

The Good Shepherd – Missed Connections

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MAIN VERSES

[Numbers 27:16](#) • [Numbers 27:18](#) • [Luke 24:27](#) • [John 9:13](#) • [John 9:28](#) • [John 9:35](#) • [John 9:37](#) • [John 10:1](#) • [John 10:18](#) • [John 10:31](#) • [Ezekiel 34:1](#) • [Ezekiel 34:11](#) • [Ezekiel 34:22](#) • [Ezekiel 37:1](#) • [Ezekiel 37:15](#) • [Ezekiel 37:22](#) • [Ezekiel 37:24](#) • [Daniel 7](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home. Shabbat Shalom, everybody.

Missed Connections in Scripture

We had some great feedback on last week's message concerning how Matthew and Luke portray Yeshua as the greater Moses and leading us out in a greater exodus as described by the prophets in the Old Testament. And the point, of course, of the message was to show how the biblical authors and the authors of the New Testament did not simply tell some historical details about the life of Yeshua. No, they sat down and spent time to articulate their own narrative of their experience with Yeshua and to link him directly into the story of the Old Testament.

And this entire series that we've started is going to be about those connections that link the New Testament to the Old Testament story that we sometimes miss, hence, Missed Connections. I thought it was a clever title.

So this week, I wanted to explore some of the ways that John plugs in the prophet Ezekiel in his writings about Jesus and how he claims Yeshua fulfills Ezekiel. And a few resources before we begin that I'd love to recommend: first, a scholar who's a friend of mine that I highly recommend, as well as a pastor in a Messianic congregation. His name is Matt Knapper. He's one of the community pastors over at Beit Shalom Messianic Fellowship in Bethlehem, Monroe, Louisiana, and he has a great two-part teaching called The Greater Exodus, so check that out. I also highly recommend a Christian professor, Professor Michael Heiser. He has some fantastic

podcasts and books on this exact topic that we're discussing tonight, so make sure you check him out as well.

So if you want to go ahead and turn with me to John chapter 10, that's going to be the chapter that we're camping out in today.

The Old Testament is About Yeshua

And just as we discussed last week in our first missed connection message, much of what is written in the New Testament—much of what the New Testament authors draw from—is the narrative of the Old Testament. And the reason is simple. They viewed the entirety of the Old Testament as not separate from the story of who Jesus is, but as a part of his story. In other words, the New Testament authors saw the Old Testament and its narrative as about Yeshua.

In [Luke 24:27](#), Yeshua speaks to this very idea. So when we read things in the New Testament that seem familiar from the Old Testament, they are. So it's common, and it's expected to see the echoes of the prophets in the story of Yeshua.

The Good Shepherd and the Sheep

Here in John, Yeshua is having this discussion with the Pharisees. It's a familiar set of passages about the good shepherd and the sheep, I am the door, and so forth. We're going to read 18 verses, so we're going to read the Word of God today. And if you're not patient enough to read a couple of scriptures in a row, maybe you should reevaluate what reading the Bible is all about, because we're going to dive in and give this context the weight that it deserves.

So let's go ahead and read John chapter 10, verses 1 through 18. Here's what it says:

Very truly, I tell you, Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Right? Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore, Jesus said again, I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees a wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks and the flock scatters. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Demon-Possessed. Why?

So here we go. Familiar. This kicks off a pretty divisive stance, actually, from the Jews around Yeshua and him, and they end up accusing him of being demon-possessed after he gives this speech.

Demon-possessed. Why? Why would they accuse him of being demon-possessed after speaking these words? Well, they are angry because the last three chapters leading up to this chapter—the entire discussion has been about Yeshua's identity. Yeshua does a miracle or he says something kind of cryptic in a teaching and the Pharisees and religious leaders have an absolute cow. Disputes come about and everyone is trying to figure out who is this no-named rabbi from Nazareth and who does he think he is? Who is he truly? And that is the entire trajectory that John is taking us in these chapters leading up to this point.

The Blind Man's Trial

The focus here revolves around the religious leaders that have been put in place over the flock. In John chapter 9, it really highlights this because even after all of these disputes and clashes with Yeshua and his healing, he goes on to heal a blind man. And instead of the Pharisees trying to corner Yeshua again, they end up cornering the blind man. They take the blind man, this guy that was just healed, and then they go back and forth debating whether Yeshua is actually from God.

So let's look at the verses because it's important to kind of build up the foundation for [John 10](#) that we just read. Just like a good movie that starts out with a climactic scene and then goes back in time to review what's happening, go ahead and turn your page in your Bibles backwards to the chapter before. And let's read a few verses leading up to why Yeshua gives this discourse talking about sheep and a shepherd, okay?

We're going to start in John chapter 9, verse 13. And here's what it says:

He put mud on my eyes, the man replied, and I washed and now I see.

Some of the Pharisees said, They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents, dragging his parents into court or into this dispute. Is this your son, they asked? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?

And so the rest of this chapter is filled with the religious leaders griping and even throwing insults at the blind man, this poor blind man that was just healed, right? That they threw him

into this trial and went back and forth.

Right here in chapter 9, verse 28, they hurled insults at him and said, You are this fellow's disciple. We believe, or we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from.

The Son of Man

So what is chapter 9 setting up? It's setting up the true character of the teachers and the pastors and the shepherds, or religious leaders, at this time.

And here's how John chapter 9 ends, right before we go into the [John 10](#) discourse about the sheep and the good shepherd and the hired hands. In verse 35, here's what it says:

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, the blind man that was healed, right? They threw him out. And when he found him, he said, Do you believe in the son of man?

So the blind man asked, Well, who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him.

And Yeshua said, You have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you.

So the son of man character, of course, is referencing all the way back to Daniel chapter seven with the son of man that's going to defeat the beast and become king. And it's also drawn straight from Ezekiel, which is who John quotes in [John 10](#). In verse 37:

Jesus said, You have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking to you. Then the man said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him. Now some of the Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, What are we, blind too?

Okay, so lots of scripture, which is always a good thing.

The Good Shepherd vs. the Hired Hand

Chapter 10. The portion that we first read a few minutes ago about the good shepherd who knows who their sheep are, who listens, who calls, who takes care of them, and those who are just the hired hands, the ones that aren't the good shepherd, right? That doesn't protect the sheep.

Chapters 7 through 9 of John are setting up what Yeshua is speaking about there. And he's speaking about himself in contrast to the religious leaders and Pharisees. They are the

neglectful hired hands who only live for their own self-interest and allow the sheep to be devoured by wolves.

I mean, think about it. A blind man was healed. And because this act of mercy and grace threatened the agenda of the temple leadership, the Pharisees and the pastors at the time, they put him on trial multiple times until they threw him out for not giving them the answers that they wanted.

Anyone ever been thrown out of a church because they didn't give the right answers to the pastor? This was his situation. Here, Yeshua is declaring that he is the only good shepherd. And again, the context here is in contrast to the religious and political leadership of Judea right here.

Then he tells everyone to follow him because he's the good shepherd. Now that's the context and why that's so important, because we often read this chapter and think, "Oh, this is a great symbolic message—Yeshua is the good shepherd and I'm the sheep, and sheep are dumb, and I'm dumb, and we need a good shepherd that loves us and takes care of us." And yes, that's absolutely what it's saying, but there's a deeper context there, and that's what we're going to expose now.

So do you guys want to see what John does here to make it more of an affront to the Pharisees and leadership? It wasn't simply that Yeshua was saying these things to them. It was that he was actually quoting from Numbers chapter 27 in the Torah, as well as two different chapters in Ezekiel.

The Good Shepherd in Scripture

So look at how John begins chapter 10. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought all of his own, he goes out ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

Now let's compare that to [Numbers 27](#), verse 16 in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament that was more prominent in the first century).

Why is John framing, or why is Yeshua quoting [Numbers 27](#) in his speech, and why is John specifically pointing that out and emphasizing it here? Well, [Numbers 27](#) is about a transfer of leadership in the Torah. It's about the transfer of leadership from Moses, who is about to die, to a new leader who will shepherd the flock. And who is the new leader of Numbers chapter 27? Well, verse 18 says, "So we know that Joshua, the Hebrew word for Joshua is Yehoshua, and the shorthand of that was popular in the first century, of course, is Yeshua."

From Moses to Joshua

So Yeshua is the new leader that's taking the leadership role over Israel in [Numbers 27](#), which I chuckle at because it's such a savage way of explaining to the Pharisees that they have failed to fulfill their mandate as leaders and a transfer is taking place. Right now, the good shepherd is Joshua. And the story is the leadership is passed from Moses to Joshua to lead the people into the fulfillment of the promises of God, which in the Torah was the land, right? Or rather, Yeshua. Yeshua is claiming to be that person now. He's saying that he is the legitimate leader of Israel now. God's spirit is upon him, not them. His anointing as king over Israel is active, and they have no authority as pastors over the flock. This is how he begins this setup of John chapter 10.

And what else does John quote from? Well, Yeshua also quotes from [Ezekiel 34](#) and emphasizes, or leads into, [Ezekiel 37](#), which are some of our favorite chapters, right?

The Accusations of the Prophets

So let's see where he goes. Let's look at Ezekiel, and we're going to read a section of Scripture. And while we're reading this section of Ezekiel, I want you to see if any of the language pops out at you. This is how it would have popped out to the Pharisees and the leadership at that time, right?

So I want you to kind of pretend that you're a Pharisee who's a little irritated at this rabbi who's come and is encroaching on your turf, your leadership at this time.

And so [Ezekiel 37](#), starting in verse 1, the word of the Lord came to me. Should not shepherds take care of the flock? So think about the blind man and how they treated him. And when they were scattered, they became food for all the wild animals.

You see the language Yeshua is using here? He's taking accusations from the prophets to the leaders of Israel and throwing it back at the current leaders of Israel in his day in Judea.

And what's even more compelling is when we continue reading the chapter—it's who God, Yahweh, says he's going to send to shepherd his flock, to be the good shepherd. Who does God say he's going to send to gather the lost sheep?

Well, verse 11, this is what he says:

"For this is what the sovereign Lord says. I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my

sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries. I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel and in the valleys and all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in the good pasture and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land and there they will feed in a rich pasture of the mountains of Israel."

The Daring Claim

So not only is Yeshua slamming the leadership of the Pharisees and the local religious leaders—he just made reference to himself and used scripture to do so that was actually talking about God, Yahweh. Can you feel the tension? Are you still playing the game where you're kind of pretending that you're the Pharisee, the one who's thinking, "Who is this guy healing people? And he's encroaching on what we've set up in our community that we're shepherding. And now he's talking about scriptures that pertain to God and he's using them on himself."

All right, what verse 22 says: "I will save my flock. So here's something else that gets added in Ezekiel. I will save my flock and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd. Here's a development. My servant David, and I will tend them. He will tend them."

So you have this transition of both God saying he will be the shepherd and save the flock, and also here placing a king over them, placing King David over his flock. So remember now, this is Ezekiel. This is the time of the Babylonian exile. King David has been dead for a while. This compelling prophecy is about a future Davidic king that will rule over Israel as a shepherd, with Israel as sheep.

Now imagine being a Pharisee that is being judged as he just sent a blind man through a trial, dragged his parents out, questioned them, and then threw him out in the streets with insults. And now Yeshua is using scriptures that pertain to Yahweh for himself being the shepherd of Israel. And he's using scriptures about the future Davidic king of Israel pertaining to himself. Would that tick you off just a little bit? I mean, that surely wouldn't add any fuel to the fire, right?

The Two Sticks

Ezekiel 37 uses the same language when speaking of the two sticks. And this section of Scripture, I'm sure many of you are familiar with it. It's certainly one of our favorite chapters in

the Bible. Two sticks, Ephraim and Judah, right? And let's read over this section of Scripture.

And guys, I know we're reading a lot of Scripture. The New Testament authors emphasized the words of Yeshua because they understood that their audience would understand the links back to the Old Testament story, and that would give such a greater context and weight for what they were portraying Yeshua as in the New Testament. And so, yes, what an honor it is that we can take these scriptures and stories and these accounts from the New Testament and go back into our Bibles and meditate on the chunks of scripture that give them weight, right?

So Ezekiel chapter 37, we're going to start in verse 15. And then after verse 22, I want you to start picking up the language again. So here we go.

"The word of the Lord came to me. This is Ezekiel speaking. And it says, 'Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him. Then take another stick of wood and write on it, belonging to Joseph, that is to Ephraim, and all the Israelites associated with him. Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.

When your people ask you, won't you tell us what you mean by this? Say to them, this is what the sovereign Lord says. I'm going to take the stick of Joseph, which is in Ephraim's hand. And all the Israelite tribes associated with him and join it to Judah's stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood and they will become one in my hand.

Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on and say to them, this is what the sovereign Lord says. I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from around everywhere where I've scattered them and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land. On the mountains of Israel, there will be one king over all of them, and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms."

Verse 24—

The Prophecies Fulfilled

When John wrote the words of Yeshua, he was not simply drawing on everyday shepherd life. As I said before, the sheep are dumb, and so they need a shepherd to lead them like us, right? And watch out for wolves. All of that is metaphor and symbolism for us—us being stupid humans and needing a shepherd. Yeah, that's great.

But John was intentional about pointing this out—these scriptures. This was the context of [John 10](#). The prophecies of Ezekiel about God coming to be the good shepherd and God installing David to be the good shepherd is being fulfilled by and through Yeshua.

The Good Shepherd and the Bad Shepherds

[John 10](#) is supposed to get us excited about that. All of these prophecies are coming up to this climactic exposure, this birthing of this new king, inauguration right here. The good shepherd is here in [John 10](#). And he is calling to his sheep to bring forth the promises and the blessing and the life to them. Here, Yeshua is presented as Yahweh, the good shepherd, and David, the good shepherd. And so what does that mean for the Pharisees and the leaders? Are they good shepherds? No, no. For the past three, four chapters, no, these are bad shepherds. These are the wicked, sinister, abusive shepherds. I mean, look how they treated everyone for the past three chapters. Think about it this way.

The Political Context

Something interesting: when we read [Ezekiel 37](#) specifically, Israel had no leadership over them, real leadership over them in Judea in the first century. They have been forced to submit to Rome, right? They are subjects of Rome. In order to gain some type of independence, they had to make a deal where they sacrificed two daily offerings in honor of Caesar in the temple in Jerusalem every single day, right? The only sense of leadership, community leadership in Judea for the people are these religious leaders. And Yeshua comes in announcing he is the king. That's what Messiah means, Mashiach, the anointed one, the king. The son of God, another title for king. The good shepherd, both a title for God and David the king. And so here Yeshua is announcing not only is he a good shepherd and he's going to feed you and yada, yada, yada. It's a big deal. He's saying, I am the new king and I'm here to redeem.

Okay, But What About Rome?

Okay, you're the long-awaited king, Yeshua. Well, what about Rome? This is what his own disciples asked him. What about Rome? Are you going to defeat Rome and Caesar? Yes, yes, I am. But not in the way that you think. Remember, again, when Ezekiel wrote these prophecies, the southern kingdom is being exiled. Judea is being exiled to Babylon. This is where the term the Jews come from. They were inhabitants of Judea. And so the southern kingdom, Judea, is being exiled to Babylon. The northern kingdom, the northern tribes of Israel, have already been conquered and dispersed hundreds of years earlier. Like, they're gone. And Ezekiel is writing

that God will be their shepherd and they will not be lost any longer. He will come to their rescue to save them and he will set up his own kingdom with David as his king.

Two Sticks Become One

Take two sticks and write Ephraim or the northern kingdom of Israel on one and Judah, the southern kingdom on the other and hold them together as one. Yeah, Yeshua is saying that's what I'm going to do. I will reconstitute the covenantal kingdom once again in my hands. That's what [Ezekiel 37](#) is all about. And that is the gravity of what Yeshua is saying that he is doing in [John 10](#) by referencing these scriptures. And he's not saying he's going to do it in thousands and thousands of years from now. No, he's doing it right then and there. He's telling the other leaders that they are no different than the Roman oppressors. It is through him that all of these things that God said he would do are happening now. Israel is being reconstituted as a whole.

The Twelve and the Tribes

How many disciples did Yeshua gather around him? Twelve. Why? What do the twelve disciples represent? Well, the twelve tribes of Israel, right? The twelve tribes are regathered and reconstituted only around Yeshua. It is only through him that the exile ends. It is only through him that God's kingdom breaks forth. It is only through him that the good shepherd meets with his people.

This Is a Huge Deal

And this section of scripture is not just a cute, nice, pretty symbolic picture of sheep in a pasture. This is a huge deal to proclaim. This is the weight that comes with it. And so if you were a Pharisee, how would you react if you have invested in the community and set yourself up high and you demand the respect that you have? And here comes this guy quoting all of these scriptures and then saying that you are who Ezekiel spoke against, you evil shepherds. How would you react? Well, I tell you what, let's read the story because the Pharisees react accordingly.

Stones Picked Up

[John 10](#) verse 31 says, The Jews picked up stones to stone him. Jesus replied, The Jews answered, They understood where he was referencing. They totally picked up on all the hyperlinks back to Numbers, the transfer of leadership, and back to [Ezekiel 34](#) and 37. They

totally understood it. That's why they reacted that way. You make yourself out to be God? They picked up stones. How dare you? Oh, you can feel the tension, right?

When We Miss the Grand Story

See, when we aren't familiar with the story of the Hebrew Bible, sometimes we miss the importance of the grand story of who Yeshua is. The New Testament authors are trying to show us, right? They're trying to show us that that's him. And this chapter can be used in an edifying way of showing Yeshua's character as a shepherd to us individually as sheep, yes. And he tends to us and he protects us from wolves, yes, and it's great. But the actual context of the story and how it plugs into the grand story of the Bible, it's part of the bigger story. It traces all the way back to Torah and back to the time of the exile. This is what ticked off the pastors and the religious leadership in the first century, because they knew the stories and they were not prepared for Yeshua to be the one that would fulfill the prophecies.

Who Is Your Good Shepherd?

And so I ask you today, who is your good shepherd? Who is the one that you find ultimate rest in, identity in? Are you prepared to acknowledge that Yeshua or Jesus is the one that fulfills that role in your life? And not only in your life, but in the lives of others around you. That last part's important. Are you willing to look at the world through the lenses of what Yeshua has done for you?

The Problem of Judgment

See, sometimes we get irritated when we see God's grace extend to those around us that we just think are stupid blind people, just like in the story. How many of us have judged another person and thought ourselves more righteous, more holy, more set apart than them? Why? Maybe because we have the knowledge or the history, or maybe we feel entitled to the name of being God's chosen people, God's people. And in that, we look at others like the Pharisees looked at the blind man who experienced a mercy that we didn't feel he deserved or we didn't feel was legitimate. The blind man was not part of their group, their identity. And instead of embracing him, instead of celebrating that God would pour out his mercy on him, they oppressed him even further and ended up throwing him out. God's people, those who claim to be believers... Guys, we have to do and be better than that, than those examples.

Our Zeal Can Work Against Us

Because more times than not, our zeal in protecting our assumed identity as the sheep of the shepherd, in reality, is often against it. And we need to stop telling people that they're still blind even though God has made them see clearly. Maybe it's us that are truly the blind ones. I see this when we tend to look even on other believers or other Christians of other denominations or other traditions. And I see this when we look upon people that have a different political view in a secular country. And I see this when we look at anyone that we can't quite put in our group.

A Diverse Flock

And the issue is that we shouldn't have our own group. We should be in his group, in his flock. And Yeshua clearly shows that his group, his flock, is diverse enough to make everyone uncomfortable. And that's what makes it so beautiful. And so I hope that this study was edifying. I hope that this missed connection helps give a greater context, not only to who Yeshua is, but to who you are, whoever that may be. We can find ourselves looking up, proclaiming, Who is the son of man? I want to follow him. I want to believe him like the blind man did after he was healed. Or we can be like the Pharisees, ticked at the audacity of King Yeshua, picking up stones because, well, we're in charge of how God regulates his mercy towards others.

Closing

When the world looks at you, what do they see? What do they see? So join me in prayer as we conclude.

Avinu Malkenu, our Father, our King. Father, we thank you for this time that we can come together, dive into your world. Father, we thank you for the opportunity to have these writings and this magnificent story about our salvation come to us in the person of Yeshua, that we can meditate upon your scriptures. And we ask that your spirit that you've given to us would continue to evolve us and our obedience to make us more like Yeshua and ambassadors to his kingdom. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen. Shalom.

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