

Zechariah 11:4-17

Beauty and Bands: A Shepherd in the Land

Text: Zechariah 11

Introduction:

1. God had promised that the seed of woman would crush the head of the serpent and the enemy of man would be defeated (Genesis 3:15).
2. He showed that this victory would include blessedness for all through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).
3. This Victor would be a mediator (Job 19:23-27), a ruler (Genesis 49:10), a star (Numbers 24:17), a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), a priest (1 Samuel 2:35), and a king (1 Samuel 2:10) - ruling from the throne of David (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).
4. During the time of David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1) recorded many prophecies of Jesus in the Psalms.
5. In the writings of the prophets, much more detail about the coming Messiah was given.
6. Zechariah showed the rejection of the Messiah...

I. THE BACKGROUND

(ZECHARIAH 11:1-3)

- A. Remember, in the time of Zechariah, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple had just been rebuilt.
- B. Yet, God is looking forward to the time when the Romans (AD 70) would destroy the city and the entire Jewish economy.
- C. Lebanon was often considered to be the northern entrance to Israel.
 1. A fire is coming that will destroy the greatest of the forests - the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan.
 2. The impenetrable forest will be consumed by fire.
- D. The fire would spread throughout the land causing the shepherds to howl and wail.
- E. The shepherds were the leaders of the nation who wept as they witnessed its destruction - a devastation that they could not halt (cf. 10:2-3).

II. THE PROPHECY

(ZECHARIAH 11:4-17)

- A. God rejected Israel because they rejected His Shepherd - the Messiah.
- B. God was the true Shepherd of Israel - a King that they often rejected.
- C. Here, he puts the prophet in the place of the shepherd and instructs him to "Feed the flock of the slaughter."
 1. They are a flock because they belong to God.
 2. They are for the slaughter because they were oppressed by those world powers who held rule over them.
- D. The world powers would destroy one another, but God would tend His flock.
- E. In feeding the flock, two staves were used - one called "Beauty" and one called "Bands."
 1. "Beauty" means 'favor' or 'graciousness' - referring to God's favor on the flock.
 2. "Bands" means 'binders' - referring to the unity of Israel and Judah.
- F. In spite of this, the people abhorred their Shepherd.

Prophecy of Jesus

- G. Thus, God grew weary with them and was forced to bring punishment, cutting off three shepherds (leaders) in one month.
- H. Pestilence, sword, and famine followed as the staff of God's favor ("Beauty") was broken.
 - 1. The breaking of the staff signified the breaking of the covenant.
 - 2. God's promise to protect His people from the world powers was now canceled.
 - 3. This was not because of any fault with God, but due to the nation's rejection of Him.
- I. When God asked the people to evaluate His work on their behalf, they showed their contempt by valuing Him at the price of a servant who had been gored by an ox (cf. Exodus 21:32)!
 - 1. To them, God was only worth the price of an injured slave.
 - 2. Of course, this was the same value that Judas placed on the Messiah (Matt. 26:15; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6).
- J. God mockingly called this a "goodly price" and ordered the prophet to cast it unto the potter.
 - 1. Likely, this indicates that God viewed it as worthless and something to be thrown out like trash.
 - 2. Yet, it is worth remembering that Judas cast down the 30 pieces of silver and it was used to purchase a "potter's field" (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19).
- K. The result of their attitude was the breaking of the other staff - "Bands" - indicating that disunity would bring about the fall of Israel from within.
- L. Since they rejected the Good Shepherd, God would allow them to be ruled by foolish shepherds who would care only for themselves at the expense of the flock.

III. THE FULFILLMENT

(MATTHEW 27:3-10)

- A. Like the shepherd of the prophecy, Jesus - the Good Shepherd - was rejected by the people of God.
- B. He was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver that were then used to buy a "potter's field."
- C. This prophecy reveals the foreknowledge of God and confirms the identity of Jesus as the Messiah.
- D. Yet, many claim that this prophecy actually contains contradictions and, thus, is not true.
 - 1. Matthew 27:9 attributes this prophecy to Jeremiah, not Zechariah.
 - 2. Many have tried to argue that Matthew made a mistake - thus, they attempt to argue against the inspiration of the Bible.
 - 3. However, Matthew was not mistaken in what he wrote.
 - 4. Consider the following points:
 - a. It is common for quotations from more than one prophet to be combined and attributed to only one of them (cf. Mark 1:2-3). {*Matthew may have been referring to Jeremiah 32:6ff; 19:1ff; and Zechariah 11.*}
 - b. Matthew stated that the prophecy was spoken - not written - by Jeremiah.
 - i. This would not be unusual (cf. Acts 20:35; Jude 14).
 - ii. Zechariah could have simply incorporated Jeremiah's prophecy into his own - by inspiration.
 - iii. In fact, he claimed to be writing to remind Israel of "the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets" (7:7).
 - c. There is no error or contradiction in Matthew's words.
- E. Some also see a contradiction in the records of Judas' death (Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:18).
 - 1. Judas hanged himself and then his body fell from the tree.
 - 2. Both statements are true; there is no contradiction.
- F. The prophecy proves that the Bible is the inspired and accurate Word of God