

Zechariah 11:1-17

1. This chapter 11 is claimed to be the most difficult to explain in the book of Zechariah
 - a. Zechariah 11:4-17 has been identified as the most unknowable passage in the OT
 - b. The problem comes between figurative and real.
 - i. Is the forest really burned and destroyed? Are the shepherds wailing for their lost fields?
 - ii. Does the forest represent the temple? Are the shepherds the leaders of the people?
 - c. Where are these events placed in history?
 - i. Is the land being cleared of trees to make room for returning exiles?
 - ii. Is the land being destroyed by the Jewish wars with Rome in 66-70 AD?
2. The opening poem may go with the end of chapter 10 or begin chapter 11. Or, it may be a hinge that connects the two chapters.
 - a. A taunt song after the destruction of the nations in chapter 10 represented by the cedar, pine and oak trees
 - b. A description of the destruction that will follow the rejection of the Messiah in 30 AD when Rome marches through in 66-70 AD.
3. Three trees – cedar, cypress (pine), oak. Three lands – Lebanon, Bashan, Jordan. Two mourners – shepherds, lions.
4. It would appear that chapters 9-10 speak of peace and blessing. Chapter 11 is sin and punishment.
 - a. Chapter 11 would occur before chapter 9-10 historically because it is the rejection of the True Shepherd, the Jewish Messiah, which is followed by God's judgment on the land for rejecting Jesus.
 - b. Chapter 9-10 are prophecies of the promised eschatological future when salvation has been attained. They were given to provide hope during the days of chapter 11.
5. This chapter includes three shepherds:
 - a. The wailing shepherds (11:1-3)
 - b. The true shepherd (11:4-14)
 - c. The false shepherd (11:15-17)

**Zechariah 11:1 – “Open your doors, O Lebanon,
that the fire may devour your cedars!**

**11:2 – “Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
for the glorious trees are ruined!**

**Wail, oaks of Bashan,
for the thick forest has been felled!**

**11:3 – “The sound of the wail of the shepherds,
for their glory is ruined!**

**The sound of the roar of the lions,
for the thicket of the Jordan is ruined!**

1. Lebanon was famous for the cedar forests.

- a. Cedars were used to build the first and second temple and the palace of David and Solomon.
 - i. The OT and the Rabbis in the Talmud say the cedars represent the temple and the royal palace
 1. 1 Kings 6:15-18
 2. 1 Kings 7:2
 3. 2 Chron. 2:8-9
 4. Jeremiah 22:23
 5. In Ezekiel 17:3-4, 12-13 cedar tree is a symbol of the royal house of Judah
2. The other trees (cypress and oak) could refer to the kings of other lands.
3. Shepherds and lions would be the rules and leaders of Judah and the Jews
 - a. Similar to Jeremiah 25:34-38
4. The flocks and animals represent the people to be cared for by the leaders.

11:4 – **“Thus said the Lord my God: “Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter.**

1. Now begins the explanation of why the land and the nation were destroyed – they rejected the Messiah. (described in 11:4-14)
 - a. This description in 11:4-14 of the good shepherd who was the rejected shepherd is also the theme of Isaiah 42; 49; 50; 53 – the suffering servant of Isaiah.
2. Zechariah is either:
 - a. Acting out the part of the shepherd as a prophetic skit.
 - b. Speaking the words that Jesus would speak in 30 AD, particularly the last month of his ministry. So, Zechariah is speaking both for God and as the Messiah.
3. The sheep marked for “slaughter” would be the Jews of 30 AD

11:5 – **“Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the Lord, I have become rich,’ and their own shepherds have no pity on them.**

559 [e] yō-mar, יֹאמְרוּ	4376 [e] ū-mō-ḵe-rê-hen וּמֹכְרֵיהֶן	816 [e] ye'·šā-mū, יֵאָשְׁמוּ	3808 [e] wə-lō וְלֹא	2026 [e] ya-hār-gun יִהָרְגוּ	7069 [e] qō-nê-hen קֹנֵיהֶן	834 [e] 'ā-šer אֲשֶׁר
say	and those who sell them	feel guilt	and no	slaughter them	owners	whose
V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Conj-w V-Qal-PrtcpI-mpc	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp	Conj-w Adv-NegPrt	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp	V-Qal-PrtcpI-mpc	Pro-r
						5
feminine pronouns - the sheep are ewes for breeding, not butchering						
5921 [e] 'ā-lê-hen. עַלֵּיהֶן	2550 [e] yah·mō-wl יַחְמוּלוּ	3808 [e] lō לֹא	7462 [e] wə-rō-'ê-hem, וְרֹעֵיהֶם	6238 [e] wa'·šir; וְאֶשֶׁר	3068 [e] Yah-weh יְהוָה	1288 [e] bā-rūk בָּרוּךְ
them	do pity	not	and their shepherds	for I am rich	Yahweh	Blessed be
Prep	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Adv-NegPrt	Conj-w V-Qal-PrtcpI-mpc	Conj-w V-Hifl-ConjImperf-1cs	N-proper-ms	V-Qal-QalPassPrtcpI-ms

1. The butchers were foreign powers and the sellers where the Jewish leadership.
2. Jews where sold into slavery after the Jewish wars of 66-70 AD.

