

# Zechariah 11 - The False Shepherds; The Coming False Shepherd (Antichrist)

## IV. Two Burdens (Zech 9:1—14:21)

(1) Israel's postponed deliverance due to her rejection of her Messiah (Zech 9:1—11:17)

(C) False shepherd (Zech 11:1-17)

(a) The personified as wailing (11:1-3)

(i) Cedars of Lebanon (11:1)

(ii) Cypress & Oaks of Bashan (11:2)

(iii) Shepherd & Lions (11:3)

(b) Reasons for the wailing (11:4-14)

(i) Zechariah pastors a doomed flock (11:4-7)

(ii) God no longer favors the flock (11:8-11)

(iii) Israel to reject her Messiah (11:12-13)

(iv) Cessation of the nation's unity (11:14)

(c) The coming False Shepherd (11:15-17)

(i) Raised up (11:15-16)

(ii) Destroyed (11:17)

The predictions of this chapter were given long after the completion of the Temple of Zerubbabel, and address concerns in the more distant future. There is to be a scattering of the people even after the time of Zechariah.

This chapter explains why the blessings and promises of the previous chapter are in postponement for Israel. By rejecting their true Shepherd-Messiah at His first advent, they will experience rejection themselves, climaxing in their taking up with the False Shepherd in the time of their greatest woe. All the attendant dark and dismal storm being a necessary prelude to the Second Advent of their Deliverer and King, bringing in the Millennial Kingdom.

It presents the Good Shepherd in His first advent, who will give His life for the sheep. It will also present a glimpse of another shepherd who will shear the sheep and kill them for food. While there are many views as to which desolation Zechariah has in mind in the highly poetic style of the first 3 verses, the context of the rest of the chapter suggests that the judgment which resulted from the rejection of the Shepherd of Israel and the destruction which overtook the land in 70 AD is in view here.

## **Zechariah 11**

(C) False shepherd (Zech 11:1-17)

(a) The personified as wailing (11:1-3)

(i) Cedars of Lebanon (11:1)

1 Open your doors, Lebanon, So that a fire may feed on your cedars.

1 Open your doors, O Lebanon, That a fire may feed on your cedars.

1 Open your doors, Lebanon, and fire will consume your cedars.

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

- Three verses (v1-3) personifying the wailing or moaning of the land

— The point that the personification is making is the sorrow of Israel because of her rejection of her True King at His first coming

(ii) Cypress & Oaks of Bashan (11:2)

2 Wail, juniper, because the cedar has fallen, For the magnificent *trees* have been destroyed; Wail, **oaks of Bashan**, Because the **impenetrable forest** has come down.

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.

2 Wail, cypress tree, for the cedar has fallen while the stately trees are destroyed. Wail, oak trees of Bashan, for the old growth forest has been cut down.

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.

- "...oaks of Bashan" - Cf. Ezek 27:6

- "...impenetrable forest" - God goes after the strongest part of a nation when it's under discipline

(iii) Shepherd & Lions (11:3)

3 There is a sound of the shepherds' wail, For their **splendor is ruined**; There is a sound of the young lions' roar, For **the pride of the Jordan is ruined**.

3 There is a sound of the shepherds' wail, For their glory is ruined; There is a sound of the young lions' roar, For the pride of the Jordan is ruined.

3 Hear the wailing of the shepherds, for the magnificence of the forest is ruined! Hear the roar of the lions, for the Jordan's arrogance is ruined!

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.

- This verse tells us who is at fault here: the "shepherds" and "lions" meaning Israel's religious leaders (scribes, pharisees, sadducees, the Herodian dynasty, etc.) (Jer 25:34-38)

- "...splendor is ruined" - God would take away the Jewish religious leader's wealth and notoriety, which they loved so much, because they didn't recognize their Messiah

- "...the pride of the Jordan is ruined" - everything that these leaders took pride in, including the Jordan River, would come under judgment

The bottom line of v1-3 is that Israel would be destroyed because of her rejection of the Messiah. The judgments described here will occur during the Tribulation period.

(b) Reasons for the wailing (11:4-14)

(i) Zechariah pastors a doomed flock (11:4-7)

4 This is what the LORD my God says: "Pasture the flock *doomed* to slaughter.

4 Thus says the LORD my God, "Pasture the flock *doomed* to slaughter.

4 This is what the LORD my God says: "Shepherd the flock marked for slaughter.

4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

- Verses 4-7 are a literary unit, with God telling Zechariah to pasture a flock that is doomed to slaughter

- In these verses, Zechariah is speaking for God and the Messiah as if he (Zechariah) were the true shepherd

— The shepherding that God wanted to do for Israel, He tried to do through the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah is standing in for God here as the shepherd.

