

Studies in Zechariah 10 Zechariah 11:

by John W. Bramhall

The sermon examines Zechariah 11, highlighting God's judgment on Israel for their sin and the hope for a faithful remnant amidst desolation.

Duration: 53:34

Scripture: Zechariah 11:1-2, Zechariah 11:15-16, Luke 19:41, Luke 22:3

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Shepherd Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the judgment of God upon Israel due to their disobedience. The speaker emphasizes that God protected his people and directed his favor towards them, but eventually dealt with them to break them apart. The ministry of the good shepherd, represented by Jesus, is mentioned, highlighting his care for his people. The speaker also mentions the complete desolation and judgment that swept through the land of Palestine, leading to the destruction and scattering of the people. The distinction between the 'flock of slaughter' and the 'poor of the flock' is also explained.

Transcript

Shall we turn this morning into the Book of Zechariah, reading from the eleventh chapter. Chapter eleven in the Book of Zechariah, the word of God coming by the Spirit through the Prophet, and saying, Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. How, for a tree, for the cedar is fallen, because the mighty are spoiled.

How, O ye oaks of Dacian, for the forest of the vintage is come down. 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.

Thus saith the Lord, My God, feed the flock of the slaughter, 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. 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, 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 Dance, and I fed the flock.

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

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. And it was broken in that day, and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord. 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, and the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the potter. A goodly price, and I was prized out of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house.

Then I cut aside mine other staff, even bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. And the Lord said unto me, take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish, or even of a wicked shepherd. 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 see that that standeth still.

But he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye. His arm shall be cleaned right up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

May God the Spirit bless the reading, and may ye give the understanding of this wonderful but most solemn portion of the word of God in relation to the history of his people Israel. We come to a chapter that presents the fruit of sin and the divine punishment that has been meted out in judgment upon the people of Israel. May I remind you of the preceding section of our study in this prophetic portion, when we have the series of eight visions in one night.

We not only found in the opening vision the promise of divine blessing and restoration given by God the Spirit to his servant Zechariah the prophet, but we also found following the promise of restoration and blessing, there was the record of Israel's iniquity and sin, as well as the divine dealings of God in relation to their moral and spiritual disobedience. In this last great section of the prophecy of Zechariah, we began in chapter 9 and 10 and read of the blessings that God promises and will in his determined purpose fulfill for Israel. But again we find, and it's often a prophetic scripture, not only in the prophecies but even in the book of the revelation, that God returns to give in a parenthetical section some of his dealings in judgment with his own.

Likewise in the 11th chapter, I believe we have the most solemn chapters before us that describe the darkest chapter in Israel's history. For as you note in the chapter as we have read it, it could be divided into three sections. In the first three verses which we have read, and shall now consider, we have the explanation and the visitation of the wrath of God upon his people Israel.

Beginning at verse 4, going through verse 14, in that section we have the reason for the visitation of God's judgment in Israel. And then at the end of the chapter, beginning at verse 15, through the end of the chapter we shall find one of the most solemn facts regarding Israel's history, and that is the ultimate confirmation of Israel's sin in the final scourge that shall be upon them in the days of the great tribulation. Let's look at the first three verses briefly, where we have the visitation of God's wrath.

Now may I reemphasize that God often parenthetically goes backward in writing his prophecy. You find it in the book of the Revelation again and again. And going backward in the prophecy, here in our chapter he now describes what I believe we could literally, chronologically, as a time element say, took place after the rejection and the crucifixion of the Messiah by his people.

When God scattered them abroad through the length and the breadth of the earth, and which scattering went on until a very recent day. Listen to the words as you have it in the opening verse, where we find the description of complete desolation and judgment sweeping through the land. From the highlands, even down to the lowlands, the north and the south of the whole land of Palestine, affected by the divine visitation of God's wrath.

Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree, before the cedar is fallen, because the mighty are spoiled. And from the north of the land where the mighty cedars of Lebanon existed, down to the very oaks of Dacian, there was the mighty judgment of the whole land of Israel.

Then you go to verse 3, which we have, and we find in verse 3, the word of the prophet saying, there is a voice of the Messiah, for their glory is spoiled. A voice of the Messiah, for the pride of the people. May I point out, as we have so frequently seen, there was not only the visitation of the shepherd vindicating the leadership of God, but a ministry of shepherding that lent in its character, and even the glory of God.

Beloved, we can safely assume that the judgment of God was thorough when upon Israel was torn out his unmitigated wrath because of their sin of disobedience. Now let's look for the reason of it, as we begin in verse 4, for Israel's great sin and the tragic country clearly declared in verse 4, thus saith the Lord my God, feed the flock of the slaughter. May I emphasize a principle that the prophet emphasizes here? The Spirit of God writing, the flock of God's people were to be fed.

The feeding of God's people is one of the most important principles in relation to his divine text, whether in Israel and whether in the church today. One of the greatest principles of responsibility that we not only find emphasized in the ministry of the priests of Israel, feed the flock of God. We think of the words of the apostle in Acts 20, 28, when exhorting even the elders of the church in Ephesus, feed the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers or shepherds.

And the responsibility of the shepherds, feed the flock. But then, no, instead of feeding the flock of God, we find in verse 5 that they were heartless shepherds, and particularly the reference would imply the heartless character of the shepherds of the Gentile nations. For when God visited in judgment and wrath these earthly people and scattered them, he gave them over to the control of the governmental authority of the nations, the Gentile powers.

And those Gentile powers were yet responsible to shepherd the people of God, and not visit them with added burdens of judgment and destruction. But now, no, their possessors, writes the prophet, slay them and hold themselves not guilty. And they that sell them say, Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich, and their own shepherds pity them not.

Now, it is indeed an accusation that stands clearly throughout the annals of history, that the shepherds into whose hands God permitted his flock to be driven, were heartless and cruel, and their actions toward God's earthly people had manifested the actions of intense cruelty and hatred. And they pitied the people of God not at all. But now note verse six, and this is more solemn.

For in verse six, not only the shepherds, not only the civil and religious leaders, not only the nations around pitied not Israel, but note the solemnity of God's words in verse six, For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith Jehovah, 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. My beloved, it's a solemn fact that when God visited his beloved people in judgment following the death, the crucifixion of the blessed Messiah, the Lord Jesus, there was fulfilled, as the Lord stated very clearly in Matthew 24, the judgment that was to come upon Israel, Jerusalem, and the earthly people of God. And they were to be scattered among the nations.

And as we recognize, may I point out to you, go with me to Matthew 24 if you please. Matthew chapter 24, let me read the words of the opening of that chapter, when the Lord Jesus thus was speaking to his disciples. And in Matthew chapter 24, we have the words of the Savior declaring in answer to the disciples, as they showed in the glory of the temple.

Verse one and two, Jesus went out and departed from the temple. May I go back into chapter 23? The context is very clearly part of it, at the end of it. Let me read verse 37.

The words of the Lord Jesus, as undoubtedly for the last time he looked over the city of Jerusalem, and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which descend unto thee, how often would I have gathered my children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. May I impress upon you the solemnity of those words of verse 38? Your house is left unto you desolate.

Now when you read of the Lord Jesus in his ministry during life, coming into the temple, he honored it as the house of his Father. He honored it as the temple of Jehovah. But when, following his rejection, and on the threshold of his crucifixion, for the last occasion in relation to that earthly house, he wept over the city, and then declared, Your house is left unto you desolate.

One cannot fathom the desolate character of these words, that their Jehovah Messiah was leading them to their destruction. Now read on, For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, which will take place at the end of the great tribulation. But then read verse one and two of chapter twenty-four, And Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

And one can recognize this uncountably. They went of their way to the Mount of Olives, for the last occasion in the life of the Lord Jesus before his death. As they crossed the valley of Timran, and ascended the mount, they undoubtedly looked back on the beauty and the glory of the temple buildings in the rays of the setting sun.

And the disciples pointed out the beauty of that great temple of Herod. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Now go back to our chapter in Zechariah.

Let me reemphasize the solemnity of the words that certainly are corroborated by the words of the action of the Lord Jesus when he left the temple and the environment of the house of the Lord in that day. Verse six, For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith Jehovah, 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 deliver them. One is only to read the graphic account of Josephus as he wrote concerning the great

siege of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70, under the great general Titus, when the city was destroyed.

