

Post-Exile Prophets
THE MINISTRY OF THE MESSIAH

Wednesday, September 3
Reading: Zechariah 11:7-9

Zechariah 11:7 *So I shepherded the flock marked for slaughter, particularly the oppressed of the flock.*

Having described the judgment of Israel and its leaders in the previous verses, Zechariah now describes the cause of God's judgment – the rejection of the Messiah. When God tells the prophet to "Shepherd the flock marked for slaughter" (11:4), He is making the prophet a living picture or parable of the Messiah's work. The flock (Israel) was doomed for slaughter because of the rejection of the true Shepherd. Yet Messiah would care for "the oppressed of the flock", those who were harmed by the actions of the false shepherds. Jesus' ministry focused on the poor and needy who were looked down on by the religious leaders of the day.

A shepherd's staff was used to protect and guide the sheep. The two staves mentioned here define the purpose of the Messiah's coming. The Hebrew word for "Favor" can also be translated as beauty or grace. Jesus came to bring God's grace and favor to His people. The Hebrew word for "Union" means to bind together. Jesus came to bind people to one another and to unite them with God.

"In one month I got rid of the three shepherds." This is a very difficult phrase to interpret. There have been over 40 different views given to explain the identity of these three shepherds. Zechariah does not elaborate so it is not possible to be dogmatic on this issue. One view that makes sense to me is that this represents the three classes of religious leaders in Jesus' day – the scribes, priests, and elders. Jesus repeatedly confronted these leaders for their hypocrisy and leading the people astray. The "one month" may simply refer to a short period of time in which their judgment would come.

"The flock detested me." While Jesus was embraced by the common people of Israel, the religious and political leaders despised Him and plotted to destroy Him. Though He longed to bring them God's favor and unity, they rejected Him and so He ultimately rejected them. We hear this in Jesus' words during the last week before His crucifixion:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate." (Matthew 23:37-38)

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when His disciples came up to Him to call His attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" He asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." (Matthew 24:1-2)

Because of their rejection, Jesus would leave them to their sad fate – the fate they had chosen. Jesus still makes the call for Favor and Union today! He longs to shepherd and care for you and me.

"In the time of My favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. (Philippians 2:1-2)