

Zech. 11:1 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.

Zech. 11:2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

There is a definite shift in the message at this point. Address is being made to Lebanon, which is on the northern border of Israel, the direction from which Israel's enemies are most noted to come. This seems to be a directive for Lebanon to make way for the fire [of judgment] that is coming to devour thy cedars [representative of strength]. The oaks of Bashan (the Golan Heights) picture the strength of the associated area of Syria/northern Jordan Valley. This seems to be a picture of judgment coming to and from the north according to God's purpose.

Zech. 11:3 There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

The shepherds are a reference to the spiritual leaders of the people. They are pictured lamenting the fact that their positions are being destroyed and their pride brought down. The young lions would seem to be a reference to the governmental rulers of the land, who are also moaning (from the Hebrew for *roaring*) at the destruction of their land.

This has to be referencing a time of judgment after that of the Babylonian captivity. We noted earlier that Alexander the Great basically gave Israel a pass, so this must be in reference to the Romans and/or the kingdom of the future Antichrist. This must be a tough message to deliver after the promise of the preceding message.

Zech. 11:4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

Zech. 11:5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

YHWH is talking to Zechariah, and as you continue to read, it would seem that he is being instructed to act out an object lesson similar to many of Ezekiel's prophecies. Point is made that Zechariah is speaking the words of "YHWH my God."

Zechariah is told to feed a flock of sheep even though they have been designated for slaughter. In context, the flock would seem to be a reference to the people of Israel. I believe the instruction to "feed the flock" would be a reference to providing spiritual nourishment. The Hebrew for *possessors* references those who gain possession of the sheep, i.e., conquerors. It would seem that many of the people are killed at the hands of these conquerors who experience no guilt for their actions. Those who have part in surrendering to or cooperating with the enemy for their own benefit declare their prosperity to be a blessing from YHWH. The spiritual leaders of the people show no pity to their people. Why? They are the ones cooperating with the conquerors for their own personal gain.

Zech. 11:6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.

YHWH declares that He will no longer have pity on His people (in contrast to the situation existing at the time of Zechariah's prophecy). God is going to allow the people

to make themselves victims of their leaders and the leaders of the conquering nation. In other words, God is giving them over to another time of judgment.

Zech. 11:7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, *even you*, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

Even though God is allowing His people to fall under the rule of their enemy, He is still going to provide spiritual nourishment to His people. There will be a few godly men in the land, mainly among the poor/humble/needful of the land. Since we have the privilege of hindsight, it is easy to make application to Israel during the time of Christ. The religious leaders of the day were more concerned about their own well being than that of the people, the temple had become a place of business profit for them. Zechariah appears to be a type of Jesus who comes on the scene to feed the flock the truth of God's Word and declare Himself as the Messiah.

Staves are a reference to a shepherd's rods that are used for guidance and protection of the sheep. Zechariah pictures himself taking two rods; one he names "Beauty" (agreeable, delight, pleasant) and the other he names "Bands" (bind, destroy, spoil). Then point is made that he fed the flock.

I see Zechariah picturing the Good Shepherd, Jesus; He identified Himself as such in a parable in John 10.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

One use of the shepherd's rod is to identify his sheep from the larger group in the sheepfold. I see Him using the rod called "Beauty" to identify those of the sheep of Israel that are His followers, and the rod called "Bands" to identify those that are marked for destruction. I also see application to identify the whole flock (Israel) as His pleasant plant and place of delight from which He has promised to preserve a remnant through whom His covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled.

When Jesus came, He made a point to feed the flock (the people of Israel) with spiritual truth. In fact, He made a point that His mission at that time was specifically to the house of Israel.

Matt. 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

It is interesting to note that it was the poor and needy who most readily received Him and His message, and Jesus explained why.

Matthew 19:23-24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Zech. 11:8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

"month" = from a unused root of uncertain signification

This is a difficult verse, especially regarding application to those to whom Zechariah was ministering. It would seem to me that consistent future application would have to be made to the time of Jesus' ministry. Consistency would also make reference to the

three shepherds as spiritual leaders. Some of the commentaries state that this makes reference to viable positions before the Lord, not specific people—prophet, priest and king (all of whom were to be spiritual leaders). This made sense to me since the Lord at His resurrection assumed the leadership role of all three positions. Unlike some others, I tend to think that the point these positions were “cut off” was at the resurrection.

“lothed” = ... much discouraged, grieve...trouble, vex.

As to possible reference to individuals, Caiphas and Ananias would be two of my guesses. I would have added Herod except that He was not Jewish, and there is no indication that he “abhorred” Jesus. That the other two abhorred the Lord is clear from their declaration of allegiance to Caesar as their king in their persistence to have the Savior crucified. That they vexed and troubled him, along with the others of their group, is evident from His castigation of them as related by Matthew.

