

Bob Deering // November 13, 2018

The Journey Through Zechariah Session 10 Chapter 11

I. **Introduction:** This is quite a remarkable chapter! Our previous chapters speak of Jesus, the humble King who exercises His dominion throughout the world. Now we come to chapter 11 — a continuation of the last oracle and Israel's response to the humble King. They liked the fact of a King, but not so much the idea of a humble King. He was a righteous King also requiring them to be righteous and they didn't like that. He was making a demand upon their lives. They said no to Him in the first three verses of this chapter, which brought about the judgment of Rome in 70AD. This is a very poetic depiction in these three verses, and how this plays out is that Israel is deceived in not accepting Jesus the humble King, but they are also deceived in the end times when Jesus is about ready to return and choose to accept the Antichrist. Now, God even uses this time of darkness to truly establish them through an amazing act of deliverance. Zechariah used symbolic actions to prophetically describe Israel's two most powerful shepherds — Jesus, the good shepherd (11:4-14), and the Antichrist, the wicked shepherd (11:15-17).

II. Israel is Judged: Zechariah 11: 1-3

Open your doors, O Lebanon, that fire may devour your cedars. Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, because the mighty trees are ruined. Wail, O oaks of Bashan, for the thick forest has come down. There is the sound of wailing shepherds! For their glory is in ruins. There is the sound of roaring lions! For the pride of the Jordan is in ruins. (Zech. 11:1-3)

- A. **Lebanon:** Fire was to destroy the famous cedar forests in Lebanon in the **north**. Cedars were symbolic of kings or the **royal class** (2 Kgs. 14:9; Isa. 14:8; Ezek.17:3; Amos 2:9). Lebanon is called to "open" its doors so the fire might destroy its forests of cedar trees.
- B. **Cypress:** The cypress trees were beckoned to wail in anguish as they watched the cedars of Lebanon burn. If the more valuable and majestic cedars burned without mercy, then surely the lowly cypress trees would burn too. They represent the lowly **common people**.
- C. **Bashan:** This refers to the territory **east** of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. Bashan was well known for its thick forest of oak trees (Isa. 2:13; Ezek. 27:6).
- D. **Shepherds:** The *glory* of the shepherds was their flocks in the **pasture lands**. Shepherds were symbolic of the **leadership** in Israel (Ezek. 34). They would wail because their pasture lands were destroyed by the invading armies of Rome.
- E. **Jordan:** The lions in thickets around the Jordan River in the **south** roared because of the destruction of their lairs and food supplies by the fires of the Roman armies.

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III. Zechariah 11:4-6

Thus says the LORD my God, "Feed the flock for slaughter, whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich'; and their shepherds do not pity them. For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land," says the LORD. "But indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king. They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver them from their hand." (Zech. 11:4-6)

- A. The Lord sent Israel the best shepherd (11:4-6), but they rejected Him (11:7-14). The Lord told Zechariah to offer himself as a shepherd to care for a flock of sheep that were soon to be slaughtered and sent to market to be sold. Many think that he actually walked this out by taking the job, as a parable for others to see. As he tells the story, he sometimes speaks for God and sometimes for Messiah. Some say he merely presented an allegory of a vision that he received.
- B. ***Feed the flock for slaughter:*** Zechariah was to take a job that included taking a flock of sheep out to graze in the pasture lands (11:4). This flock was being fattened for slaughter so that their wool and meat could be sold at the market. It was a common sight to see shepherds selling their sheep to be slaughtered so that their meat could be sold.
- C. ***The flock for slaughter:*** The spiritual condition of Israel in the generation that Jesus came to minister to them was so bad that they had already set their heart in a way that was hostile toward God. This is evident from their conclusion that Jesus and John the Baptist were demonized. It was only a matter of time before they determined to kill Jesus.
- D. ***John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." (Mt. 11:18) Many of them said, "He [Jesus] has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?" (Jn. 10:20)***
- E. ***Owners:*** The new owners who bought the sheep represented the Roman rulers who controlled Israel. The shepherds who sold the sheep were Israel's former leaders who, by their unbelief and sin, set the people of Israel up for future judgment through the instrument of the Roman army.
- F. ***I will no longer pity:*** The bigger reason behind the judgment of Israel by the Romans was that the Lord no longer pitied, or showed mercy to, the generation of leaders that had rejected Jesus. The Lord saw their murderous hearts and, thus, their participation in the murder of previous prophets—they were operating in the same spirit as those who murdered the prophets.
- G. ***That on you [the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus] may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. (Mt. 23:35)***
- H. The Lord gave Israel into the hands of Roman kings who attacked the land of Israel. The Lord would not deliver Israel in that hour.

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IV. The Good Shepherd Rejected: (Zech. 11:7-11)

So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds; and I fed the flock. I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then I said, "I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other's flesh." And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples [Gentile nations]. So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. (Zech. 11:7-11)

- A. ***I fed the flock:*** Zechariah found a job feeding a flock of sheep (11:4, 7). Zechariah was a prophetic picture of Jesus the good shepherd coming to feed the flock of Israel.
- B. ***The poor:*** Zechariah was received by a group he called the poor of the flock (11:7, 11). The *poor* can be translated as the *afflicted* or the *humble*; it is often used to speak of the godly being oppressed by the godless. David referred to himself as the poor, or as a contrite and godly man (Ps. 34:6; 40:17; 69:29; 70:5) The poor paid close attention to Zechariah's words and believed that what he spoke was in fact God's true word (11:11). ***The poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord. (Zech. 11:11)***
- C. ***Dismissed three shepherds:*** In one month, Zechariah fired three shepherds who were working under him. This prefigures Jesus dismissing three shepherds. Many theories abound on this verse (11:8). The best approach seems to be to see this as *three classes of shepherds* (leaders) that were dismissed—*elders, chief priests, and scribes*. Jesus named these three classes of leaders who rejected Him. I see the month in Jerusalem leading up to His death, when they decided to kill Him, as the time when they sealed their fate.
- D. ***He strictly warned them... saying, "The Son of Man must...be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." (Lk. 9:21-22)***
- E. ***Two staffs:*** Shepherds carried two staffs when going out to feed their flock (11:7). One staff was to *protect* the sheep from beasts and the other to *direct* them to green pastures. The names of the two staffs had prophetic significance related to the coming judgment.
 - 1. ***Beauty:*** This can be translated as "*Favor*." It spoke of God's favor to keep the peoples (Gentiles), Israel's enemies, from destroying them. When Zechariah cut this staff in two (11:10), it spoke of God
 - 2. ***Dying and perishing:*** This describes the coming judgment for their rejection of Jesus. The Lord turned them over to their fate—some died, others devoured each other. Some were so hungry that they actually ate one another during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

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V. **Zechariah 11:12-14**

Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter. Then I cut in two my other staff, Bonds, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel". (Zech. 11:12-14)

- A. Zechariah ended his job of feeding the flock of sheep, so he asked the other shepherds to pay him the wages that they felt he deserved for his services. They paid him thirty pieces of silver. This was the cost of reimbursing the work that was lost when a slave was injured (Ex. 21:32). This small amount of money was an insult for all that Jesus the Shepherd did in feeding Israel's sheep. It reveals how little Israel valued His services. To offer him this wage was like telling Jesus that they considered the services of a common slave to be about as helpful as He had been to them.
- B. ***Throw it to the potter:*** The Lord told Zechariah to throw the silver to the potter in the temple courtyard. This was a proverbial way to express disdain for the wages, since potters were usually very poor. The money was flung down in the temple. It was used to buy a field, a burying ground, for a potter, since most could not afford one (Mt. 27:3-10). Matthew mentions Jeremiah when summarizing the story (Mt. 27:9-10; Jer. 19:1-13), but uses phraseology from Zechariah 11. It was acceptable to merge two passages together while only mentioning the most prominent prophet. Mark 1:2-3 combines words from Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 but only mentions the more prominent Isaiah.
- C. ***Cut the staff called Bonds:*** The staff *Bonds* spoke of God keeping Israel united as a nation. When Zechariah cut this staff (11:14), it meant that the Lord was going to allow great strife to divide Israel. The division is temporary; they will be forever reunited (10:6).

VI. **The Appearance of the Bad Shepherd (11:15-17)**

And the LORD said to me, "Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye; his arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded." (Zech. 11:17)

- A. The Lord will raise up a foolish and worthless shepherd that Israel will choose (11:15-17). Zechariah was again told to take symbolic action by presenting himself as a foolish shepherd and taking up certain tools that such a shepherd would use.
- B. ***I will raise up:*** God will raise up this foolish shepherd "in the land" of Israel. God will raise up the Antichrist. However, Satan and man's sinful free choices will contribute to it. Jesus will open the first seal to release the Antichrist to oppress wicked nations (Rev. 6:1-2).
- C. ***The Lamb [Jesus] opened one of the seals...a white horse. He [Antichrist] who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him...he went out conquering and to conquer. (Rev. 6:1-2)***

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- D. *He [Antichrist] was given...authority [by God] to continue for forty-two months...It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. Authority was given him [by God] over every tribe, tongue, and nation. (Rev. 13:5, 7)***
- E. *This is key for us to understand:*** The Lord raised up a wicked Pharaoh in Moses' day; he was the most powerful man in the world (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17). He raised up a cruel and powerful Assyrian king named Sennacherib to judge Israel in a severe way in 721 BC (Isa. 10:5). The Lord called the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, to judge Israel in 586 BC (Jer. 25:9, 12; 27:6; 43:10; Hab. 1:5-7). The Lord raised up the wicked Persian Empire to judge the wicked Babylonians (Isa. 13:3-5). He sets leaders in place to serve His greater purposes (Dan. 4:17; 5:21; Rom. 13:1, 4).
- F. *Foolish shepherd:*** This prophecy will find its ultimate fulfillment in the Antichrist, who will make a covenant with Israel and then break it to fiercely persecute Israel (Is. 28:15-18; Dan. 9:27; 11:36-45; Jn. 5:43; 2 Thes. 2:3-10; Rev. 12:13-17; 13:1-18).
- G. *Eat the flesh and tear the hooves:*** He is described as one who totally devours people. To tear the hooves is to frantically search for the last morsel—to totally consume Israel.
- H. *Woe:*** This woe applies to all the evil kings of Israel, but one specific man is especially in view.
- I. *His arm and eye:*** His arm will be completely withered—his power will be totally broken. His right eye shall be totally blinded—he will lose his understanding and sanity. Jesus will easily and quickly destroy the Antichrist (Dan. 7:11-14, 22, 26-27; 9:27; 11:45; 2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:20).
- J. *Then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thes. 2:8)***