

# CHAPTER 11

God's prophet, who, in the chapters before, was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to declare war. The Jewish nation shall recover its prosperity, and shall flourish for some time and become considerable; it shall be very happy, at length, in the coming of the long-expected Messiah, in the preaching of his gospel, and in the setting up of his standard there. But, when thereby the chosen remnant among them are effectually called in and united to Christ, the body of the nation, persisting in unbelief, shall be utterly abandoned and given up to ruin, for rejecting Christ; and it is this that is foretold here in this chapter — the Jews rejecting Christ, which was their measure-filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is,

**I.** A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation (v. 1-3).

**II.** The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah.

- 1.** He is charged with the custody of that flock (v. 4-6).
- 2.** He undertakes it, and bears rule in it (v. 7, 8).
- 3.** Finding it perverse, he gives it up (v. 9), breaks his shepherd's staff (v. 10, 11), resents the indignities done him and the contempt put upon him (v. 12, 13), and then breaks his other staff (v. 14).
- 4.** He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who, instead of preventing, shall complete their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch (v. 15-17). This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that, when it does come to pass, they may not be offended.

## Ⓢ ZECHARIAH 11:1-3

### DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH NATION

In dark and figurative expressions, as is usual in the scripture predictions of things at a great distance, that destruction of Jerusalem and of the

Jewish church and nation is here foretold which our Lord Jesus, when the time was at hand, prophesied of very plainly and expressly. We have here,

**1.** Preparation made for that destruction (v. 1): “*Open thy doors, O Lebanon!* Thou wouldst not open them to let thy king in — he *came to his own and his own received him not*; now thou must open them to let thy ruin in. Let the gates of the forest, and all the avenues to it, be thrown open, and let the fire come in and devour its glory.” Some by Lebanon here understand the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon, and the stones of it white as the snow of Lebanon. It was burnt with fire by the Romans, and its gates were forced open by the fury of the soldiers. To confirm this, they tell a story, that forty years before the destruction of the second temple the gates of it opened of their own accord, upon which prodigy Rabbi Johanan made this remark (as it is found in one of the Jewish authors), “Now I know,” said he, “that the destruction of the temple is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, *Open thy doors, O Lebanon! that the fire may devour thy cedars.*” Others understand it of Jerusalem, or rather of the whole land of Canaan, to which Lebanon was an inlet on the north. All shall lie open to the invader, and the cedars, the mighty and eminent men, shall be devoured, which cannot but alarm those of an inferior rank, v. 2. If *the cedars have fallen* (if *all the mighty are spoiled*, and brought to ruin), let the *fir-tree howl*. How can the slender fir-trees stand if stately cedars fall? If cedars are devoured by fire, it is time for the fir-trees to howl; for no wood is so combustible as that of the fir. And let the *oaks of Bashan*, that lie exposed to every injury, *howl, for the forest of the vintage* (or the *flourishing vineyard*, that used to be guarded with a particular care) has come down, or (as some read it) when the *defenced forests*, such as Lebanon was, have come down. Note, The falls of the wise and good into sin, and the falls of the rich and great into trouble, are loud alarms to those that are every way their inferiors not to be secure.

**2.** Lamentation made for the destruction (v. 3): *There is a voice of howling*. Those who have fallen howl for grief and shame, and those who see their own turn coming howl for fear. But the great men especially receive the alarm with the utmost confusion. Those who were roaring in the day of their revels and triumphs are howling in the day of their terrors; *for now they are tormented* more than others. Those great men were by office shepherds, and such should have protected God's flock committed to their charge; it is the duty both of princes and priests. But they were as

*young lions*, that made themselves a terror to the flock with their roaring and the flock a prey to themselves with their tearing. Note, It is sad with a people when those who should be as shepherds to them are as young lions to them. But what is the issue? The shepherds *howl*, for *their glory is spoiled*. Their pastures, and the flocks which covered them, which were the glory of the swains, are laid waste. The *young lions howl*, for *the pride of Jordan is spoiled*. The pride of Jordan was the thickets on the banks, in which the lions reposed themselves; and therefore, when the river overflowed and spoiled them, the lions came up from them (as we read ~~400~~ Jeremiah 49:19), and they came up roaring. Note, When those who have power proudly abuse their power, and, instead of being shepherds, are as young lions, they may expect that the righteous God will humble their pride and break their power.

