

Ezekiel 34:11-22: God brings salvation but removes the bad sheep before the Millennium.
This passage shows that this process is before and not at the beginning of the Millennium.

Summary of the background Ezekiel 34:1-10

Jerusalem has just fallen in Eze. 33:21 and Ezekiel rebukes the shepherds for exploiting the people, depicted as the flock (1-2). Shepherds may be referring to the political leaders, as v3-6 cites physical needs, which they are responsible. Still the titles of kings are not found in the entire chapter and the word “shepherds” should not be simply discarded or ignored. They flounder in two key areas, in failing to feed the flock and to help those in need. The reason is in v3 for they only seek to feed and lavish themselves with wool and the fatness of the flock. As a result the flock is scattered and these shepherds do not even attempt to find them. The throes in v5-6 are true for the Jews throughout history. They are scattered all over the world and taken as food by every beast, meaning the gentile nations. So God declares His judgments on the shepherds (7-10). He is against them and will take the sheep from them to cease all exploitation (10). Indeed they will be leaders no more.

Explaining the Passage Ezekiel 34:11-22: God promises in v11-16 that the sheep will be re-gathered and returned to Israel. It is not the return of the Babylonian exiles as they will be from many countries (13). In fact in v11, God will do it Himself and it matches well with the present return of the Jews. The return is worldwide, not led by a single human leader but a multifaceted miracle by the power of God. After their return, the blessings in v13 are also apparent. The plantations in the Golan Heights is just one testimony that God is feeding them in the mountains and they will occupy the “inhabited places”, which is like the West Bank, the inhabited land of the Palestinians. Note in v16, amidst the return, He will destroy the fat and strong, the evil members of the flock. In fact God allows the Holocaust probably as an integral part of this selective process. Next, v17-22 is depicting an action that God will take *after* their return. It must be for in v18, the flock is feeding in good pastures and drinking clear waters. There will be a process of testing to select the good sheep from the bad ones. In v17 the rams or male sheep are the good leaders while the male goats are their evil counterparts who are supplanting the flock (18-20). Then v20-21 refers to the flock where the fat sheep, the evil ones are pushing and scattering to hurt the lean sheep, the upright members. Simultaneously with this selection exercise, God will in v22 deliver or save the flock. Actually in Hebrew “save” is “yasha”, the standard word for salvation. It is happening right now with the emergence of the Messianic Jews, many are turning to Christ. The process continues into the Tribulation and as affirmed in Rev. 7:4, there will be 144,000 committed believers present. This dual processes of judgment and conversions continues to the end as depicted in Zech. 13:8-9 when the antichrist will invade Jerusalem leading to a national repentance and Christ’s return in Zech. 14:4.

Linking the passage to Ezekiel 34:23-31: It is evident that from 34:23-24 onwards, Israel will be under Christ their Lord God and the resurrected David will be their prince. This is so appropriate for Christ is the good shepherd (Jn. 10:11). It is obviously the beginning of the Millennium for which v25-31 is such a fitting description, with blessings in abundance and total security. The simultaneous process of judgmental selection and salvation in 34:17-22 precedes this period and thus it will *not* occur in the Millennium. It is presently already in progress and will intensify during the Tribulation. The delivered flock in v22 or the Messianic Jews is there for the entire process without any hint of being raptured.