One of the most violent sieges, and one of the most terrible sieges of human history, that lasted for two years before the city was overtaken, and the people destroyed and scattered abroad, and never regathered again in the land until the year 1948. May we not recognize it's one of the most solemn events and tragic consequences of the sin of Israel as a nation. But let's read further.

For we have further in verse seven, the prophetic ministry of the prophet, as thus Zechariah is commanded, I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. Will you notice this expression as we have it in verse seven, the poor of the flock. Will you notice it again in verse 11, and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.

Now may I make a clear distinction between the flock of slaughter and the poor of the flock. The flock of slaughter undoubtedly embraced the whole nation of Israel, but within the whole flock there was a remnant, small undoubtedly, feeble unquestionably, and he calls them the poor of the flock. You'll find in the 11th verse, the poor of the flock appreciated and acknowledged his word.

What took place in the judgment of God, there was a small remnant that recognized this is the hand of the Lord in judgment upon us, and they were the poor of the flock. And in the midst of those judgments, there was the assurance that the Spirit of God, the great shepherd of his sheep, would minister to those who in their humility, and the acknowledging of God's ways of chastening upon them, he would feed them. How true that principle is today.

But then note, as though they realized his words, then note what follows, the action of Jehovah. Verse seven at the end, I took unto me two slaves, or staffs, the one I called beauty, the other I called bands, and I fed the flock. Now these two staffs, one named beauty and the other named bands, the word beauty suggests pleasantness and favour from Jehovah.

The word bands suggests a binding together. Let me remind you that the shepherd, the oriental shepherd, he had two staffs, he had a rod and he had a staff. The rod was to protect the sheep from outward danger, and the staff, the stain, was to protect the sheep from internal strife and difficulty.

And so God had two staffs in relation to his people. One, beauty, upon which his merit or his favour would thus be ministered to his people. And he had a staff called bands, whereby he united his people together.

And God protected his people, and the favour of God was directed to his people, in thus protecting them from their enemies and destroying their enemies. But he had a band that bound them together in brotherhood, united within the nation. But God, as we shall see, he deals to break these asunder.

Now note verse eight please. And here you have the statement opening with the fact, there was opposition to his ministry. Now note verse seven.

I will feed the flock of Florida. Now may I remind you the back of these words is the ministry of the good shepherd. Our Lord Jesus came to his own and said, I'm the good shepherd.

And as the good shepherd, he ministered to feed the flock of his own dear earthly people in that day. But there was opposition. And we read in verse eight, three shepherds also I cut off in one month, as my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

Three shepherds? Well, perhaps it's not too fanciful to declare that in Israel there was a threefold ministry. There was the ministry of the prophets, there was the ministry of the priests, there was the ministry of the rulers of the Sanhedrin. But they were cut off entirely.

And when the great judgment of God fell upon Israel in the year of their dispersion, they never again had the ministry of prophets. They never again had as a nation the ministry of the priests. They never again had the ministry of the rulers and the Sanhedrin.

It was entirely and completely cut off. Because as he declares, my soul loathed them, and also their soul also abhorred me. There was not only his displeasure of the godless shepherds, but there was their great dislike to the good shepherd.

Now note verse nine. As we come to verse nine, terrible calamities follow as the result of God's judgment. Then said I, I will not feed you that that dieth, let it die.

That that is to be cut off, let it be cut off. And let the rest eat every one of the flesh of another. And beloved, as we think of what took place in that day in the past, there has been war, there has been famine, there has been pestilence, there has been internal strife, there has been mutual destruction overtaking the deluded people of Israel.

Will you go with me to Luke chapter 19 please? I want again to read the words of the Lord Jesus. They're very solemn in relation to the judgment upon the nation that came. Chapter 19, begin reading with me verse 41.

Again I want you to recognize, even in the words of the Savior is recorded by Luke in chapter 19, and we shall read one verse in chapter 21. Verse 41, Luke 19. When he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hast known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now are they hid from thine eyes.

For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another. Now note the reason, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. Now may I go to chapter 21 with one verse only to read, verse 24.

And here you have the complete finality of his judgment upon the worthless shepherds and the disobedient nations. They shall fall by the edge of the sword, they shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Beloved may I say, I believe with all earnestness there has never been a more sad party of Israel's history than that which has transpired since their rejection of their Messiah and his crucifixion down to this present day.

And it was the judgment of God upon them because of their disobedience and their sin. But didn't it go on in our chapter with Zechariah? That band of beauty, which was the symbol of his divine favor, that band of, that was called, of a staff that was called bands, which was the symbol of his holding the people together, we find what happens in verse 10. I took my staff, even beauty, I covered asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

And here we can recognize what God does, he takes the symbol of his blessing upon them and he breaks that symbol, and he removes it so that it is broken. And we read in verse 11, it was broken in that day. And

the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.

May I make this comment kindly? That what I believe to be a solemn truth, in my own observation, conversation, and experience with a few of God's earthly people, who know not, and will not, and do not acknowledge their Messiah. And may I go even further? I have found this also sometimes found amongst Christian Jews. The unwillingness to acknowledge the terrible disobedience of rejecting their Messiah.

Some years ago in the north, speaking upon the great national day of atonement, which we shall reach in chapter 12 and 13, I was amazed at one of the Christian Jews in the audience coming to me, and telling me, you've spoiled a perfectly good servant. And I said, how? And this is how, in his opinion. It was just at that particular time the Pope had given a message of exoneration, clearing the nation of Israel from its guilt of putting the Messiah to death.

And as I was speaking of the fact, as we shall see in a later message in the next chapter, God brings the guilt of crucifying the Messiah to the nation at the end time, to convict them and bring them to repentance. And I just commented on the unfortunate fact that it was an impossibility for the Pope to exonerate that guilt. And to my amazement, that was the cause of the provocation.

The very brother was not willing, and I thought to myself, if I was a Christian Jew, I would bow in the dust and think that my nation crucified their own Messiah. Another young Christian Jew, willingly, stayed in this land. It was the will of God that he had to die, to hide behind the sovereign will of God.

My beloved, listen, even a Christian dare not do that. Though it was the will of the Savior to die upon Calvary, you know and I know my sins and yours put in there. And oh beloved, what a sad confession.

None of these words, the reason I state that, is in verse 11, there were, God be praised, among them the poor of the flock. And what an expression. May I say, now listen to this carefully, you'll find the poor of the flock are the most spiritual ones.

Now that doesn't imply the poverty, literally, nearly. But you'll find that the spiritual, who see the hand of God in this judgment, they are the poor of the flock. They realize, as the verse continues to say, the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.

It was the word of the Lord. Oh the submission, even to the judgment, and thank God there have been those, even amongst these earthly people, who have acknowledged the judgment of God upon them. God grant, we may realize it in our own lives when we are chastened of the Lord.

Now look at verse 12. And as we go to verse 12, we have the Good Shepherd, and Israel's value of him in 12 and 13. I said under them, now this is an example that may have literally taken place in Zechariah's experience.

But behind it is the representation of the time of the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd who came to his own. I said under them, if you think good, give me my price, if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver, and the Lord said unto me, cast them unto the potter.

And then perhaps in sarcasm, the prophet write, of goodly price that I was prized of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. My beloved, may I say, the Lord came unto his own.

And what was he looking for? He was looking for the spiritual fruit. Remember when the Lord came to the fig tree outside the city, and he was looking for fruit, and there was none upon it? He cursed it. Symbolical of the act of his judgment upon the nation for their rejection of him.

How much did they value him, as the prophet write? Instead of finding the spiritual fruit of repentance, of faith, of love, of piety and obedience, he received thirty pieces of silver. Which was the sum equivalent of telling the shepherd why we can get a slave to work for us for thirty pieces of silver. And that is the only value we think you have.

The value of a common slave. And instead of giving him his wages, they gave him an insult. Now may I bring that home, to realize what did the Lord Jesus, the King of Israel, the Messiah of his people, what did he deserve to receive? What were the wages that the people of Israel should have paid him? You know as I do, the complete obedience and acknowledgement of his person, and of his greatness, and of his shepherding character, to bless them.

