

Post-Exile Prophets
THE JUDGMENT OF THE MESSIAH

Tuesday, September 2
Reading: Zechariah 11:1-6

Zechariah 11:6 *"For I will no longer have pity on the people of the land," declares the LORD. "I will give everyone into the hands of their neighbors and their king. They will devastate the land, and I will not rescue anyone from their hands."*

It is not unusual for Hebrew prophets to begin with the judgment and then go back and describe the reasons for those judgments. That is what Zechariah is doing here. He is describing the judgment to come because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah.

The opening poem (11:1-3) displays the destruction of Lebanon's mighty cedar and juniper (cypress) trees. These trees were famous for being the best building materials in the Near East. They had been used in the construction of Solomon's temple almost 400 earlier (2 Chronicles 2) and also in the construction of the 2nd temple in Zechariah's day (Ezra 3:7). The destruction moves south to Bashan (Golan Heights today) and ultimately to the Jordan.

The burning of the cedars of Lebanon would remind the people of the temple made of those cedar trees. This foreshadowed the future destruction of the temple. The shepherds mentioned here are the false shepherds of the previous chapter who do not care or protect their people. Zechariah says they wail and roar, not because people are being killed, but because of the loss of their pastures. They are more concerned about their own wealth than with the people they are supposed to lead. They also roar because their defenses ("thickets of the Jordan") are ruined.

The enemy invaders ("buyers") slaughter and destroy without mercy, while the Jewish leaders ("those who sell") profit off their own people and arrogantly claim that God has blessed their greedy actions. This ultimately leads to God pronouncing judgment on Israel: He would give them into the hands of their enemies who will devastate the land.

At the time of Jesus, Israel was under the iron grip of Rome. The religious leaders and temple authorities cooperated with Rome. They abused their power and misled the people. Jesus had His harshest words for these 'false shepherds' (Matthew 23). He cleansed the temple because they had turned the temple courts into "a den of thieves" (Luke 19:45-46). It was soon after this, that Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple (Matthew 25; Luke 21).

In 70 AD, the Roman legion fulfilled Jesus' prophecy. The word "devastate" in 11:6 literally means to crush, to beat with a hammer. This is exactly what the Romans did to Jerusalem. They looted and burned the temple to the ground and after a period of fighting, dispersed the Jewish nation. The Jewish people would not have a homeland again until 1948 with the re-establishment of the nation of Israel.

There is a price for rejecting Jesus! The Jewish leaders rejected Jesus and led their nation to do the same. This resulted in God removing His hand of protection and allowing the Romans to destroy the nation. The same is true today! Rejecting Jesus results in eternal judgment. But it is not too late! Jesus is still the Good Shepherd!

John 10:27 "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand."