covenant with David (Ezek. 34:25 LXX); God knows, loves, appoints, and commands Jesus (Jn 10:15, 17, 18). Outside of the shepherd discourse, Jesus regularly points out that his authority comes from the Father (5:26–27, 30–32, 37)...

And of course, in John 10:30, he's going to say, "I and the Father are one." And that's going to bring us into the whole Psalm 82 thing, which we covered in a previous episode about how Jesus appeals to Psalm 82 to basically say, "Hey, fellas, doesn't your own Scriptures tell you that there are supernatural sons of God? So don't gripe that I use the term Son of God and say 'I and my Father are one,'" and then he goes in verses 37 and 38 and says, "The Father is in me, and I'm in the Father." It hearkens back to the Angel of the Lord stuff in the book of Exodus, where the presence of God (the Name) is in the angel. I mean, this is where he's going with this. He is going to identify himself with God and with David and with the shepherd—all this stuff. It's all in one chapter. This is John 10, and it's kind of a crazy chapter.

And then back to the comment, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." So, yeah. There's the tribes being united, but there's more than that. And my apologies to Mormons and others who take the verse to be some sort of strange "lost tribes of Israel in North America" nonsense. It's not. The verse isn't about that. The statement is defined and explained by the Old Testament. Now

catch this. I'm going to read you a quote from Manning and then go on to a few other passages. Manning says:

John first suggests a redefinition of the people of God in Jn 10:16, 'I have other sheep who are not of this fold; and I must bring them and they will hear my voice and they will be one flock, one shepherd.' The addition of sheep from outside the fold, who are admitted on the basis of hearing Jesus, suggests that John is redefining God's fold. In John 11 [MH: the next chapter], the narrator resumes the theme of gathering God's people in his explanation of Caiaphas' prophetic words, 'You do not consider that it is better for you that one man die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish.' John's explanation is closely tied to Jesus' earlier description of the 'other sheep' and alludes to two related passages in Ezekiel.

Now catch this. So here's John 11. I'm going to read you all the stuff in John. Then I'm going to jump to Ezekiel—one other thing that we haven't read yet. So there's John 10:16: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them and they hear my voice. They'll be one flock, one shepherd." He describes these other sheep from some other place (some other fold) in the same terms as he describes the Jews (the twelve tribes). "They're going to hear my voice. They'll be one flock, one shepherd." In John 11:51-52, Caiaphas, of course, prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation (τοῦ ἔθνους), and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather all that are scattered.

Now it's interesting that the language there in the Greek, "that he might gather" in Caiaphas' quote (συναγάγη) all the scattered... There's a very particular verb form (διεσκορπισμένα). Both of those words show up in Ezekiel 28:25. Listen to this verse [paraphrased]:

And I will gather Israel from the nations from where they are scattered. I will gather them from the regions around them, and I will lead them into the land of Israel. I will appoint them as one nation in my land... and one ruler will be over them all, and they will no longer be two nations... My servant David will be ruler in their midst, and one shepherd will be over all.

That's Ezekiel 28:25 and then Ezekiel 37:21-24. That's Pentecost. [laughs] That is Pentecost to a T. And Manning says:

The main reasons for John's allusions to Ezek. 28:25 and 37:21-26 are clear. John sees the OT prophecies of the gathering of Israel being fulfilled in the followers of Jesus.

1:00:00

He sees the tribes coming together. And once the tribes come together at Pentecost, they gather in Jerusalem, they hear the Gospel, and they witness the coming of the Spirit, initiating the new covenant. What do they do? They go back home and they become cell groups. They become plants. They become purveyors of the Gospel. To whom? Not just their own communities, their own families, and their own synagogues. But they become communicators to the whole area—to the nations. Like I have in *Unseen Realm*, these are little beachheads all over the ancient world that ultimately are going to lead to the Gentiles being brought in. They're outside the current flock. Gentiles are not in the flock of Ezekiel. They're outside the flock. They're outsiders. But they're going to become part of the flock. And the key to that is going to be what happens at Pentecost. The Old Testament telegraphs this idea and what's going on here.

So again, this is not... I keep saying, if you had a decent knowledge of your Old Testament and you're there in Jerusalem on that day of Pentecost, no wonder 3,000 of them believe. Because if you know what's going on here right in front of your face, and if you know the Scriptures well enough to see the implications, and you hear these crazy people that are now somehow able to talk in other languages (which also comes from the Old Testament)... They're known languages. And you see them empowered to do this. And now you get to hear about Jesus of Nazareth. This is a different perspective now. And you see the coming of the Spirit, the Spirit empowering these people to tell this story... No kidding. No kidding. Everything is just going to start to come together. The pieces are going to start to come together in your head—of course, with the benefit of hindsight. But it's no wonder that so many of them believe. They get it. They see it. And this becomes the beachhead event that lots of Jews go back into these countries, the places where they've been scattered. God's providential use of the exile is now clear to be seen, why it is this way. Because this is going to be the key—the mechanism—to gathering people from all the nations that were disinherited and bring them back into the family. They're sheep of another fold that God wants in his fold again. There are just so many ways that this could go. Let me read Manning again.

The gathered sheep in Jn 10:16 become the gathered children of God in Jn 11:52, and now it is clear that Jesus will gather sheep, God's children, from beyond the nation. These two references by themselves could be taken as a promise to gather Diaspora Jews to Jesus, but in John, Gentile believers are suggested by John's description.

This inclusion of Gentiles is clear from John's description of the 'scattered children of God (τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ)' in Jn 11:52. In the Johannine corpus [MH: in all of John's writings], τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ are all God's children, regardless of nationality. The only other use of that phrase in the Gospel of John explicitly includes all believers in Jesus [MH: here's the quote—it's a verse you've heard before]. 'But as many as received him, he gave them the right to become children

of God (τέκνα θεοῦ), to those who believe in his name, who were born not from blood, nor from the will of the flesh [MH: it has nothing to do with ethnicity], nor from the will of man, but from God' (Jn 1:12–13).

Human ancestry is not the point of this.

Human ancestry provides no privileged access to becoming children of God, according to John (see also 1 Jn 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2).

And the language gets looped back into Caiaphas' statement in John 11:52, which is connected to John 10:16.

So in the end, John's use of Ezekiel 34, 37 (and Numbers 27) not only casts Jesus as God the true shepherd, and David the true shepherd, and an atoning deliverance from exile for the twelve tribes (all this stuff), it leads to inclusion of the Gentiles, and the reversal of the Babel judgment. I mean, there's a ton of stuff packed in here in John.

So to wrap up the episode, why are we doing this? We're doing this to telegraph the point that when you read your New Testament, you should just assume [laughs] that there's stuff going on. You should just assume that the New Testament writers are using the Old Testament to frame what they're saying and repurposing it to present Jesus and present XYZ idea about the gospel. It's just there so frequently. But it's so subtle. And what we typically do is we'll preach this passage and we'll talk about how dumb sheep are, how they need a leader and they need a shepherd. Yeah, they do. They are and they do. But if that's what you're getting out of this passage, it just falls way short of what was actually the teaching point or points of the passage: Jesus' identity and his mission, which includes everybody—including the Gentile.

1:05:00

TS: Alright, Mike. I like these episodes, because unless you're a scholar or take time to really connect those dots, most readers of the Bible just are not going to make those connections. So we appreciate you having that expertise. Because it's invaluable, seeing how the Old Testament does influence the New Testament.

MH: Yeah. Again, our goal here is simple. We just want you to be a more careful reader of your Bible. And especially since most Christians naturally gravitate toward the New Testament, there's just a depth to it, to the New Testament, even these simple stories and these simple episodes. There's just a lot going on. [laughs] There's a lot going on in the speaker (in this case, Jesus) and the people listening to him, on all sides. They can pick up what he's laying down, but unfortunately, we just miss a lot of it.

TS: Absolutely. Any thoughts as to what we're going to be talking about next week?

MH: We're going to do a little more Ezekiel in some of the Gospels. I haven't landed specifically on which part. But Ezekiel is sort of a favorite resource for a number of Gospel passages, so it'll be one more of these.

TS: Alright, sounds good. Perfect. We'll be looking forward to that. And with that, Mike, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.