And instead of giving him the wages of spiritual fruit, they said you're worth no more than a slave. And as in Zechariah's case, the thirty pieces of silver were cast to the ground, and not where, cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Now the potter in Israel was certainly the lowest laboring class.

And in that day, the deed was done publicly in the house of Jehovah. If you read Matthew 27, and read of Judas taking the thirty pieces of silver when he was thus convinced, and realized the enormity of his crime, he went, now you know, let me point out this particular distinction, he went into the house of the Lord and he cast it before the priest. Now there are two words in your New Testament Greek language that describe the temple.

There is one word that describes, as in Matthew 24, the disciples showed the Lord all the buildings of the temple, and the beauty of them. And that word describes the whole environment of the temple area. But there is another word that only describes the holy place where alone the priests were privileged to enter.

And when Judas went into the temple to cast the thirty pieces of silver, he did not cast it in the open court of the temple. He went into the holy place where only the priests were permitted to go, in a great condemnation of conscience, and cast it in the very house of the Lord, in the holy place. Repudiating is that, and regretting it, but we know.

And the temple was chosen as the act of repudiation. For my beloved, what a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. In the very temple of Jehovah, the very prize that the nation valued in heaven.

But now, let's go on if you please, and I want you to notice something very special at the end of our chapter, verse fourteen. And then you can note the importance and the meaning of that word, then. Notice, then.

Then when I was so valued, then I cut asunder my other staff, even bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. And oh, beloved, the staff bands that held the nation together. Though it was the remnant of Judah and Benjamin, God said, I'm going to break them apart and scatter them.

Oh, my beloved, may I say earnestly and solemnly, you and I can certainly realize the hand that God's chastened me upon his dear earthly people. There's never been a nation that has suffered at the hand of God in judgment as Israel. Let's realize that.

But now note the last consummation, which is even far worse. At the end of the chapter in the last section, fifteen through seventeen, the prophet tells what will be the final apostasy, as well as the final breach between God and Israel. Confirming by the appearance of what could and should be called the wicked shepherd.

What you have in the words that close the chapter is the description of the Antichrist. The false Messiah, for the disobedience, now please may I state, listen, the disobedience of Israel, beginning with the rejection of the Messiah at his first advent. The judgment and chastening hand of God all through the centuries, and their present return as a nation in the land of Israel, is bringing them to that place where the greatest abomination will be perpetrated by the nation of Israel when they accept the great Antichrist.

Listen to the words. The Lord said unto me, take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish, and the Hebrew idiom of the word foolish. Now note verse sixteen.

For as you have in verse fifteen, you have the character of that shepherd. Now what the chapter involves is, in the opening of it, is the unfortunate wickedness of the shepherds of the past. And then comes in the true shepherd with his ministry and the presentation of his person and what, and the nation rejected their good shepherd.

Now at the end, you have the wicked shepherd. Now may I state, this is the implication of perhaps the most wicked person that ever lived in human history. May I remind you what we read in 2 Thessalonians chapter two, when the Apostle Paul writes concerning the rapture, and then what follows? Then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy.

My beloved, I cannot magnify too greatly the wickedness of this. There have been wicked persons lived on the earth. But it is my humble opinion and deep conviction, this person will be of the most wicked character.

And when you read particularly Revelation and the thirteenth chapter, and see the two last world great wicked characters, the revived Roman Empire with its civil head, and the false prophet, may I remind you that at the end of chapter nineteen of the book of Revelation, those two wicked men are the first occupants of hell. And they are consigned to the length of time without even dying. And it's my opinion that any person, and these particular two, so wicked that God will not give them a trial at the great white throne judgment.

And without death they are immediately the first occupants of the eternal lake of fire. And they are there a thousand years before the devil himself gets there. Now let's look at this character again in Zechariah.

Just realize the implication, the broad meaning of the wicked shepherd, his character. Then look in verse sixteen, and we see his words. For lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land.

Oh may I say, may I put it this way, and this is personal. There was one thing that was in my heart the little time I was in the land of Israel. All that I saw was a definite wonderful interest.

