

The Visions to Zechariah Zechariah 11:1-17

Lesson 6

Chapter 11 of Zechariah is the conclusion to the oracle from the Lord begun in chapter 9. Together, the three chapters revealed the events that transpire in Israel's future and culminate in the Lord reigning over the entire world. In typical fashion, the Lord traced the future prophecy three times within the same oracle, adding new detail with each telling. We can look back through the historical records and see the accuracy of the Lord's oracle. Today, most of Christianity longs for the complete fulfillment of this oracle. Songs, books, poems, dreams and prayers that speak of the total consummation of this oracle seem to consume all of Christian thought but it cannot speed up the calendar of the Lord's plan. Each part of the prophecy will find its completion in its proper time within the context of all the revealed Word of God.

Before beginning chapter 11, we need to review the facts found in chapters 9 and 10.

1. The Lord revealed this oracle to Zechariah sometime after 518 BC.
2. The lands of Hadrach and Hamath, as well as the cities of Damascus, Hamath, Sidon and Tyre would be conquered. Alexander the Great fulfilled this prophecy on his march to defeat Egypt between 333 BC and 332 BC. *Zechariah 9:1-4*
3. After destroying Tyre, Alexander the Great continued to fulfill the prophecy as he marched through the Philistine cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod on his way to Egypt. Conquering Egypt, Alexander the Great returned to the Damascus area to take the road east to face Darius III, the king of Persia. *Zechariah 9:5-7*
4. As prophesied, the Lord protected Jerusalem. Alexander the Great passed more than 30 miles away from her gates on his track south to Egypt and then back north to Damascus. *Zechariah 9:8*
5. Later, the city of Zion rejoiced as the Lord rode into her gates on the foal of a donkey. *Zechariah 9:9*
6. Sometime in the future, the Lord will return to Zion to reign over all nations in peace. *Zechariah 9:10*
7. In a second pass through the prophecy, the oracle returns to the days of Zechariah as the Lord promised never to break His blood covenant with Israel and He will cause her to rise up and defeat the Grecian enemy. This prophecy found fulfillment when Antiochus Epiphanies attacked Jerusalem in 167 BC. *Zechariah 9:11-17*.
8. The oracle told Israel to ask for rain and the Lord would give it to them to help with their crops. *Zechariah 10:1*
9. However, Israel still had a problem with household idols and lying prophets who proclaimed false dreams and visions. The oracle revealed that Israel would soon be a herd of sheep with no true shepherd. *Zechariah 10:2*
10. The oracle states that the false shepherds, the wild goats, will be punished by the anger of the Lord. He also promises that Judah will one day rise as a majestic horse ready for battle. *Zechariah 10:3*
11. From the mighty Judah will come a cornerstone, Jesus, a tent peg, the cross, and ultimately a battle in the streets of Jerusalem when Israel will call upon the name of the Lord and He will answer their prayers. *Zechariah 10:4-6*
12. After the battle, the Battle of Armageddon, the Lord will bring all the Jews back to the Promised Land and they will be a nation much larger than ever before. *Zechariah 10:7-12*

Chapter 11 begins the third pass with the foretelling of the destruction of the forests of Israel's northern neighbors.

Destruction of the Trees of Lebanon and Bashon

Zechariah 11:¹ Open your doors, O Lebanon, That a fire may feed on your cedars. ² Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, Because the glorious *trees* have been destroyed; Wail, O oaks of Bashan, For the impenetrable forest has come down. ^{3a} There is a sound of the shepherds' wail, For their glory is ruined;

Two great forests stood at the northern boundary of the Promised Land, one of cedars and the other of oaks. Today, the reputation of both still lingers but the forests do not. After Alexander's struggle to conquer Tyre, he ordered boats built for his army from the cedars of Lebanon. As he marched through the oaks of Bashan, he ordered chariots, carts, catapults and rams built from those trees. Throughout the rest of the Greek and Roman periods, the cedars of Lebanon were cut and burned because the resin within them caused a fire to burn hotter than any other known source of fuel in that day. These same trees had provided the resin used in Egypt to embalm the pharaohs, a sticky substance that resisted both rot and insect. When Caesar Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, he consumed much of both forests on his journey through the land. Upon his arrival, the false shepherds of Jerusalem wailed for God's help, but they had already rejected the Lord in 30 AD and He did not answer. It was all part of His plan.

