

Zechariah 11:1-17

The prophet Zechariah had already witnessed many exciting and important events, but his calling as a prophet was not yet over.

The two oracles that conclude this book probably came from much later in his life. Perhaps many years after the temple was rebuilt. They depict a less positive situation.

Summary

In Zechariah 11:1-17, God called Zechariah to stand up against godless leaders who had taken control of Jerusalem.

1. Lamented False Leaders vv. 1-5

Zechariah 11 begins with a lament (**Zech 11:1-3**). It pictures the devastation coming down out of the North on the false shepherds of Israel whose ability to exploit the people will be taken away. The message is plain and simple: those placed in leadership over God's people will be held to account and judged.

The people of the city were being misused by leaders, merchants and politicians, who exploited the people for selfish gain (**Zech 11:4-5**).

This teaches us about God's standards for leadership. A godly leader should have the interests of the followers and of the greater public in mind (**1 Peter 5:2-3**).

Verse 5 paints a stark picture of godless leadership. God condemns those who labor only to line their own pockets. Such may seem to go unpunished and even prosper, but God will bring false shepherds to account (**Zech 11:17**).

2. Good Shepherd vv. 6-7

God commanded Zechariah to engage in a role-play in order to make his point in a very public way before the people of Jerusalem (Cf. Hosea; Isaiah; Ezekiel). God had said to Zechariah, "Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter" (**Zech 11:4**). Zechariah went before the people bearing two shepherd staffs as prophetic protest signs: **one** marked "Favor," which signified God's blessing on the people, **and the other** marked "Union," signifying the national unity and peace.

The prophet denounced the godless leaders and succeeded in removing "the three shepherds." We might think that this kind of protest would result in the prophet being swept up on a tide of public approval but that was not so (**Zech. 11:8**).

Godless people will not tend to godliness in their thinking and actions.

That is why our witness to the world must first and foremost consist of the gospel of grace for sinners, so that people will be reconciled to God and his truth and his love.

3. Rejected Flock vv. 8-11; 14-16

What happens when a people reject God?

Ultimately, after much long-suffering patience, God rejects them (**Zech. 11:8-9**) and the consequences of their rejection would prove bitter (**Zech. 11:10-11; 14**).

Like the Jews in Zechariah's time, we will not enjoy the blessings of God without obeying and bending the knee to him as our Lord.

God sends Zechariah back to the people to represent the foolish shepherd they chose in his place (**Zech 11:15-16**). It is always a severe judgment when God gives sinners exactly what they want. As Christian people, we must be ever more eager to stand before our generation with the gospel of grace and truth it so desperately needs.

4. Departed Savior vv. 12-13

This prophetic role-play is completed in two ways.

First, by revealing the contempt of those who rejected God's messenger (**Zech 11:12-13**). This is a vivid picture this is of the world's contempt for true religion, as well as God's rejection of its arrogant offerings.

Secondly, these two verses complete the passage by linking these events to what would happen over five hundred years later when another good and true shepherd sent by God would be rejected by the people of that very city.

This Shepherd was God's own Son, the great and final prophet of Israel.

If it was painful for Zechariah to be rejected, how much more so for Jesus to be rejected by the professing people in His day (**Matt. 23:37-38**).

Matthew 24 begins by saying, "Jesus left the temple."

As Zechariah's role-play had forecast, God's patience had come to an end.

All who did not go with Jesus were left behind to receive the judgment due their sin.

5. Grave Warning

This passage was a sharp warning to the Jews, that rejecting the true and good shepherd would bring disaster on their heads.

Zechariah's prophecy, recalled by Jesus on his way to the cross, would be fulfilled with terrible accuracy. What was foretold in our passage came to life in the form of terrible conquest by the Romans in AD70 in the aftermath of Jesus' rejection by the Jews.

On the one hand, the Scripture presents God as eager to forgive and slow to anger, rich in mercy and reluctant to destroy. Yet when his judgment finally comes, how terrible it truly is!

Just as Jesus came to Jerusalem, so he comes to every man and every woman.

He offers you salvation—forgiveness by his death for your sins but he also warns against the consequences of rejecting him as Savior and Lord.

The warning, then, is this: If you reject the grace and mercy of God, refusing the Savior he has sent, God must then reject you in turn.

If you choose sin and its pleasures, you cannot escape sin's judgment.

Zechariah reluctantly broke the two staffs that represented God's blessing, and so too will all the godless find themselves without the benefits of God's grace.