

Zechariah 11:1-11 – Shepherds Are Punished for Abusing the Sheep

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Phillips, Geneva, JFB, Clarke, Poole, Spurgeon, Henry, Handfuls, Trapp, Calvin?

Beloved in Jesus Christ: Remember the promises God made to his people. God would bring rain for Israel's crops, ruin to Israel's enemies, revival to Israel's people, power to Israel, pleasure to Israel, protection to Israel, he equipped them to fight, he assured them of victory, and he rewarded their service. How blest is he whose trespass have freely been forgiven! **But God knew that the Jewish leaders -the shepherds of Israel, would ultimately reject him and attack his sheep.** So God spoke of what he would do to those false shepherds of Israel. This is God's message today.

Our headings are:

God would devour 吞食 the wicked shepherds by fire

God would devour the wicked shepherds by sword (foil)

God would devour the wicked shepherds by famine

Our goals are: **That you will see what God would do if you hinder his people from doing his kingdom's work.**

God would devour the wicked shepherds by fire

1. Many people view Malachi as the last prophet of the Old Testament because his prophecy is at the end, but this part of

Zechariah's prophecy was likely written after Malachi, close to the end of Zechariah's life. Jesus alluded 暗示 to this in Matthew 23:37. He spoke of the leaders of Israel who persecuted the prophets from Abel to Zechariah. So consider this the last word the church heard from God...the last thing to ring in their ears for 400 years.

1 Open your doors, O Lebanon, That **fire may devour your cedars.**

2. God promised to destroy the doors frames of Israel with fire. There were 2 doors frames made out of Lebanon's cedars: the temple doors (religion) and the city doors (justice) of Jerusalem. The cedars 香柏樹 for construction were hauled from Lebanon, which bordered Israel. **How can we prove that this was referring to people in Jerusalem? God called the Jews Lebanon.** The Jews were attacked by Nebuchadnezzar and God rebuked him for attacking "Lebanon." Also. Hab 2:17.

Ezekiel 17:2 "Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel, 3 "and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "A great eagle with large wings and long pinions, Full of feathers of various colors, Came to Lebanon And took from the cedar the highest branch.

說、主耶和華如此說、有一大鷹、翅膀大、翎毛長、羽毛豐滿、彩色俱備、來到利巴嫩、將香柏樹梢擄去。

2 **Wail, O cypress 松樹**, for the cedar has fallen, Because the **mighty trees are ruined.** Wail, O oaks of Bashan, For the **thick forest has come down.**

3. God spoke with certainty of Lebanon's (Israel's leaders) destruction by fire. He said that if the stately cedars (prominent leaders- men are called "trees" often) were already destroyed, the slender cypress (fir) (lesser leaders) would more easily be destroyed. And if the mighty forests trees were cut down, surely the lesser oaks would be cut down as well.

3 There is the **sound of wailing 哀號 shepherds!** For their glory is in ruins. There is the sound of **roaring lions! For the pride of the Jordan is in ruins.**

4. These trees (political, religious, economic leaders) were called to wail – cry loudly- like the roaring lions who used to hide in the "pride of Jordan" – thickets 繁茂处 near the river. When the rising water forced them to leave their comfortable place they would wail. So too did the shepherds of Israel wail because they were humbled by God when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70. Their pride was crushed. They lost their wealth and power. Pharisees confirmed this! (Even mighty trees are humbled by the lumberjack's axe.)

5. God spoke in perfect tense to show certainty of the leaders' fiery destruction! Romans fired cannon balls into Jerusalem.

6. Lesson:

a. A literal interpretation of the Bible will hurt you. (God often used poetic language.) So be careful that you always study God's Word in context.

b. When a church fails (devoured) today some leaders blame frivolous 无足轻重 things...like we didn't have comfortable seats, the songs were too hard, there was no projector, or the refreshments weren't good. They ought to look and see if the preaching, sacraments, and discipline were wanting!

c. Shepherds who would not open up their heart doors to the Lord for guidance will dry and eventually burn in hell.

God would destroy the wicked shepherds by sword (foil)

4 Thus says the LORD my God, "**Feed the flock for slaughter**, 5 "**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**."

1. God warned the leaders of the Jews who were responsible for feeding the flock, that he would indeed slaughter 屠杀 them with the sword for not doing so.

a. These false shepherds were the merchants. Their goal was to say: "Praise the Lord, I am rich."

b. These false shepherds were the political leaders. They would say: "How can I pervert 歪曲 justice and become rich?"

c. These false shepherds were the religious leaders. Their goal was to say: "Give your money to the Lord and we will receive it." They ignored the example of the Good Shepherd.

2. Specifically, these shepherds slaughtered or sold God's sheep for their own advantage and they felt no remorse for what they did. They didn't pity the flock. **They treated them as animals!**

Ezekiel 34: 8 "as I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock" —

But the sheep belonged to the Lord. **They were his treasured possessions.** And he wanted them cared for: **Protected, provided for, and taught!** This is why Jesus had to come as the prophet to feed the flock!

3. This prophecy was fulfilled during the time of Christ and soon after. The leaders of Israel and the Zealots (Jewish rebels) abused the sheep. **They treated their fellow Jews worse than the Romans.** Didn't the Jews sell their own people to Rome?

John 11:48 "**If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.**"

John 19:15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "**We have no king but Caesar!**"

They even praised God for their wealth gained by corruption. And then they brutally attacked Christians after Jesus in a concerted and protracted manner.

6 "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."

4. Because of the failure in leadership, God brought judgment on the land. He terrorized them. God did not deliver them. God allowed them to be plundered. Vespasian and Titus obliged and destroyed Jerusalem.

7 So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. **I took for myself two staves:** the one I called **Beauty**, and the other I called **Bonds 联系**; and I fed the flock.

5. Yet in his mercy God redeemed the poor (in spirit) sheep, protected, and provided for their needs. He did this through Jesus.

Isaiah 40:11 **He will feed His flock like a shepherd;** He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.

Ezekiel 34:23 "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them — My servant David. **He shall feed them and be their shepherd.**

Jesus did this by using 2 staves in his hand. One staff was called **Beauty** and the other **Bonds**. The staves (1 rod and 1 staff) were used for discipline and protection. A shepherd might cause his sheep to live by breaking its leg so it would learn to stay in safety. And he would use his rod to kill wild animals that might attack his sheep. (This is comparable to Christ's golden scepter 权杖 and his iron rod.)

Psalms 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your **rod and Your staff**, they comfort me.

8 I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me 因為我的心厭煩他們、他們的心也憎嫌我。

6. While God fed and protected his sheep, he chased 3 false shepherds in 1 month—a short time. These 3 shepherds were likely prophets, priests, and king. God loathed and abhorred them. God made them disappear. (Same language of Ezekiel 34.)

And isn't it true that the Jewish leaders hated Jesus? Jesus threatened their livelihood.

7. Lessons:

a. **Evidenced was the need for a new Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, who would lay down his life for his sheep – not one who would plunder 掠夺 them.**

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

b. Woe to shepherds who do not care for God's flock.

1Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, **not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly...**

Elders, pastors, businessmen, and politicians who abuse the flock of Jesus must know that God will hold them accountable. Pastors who tickle ears, politicians who promote wickedness and protect those who do them, businessmen who abuse their workers...all will have to give account to God.

c. Don't assume that physical wealth is a sign of spiritual prosperity, regardless of what Benny Hinn says.

d. God never abandons his church, even through her darkest times. Let this comfort you.

God would destroy the wicked shepherds by famine

9 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."

1. God withheld food from the false shepherds and caused them to become cannibals 食人族. It was an ironic twist and a most dramatic part of this prophecy. **The Jews rejected God's food for their souls so they would eat each other.** This was confirmed by Josephus and other early historians. Mothers ate their own children. This happened when Rome laid siege in Jerusalem and the Jews starved. God has said this earlier.

Deuteronomy 28:53 "You shall **eat the fruit of your own body**, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you.

10 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. 11 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.**

2. God then illustrated his disdain 蔑视 and abandonment of his covenant breaking people. He broke his staff of protection. He no longer reached down into crevices where his sheep had fallen to rescue them. He did not use his staff to fight off the lions and bears. **And there was no doubt that God no longer cared for those who rejected him**- who had broken covenant with him. **This happened on the day the Jews said: "We have no king but Caesar."** Yes, Israel held up for 40 years, but the broken covenant was completed in AD70.

3. And yet, the "poor in spirit" knew that this was God's Word when it came true. They left Jerusalem and were saved. This was confirmed by historical records!

Matthew 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' 那行毀壞可憎的 spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 **then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.**

4. Lessons:

a. When people love watered down preaching, and when preachers love to preach watered down sermons, they must not expect that God would bless that Word. Evangelism 传福音 would be in vain. The enemy will attack with all their weapons: Lusts, vain philosophies, etc. When you over work and ignore your family, do not expect God to bless your work. Young people, when you only watch sports or play computer games, don't pray and ask God to bless your spiritual life.

b. Those who reject God's diet for their souls will die in their sins.

John 8:24 "Therefore **I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**"

Conclusion:

God gave his people what they deserved: Fire, foil, famine. He offered rain for their crops, ruin to their enemies, revival to their people, power, pleasure, and protection. He equipped them for the fight, assured them of victory, and rewarded them for fighting. But they turned away and rejected the Lord.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Don't take God for granted. **Use the gifts that Jesus Christ earned for you when he died on the cross and restored your relations with his Father.** Know the promises of the Word. Be nourished by the sacraments.

2. Work hard for God's kingdom in the area he has called you.

3. If you are not sure how or where you can work, talk with your elder. But work for God's kingdom. You have been saved for kingdom service.

Finally: I urge you to ask Jesus to open your spiritual ears so that you will hear his call, come into his house, and be safe. He shed his blood so you can have right of access to God.