

Post-Exile Prophets
THE SUBSTITUTE MESSIAH

Friday, September 5
Reading: Zechariah 11:15-17

Zechariah 11:16 *For I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy, but will eat the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hooves.*

A century before Zechariah, the prophet Ezekiel had described the Lord as the Good Shepherd.

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after My sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered...I will tend them in a good pasture...they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I Myself will tend My sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak...I will shepherd the flock with justice. (Ezekiel 34:11-16)

As Zechariah concludes this prophecy, he changes roles. He has been acting the part of the Good Shepherd – the Messiah. Now God tells Him to play the role of “a foolish shepherd.” Since the people had rejected the true Shepherd, God would give them a false shepherd instead. And unlike Ezekiel’s description of God as a loving caring Shepherd, this shepherd would ignore and abuse the people for his own advantage. Instead of feeding the flock, he will feed ON the flock. Instead of healing the injured, he would tear them apart.

It is important to note that this does not surprise the Lord. In fact, God is going to “raise up” this false shepherd. He is in complete control. The nation had rejected their true Shepherd so God will give them what they want - a shepherd who cares nothing about God or His people. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not accept Me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him” (John 5:43). Who is this false shepherd who “comes in his own name”?

While there have been many ‘false shepherds’ who have led God’s people astray through the centuries, they are all but shadows of the ultimate false shepherd who will come in the last days. The Bible calls him the antichrist (1 John 2:18) and the beast (Revelation 13). He is Satan’s counterfeit of the Lord Jesus. But like all the bad shepherds before him, he will lose.

Zechariah ends this prophecy with a poem (11:17). All worthless shepherds will one day be judged by the Lord. Their arm that should have protected their flock will wither away and their eye that should have looked after and cared for the flock will be blinded.

There are no vacuums in our spiritual life! Whenever someone rejects Jesus, something else will take that place. Whether it be a false religion, money, fame, selfish pleasure, or whatever else, Satan will fill that void so you don’t turn to Christ and receive true life.

Is there anything taking the place that belongs to Jesus in your life? Are you following a ‘false shepherd’ who is leading you away from a close personal relationship with Jesus?