The Faithful and the False Shepherd
Zechariah 11:1-17

In Zechariah 11 we have a masquerade as the prophet takes on the role of two shepherds: the good and faithful shepherd and the foolish shepherd; as the faithful shepherd he is the “feed the flock for slaughter” (v.4); he is to take two staffs: Beauty and Bonds (v.7); he is to break the staffs in two as God is breaking His covenant with Israel as well as the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (vvs.10,14); he is given 30 pieces of silver to throw down in the house of the Lord (vvs 12-13).

Zechariah is acting out Israel’s rejection of the good Shepherd, Jesus Christ (Psalm 23:1; John 10:11).

In verses 15-17 he is to masquerade as the foolish shepherd who is the Antichrist and his implements are possibly clubs.

The Ravage of the Wailing Shepherds (11:1-3)

The future judgment (11:1-3)... The prophet speaks of three locations that surround Israel and their resources: Lebanon with its cedars; Bashan (Syria) with its oaks who had provided wood for homes and the Temple; the Jordan Valley with its fertile soil that produced food; judgment is coming to Israel and it begins with her resources being cut off and then Israel herself; it begins in the north with Lebanon and sweeps southward; the devastation is going to make the shepherds of Israel wail (v3a); the real reason for the judgment is Israel's rejection of the true and faithful Shepherd, the Messiah.

The fulfilled judgment... It was the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, around 30 years after Jesus was crucified; one million, one hundred thousand died at the hands of Titus of Rome; then in 135 AD under Emperor Hadrian marched through
Galilee and Judea and destroyed 985 towns; in this you have the two diasporas of the Jews prophesied by Moses (Deuteronomy 28:49,64; Leviticus 26:33). Moses said in their scattering they would be a persecuted people (Deuteronomy 26:65); their land would become desolate and their cities waste (Deuteronomy 29:22-23; Leviticus 26:33); God promised to preserve them in a worldwide dispersion (Isaiah 66:22; Jeremiah 30:11; 31:35-37) and one day regather them back to their desolate land (Isaiah 11:11-12); the land did not begin to thrive until Israel became a nation a second time (Ezekiel 36:33-35).

The Rejection of the Faithful Shepherd (11: 4-14)

The slaughter of the flock (11:4)… “He came to His own and those who were His own did not receive Him (John 1:11); it was already known to God the Messiah would be rejected and His rejection would bring the slaughter of the flock (11:5).

Jeremiah spoke of Israel being like scattered sheep of the flock as the lions (Gentiles) have driven them away; they were devoured by Assyria and then Babylon (Jeremiah 50:17); then the Persians, the Greeks yet Israel felt no guilt (v.5); God was not pleased with how the Gentiles treated the Israelites (Zechariah 1:14); it made Him angry, but stubborn Israel did not not learn their lesson; they mocked and martyred the prophets and when the Prophet, the good Shepherd comes to feed them, they will not listen to Him either; so God sent the Romans to deliver them into their hand (v.6).

The staffs of the good Shepherd (11:7)… the two staffs, one for fighting off any attacker; the other for guiding the sheep and keep them from straying (Psalm 23:4); the staffs of the true Shepherd are given names: Beauty, or Grace and Blessing; the other staff is called Bonds or Unity; this speaks of the unifying ministry of the good Shepherd; there is the oneness that all believers have in Christ: one Shepherd and one flock (John 10:1-16,26-30); one Vine and one set of branches (John 15:1-10); one King and one Kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Romans 4:17); one Head and one body (1 Corinthians 12:22-27); one Bridegroom and one bride (Ephesians 5:22-23); one Father and one family (Ephesians 2:19); one foundation and one building (Ephesians 2:20-22).
The severing of three types of false shepherds (11:8)...The three shepherds in the days of the Messiah that had major influence over the people: Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes or possibly the Sanhedrin; the true Shepherd loathed and abhorred these false shepherds; He will not feed them but let them die (11:9); these false shepherds were destroyed and the entire religious system was put out of business with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD; those who survived the Roman carnage according to Josephus resorted to cannibalism as “those who were left ate each others flesh” (11:9b).

The splitting of the staffs into two pieces (11:10,14)... the staff called beauty was cut in two, “that I might break the covenant with Israel ”(11:10); this is amazing as the covenant was unconditional; God is so angry at Israel that He is going to allow the Romans to to kill over a million and scatter the rest as well as destroy the temple and their hypocritical false religious practices; He is going to break the staff of Beauty and Grace.

Then Zechariah is to break the staff of Bonds or Unity (11:14); when the Jews were scattered there was no longer a Galilee or a Judea; the nation was no more; in 135 AD Emperor Hadrian named the land Syria-Palestina and Jerusalem Alia-Capitolina, meaning Gentile capital; in the breaking of the staffs the Jews no longer had their Levitical worship nor could they occupy their land.

The salvation of the poor from the flock (11:11)... It was the poor people, not the religious people who believed in the true Shepherd (Mark 12:37b; Matthew 5:3).

The selling of the good Shepherd for 30 pieces of silver (11:12-13)... This prophesy was fulfilled when Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 27:3-8); the blood money that betrayed Jesus could not be put back into the temple treasury so the chief priests used the money to buy a potter’s field to bury strangers; it was by the power of the Spirit that the temple got built (Zechariah 4:6), it was from the temple treasury that money was taken to put the Messiah-Shepherd to death.
Jeremiah made the same prophecy (Jeremiah 32:6-9; Matthew 27: 9-10); the value placed on the Messiah was the price a man would pay for a slave in compensation for a slave that was goaded to death by an ox (Exodus 21:32); Jesus was sold for the price of a dead slave (see 2 Corinthians 8:9).

The Recognition of the False Shepherd (11:15-17)

The changing of roles for Zechariah (11:15)... he is now to take the implements of the false shepherd, perhaps that of a club.

The coming of the apostate church... (see Matthew 24:5,11,24 ); “many will fall away” and “most people’s love will grow cold”(Matthew 24:10,12); apostasy comes before the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3; see 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The character of the Antichrist (11:16)... He is called “a foolish shepherd;” the word for “foolish” (ewil) is the Hebrew word for “wicked; ”God is the one who raised up the foolish shepherd; he will be a Jew hater who seeks to annihilate the Jews (Revelation 12:7) and make war with the saints (Revelation 13:7).

Paul describes the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2;3-4;9-10; he will lead people away from the truth; he is called a man of sin and perdition (v.3); he opposes God and sits in the temple of God showing himself to be God (v.4); he is the lawless one whose workings of miracles are in accordance with Satan (v.9); he will cause people to perish in unrighteousness (v.10).

The condemnation of the Antichrist (11:17)... “Woe” is a word of judgment; people are attracted to him because he portrays strength and is an outstanding orator (Daniel 7:8,10); a master politician (Daniel 11:2; Revelation 6:2); a prince (Daniel 9:26); a religious leader (2 Thessalonians 2:4); he is possessed with the power of Satan (Revelation 13:2); he makes war against the Jews and the saints (Revelation 12:13-17; 13:1-10); he seeks to annihilate the Jews and two-thirds will die during the Tribulation (Zechariah 13:9).
The conquest of the foolish shepherd... When Christ returns He comes a mighty conqueror and the Antichrist along with the False Prophet will be seized and cast into hell (Revelation 19:11-20; 20:4-10).