But underneath in my soul and in my mind and heart were going the words of scripture that reminded me that the day is coming when this nation will have the most wicked person and accept him as their false messiah. Oh what a day that will be. I will raise up a shepherd in the land which shall not visit those that be corrupt, 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.

My beloved, the character of this man which many in Israel will follow and accept is for the destruction of the people. He has no heart for them, he has no desire to feed them, he has no desire to help the young, he has no desire to heal what's broken and feed that that standeth still, but if ministry will be one of destruction, he will eat the flesh and he will tear their claws in pieces. Oh the character of his work.

You know I'm glad I'm saved. Oh what a strong delusion. As Paul says in 2 Thessalonians, for this cause, rejecting the true one, I will send them strong delusions that they may believe a lie.

Oh go with me to chapter 4, chapter 5 of the book of John please. May I point out to you something of which time permitted is to go further, but look in chapter 5 and verse 43. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus, and listen to them carefully.

For in John 5 43, the Lord Jesus speaks of that one, I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not, if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. This is one of the saddest commentaries in the Gospel of John regarding the rejection of the nation. You remember the opening of chapter 1 of John, and those words of verse 11, he, the living word, came unto his own, and his own received him not.

And in the 43rd verse, the Saviour says, I am come in my Father's name. And every act and every word of the Saviour's ministry proved he was sent by Jehovah above. But they rejected him.

Now note, and this is a sad thing, another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. My beloved, may I say again, please may I say it, when you connect it with the chapter before us in Zechariah, it is the saddest event in the history of Israel. It was indeed sad that they rejected their true Messiah.

Will it not be more greatly sad and a tragedy when they receive one who is the false Messiah? Part of the great judgment of Jehovah upon the disobedient nation. But now back to our chapter, and the closing verse. We find the character of the wicked shepherd in verse 15.

We find his work described in verse 16. In verse 17, we have the judgment and the punishment of that shepherd. Woe to the idle shepherd, that leaveth the flock, that thorn shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye.

His arm shall be cleaned right up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened. Now beloved, there are two things involved in the expression. His arm and his right eye.

The arm is the symbol of his strength. And when you read the contemporary scriptures, such as we've mentioned in Revelation 13, as well as in 2 Thessalonians 2, you can recognize the power the signs, the lying wonders, and the miracles that he performs to deceive the world. But his right arm, his arm of strength, God says in the day of judgment, it will indeed be completely withered away.

And his eye, and may I say, the eye speaks of his intelligence. And beloved, there's no question of doubt, the world at large is looking for a man who has the strength, and who has the intelligence to correct the conditions among the nations. And beloved, you and I who know the good book, and the hope of the church, realize that when the church is gone, God will permit this idol shepherd to appear, whom they will follow, and many to their destruction.

And at the end of that period, the idol shepherd will wither away completely. His strength will be utterly gone. The intelligence that the world admired will disappear.

You know, I think of the words of the Lord Jesus, and I say with all earnestness, as I close, may we know the truth of them. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lonely in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

My beloved believer, please may I encourage and exhort you, as well as myself, fix your heart upon that lonely man, who is the perfect pattern for us to follow. He's the good shepherd, he's the great shepherd, he's the chief shepherd. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.

Shall we pray? O blessed Father, we do thank thee again, for the illuminating Spirit of God, who underneath the precious words of thy book, brings out the treasures of truth, and magnifies to us the one who is over all, blessed forever, even our Saviour, the Son of the Living God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, again we pray for thy people Israel, as we have covered this chapter, we are deeply conscious they are facing the greatest trial that they will ever have known as a nation. And the great dark period ahead is going to bring them the greatest deception that ever has been known in Israel, from beginning to the end of its history.

The false Messiah. Blessed Lord, have mercy on thine earthly people today, save some of them, bless those that are seeking to win them to Christ, open their eyes, that they may find thee now, blessed Saviour, their Jehovah Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, and their Redeemer. And we who are thine, how grateful we should be, thou hast redeemed us and brought us to thyself.

May the truth we've covered, magnify thyself Lord to every one of our hearts, that we may be thy humble, but thy devoted followers until we see thee face to face, we ask it in thy precious and holy name, Amen. Thank you.

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