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Zechariah 11

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Zechariah 11.

Topics.

- Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, the glorious trees are ruined.
 - The shepherds' glory is ruined they are doomed to slaughter.
 - God will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land.
 - I became the shepherd doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders.
 - I broke my staff favour annulling the covenant I had made.
 - The shepherd's wages was thirty pieces of silver.
 - I broke my second staff union, annulling the brotherhood.
 - Woe to the crooked and worthless shepherd who deserts the flock.
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FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

The following introduction is quiet long, but it does help understand the the background of Zechariah, (to skip the introduction scroll down to Zechariah chapter one). As Haggai encouraged the returned Jewish exiles to rebuild the Temple, Zechariah encouraged them to repent and renew their covenant with God. Such spiritual renewal would be necessary for the people to be ready to worship God once the Temple was rebuilt (about 515 B.C.). Zechariah accused them of doing the very things their ancestors had done before the exile. He was concerned about social justice for widows, orphans, and foreigners. As the people endured opposition from the non-Jewish inhabitants of Judea, Zechariah reassured them of God's abiding comfort and care and that He would continue his covenant with Israel. The Messianic hope was rekindled during Zechariah's ministry by the ordination of Joshua as priest and Zerubbabel as governor. From Zechariah chapter one through to the end there is a beautiful message of comfort and encouragement for the people of Israel during the era of Zechariah and for those who are rebuilding the temporal Temple of God, but as the visions progress through the chapters the focus slowly shifts from the era of Zechariah and transcends time to a future age where God is building an eternal Temple in the Lord Jesus Christ. The visions then progress to Jesus returning in glory and climax's in the final chapter with Christ reigning from Jerusalem as King over the entire earth and ends with the promise that the Lord would establish his rule over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9).

The historical background: twenty years after untied Israel returned from their seventy years in captivity to Babylon, the Temple was still a blackened ruin and the discouraged people did not see how it could be restored. At this critical moment God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the Jews to rebuild the Temple. The prophecies of the two men were delivered almost at the same time. Zechariah gives a series of eight symbolic night-visions, to encourage the Israelites to complete the Temple.

Wail, Cypress, the Cedar has Fallen, the Glorious Trees are Ruined.

- **Zechariah 11:1-2:** Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!
²Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, for the glorious trees are ruined! Wail, oaks of Bashan, for the thick forest has been felled!

Lebanon: (is a symbol of Judah) (the two tribes) Lebanon came to symbolize the exalted status of Judah's royal house. Writers of biblical poetry speak at length on the motion of Lebanon's famous cedar trees, their massive branches their fragrance and on their height as a symbol of dignity and pride and on their growth and resistance to decay as a symbol of endurance. (Lebanon is included in God's promise).

Bashan: (is a symbol of Israel) (the ten tribes) it is the broad, fertile region E of the Sea of Galilee in Samaria, extending roughly from Gilead on the S to Mt Hermon on the North. The whole district was assigned to the half tribe of Manasseh.

Lebanon, cypress trees and the glorious trees: symbolize the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people of Judah.

Bashan and the thick forests: symbolize the people of Israel in the land of Samaria.

Oaks of Bashan: symbolize the shepherds of Israel.

Cedar trees; symbolize the shepherds of Judah.

Zechariah in his vision sees the destruction of Israel's worthless and foolish shepherds, priests and prophets prior to the seventy-year captivity, but prophetically the vision transcends Old Testament history and takes us to the New Testament, chief priests, Pharisees, scribes and elders and the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ZECHARIAH 11:3-5

The Shepherds Glory is Ruined they are Doomed to Slaughter.

- **Zechariah 11:3-5:** The sound of the wail of the shepherds for their glory is ruined! The sound of the roar of the lions, for the thicket of the Jordan is ruined! ⁴thus said the LORD my God: "become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter ⁵Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the LORD, I have become rich,' and their own shepherds have no pity on them (the flock).

The roar of lions: refers to the voice of the shepherds. The message of the shepherds became corrupt they lead the nation of Israel and Judah to destruction and captivity.

The shepherd doomed to slaughter: the shepherd doomed for slaughter means being a shepherd who is prepared to put the life of his followers before his own and being one who is even ready to die for them, the LORD is telling Zechariah to become the shepherd of the flock doomed for slaughter, because the shepherds that Israel has had in the past have had no compassion for their followers and even worse were using them as merchandise to get rich themselves and no-one was punishing them for it.

But though these majestic and prophetic words apply to Zechariah they only rest with him for a moment, then clearly take up wings and transcend time and history until they arrive at the ultimate Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ who was doomed for slaughter and sold for money so another would become rich (Judas).

ZECHARIAH 11:6

God will No Longer have Pity on the Inhabitants of the Land.

- **Zechariah 11:6:** For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of this land, declares the LORD. Behold, I will cause each of them to fall into the hand of his neighbour, and each into the hand of his king, and they shall crush the land, and I will deliver none from their hand."

In the vision Zechariah sees Israel's past history, but he speaks it in the present moment because he proclaims the events as they come to him in the vision. He has said the shepherds and the people of Judah and Israel are corrupt so the LORD will send a fire through the two nations (v1-2) and will no longer show pity toward the people but totally crush them (v6).

This is exactly what the LORD did, the shepherds had led the people away from God and into gross sin and the worship of idols and pagan gods, so the LORD used Assyria to invade Israel (the ten tribes) in the land of Samaria and Babylon to attack the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah (the two tribes) and take them captive for seventy years. But although Zechariah's words take us back to past events, they also echo a future warning to the people of Israel, if they do not repent and feel sorry for what happened to their shepherds and their nation in the past, the same events will eventually unfold in the future.

Bible prophecy and past tense: often a prophecy is spoken in the present tense as though the events are still to take place when in actual reality, they are past events. This is because the prophet is seeing the vision in the present moment and speaks it as he sees it in present time. The people the prophet is speaking to know when the prophecy is past events, but sometimes it can be difficult for those reading it thousands of years later to realise, because of the tense it is written in. One of the keys to understanding Bible prophecies is to know that the verses are not always written in chronological order.

3

It is almost as though the prophet is so inspired that he immediately speaks the words as they come to him. They are then recorded in the order that the prophet spoke them, but that does not always mean they are in the actual chronological order that they will unfold throughout history. Sometimes the latter verses of a chapter may actually be the first events to take place in God's foreordained plan of events. In the book of Revelation this principle applies not only to the individual verses of the chapters but also too many of the chapters themselves.

The destruction of Israel and Judah: many times God through the prophets warned Judah and Israel of their impending doom, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets they rebelled against the LORD they turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.). Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods and were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years.

Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the Good News: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

The beauty, wonder and glory of the Bible: the following verses now transcend the era of Zechariah and Haggai and with lightning speed take the mind of the passionate and enthusiastic Bible reader to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ZECHARIAH 11:7

I became the Shepherd to Be Slaughtered by the Sheep Traders

- **Zechariah 11:7:** so I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders and I took two staffs, one I named Favour, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep (the LORD'S flock).

The first staff named Favour: refers to God's covenant blessings toward Israel (Zech. 11:10).

The second staff named Union: refers to the union God had through the covenant with Israel.

Sheep traders: refers to shepherds who use their followers as merchandise for their own gain. Though this verse speaks of Zechariah becoming a shepherd doomed for slaughter (meaning he was prepared to give his life for the sheep) in contrast to the previous corrupt shepherds of Israel who used God's flock for their own glory and gain it also echoes a future shepherd to come who was also doomed for slaughter and his name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah in this prophetic vision sees Jesus taking two staffs in his hand one named FAVOUR and the other named UNION.

ZECHARIAH 11:8-11

I Broke My Staff Favour Annulling the Covenant I Had Made.

- **Zechariah 11:8-11:** In one month I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. ⁹So I said, "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another." ¹⁰And I took my staff Favor, and I broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples. ¹¹So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep traders, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD.

The three shepherds: prophetically the three shepherds refer to the following religious leaders of Jesus generation the chief priests, the Pharisees and the scribes. All three groups not only used their followers for their own gain and to increase their own power and fame they also detested the Lord Jesus Christ and plotted his murder, so the Lord refused to be their shepherd.

What is to die, let it die and what is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed: refers to the total destruction of old covenant (the first staff named Favour) the entire Levitical priesthood and all of Israel's ceremonial rites, sacred feasts and holy days were done away with.

NOTICE: when the three sheep traders (the chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes) saw Christ crucified they knew it was the word of the LORD.

The death and resurrection of Christ totally annulled the covenant God had made with Israel and totally stripped the chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes of all the power they had over God's people, because since Christ's resurrection no sinner needs a temple or a human priest to come before God, nor do they need to adhere to ceremonial rites and holy days, or keep religious customs and traditions all they need to be right with God and inherit eternal life is faith in God's perfect and eternal High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in God's grace and Christ's righteousness in contrast to trusting in their own self-effort and their own righteousness.

ZECHARIAH 11:12-13

The Shepherd's Wages was Thirty Pieces of Silver.

- **Zechariah 11:12-13:** then I said to them, "if it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." and they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³then the LORD said to me "throw it to the potter"— the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

5

The words, "They weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the House of the LORD," not only very clearly refers to the chief priests, the Pharisees, the scribes and religious elders of Jesus generation, but is also a very clear echo of Judas, who was one of the twelve shepherds of Christ, but valued the riches of this world more than Christ. This is an amazing prophetic vision of Jesus who became the perfect shepherd doomed to slaughter as the following verses show.

- Judas said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they (the chief priests) paid him thirty pieces of silver. (Matt. 26:15).
- Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. (Matt. 27:3).
- Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel. (Matt. 27:9).

The words cited by Matthew are not found in Jeremiah, but in Zechariah 11:13. Throughout history scholars and theologians have struggled over this discrepancy and explained in many various ways of which the following are but just a few.

1. Matthew was quoting from memory, and upon recollecting the two noticeable and striking chapters of Jeremiah eighteen and nineteen in which Jeremiah had spoken of the potter and his work and was led to think that this Scripture also belonged to the same group of prophecies.
2. Jeremiah originally spoke the words and Zechariah repeated them and the Jewish scribes kept Zechariah's citing of them in writing and not Jeremiah's.

3. Matthew in an earlier chapter quotes one of the most remarkable prophecies of Christ (Matt 21:4-5) from the book of Jeremiah which shows that he was clearly familiar, with Jeremiah writings and since these two amazing prophetic verses are linked and speak of two major events concerning Christ he references them both to Jeremiah.
4. The Syriac and Persic versions of the Bible make no mention of any prophet's name, but read, "Which was spoken by the prophet"; and so the words could be ascribed to Zechariah or to Jeremiah. Though this would certainly explain such a discrepancy it must be acknowledged that in all the Greek copies, in the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel the prophets name Jeremiah is used.
5. Zechariah had two names and was therefore referred to as Zechariah and Jeremiah, but there is no proof of this.
6. The words were originally spoken by Jeremiah and Zechariah recorded them and Matthew quoted them as the words of Jeremiah since they were originally spoken by him.

There are many more things that have been said for reconciling this difficulty, but who originally cited the words is of little importance since they perfectly predicted Judas betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver hundreds of years later. For further information see: Matthew 29:9 in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MEN).

ZECHARIAH 11:14

I Broke My Second Staff Union, Annulling the Brotherhood.

- **Zechariah 11:14:** Then I broke my second staff union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel

6

The second staff named Union: is the brotherhood (or union) between Israel and Judah. The brother hood they had between them was the Old Covenant and the priesthood, the Temple, the ceremonial rites, the holy days, the sacrifices and their religious Jewish customs and traditions these were the things that Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) and Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) had in common and that bound them together. When Judas threw the thirty pieces of silver into the LORD'S House the blessings of the LORD'S covenant with Israel and all their religious customs and traditions were annulled (Malachi 2:1-7). This is because God is now building a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles and to be a part of this new creation no one (Jew or Gentile) needs to adhere to any of the Old Covenant ceremonial rites or keep the holy days and sacrifices etc.

Paul wrote:

- If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:9-13).

Since Christ death and resurrection no one is saved by outwardly adhering to ceremonial rites or by keeping holy days and religious customs and traditions salvation is a matter of the heart of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and trusting in God's grace and not self-effort and self-righteousness. God is not interested in outward religious words, but He does delight in those who walk in the fruits of the Spirit (love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness etc.,) as they go about their daily lives.

NOTE: this does not mean that keeping certain religious customs and traditions is sinful, in fact for some it can be spiritually healthy and faith building, but the instant anyone thinks that by keeping such outward things they are made righteous and saved by them is the instant they have not only denied all that Christ achieved for them on the bloodstained cross, but they have also made his death count for nothing. When men and woman trust in outward religious performance to be saved the very things, they are trusting in become the very things that stop them from being saved.

The following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. This is the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skilfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life. By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in attending a church building every week, strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practise of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

ZECHARIAH 11:15-17

Woe to the Crooked Shepherd who Deserts the Flock.

- **Zechariah 11:15-17:** Then the LORD said to me, "Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs ¹⁷"Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!"

A worthless shepherd does not:

- Care for those suffering hardships, troubles and sorrow.
- Care that their followers are being deceived and destroyed by their teaching and their ministry.

- Care for children or the sick and crippled (because they are of no benefit to them).
- Care for the rich and wealthy, but will use charm and flattery while seeking opportunities to use them for their own gain.
- Care for the poor and the lowly, but will instead ignore them since they have nothing to offer that will advance their own dreams and goals.

Notice God says he is going to raise these shepherds up, meaning He is going to allow them to flourish for a time, but a time will come when they will be judged for their selfishness and lack of compassion for those who trusted them. Zechariah says, "Woe to my worthless shepherd," (v17) these prophetic words immediately take the mind of the Bible reader to the seven woes Jesus spoke against the chief priests the Pharisees, the scribes and elders (the crooked shepherds) of Jesus generation (Matthew chapter 23).

VISIONS

A vision can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind). A biblical vision communicates the God's will or future events and is always under God's control. It can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of whoever God chooses to give the vision to. Those who have had such a vision tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words that God has spoken to them in the vision. For further information see the title:

8

- Visions and Prophecy.
- In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace