

December 4

Scriptures: Read Zechariah 11 & 12

Key Verse: "... they will look on Me whom they have pierced..." (Zechariah 12:10)

Overview

Chapter 11 prophesies of the darkest period of Israel's history - when Jesus, their promised Messiah, would be rejected. As a result, God would no longer pity them but would give them up to suffer defeat at the hands of the Romans (70 A.D.; 11:1-3, 6). They are called "the flock for slaughter", because of the persecution and killing they as a nation had experienced, and the worst was yet to come. Not only did foreign oppressors ("their owners") abuse them, but their own leaders ("shepherds") had no pity for their plight (11:5; cf. Mk. 12:38-40). These leaders hated Jesus, and He rebuked them for their sin and for leading the people astray, for which they would quickly be destroyed. These "three shepherds" may refer to the chief priests, elders, and scribes (11:8; cf. Mt. 26:3-4 or 22:15, 16, 23). After Jesus' rejection, the land would be plagued by more worthless shepherds (11:15-17). Some see these verses as referring to the Antichrist (cf. Dan. 11:36-39; 2 Thes. 2:1-12; Rev. 13:11-18).

The prophet Zechariah speaks representatively for the Messiah, the coming Good Shepherd. Even though the flock was destined for slaughter, Jesus graciously came and fed them, but His particular attention was given to the poor of the flock (the meek or humble), from whom would come the remnant who would receive Him. Zechariah may have illustrated his message by holding in his hands the two different kinds of shepherd's staffs: one for warding off wild animals (called "beauty" or "grace"), and one for aiding the sheep and keeping them together (called "bond" or "binders", signifying "unity"; 11:7). When the nation hated and rejected Jesus, He symbolically broke these staffs, for He would break His covenant with other nations — a covenant that had once ensured Israel's protection. God would now allow the enemies to do with them as they pleased (the destruction of Jerusalem; 70 A.D.), which would result in Israel's scattering throughout the world (the broken staff of unity). At that time, the "poor of the flock", the followers of Jesus, would know these calamities had come in fulfillment of this prophecy (11:11).

The contempt that the nation had for Jesus and His ministry among them is illustrated by the price they paid, which was a mere thirty pieces of silver, the price of a wounded slave (cf. Ex. 21:32). What an amazing fulfillment of prophecy it was for Judas to have been given that very amount for turning Jesus over to the "bad shepherds". Judas later threw the silver into the Temple, which was then handed over to a "potter" to buy his field (11:12-13; Mt. 26:14-15; 27:3-7).

The tribulation period will be especially difficult for believers, as chapter twelve seems to indicate. The "tents of Judah" (12:7) may refer to Gentile believers who have been grafted into the true spiritual Israel, and "Jerusalem" may represent Jewish believers in Jesus, for as the New Testament makes clear, it is people that the Lord is interested in, not geographical locations. When the wicked nations gather to wage war (cf. Mt. 24:9), they are actually defying God by trying to harm the apple (pupil) of His eye, His people. Such an offence will ultimately lead to

the enemies' destruction by being made to drink the cup of God's wrath and being crushed by the very thing they wanted to crush (12:2-3; cf. Matt. 21:44). It will be clear to all that the Lord Himself was fighting the battle. He will go before the saints and empower them by His Spirit, so that they will be invincible.

The "house of David" may represent all believers in Jesus Christ. At that time, after being purified through persecution, they will be so full of the Holy Spirit and so much like Jesus (the "Angel of the Lord"), that they will have the same authority as He did during His public ministry (12:8). The Holy Spirit's outpouring will also give them grace, for during the trying times before Jesus' return, they will learn the true meaning of: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9-10). They will also be given to supplication (12:10a), which is fervent prayer for the Lord's intervention. Jesus will hear the pleas of the elect, and for their sake He will shorten those days by coming for them (Matt. 24:22).

When Jesus returns, the whole world will see Him and know for sure that He is the Son of God, the Messiah whom they pierced by rejecting Him. By that time, however, it will be too late for repentance. Therefore, there will be much mourning, not only by the Jews who had rejected Him, but by every person who did not believe in Jesus while the door of God's grace was open (cf. Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). The Holy Spirit inspired New Testament writers to proclaim that salvation is by faith and not by sight, and all who have not turned with faith to Jesus before His appearance at the time of His second coming will be lost. Although Zechariah's prophecy here may have a double implication, we learn from the apostle John that it was fulfilled at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, when they "look[ed] on Him whom they pierced" (John 19:37). Indeed, the believers in Jesus at that time were extremely sorrowful and full of much grief (cf. Mark 16:10). It was only after Jesus' resurrection that they came to understand the things He had told them would come to pass (cf. Luke 24:6-8), and then Jesus comforted them and told them to rejoice (cf. Matt. 28:9). Many other people of Jerusalem, who had seen Jesus crucified, heard Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and they began to mourn, being "cut to the heart", because while Jesus was among them, they had rejected Him (Acts 2:37).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we voluntarily bow before You as our lord and Saviour. Thank You that You were pierced for us. May our lives speak constantly of Your great plan for the human family.