## ~~310~~ ZECHARIAH 11:4-14

### JUDGMENTS PREDICTED AND TYPIFIED

The prophet here is made a type of Christ, as the prophet Isaiah sometimes was; and the scope of these verses is to show that *for judgment Christ came into this world* (~~400~~ John 9:39), for judgment to the Jewish church and nation, which were, about the time of his coming, wretchedly corrupted and degenerated by the worldliness and hypocrisy of their rulers. Christ would have healed them, but they would not be healed; they are therefore left desolate, and abandoned to ruin. Observe here,

**I.** The desperate case of the Jewish church, under the tyranny of their own governors. Their slavery in their own country made them as miserable as their captivity in strange countries had done: *Their possessors slay them and sell them*, v. 5. In Zechariah's time we find the rulers and the nobles justly rebuked for *exacting usury of their brethren*; and the governors, even by their servants, oppressive to the people, ~~400~~ Nehemiah 5:7, 15. In Christ's time the *chief priests* and the *elders*, who were the possessors of the flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, engrossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees, who were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees, who were bigots for superstition, corrupted

their morals, by making void the commandments of God, <sup>4156</sup>Matthew 15:16. Thus they slew the sheep of the flock, thus they sold them. They cared not what became of them so they could but gain their own ends and serve their own interests. And,

**1.** In this they justified themselves: They *slay them* and *hold themselves not guilty*. They think that there is no harm in it, and that they shall never be called to an account for it by the chief Shepherd; as if their power were given them for destruction, which was designed only for edification, and as if, because they sat in Moses's seat, they were not under the obligation of Moses's law, but might dispense with it, and with themselves in the breach of it, at their pleasure. Note, Those have their minds woefully blinded indeed who do ill and justify themselves in doing it; but God will not hold those guiltless who hold themselves so.

**2.** In this they affronted God, by giving him thanks for the gain of their oppression: They said, *Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich*, as if, because they prospered in their wickedness, got money by it, and raised estates, God had made himself patron of their unjust practices, and Providence had become *particeps criminis* — *the associate of their guilt*. What is got honestly we ought to give God thanks for, and to bless him whose blessing *makes rich and adds no sorrow with it*. But with what face can we go to God either to beg a blessing upon the unlawful methods of getting wealth or to return him thanks for success in them? They should rather have gone to God to confess the sin, to take shame to themselves for it, and to vow restitution, than thus to mock him by making the gains of sin the gift of God, who *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*, and reckons not himself praised by the thanksgiving if he be dishonoured either in the getting or the using of that which we give him thanks for.

**3.** In this they put contempt upon the people of God, as unworthy their regard or compassionate consideration: *Their own shepherds pity them not*; they make them miserable, and then do not commiserate them. Christ had *compassion on the multitude because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as if they had no shepherd* (as really they had worse than none); but *their own shepherds pitied them not*, nor showed any concern for them. Note, It is ill for a church when its pastors have no tenderness, no compassion for precious souls, when they can look upon the ignorant, the foolish, the wicked, the weak, without pity.