11:6 – **“For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of this land, declares the Lord. Behold, I will cause each of them to fall into the hand of his neighbor, and each into the hand of his king, and they shall crush the land, and I will deliver none from their hand.”**

1. This was Roman destruction by the hand of the Lord.
2. This was the Word of the Lord to Zechariah

3. "land" would be the land of Israel that was crushed by Rome.

11:7 – "So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staves, one I named Favor, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep."

1. So, Zechariah now acts this out. According to this verse it seems Zechariah did act on his assignment to become a shepherd.
 - a. The flock he watched was going to the slaughter
 - b. Zechariah tended the sheep.
2. Two staves:
 - a. Favor – *no'am* = "pleasantness" and "Graciousness"
 - b. Union – *hobhelim* = "Binders" and "unifiers"
3. Shepherds carried a rod/club to beat away wild beasts and a crooked staff for retrieving sheep.

11:8 – "In one month I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me."

1. It may be that Zechariah was actually working as a shepherd, but it prefigured what the Messiah would do in 30 AD in one month.
2. There are many interpretations (some say forty interpretations) of 11:8. "One month" could mean:
 - a. Literal 30 days
 - b. A shorter period of time
 - c. A long, undefined period of time
 - d. 30 years
 - e. The last month of Jesus' ministry
3. Who are the "three shepherds"?
 - a. The three leaders of the Jewish political factions fighting each other in Jerusalem before and during Rome's siege on Jerusalem in 70 AD – Eleazar, John and Simon.
 - b. Three Seleucid kings or leaders (Greeks from Syria before or during Maccabean Revolt – Seleucus IV, Heliodorus, Demetrius Soter
 - c. Three corrupt High Priests during the Seleucid oppression of the Jews – Jason, Menelaus, Alcimus
 - d. Three classes of leaders – prophet, priest, king
 - e. Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes
 - f. Three is merely symbolic of completeness
 - g. Basically, the good shepherd would deliver Israel from poor, corrupt "shepherds" that are forerunners of the foolish, worthless shepherd described at the end of chapter 11 (11:14-17) which is the antichrist.
4. Even though the Good Shepherd rids the flock of the foolish shepherds the flock itself still detested the Good Shepherd.

11:9 – "So I said, "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another."

1. The flock detested their good shepherd, so the shepherd quit and left the sheep to their fate of being a flock without a shepherd.
 - a. Death
 - b. Destruction

- c. Devouring each other – this is documented by Josephus when it happened in Jerusalem among the Jews in 70 AD.
 - i. Jeremiah 19:9 – “I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbor in the siege.”
 - ii. Deuteronomy 28:53-55 – “Because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the Lord your God has given you. Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating.”

2. The sheep rejected the shepherd and the shepherd rejected the sheep.

- a. This clearly occurs the last week of Jesus ministry

11:10 – “And I took my staff Favor, and I broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples.

- 1. The staff that supported the people with favor from the covenant was broken.

11:11 – “So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep traders, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord.

- 1. The nations that sold the Jews realized the covenant they had with the Lord was no longer in effect in 70 AD.

11:12 – “Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver.

- 1. The rejected shepherd will be paid his final wages or severance pay
- 2. Zechariah 13:7-9 records the death of the good shepherd – “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. IN the whole land, declares the LORD,…”
- 3. The good shepherd show his disdain and lack of concern for what the sheep think of him when he says, “if it seems good to you” pay “me my wages, if not, keep them” because I don’t care what you think one way or the other.
- 4. “thirty pieces of silver”
 - a. The price of a slave in Israel as in Exodus 21:32
 - b. A phrase used to express a very little amount of money...it is mocked as such in 11:13 as “the lordly price at which I was priced” or “the handsome price at which they priced me!”
 - c. Basically the wages earned by a slave doing slave labor...next to nothing
- 5. 11:12-13 is used in Matthew (also while Matthew alludes to Jeremiah 19:1-13:
 - a. Matthew 26:14-15
 - b. Matthew 27:3-10
- 6. Thirty pieces of silver was paid for Jesus and the money was thrown into the Temple and then used to buy an exhausted field used by potters to get clay for pots.

11:13 – “Then the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter.

- 1. The sheep did not want righteousness or righteous leadership.

2. John 10 – Jesus was the Good Shepherd

11:14 – **“Then I broke my second staff Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.**

1. The second staff used to hold together the tribes and brotherhood of the Jews was broken turning Jew on Jew while they were sold into the nations.
2. The sequence of breaking the staffs follows the rejection of the good shepherd:
 - a. God rejects Israel - Nations trample Jerusalem
 - b. Israel rejects their brotherhood – Jews trample on Jews; basic disunity

11:15 – **“Then the Lord said to me, “Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd.**

11:16 – **“For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.**

11:17 – **“Woe to my worthless shepherd,
who deserts the flock!**

**May the sword strike his arm
and his right eye!**

**Let his arm be wholly withered,
his right eye utterly blinded!”**