Matt. 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Matt. 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Matt. 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Matt. 23:16 Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Matt. 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Matt. 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

Matt. 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Matt. 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Zech. 11:9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

The thoughts of this verse lead directly into some of the next verses in Matthew.

Matt. 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children

together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

Matt. 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

He has given them over to judgment.

Zech. 11:10 And I took my staff, *even* Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

Zech. 11:11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it *was* the word of the LORD.

At this point the Lord is pictured breaking the staff called Beauty; this represented the break in His old covenant with Israel to replace it with a new and better one as prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God is a covenant-keeping God. The only way He would break a covenant is to replace it with something that would add to the benefits of the first.

Jeremiah 31:31–34 “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Ezekiel 36:25–28 “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

No longer would the covenant be based on the law; it would become a covenant of grace. The law will remain in effect, but provision for the sinner will be made by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us that some of the branches were broken off and new branches from a wild olive tree (the church) were grafted in to strengthen the original tree and provoke Israel to jealousy so that they would return to God in faith. The time is coming when they will again be grafted back into covenant position. (This is all detailed in Romans 9-11; see journal.) Again there is reference to the poor of the flock of Israel who made up the early church (which, by the way, was almost all Jewish in its beginnings). They came to understand that this was all according to the word of YHWH.

Zech. 11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver.

Zech. 11:13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

The NIV Commentary shed some light on these verses.

“Give me my pay” speaks of the termination of the relationship.”

These verses foretold the transaction Judas made with the Pharisees to betray the Lord for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. The price was paid because the religious leadership and, in turn, the people had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Then the Lord tells Zecharias to picture the 30 pieces of silver being thrown back in the house of the Lord for the use of the potter.

Again, we have the privilege of hindsight in understanding that this was an amazing prophecy regarding details of events that accompanied the betrayal and death of Jesus. When Judas threw the money down in the temple, the Pharisees used it to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for the poor, since their law forbade that it be returned to the temple treasury.

Matthew 27:3–10 “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord appointed me.”

Note that Matthew makes reference to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. Of the different explanations I have found, the following one makes the most sense. The scroll of Jeremiah contained the book of Zechariah.

Zech. 11:14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, *even* Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

Next, Zechariah breaks the staff called Bands. This is a bit confusing since the two kingdoms were divided after the reign of Solomon. I just had a thought that since Jesus is described as the “lion of Judah,” this represents the break in the relationship between the Lord and Israel when they rejected the Messiah.

Rev. 5:5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Another thought is that maybe this is a reference to the dispersion yet to be forced upon the people of Israel by Rome that would result in its people being spread all over the globe. No longer would this staff be used to keep the wicked from harming the flock.

Zech. 11:15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

YHWH continues to instruct the prophet, and he is told to take hold of the instruments of a foolish shepherd. What would be the instruments of a foolish shepherd? A weak

rod? A broken sling? In other words, whatever caused him to be ill prepared to care for the sheep or would result in harm to the sheep.

Zech. 11:16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.*

Zechariah was serving as a picture of a foolish shepherd to come. This shepherd is described as not interested in the sheep and not taking care of their needs; in fact, he destroys them. Important truth to note: God is the One that will facilitate the rise of this shepherd to his position. Why? To serve as an instrument of His judgment.

It was interesting to find that the Hebrew defined *foolish* as *impious*, which Webster defines as "not pious...irreligious; irreverent; ungodly; profane; wanting in reverence for the Supreme Being." Consistency would declare this shepherd to speak of a religious leader to come. In connection with Jesus as the "Good Shepherd," it would position him as the Anti-Messiah or evil, foolish shepherd. Implication is that the people will look to this foolish shepherd for guidance and protection (and Jesus predicted this)...

John 5:43 "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

...but will soon find out that he cares nothing for them.

I think the reference to the coming Antichrist is clear and graphic. He will rise to power through the ability to mediate peace in the Mideast with the pretense of looking out for Israel in the process. Time will prove that he hates God and God's people. He will try one more time to prevent the coming of the Messiah as King of kings by destroying His people so they cannot call out to Him for deliverance. He will destroy many who become part of God's flock during his terrible reign of power.

Zech. 11:17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword *shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.*

In this verse, God declares a prophecy regarding this foolish shepherd. It would seem that he will sustain injury to his arm and his right eye; the result--his arm will be withered, and he will be blind in his right eye. This message of God through Zechariah will be another one of those amazing prophecies that will strengthen the faith of tribulation believers by again affirming the truth of God's word. I think there is a connection to this verse and some verses in Revelation regarding the Antichrist, which would indicate that these wounds appear to be fatal (according to the Greek for *deadly*), but he miraculously recovers.

Rev. 13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, **whose deadly wound was healed.**

Rev. 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

Rev. 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, **which had the wound by a sword, and did live.**

“that leaveth the flock” - I can't help but think that this is a reference to a Jewish man who forsakes his own people for personal power and glory. I personally believe that, as Judas of old, he sells his soul to Satan.