**II.** The sentence of God's wrath passed upon them for their senselessness and stupidity in this condition. There was a general decay, nay, a destruction, of religion among them, and it was all one to them; they regarded it not. *My people love to have it so,* <sup><458></sup>Jeremiah 5:31. Though they were *oppressed and broken in judgment,* yet they *willingly walked after the commandment,* <sup><459></sup>Hosea 5:11. And, as their shepherds pitied them not, so they did not bemoan themselves; therefore God says (v. 6), *"I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land. They have courted their own destruction, and so let their doom be."* But those are truly miserable whom the God of mercy himself will no more have compassion upon. Those who are willing to have their consciences oppressed by those who *teach for doctrines the commandments of men* (as the Jews were, who called those *Rabbi, Rabbi,* that did so, <sup><460></sup>Matthew 15:9; 23:7), are often punished by oppression in their civil interests, and justly, for those forfeit their own rights who tamely give up God's rights. The Jews did so; the Papists do so; and who can pity them if they be ruled with rigour? God here threatens them,

**1.** That he will deliver them into the hand of oppressors, *every one into his neighbour's hand,* so that they shall use one another barbarously. The several parties in Jerusalem did so; the *zealots,* the *seditions,* as they were called, committed greater outrages than the common enemy did, as Josephus relates in his history of the wars of the Jews. They shall be delivered every one *into the hand of his king,* that is, the Roman emperor, whom they chose to submit to rather than to Christ, saying, *We have no king but Caesar.* Thus they thought to ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters. But for this God brought the Romans upon them, who *took away their place and nation.*

**2.** That he will not deliver them out of their hands: *They shall smite the land,* the whole land, and *out of their hand I will not deliver them;* and, if the Lord do not help them, none else can, nor can they help themselves.

**III.** A trial yet made whether their ruin might be prevented by sending Christ among them as a shepherd; God had sent his servants to them in vain, *but last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son,* <sup><461></sup>Matthew 21:37. Divers of the prophets had spoken of him as the *Shepherd of Israel,* <sup><462></sup>Isaiah 40:11; <sup><463></sup>Ezekiel 34:23. he himself told the Pharisees that he was the *Shepherd of the sheep,* and that those who

pretended to be shepherds were *thieves and robbers* (<sup><801></sup>John 10:1, 2, 11), apparently referring to this passage, where we have,

**1.** The charge he received from his Father to try what might be done with this flock (v. 4): *Thus saith the Lord my God* (Christ called his Father *his God* because he acted in compliance with his will and with an eye to his glory in his whole undertaking), *Feed the flock of the slaughter*. The Jews were God's flock, but they were *the flock of slaughter*, for their enemies had killed them all the day long and *accounted them as sheep for the slaughter*; their own *possessors slew them*, and God himself had doomed them to the slaughter. Yet “*feed them* by reproof instruction, and comfort; provide wholesome food for those who have so long been soured with the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees.” *Other sheep he had, which were not of this fold*, and which afterwards must be *brought*; but he is first *sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, <sup><152></sup>Matthew 15:24.

**2.** His acceptance of this charge, and his undertaking pursuant to it, v. 7. He does as it were say, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God!* and, since this is thy will, it is mine: *I will feed the flock of slaughter*. Christ will care for these lost sheep; he will go about among them, *teaching and healing even you, O poor of the flock!* Christ did not neglect the meanest, nor overlook them for their meanness. The shepherds that made a prey of them regarded not the poor; they were conversant with those only that they could get by; but Christ preached his gospel *to the poor*, <sup><115></sup>Matthew 11:5. It was an instance of his humiliation that his converse was mostly with the inferior sort of people; his disciples, who were his constant attendants, were of the poor of the flock.

**3.** His furnishing himself with tools proper for the charge he had undertaken: *I took unto me two staves*, pastoral staves; other shepherds have but one crook, but Christ had two, denoting the double care he took of his flock, and what he did both for the souls and for the bodies of men. David speaks of God's *rod* and his *staff* (<sup><1234></sup>Psalms 23:4), a correcting rod and a supporting staff. One of these staves was called *Beauty*, denoting the temple, which is called *the beauty of holiness* and one of its gates *beautiful*, which Christ called his Father's house, and for which he showed a great zeal when he cleared it of the *buyers and sellers*; the other he called *Bands*, denoting their civil state, and the incorporate society of that nation, which Christ also took care of by preaching love and peace among

them. Christ, in his gospel, and in all he did among them, consulted the advancement both of their civil and of their sacred interests.

**4.** His execution of his office, as the chief Shepherd. *He fed the flock* (v. 7), and he displaced those under-shepherds that were false to their trust (v. 8): *Three shepherds I cut off in one month*. Through the deficiency and uncertainty of the history of the Jewish church, in its latter ages, we know not what particular event this had its accomplishment in; in general, it seems to be an act of power and justice for the punishment of the sinful shepherds and the redress of the grievances of the abused flock. Some understand it of the three orders of princes, priests, and scribes or prophets, who, when Christ had finished his work, were laid aside for their unfaithfulness. Others understand it of the three sects among the Jews, of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, all whom Christ silenced in dispute (Matthew 22) and soon after *cut off*, all in a little time.

**IV.** Their enmity to Christ, and making themselves odious to him. He came to his own, the sheep of his own pasture; it might have been expected that between them and him there would be an entire affection, as between the shepherd and his sheep; but they conducted themselves so ill that *his soul loathed them, was straitened* towards them (so it may be read); he intended them kindness, but could not do them the kindness he intended them, *because of their unbelief*, <sup>4138</sup>Matthew 13:58. He was disappointed in them, discouraged concerning them, *grieved* for them, not only for the shepherds, whom he cut off, but for the people, whom Christ often looked upon with grief in his heart and tears in his eyes. Their provocations even wore out his patience, and he was weary of that *faithless and perverse generation. Their soul also it abhorred me*; and therefore it was that his soul loathed them; for, whatever estrangement there is between God and man, it begins on man's side. The Jewish shepherds rejected this chief Shepherd, as the Jewish builders rejected this chief corner stone. They *had indignation* at Christ's doctrine and miracles, and his interest in the people, to whom they did all they could to render him odious, as they had made themselves odious to him. Note, There is a mutual enmity between God and wicked people; they are hateful to God and haters of God. Nothing speaks more the sinfulness and misery of an unregenerate state than this does. The carnal mind, the friendship of the world, are enmity to God, and God hates all the workers of iniquity; and it is easy to foresee what this will end in, if the quarrel be not taken up in time, <sup>2374</sup>Isaiah 27:4, 5.

**V.** Christ's rejecting them as incurable, and leaving them their house desolate, <sup><423></sup>Matthew 23:38. The things of their peace are now hidden from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. Here we have,

**1.** The sentence of their rejection passed (v. 9): "*Then said I, I will not feed you. I will take no further care of you; you shall not see me again; take your own course. As I will not feed you, so I will not cure you; that that dieth, let it die* (the Shepherd will do nothing to save its forfeited life); *that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off*; that which will make itself a prey to the wolf, let it be a prey, and let the rest so far forget their own mild and gentle nature as to *eat the flesh of one another*; let these sheep fight like dogs." Those that reject Christ will be certainly and justly rejected by him, and then are miserable of course.

**2.** A sign of it given (v. 10): *I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder*, in token of this, that he would be no longer a shepherd to them, as the lord high steward determines his commission by breaking his white staff, and as Moses's breaking the tables of the law put a stop, for the present, to the treaty between God and Israel. The breaking of this staff signified the breaking of God's covenant which he had *made with all the people*, the covenant of peculiarity made with all the tribes of *Israel*, and all other people who, by being proselyted to their religion, were incorporated into their nation. The Jewish church was now stripped of all its glory; its crown was profaned and cast to the ground, and all its honour laid in the dust; for God departed from it, and would no more own it for his. When Christ told them plainly that the *kingdom of God* should be *taken from them, and given to another people*, then he broke the *staff of Beauty*, <sup><424></sup>Matthew 21:43. And *it was broken in that day*, though Jerusalem and the Jewish nation held up forty years longer, yet from that day we may reckon the staff of Beauty broken, v. 11. And though the great men did not, or would not, understand it as a divine sentence, but thought to put it by with a cold *God forbid* (<sup><425></sup>Luke 20:16), yet the *poor of the flock*, the disciples of Christ, that *waited on him*, and understood with what authority he spoke, and could distinguish the voice of their Shepherd from that of a stranger, *knew that it was the word of the Lord*, and trembled at it, and were confident that it should not fall to the ground. Note, Christ is waited on by the poor of the flock; he chose them to be with him, to be his pupils, to be his witnesses; the poor received him and his gospel, when those that had great possessions turned their backs upon

him. And those that wait upon Christ, that sit at his feet, to hear and receive his words, shall *know of the doctrine whether it be of God*, <sup><407></sup>John 7:17.

**3.** A further reason given for their rejection. It was said before, *Their souls abhorred him*; and here we have an instance of it, their buying and selling him for thirty pieces of silver, either thirty Roman pence, or rather thirty Jewish shekels; this is here foretold in somewhat obscure expressions, as it is fit that such particular prophecies should be delivered, lest otherwise the plainness of the prophecy might prevent the accomplishment of it. Here,

**(1.)** The Shepherd comes to them for his wages (v. 12): “*If you think good, give me my price; you are weary of me, pay me off and discharge me; and, if not, forbear; if you be willing to continue me longer in your service, I will continue, or, if to turn me off without wages, I am content.*” Christ was no hireling, and yet the labourer is worthy of his hire. Compare with this what Christ said to Judas when he was going to sell him, “*What thou doest do quickly; be at a word with the chief priests; let them either take the bargain or leave it,*” <sup><417></sup>John 13:27. Those that betray Christ are not forced to it; they might have chosen.

**(2.)** They value him at *thirty pieces of silver*. Many years' service he had done them as a Shepherd, yet this is all they will now turn him off with — “*A goodly price that I with all my care and pains was valued at by them.*” If Judas fixed this sum in his demand, it is observable that his name was *Judah*, the same name with that of the body of the people, for it was a national act; or, if (as it rather seems) the chief priests pitched upon this sum in their proffers, they were the representatives of the people; it was part of the priest's office to *put a value upon the devoted things* (<sup><428></sup>Leviticus 27:8), and thus they valued the Lord Jesus. it was the ordinary price of a slave, <sup><423></sup>Exodus 21:32. Making light of Christ, and undervaluing the love of that great and good Shepherd, are the ruin of multitudes, and justly so.

**(3.)** The silver being no way proportionable to his worth, it is *thrown to the potter* with disdain: “*Let him take it to buy clay with, or for any use that a little money will serve to, for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter's stock, but not for the pay of such a shepherd, much less for his purchase.*” So the prophet *cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord*: “*Let him take them, and do what he will with them.*” Now we find a particular accomplishment of this in the

history of Christ's sufferings, and reference is had to this prophecy, <sup><427></sup>Matthew 27:9, 10. *Thirty pieces of silver* was the very sum for which Christ was sold to the chief priests; the money, when Judas would not keep it, and the chief priests would not take it back was laid out in the purchase of *the potter's field*. Even that sudden resolve of the chief priests was according to an ancient prophecy and the more ancient counsel and foreknowledge of God.

4. The completing of their rejection in the cutting asunder of the other staff, v. 14. The former denoted the ruin of their church, by breaking the covenant between God and them — that defaced their *beauty*; this denotes the ruin of their state, by breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, by reviving animosities and contention among them, such as were of old between Judah and Israel, the writing of whom as *one stick in the hand of the Lord* was one of the blessings promised after their return out of captivity, <sup><579></sup>Ezekiel 37:19. But that union shall now be dissolved; they shall be crumbled into parties and factions, exasperated one against another; and their kingdom, being thus divided, shall be *brought to desolation*.

(1.) Nothing ruins a people so certainly, so inevitably, as the breaking of *the staff of Bands*, and the weakening of the brotherhood among them; for hereby they become an easy prey to the common enemy.

(2.) This follows upon the dissolving of the covenant between God and them, and the decay of religion among them. When iniquity abounds love waxes cold. No wonder if those fall out among themselves that have provoked God to fall out with them. When the staff of Beauty is broken the staff of Bands will not hold long. An unchurched people will soon be an undone people.

## <sup><3115></sup>ZECHARIAH 11:15-17

### JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

God, having shown the misery of this people in their being justly abandoned by the good Shepherd, here shows their further misery in being shamefully abused by a foolish shepherd. The prophet is himself to personate and represent this pretended shepherd (v. 15): *Take unto thee the*

*instruments* or accoutrements of a foolish shepherd, that are no way fit for the business, such a shepherd's coat, and bag, and staff, as a foolish shepherd would appear in; for such a shepherd shall be set over them (v. 16), who, instead of protecting them, shall oppress them and do them mischief.

**1.** They shall be under the inspection of unfaithful ministers. Their scribes, and priests, and doctors of their law, shall bind heavy burdens upon them, and grievous to be borne, and, with their traditions imposed, shall make the ceremonial law much more a yoke than God had made it. The description here given of the foolish shepherd suits very well with the character Christ gives of the scribes and Pharisees, <sup><42B></sup>Matthew 23:2. They shall be under the tyranny of unmerciful princes, that shall rule them with rigour, and make their own land as much a house of bondage to them as ever Egypt or Babylon was. When they had rejected him *by whom princes decree justice* it was just that they should be turned over to those who *decree unrighteous decrees*.

**2.** They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, <sup><42B></sup>Matthew 24:5. Many such there were, who by their seditious practices provoked the Romans, and hastened the ruin of the Jewish nation; but it is observable that they were never cheated by a counterfeit Messiah till they had refused and rejected the true Messiah. Now observe,

**I.** What a curse this foolish shepherd should be to the people, v. 16. God will, for their punishment, *raise up a foolish shepherd*, who will not do the duty of a shepherd; he will not *visit those that are cut off*, nor go after those that go astray, nor seek those that are missing, to find them out and bring them home, as the good shepherd does, <sup><42C></sup>Matthew 18:12, 13. Their shepherds take no care of the *young ones*, that need their care and are well worthy of it, as Christ does, <sup><241B></sup>Isaiah 40:11. They do not *heal that which was broken*, which was worried and torn, but let it die of its bruises, when a little thing, in time, would have saved it. They do not *feed* those who, through weakness, *stand still*, and are ready to faint, and cannot get forward, but leave them behind, let who will take them up; they do not *carry that which stands still* (so some read it); they never do any thing to *support the weak* and comfort the *feeble-minded*; but, on the contrary,

**1.** They are luxurious themselves: They *eat of the flesh of the fat*; they will have of the best for themselves; and, like that *wicked servant* that said, *My lord delays his coming, they eat and drink with the drunken, and serve their own bellies.*

**2.** They are barbarous to the flock. Their passions are as ill-governed as their appetites, for, when they are in a rage against any of the flock, they *tear their very claws in pieces* by over-driving them; they beat their hoofs; they *smite their fellow servants.* *Woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is such a child!*

**II.** What a curse this foolish shepherd should bring upon himself (v. 17): *Woe to the idol-shepherd*, who, like an idol, has eyes and sees not, who, like an idol, receives abundance of respect and homage from the people and the chief of their offerings, but neither can nor will do them any kindness. He *leaves the flock* when they most need his care, leaves them destitute, and flees, *because he is a hireling*; his doom is that *the sword* of God's justice shall be *upon his arm and his right eye*, so that he shall quite lose the use of both. *His arm shall wither and be dried up*, so that he who would not help his friends when it was required shall not know how to help himself; *his right eye shall be utterly darkened*, that he shall not discern the danger that his flock is in, nor know which way to look for relief. This was fulfilled when Christ said to the Pharisees, *I have come that those who see may be made blind*, ~~409~~ John 9:39. Those that have gifts which qualify them to do good, if they do not do good with them, shall be deprived of them; those that should have been workmen, but were slothful and would do nothing, will justly have their arm dried up; and those that should have been watchmen, but were sleepy and would never look about them, will justly have their eye blinded.