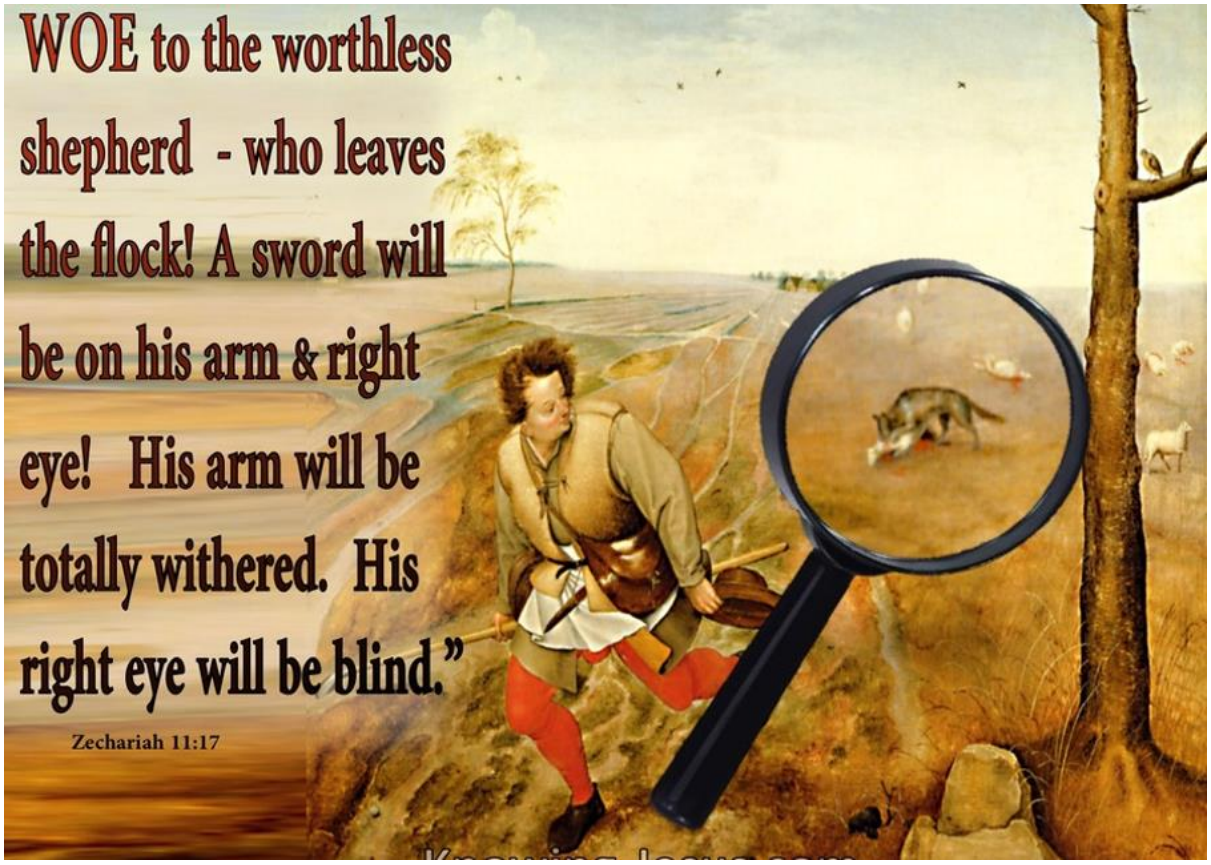
Thursday Bible Class **Zechariah 11** **22/09/22**

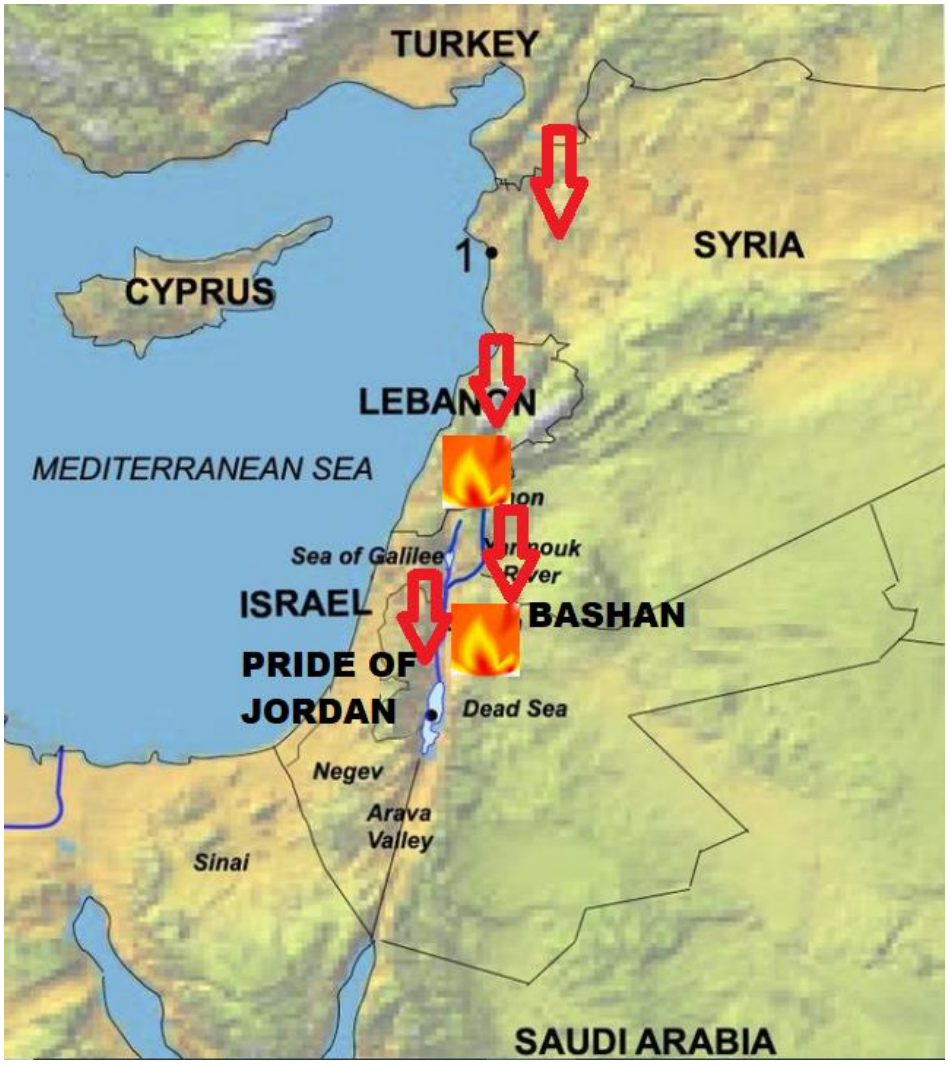
Beauty and Bands



In this chapter, the prophet is inspired to return to the theme of the flock of sheep, and shepherds.

We recall in chapter 9 God promised 16 *And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.* This flock he describes as His people. Yet in chapter 10 we read in verse 2 that the nation *went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.* Those who should have been guiding the nation were false shepherds, who God would destroy: *Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats:* but that in time would save, restore and strengthen the nation… *for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.* This chapter 11 we are looking at now returns to this theme in more detail, delivering a prophecy explaining in further detail of the scattering of the flock. However the

chapter begins referring to the destruction of the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan. Again, this is the language of parables (parabolic) and if we refer to passages like Isaiah 2:12-17, Isaiah 10:33-34, Ezekiel 31:2-3 and Luke 23:31, we can clearly see how these glorious trees refer to the national leadership of the respective regions being spoken about. So the first two verses of this chapter are referring to an invading force coming from a northerly direction towards Judah and Israel, destroying Lebanon first and then north Israel, west of Galilee. It is possible also that these phrases Lebanon and Bashan could be talking about the rich leaders of Judea, luxuriating in their wealth and prosperity stolen from the poor.



Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.

2 *Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.*

Verse 3…. *for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.*

As the terror of the northern power sweeps like a fire, the roaring of young lions, - thy Assyrians used this symbol of lions to apply to their armies, as did the Babylonians, as did the Romans. It was the Roman power which was future to Zechariah, which would finally scatter the flock. The howl of the shepherds described in the next verse is nothing to do with the upset the carers of the flock feel, seeing the sheep scattered, no, it is instead the roar of frustration that they have lost their source of income, living off the poor of the land. See

Jeremiah 25:34-36: *Wail and cry out in anguish, you rulers! Roll in the dust, you who shepherd flocks of people! The time for you to be slaughtered has come. You will lie scattered and fallen like broken pieces of fine pottery. The leaders will not be able to run away and hide. The shepherds of the flocks will not be able to escape...* [NET]

See also the comments of Jesus in Matthew 23:13-33 where he condemns: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*[KJV] The Apostle James also: 5:1: *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you …*warnings which were a repeat of the prophet here

Now in the next verse, the direction of the parable changes a little. From a general warning, now God speaks directly to Zechariah:

4 *Thus saith the Lord <u>my</u> God*; He is telling Zechariah to do this: *Feed the flock of the slaughter;* How? It is in the presentation of this prophecy, and warning, telling the people of the future calamities if they do not change their ways. It is true they are being dominated and oppressed by their own leaders, fleeced by their shepherds, but it doesn't mean that they should turn away from their True Shepherd. In this warning God accuses the leaders, the false shepherds that they abuse the flock in His Name! Verse 5: *Whose*

possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich…

This is similar to the so called 'prosperity gospel' which is a form of popular Pentecostal churches today, who believe that following in their particular churches and donating generously to their pastors will result in the congregation themselves getting rich, being blessed by God. This fraud and deceit is the opposite of what the Scriptures teach:

1 Timothy 6:5-10

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. … But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

God explains that pastors and flock will be scattered in verse 6 of this prophecy in Zechariah, as they will all turn upon each other. It is a fact that because of the various sides in the civil war which broke out prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, that the inhabitants of the land were unable to defend themselves as they were so busy fighting each other! but in verse 7, the work of Zechariah continues.