— The problem is that the flock is doomed to destruction...

5 Those **who buy them slaughter them** and **gounpunished**, and *each of* those **who sell them** says, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!' And their own shepherds have no compassion for them.

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.

5 Their buyers slaughter them without being punished, continuing to sell them as they say, 'Bless the LORD!' and, 'I'm rich!' Meanwhile, their shepherds show them no compassion.

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.

- There's a group selling the sheep and there's a group buying the sheep; the group buying the sheep are slaughtering them

- "...who buy them" - the foreign oppressors who are coming

- "...slaughter them" - refers to the captivity that the nation will enter into, worldwide dispersion, because of the sins of the religious leaders

- "...go unpunished" - temporarily, but not forever; God will always get around to keeping His promises of Gen 12:3

- "...who sell them" - those who are selling the sheep are Israel's religious leaders through their sin and not recognizing the Messiah

6 For I will no longer have compassion for the inhabitants of the land," declares the LORD; "but behold, I will let the people fall, each into another's power and into the power of his king; and they will crush the land, and **I will not rescue *them*** from their power."

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."

6 Therefore I will no longer show compassion upon those who live in the land," declares the LORD. "Look! I will deliver every single person into the control of his neighbor and into the control of the king. Even though they assault the land, I will not deliver it from their control."

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 neighbor'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*.

- "...I will not rescue *them*" - God is saying that He will not rescue His people from worldwide dispersion; this will be their punishment for not recognizing their Messiah

Deut 28:49-50:

**49** "The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down; a nation whose language you will not understand,  
50 a nation with a defiant attitude, who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young.

**7** So I pastured the flock *doomed* to slaughter, therefore *also* 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.

**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.

**7** So I became shepherd of the flock marked for slaughter, paying attention to the oppressed of the flock. I took two staffs—naming one "Pleasant" and the other one "Union"—and then I pastured the flock.

**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.

- "...two staffs" - eastern shepherds typically carried two staffs: a rod or club hewed from a tree to beat away wild beasts attacking sheep, and a crooked staff for retrieving the sheep

from difficult places

— As Zechariah is acting out his pasturing of the flock of Israel, in place of God, he is holding two staffs

— This is a great depiction of pastoral ministry...loving and ministering to the sheep, but also beating away wild beasts (false teaching, false doctrine) in order to protect the sheep.

- "...Favor" - Israel was God's favored nation (Deut 7:7)

- "...Union" - God desires to reunite Israel from its divided state (Cf. 1 Kings 12; Ezek 36:15-28)

(ii) God no longer favors the flock (11:8-11)

8 Then I did away with the **threeshepherds** in **one month**, for **my soul was impatient with them**, and their soul also was tired of me.

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.

8 In a single month I got rid of three shepherds because I grew tired of them, and they despised me.

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

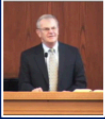
- Scholars point to this verse as the most enigmatic verse in the OT...there are up to 40 different interpretations of what this verse means

- "...three shepherds"- the elders, chief priests, and scribes (Cf. Luke 9:22)

- "...one month" - the month preceding the crucifixion of Christ, which sealed the fate of Israel in her rejection of the Messiah

- "...my soul was impatient with them" - God was impatient with them because they had no room in their hearts for God

— They are the cause of everything that went wrong, leading to the crucifixion of Christ and sealing the fate of Israel, which was meted out 37 years later in 70 AD



## Thomas L. Constable

*Constable's online notes on Zechariah, p. 106-107.*



“Zechariah, as God's representative, did away with ‘three shepherds’ that had been leading his flock within the first ‘month’ that he took charge of the sheep. These appear to have been real shepherds and a real month. At the very least, Zechariah's action prefigured that of Messiah, in taking over the leadership of His flock from other leaders of Israel who did not appreciate His leadership. Who these shepherds were or will be has been the subject of much debate.”

## Merrill F. Unger

*Unger, Merrill F. Zechariah. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963. p. 195.*

“...the only construction which is at all to any notice, is that which regards the language as descriptive of the three rulers in the Jewish state – the priests, the teachers of the law, and the civil magistrates.’ These were the people of influential prestige by whom the nation’s affairs were managed and to whose wickedness, which reached its acme when they crucified the Messiah, the destruction of the state is to be ascribed. The one month...can best be understood as referring to the period of culminating unbelief just before the national leaders crucified our Lord and thus sealed the fate of the Jewish state. During this period the nation rejected our Lord, and the Lord rejected the nation by disavowing its leaders.”

9 Then I said, “I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to perish, let it perish; and **let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.**”

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.”

9 So I said, "I will no longer be your shepherd. Let those who are about to die perish, and let what is about to be destroyed be destroyed. As for the survivors, let them devour each other."

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.

- Zechariah, who is representing God in shepherding the flock, is now abandoning his shepherding of the flock, leaving the flock to experience the consequences of their sin

— Israel had reached a point in which they were so obstinate in their rejection of the Messiah that God removed His shepherding care from them

- "...let those who are left eat one another's flesh" - Josephus references (in his work *Wars of the Jews*) that the Jews were forced into cannibalism during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD

10 And I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break **mycovenant** which I had made with all the peoples.

10 I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples.

10 Then I took the staff that I had named "Pleasant" and broke it, showing I was breaking my covenant that I had made with all of the people.

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.

- When nations come against Israel for divine discipline, which God promised would happen, God says that He will not step in to exert His pastoral care for them

— God will not step in and use His crooked staff to pull them out of dangerous places, and He will not use the club hewed from a tree to beat away attackers (Cf. v7).

— God will essentially turn Israel over to her own consequences, and it will get so bad that you'll revert to cannibalism (v9)

- "...my covenant" - used here in a looser sense, not descriptive of the formal agreement entered into by contracting parties (i.e. the Abrahamic Covenant)

— Instead, it indicates that, when the Israel's neighbors did her no harm, it was due to the fact that God had put them under a strong restraint as might be exerted upon a nation

### **Evidences of the Abrahamic Covenant's Unconditional Nature**

- ANE covenant ratification ceremony (Gen 15)
- Lack of stated conditions for Israel's obedience (Gen 15)
- Covenant's eternality (Gen 17:7,13,19; Ps 90:2)
- Covenant's immutability (Heb 6:13-18; Mal 3:6)

- Trans-generational reaffirmation despite perpetual national disobedience (Jer 31:35-37)

11 So it was broken on that day, and so the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD.

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.

11 It was broken at that time so the oppressed of the flock who were observing me would know that it had been a message from the LORD.

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

- The faithful Israelites who heard Zechariah realized that what he had done in breaking the staff was in harmony with the Word of the Lord

(iii) Israel to reject her Messiah (11:12-13)

12 And 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.

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.

12 I told them, "If it's alright with you, pay me what I've earned. But if it isn't, don't." So they paid out what I had earned—30 pieces of silver.

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.

- "...give *me* my wages" - Zechariah says, I'm not pastoring this flock anymore (symbolized by the breaking of the staff, v10-11), so pay me what you owe me and I'll be on my way

- "...but if not, never mind!" - then Zechariah says, But, you haven't treated me very well as your shepherd, so if you aren't going to pay me anything, fine.

- "...thirty *shekels* of silver" - what the flock paid Zechariah for his work

— 30 shekels of silver was the price paid for the life of a slave who died (Ex 20:32). If a slave was killed, the guilty party should pay the slave's master 30 shekels of silver for the life of the slave.

— By paying Zechariah only 30 pieces of silver, the flock is telling Zechariah that his service wasn't worth any more than a dead slave

— When Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, he completely undervalued the shepherding role of Jesus Christ, just as this doomed flock completely undervalued the shepherding role of Zechariah

Matt 26:15: and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they set out for him thirty pieces of silver.

**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.

**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.

**13** Then the LORD told me, "Throw the money into the treasury—that magnificent value they placed on me!" So I took the 30 shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury of the Temple of the LORD.

**13** And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly *fancy* 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.

- "...magnificent price" - sarcasm; Zechariah's service had been worth far more than that amount

- "...threw them to the potter" - showed Zechariah's disdain for the "magnificent price" that the doomed flock paid him for his shepherding

— Throwing something to the potter expressed Zechariah's disdain for the wage since potters were typically poor and lowly craftsmen

— This was replicated by Judas Iscariot (Matt 27:3,7); Zech 11:13 is quoted in Matt 27:9-10, but Matthew attributes the quote to Jeremiah, not Zechariah

— Matthew attributes the quote to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah simply because in Jesus' day, Jeremiah was the first of the books of the prophets, and that section (the prophets) was identified by the name of the first book.

#### (iv) Cessation of the nation's unity (11:14)

**14** Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

**14** Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

**14** Then I broke my second staff—the one I had named "Union"—breaking the union between the house of Judah and the house of Israel.

