

DECEMBER 27

Zechariah 10-11

Zechariah 10

This chapter seems to be saying that in His future blessing of Israel, God will give the nation a good shepherd.

Vs. 1-2 A good shepherd would lead the people to God. Without a good shepherd they wander. Notice the encouragement for them to call on and seek the Lord instead of relying on junk and the words of others. Nothing has changed since then and God is telling us the same thing today.

Vs. 3-5 First, God will provide a shepherd to the tribe of Judah. Notice the references to ruling and leading into battle. As we'll see tomorrow in both Zechariah and Revelation, the Lord will come first to Jerusalem to gather His people and then head north to the battle. And there will be an actual battle in both Jerusalem and 75 miles north in Megiddo (Armageddon).

Vs. 6-7 God will then strengthen all of Israel represented in the leading tribes. Again, tomorrow the references to battle will make more sense. According to v. 7, when the Lord leads them to the battle of Armageddon, the people will be so "drunk" with the Spirit that they will go forth in joy and power. They will be invincible. And their leader, this time, will not be turning the other cheek.

Vs. 8-12 With this victory behind Him, this shepherd will gather all of the sheep to Jerusalem and they will walk in His name.

Zechariah 11

But first, the nation will reject the shepherd and be given to judgment. It might be that Zechariah did some role playing here in vs. 4, 7 & 15.

Vs. 1-3 This is a poetic picture of ruin.

Vs. 4-14 Jesus became the good shepherd of the flock or generation of Israel that was doomed to slaughter. Jesus' generation was doomed because they didn't accept Him. This generation was scattered and Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

V. 8 The three shepherds may have been the chief priests, the Pharisees and the scribes. These were the main leaders of the people. Most of the priests were Sadducees, not believing in angels or the resurrection. I was reading this morning how hard Jesus was toward the Jewish rulers, Pharisees and scribes. They took away the key of the knowledge of salvation from the people. They themselves didn't enter and they made it extremely difficult for anyone who found the way through the grace of God. In John 19:15, it was the chief priests who cried out, *We have no king but Caesar.*

V. 10 Because of His rejection by the leaders, the staff of *Favor* was broken.

V. 13 This is what Judas was paid to betray Jesus. It is interesting that the money here was thrown to the potter, and in Matthew 27:5 the priests used the betrayal money to buy the potter's field.

V. 14 The staff of *Union* might symbolically describe the Jews being scattered in the Roman persecution.

Vs. 15-17 This is the judgment on those chief priests, scribes and Pharisees who led Israel after Jesus' resurrection. We see in the early chapters of Acts that these Jewish leaders were completely worthless in recognizing what was happening and in leading the people.

For an interesting connection here, read John 10, about the Good Shepherd. You'll see some of this imagery in Jesus' words.

As those who are seeking to make disciples, who make disciples, Jesus said that a disciple is not above his master. That means that those we teach will be like us. That's pretty scary. That means that we better be like our Teacher, the great Shepherd. And we can only be like Him if we humble ourselves daily in His Word and follow Him, with our cross, into His harvest.

Revelation 18

Vs. 1-3 It appears that God has used the antichrist's own anger to judge whatever nation or city is represented by Babylon. You have to wonder why this is such a big deal in heaven. I think that this Babylon, without any of Satan's influence, is the expression of mankind's self-indulgent rebellion and sin. This is how our hearts flow and how we work to ruin one another. If you read Romans 1:18ff, you'll notice that mankind's rebellion and punishment is mentioned without reference to Satan. Man ruined man and all men are under the power of sin.

V. 3 This verse gives us the scope of this world influence and dominance. It is sensual, material, commercial, pleasurable and addictive. As mentioned before, we don't have the name of this nation, but the U.S. would be an example of a nation that has this kind of influence in today's world, enticing the pride, pleasure and greed of men.

Vs. 4-8 Note that there are still saints within her. Notice also that this destruction by fire takes place in a single day. Those believers within that city will have a warning, if by no other means than by opening their Bibles. Notice here it says that Babylon was destroyed in a single (one) day. It will refer to this destruction two times more as "one hour." That gives the indication that it will definitely and literally take place in one hour.

Vs. 9-10 This is the mourning of the kings or the rich of the world. You notice that the immorality is not literal, but spiritual.

Vs. 11-19 This is the mourning of the merchants and consumers of the earth. Notice again that Babylon's destruction came *in a single hour*. Apparently this will be "breaking news."

Vs. 20-24 Notice that judgment is being given for the saints and apostles and prophets. Somehow this nation represents the heart of man opposing God and His servants. The deciding verse here is v. 24, where the blood of the prophets and saints was found in her. I was thinking this morning that two of the archenemies Paul faced were Demetrius the silversmith and Alexander the coppersmith. They were businessmen. Alexander, apparently, was responsible for Paul's final imprisonment, and Paul told Timothy to avoid him.

Notice that God has given us two chapters about a nation and influence that dominated the world. And, we'll hear more about it tomorrow. This nation led people away from God. It seduced people and nations through pleasure, music, goods, power and a focus on greed and self. It killed God's people not because of Satan, but because God's people, by their love for Christ and very presence, were a light to the sin of this nation. By following God, they were a threat. This nation defied God and it defied Satan. Mankind doesn't need Satan to be ruined from sin. We do that fine by ourselves. As C.S. Lewis said, "The dwarfs are for the dwarfs." During the Millennial Kingdom where everything is perfect and where Satan is locked up, mankind will still harbor lust and desire and greed. By the end of the Millennium, there will be many who will hate Jesus. They will see Him and despise Him. When Satan reappears, there will be multitudes who will follow him. The desires of our sinful nature create Babylon and lead us away from God.

Man may be for Man, but as disciples, we are for the Lord and His harvest.

Psalm 146

What speaks to me here is that God teaches us to look beyond the human. He is our only hope. We deceive ourselves thinking that we or anyone else are our help and hope. God may use others to help us, but it is He alone and always only Him. I'll praise God for hard times because that is where I learn and learn to praise Him alone.

Vs. 1-2 This is the call to praise and the declaration of the psalmist. Can we say this?

Vs. 3-4 Since men die, our sure hope is in an undying and unfailing God.

Vs. 5-7 In these short verses you have the promise to Abraham. This promise and faithfulness are illustrated in how God still stayed with that dishonest follower, Jacob. Then there is the creation and how God in faithfulness holds all that together. Finally, God is the Judge of the earth who cares for the poor.

Vs. 8-10 I read this morning how the Good Shepherd healed a woman who was bent over from satanic oppression and released her of that bond on the Sabbath day. Then a worthless shepherd stood up and opposed Him. And in a few words, Jesus rebuked all of those leaders and put His adversaries to shame. There was definitely no cheek turning as the Good Shepherd defended one of His own. He is our strong Deliverer. It is amazing to think of what Jesus has done, still does and will do to save us as we follow Him in the harvest.

Proverbs 30:33

Anger is a good thing not to "press." The joke regarding this verse is that some guy challenged a preacher saying that the Bible wasn't true. The preacher called the guy up on stage, read this verse, and as he reached out for the guy's nose he said, "Let's see if this verse is true."

My German one-year Bible put vs. 32-33 on the same day. Luther gave an accurate and variant translation of v. 32. Putting both verses together, the import would be that whether you have considered something like a fool, or whether you have really done a good job of considering a point (the word consider is the same word as Proverbs 31:16 for the godly woman weighing the pros and cons of buying a field), put your hand over your mouth because stirring up anger and strife is still to be avoided. So whether you are wrong or right, don't cause a fight. Only a fool causes a fight to be right.