He was instructed to take two staves in a public demonstration. Probably what we would call today two shepherds crooks. David described this tool in Psalm 23 used to comfort the flock, but also to protect. Two uses, to help gather the sheep together, but also to chase away the attacker of the flock. As he did so, Zechariah said *I will feed you the poor of the flock*. Zechariah was of course in this enactment, behaving like a Good Shepherd – the work of Jesus Christ of course. These two staves, Zechariah named them. One he called Beauty, and

the other Bands. There are several words for beauty in the Hebrew old Testament, but this one no-am is used to describe the Beauty of God (Ps 27:4,90:17) meaning delight, grace. True enough God as the Shepherd of Israel showed abundant grace towards His people. The other name Bands. Strongs Concordance says this is *chebel* in Hebrew, which is the word for a rope, but can also be used to describe a band of people, a company – hence the passage in Ecclesiastes 4:12 *a threefold cord is not quickly broken*. This word describes a binding together in unity, strength in union.



I fed the flock. He shows how, by explaining to the gathered listeners where he was preaching:

He announced: *Three shepherds also I cut off in one month*; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. This describes three types of false shepherd who hated the Good Shepherd. The suggestion is shown on next page:

Three views of Judaism

Pharisees

- Origin: Descended from Hasidim freedom fighters of the Maccabee era
- Membership: Middle-class merchants numbering about 6,000
- Beliefs: -Believed Old Testament as law, but accepted oral interpretation of the Old Testament, that study of Torah was the highest act of worship, believed in bodily resurrection and life after death.
- Practices: Supported synagogues for Torah study and interpretation, -Strict, detailed obedience to oral and written law, accepted Rome as a necessary evil as long as they were allowed to practice their beliefs

Sadducees

- Origin: Apparently descended from Zadok, and became a faction around 200 B.C.
- Membership: Priests who were wealthy, aristocratic, and often Hellenistic
- Beliefs: -Only accepted the Torah as God's law, rejected oral traditions, that the Temple was the only path to God, rejected bodily resurrection
- Practices: Ran the Temple and all its ceremonies, dominated the Sanhedrin-the religious ruling council and lived a Hellenistic, affluent lifestyle receiving Roman support.

Zealots

- Origin: A movement formed against a Roman census in 6 A.D. and led by Judas the Galilean
- Membership: Extreme Pharisess and religious Jews living primarily in Galilee
- Beliefs: like Pharisees, however, they believed only God could rule, that slavery was the worst evil, taxes were due only to God, hated Romans
- Practices: terrorism against Romans, refusal to pay taxes

Zechariah, here in verse 9 reveals how all these factions would be cut off, and destroy one another. In verse 8 he said in *one month*. This could be a symbolic 30 years. A short time after Jesus' ascent to heaven, all these factions were wiped out by the Romans.

Zechariah took the first of his staves - Beauty and chopped it in half, to symbolise the breaking of the covenant. The nation had already broken the covenant by killing the Good shepherd, so the staff of Comfort was broken. The poor of the flock understood that this was the fulfilling of prophecy - *so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord*. The poor of the flock are the believers - James 2:5-6: …, *Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*



Zechariah then enacted the betrayal of the Good Shepherd:

12 -13 *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 that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.*

Matthew 27:3-10: *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.*



Zechariah then picked up his remaining staff he had named as Bands, or Unity, in his acted out symbolic prophecy, and cut that one in half as well. As he did it he said that it was to symbolise the breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The destruction of the temple, removed the connection between the Diaspora and their Homeland

In the next phase of Zechariah's real life parable, he was to pretend to be a false shepherd. Verse 15: *And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.* Quite what these were, we are not informed. But it is interesting to note how False Shepherds copy the True, believing of course that they are able to replace Him. No doubt, they were much bigger crooks, and better staves… !!!!





Once the Romans had taken over the Land, they imposed their false ideals, and eventually, as the Apocalypse teaches a False Christendom led by the Bishop of Rome. Bishop in Greek is *episcopos* or overseer. It is what a Shepherd is supposed to do, to watch over the flock, and look after them. Instead bishops of the false church use the flock to get fat and rich. This is what Zechariah refers to in the last verses of this chapter.

The prophet issues this warning:

17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened. Other translations describe them as the worthless shepherd. They not only do not look after the flock, but lead them in the wrong direction. Where the stave should have been cradled in his arm, a sword will strike, where he should have overseen, he instead will be blinded. So indeed it has transpired. False religion is now at the heart of many of the world's troubles, but the time will come when *the Chief Shepherd will appea*r, and the faithful Under- Shepherds *will receive a crown of glory that fades not away*. (1 Peter 5:4) so the appeal of the prophet to the poor of the flock is not to go astray but to return *to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.* (1 Peter 2:25)

Brother Terry