

Jeremiah 23:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

Analysis

God promises to replace the unfaithful shepherds with faithful ones who will actually 'feed them'—the fundamental responsibility of a shepherd. These new shepherds will eliminate the people's fear and ensure none are lacking. This promise operates on multiple levels: immediate (leaders after the exile like Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah), prophetic (the Messiah and His apostles), and eschatological (church leaders who serve under Christ's authority).

The phrase 'I will set up shepherds' emphasizes divine appointment and authority. Human leaders do not seize power or earn it through political maneuvering; they are appointed by God to serve His purposes. True shepherds feed the flock with God's word, protect them from false teaching, and model Christlike servanthood. They do not lord it over the flock but serve as examples (1 Peter 5:2-3).

This promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He then appoints under-shepherds—pastors and elders—who serve by His authority and will give account to Him (Hebrews 13:17). The promise that 'they shall fear no more' points to the peace and security believers have in Christ, who promises that no one can snatch His sheep from His hand (John 10:28-29).

Historical Context

After the exile, God raised up leaders like Zerubbabel (who led the first return and rebuilt the temple), Ezra (who taught the law), and Nehemiah (who rebuilt Jerusalem's walls and instituted reforms). Though imperfect, these leaders demonstrated greater faithfulness than the pre-exilic kings. Yet they were types pointing to the perfect Shepherd-King, Jesus, who would come from David's line to shepherd God's people perfectly and eternally.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What characterizes faithful shepherds who genuinely feed and care for God's flock?
2. How does Christ's role as the Chief Shepherd inform how we understand and evaluate human spiritual leadership?
3. What does it mean practically for believers that we 'shall fear no more' under faithful shepherds?

Interlinear Text

וְקַמְתִּי	עַלְיָהּ מִ	וְכָרַע אֹם	וְכָרַע אֹם
And I will set up	H5921	over them which shall feed	over them which shall feed
H6965		H7462	H7462
לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא
H3808	them and they shall fear	H5750	no more nor be dismayed
H3372		H3808	H2865
לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא
לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא
neither shall they be lacking	saith	the LORD	
H6485	H5002	H3068	

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 1:5 (Parallel theme): Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

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