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

- Zechariah breaks the "Union" staff because if Israel would've accepted the Messiah at His first coming, He would have rolled back the division in the kingdom caused by

Solomon's sin (1 Kings 12)

— However because of Israel's foretold rejection of Christ, we know from other Scripture passages that this reunification of Israel will now not occur until the millennial kingdom

(c) The coming false shepherd (11:15-17)

(i) Raised up (11:15-16)

**15** And the LORD said to me, "Take again for yourself the equipment of a **foolish shepherd**.

**15** The LORD said to me, "Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd.

**15** The LORD told me, "Pick up the tools of a worthless shepherd again,

**15** And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet *again* the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

- Zechariah again will act out a skit, but this time God tells Zechariah to stand in the shoes of the future Antichrist (Cf. John 5:43)

- "...foolish" - worthless (Cf. v17); morally deficient (Cf. Prov 1:7)

- "...shepherd" - since his flock had rejected the Good Shepherd (Cf. Ezek 34:3-4)

— God has a habit of putting bad shepherds over flocks when those flocks reject God (i.e. Joe Biden)

— God says that if the flock won't accept the True Shepherd, He will give them a "foolish shepherd"

— If a church has a bad pastor, someone who doesn't consider or teach the full counsel of God, maybe the reason that pastor is at that church is that the members of that church don't want to hear truth. Maybe the members don't want to hear the full counsel of God, so God gave them a pastor who will give them what they want (Cf. 2 Tim 4:3-4).

— Christian ministry (pastors) are the only profession where you gain a following by telling people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. If you did that in any other profession (medicine, law, etc.), you'd be sued.

— The reason why there are so many bad pastors today is because there is a demand for what they are teaching...

**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 provide for the one who is exhausted, but will devour the flesh of the fat *sheep* and **tear off their hoofs**.

**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.

**16** for I am now raising up a shepherd in the land who will neither search for the lost, nor care for the young, nor fix the broken, nor sustain the healthy. Instead, he will devour the

meat of the best of the sheep, tearing off their hoofs."

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.

- A perfect description of a false shepherd...one who instead of feeding the flock, fleeces the flock for their own selfish gain

— The Antichrist will be interested in using God's people (Israel) for his own purposes and benefits

— One of the strongest passages against false shepherds in the OT is Ezek 34:1-10. When you read this passage, it seems as if Zechariah is paraphrasing Ezekiel in this verse.

— Throughout the Gospels, Jesus was pretty peaceful with everyone (prostitutes, tax collectors, etc.), but when it came to the religious leaders (scribes, pharisees, sadducees, etc.), those in authority who abused the people, Jesus sometimes lost it (Cf. Matt 23).

— Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14); He said that a Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:10), putting His own interests behind the interests of the sheep

- "...tear off their hoofs" - probably represents the greedy shepherd, searching for the last edible morsel that he can extract from his flock, whom he has consumed

— A false shepherd will get every morsel of benefit for himself from his fleecing of the flock

Ezek 34:1-10:

1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been **feeding themselves! Should the shepherds not feed the flock?**

3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock.

4 Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you searched for the lost; but **with force and with violence you have dominated them.**

5 **They scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every animal of the field and scattered.**

6 My flock **strayed** through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was **scattered** over all the surface of the earth, and there was **no one to search or seek for them.**"

7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

8 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "certainly, because My flock has become plunder, and My flock has become food for all the animals of the field for lack of a shepherd, and **My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock,**

9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

10 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, **I am against the shepherds**, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them stop tending sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will save My sheep from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.'"

(ii) Destroyed (11:17)

17 "**Woe to the worthless shepherd Who abandons 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.**"

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."

17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye. May his arm wither and his right eye be completely blind."

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.

- "Woe" - this false shepherd thinks he is getting away with fleecing the flock, but you should take pity on him because judgment is inevitable

- "...worthless shepherd" - the ultimate fulfillment must be the Antichrist, who will make a covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27), then break it and persecute the Jews (Ezek 34:2-4; Dan 11:36-39; John 5:43; 2 Thess 2:3-10; Rev 13:1-8)

— Perhaps the collective leadership of Israel, from Zechariah's time forward, culminating with the Antichrist, is in view

- "...Who abandons the flock!" - a false shepherd leaves the flock in danger because he's pursuing his own interest

- "...A sword will be on his arm...His arm will be totally withered" - a synecdoche, a figure of speech describing a part representing the whole

— "arm" - a synecdoche for power

- "...And on his right eye!...will be blind" -

— "eye" - a synecdoche for intelligence

— This verse says that the power and intelligence of the Antichrist, the false shepherd, will be destroyed

## Merrill F. Unger

Unger, Merrill F. *Zechariah*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963. p. 205.

“With this climactic scene the first prophetic burden describing the first advent and rejection of Messiah, the Shepherd-King (chapters 9—11) comes to a close. The way is thus opened for the second burden and the second advent and acceptance of Messiah, the King (chapters 12—14).”