Doomed Flock

Zechariah 11:^{3b} There is a sound of the young lions' roar, For the pride of the Jordan is ruined. ⁴ Thus says the Lord my God, "Pasture the flock *doomed* to slaughter. ⁵ "Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and *each of* those who sell them says, 'Blessed be the Lord, for I have become rich!' And their own shepherds have no pity on them. ⁶ "For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land," declares the Lord; "but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another's power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their power."

Zechariah was one of the last true prophets to shepherd Israel. Haggai was with him and Malachi would follow one-hundred years later as the last true prophet recorded in Scripture until the days of John the Baptist. Others will come during the 400 years of silence between Malachi's prophecy and John's ministry but the Lord will not speak to them as He had spoken to these. Judas Maccabaeus and John Hyracannus were just two of the true shepherds used by the Lord to keep Israel on track. Most of the priests and prophets to come after Zechariah took advantage of the Jews, becoming rich at their expense. The oracle told of the flawed Jewish system that would lead to its destruction at the hands of another nation, Rome.

Favor and Union

Zechariah 11:⁷ So I pastured the flock *doomed* to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock.

Shepherds use their staffs or rods to steady themselves and to prod the sheep along in the journey to green pastures. The Lord had two staffs in the oracle that He has named Favor and Union. The first implied the special relationship that the Lord established with the

nation of Israel. She was the chosen people, the royal priesthood, the nation detested or admired by all nations because she was the favorite of the Lord. The other staff implied the covenant made by the Lord with all Jews. No one, not even Alexander, Antiochus or Pompey could break these two staffs but the Lord could. It was not Titus' intent to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD but even he could not stop his own soldiers as they leveled the building on Sunday, August 4th. Why? The Lord had broken His staff named Favor and nothing could stop the Temple's destruction. Following its demise, the Jews were not able to restore the Temple, even to this day. Why? It was all part of the Lord's plan for Israel's punishment.

Annihilate Three Shepherds

Zechariah 11:⁸ Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. ⁹ Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh."

In April of 30 AD, on a Sunday afternoon, the Lord made His entry into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey just as this oracle prophesied. By Friday afternoon, Israel had also fulfilled the prophecy of this oracle by hanging their most prized possession on a tent peg called the cross. Israel did not know what they had done. On that day, their last earthly Prophet, Priest, and King died. After that time, Israel had no shepherd. Many from her number will be scattered to the four corners of the earth until the appointed time when she will call upon the name of the Lord as her Messiah. When did Israel become shepherdless? The oracle told the time; history revealed its fulfillment.

Thirty Shekels

Zechariah 11:¹⁰ I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. ¹¹ So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the Lord. ¹² I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give *me* my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty *shekels* of silver as my wages. ¹³ Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, *that* magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty *shekels* of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

The favor of the Lord departed from Israel when she paid 30 shekels for His bounty. The staff was broken when Judas accepted the wages from the shepherds of Israel. He tried to return the money to the Temple treasury but the blood bounty was tainted and could not be placed back in the vault. Judas threw the money at the feet of the priests and they gave it to potter to purchase a field down by a trash heap called Gehenna. It was there that the Temple potter had gathered the clay needed to mold the pots and vessels for the holy use in Jewish worship. From the landfill to the altar, the potter decided the clay's destiny. From holy purposes in the Temple to the everyday mundane uses in the home, the potter used the same lump of clay and formed with his hands its ultimate use. Now the potter could own the field where he once purchased the clay. For what price? The price of a gored slave – one of little use to the buyer or seller! A mediocre slave was worth 60 shekels, twice that paid for the Lord of all creation. The Lord Jesus was of little use to the buyers. They wanted Him dead. When Zechariah broke his first staff, all who were watching knew he was speaking the words directed by the Lord God and there was little doubt in their eyes that its prophecy will be fulfilled.

Worthless Shepherd

Zechariah 11: ¹⁴ Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. ¹⁵ The Lord said to me, "Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶ "For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat *sheep* and tear off their hoofs. ¹⁷ "Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock! A sword will be on his arm and on his right eye! His arm will be totally withered and his right eye will be blind."

When Zechariah broke the second staff, the union between all of Israel broke for a period. Jew will struggle against Jew just to survive when the worthless shepherd appears. History has not revealed the worthless shepherd; he is still to come in our future. One day, he will arise from the land and convince the people to make a treaty with him. The treaty will be one that ensures peace for Israel for seven years but the treaty will not last. Three and a half years into the treaty, he will enter Israel and void his promise. How will we know him? His withered arm and blinded right eye will identify him as the fulfillment of the oracle of this prophecy. During his reign, two-thirds of Israel will die at his hands. Israel's other third will finally accept the Lord as their Messiah and find salvation.