

# OpenTheo

## Zechariah 11



### Zechariah - Steve Gregg

Zechariah 11 is a prophetic chapter that speaks of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the temple. Steve Gregg discusses the historical context behind the Maccabean victories and the significance of the Hanukkah celebration. He also explores the symbols and imagery used in the chapter, such as the shepherds and trees, and how they relate to the events that unfolded. The chapter serves as a reminder of the consequences of disobedience and the importance of repentance.

### Transcript

We're turning now to Zechariah chapter 11. I hate to break up Zechariah this way because the natural division of the book, at this point in the book, is to take chapters 9 through 11 as one unit, and then chapters 12 through 14 as one unit, which the convenient thing would be if we had gotten through chapter 11 in our previous class and could start with chapter 12 and take the new section. But that's just not the way it is.

There's too much material, and I talk too long. So we weren't able to get through chapter 11. We'll take it now.

There's a good chance, of course, that we may actually get into chapter 12 as well, but we'll just see what this requires. In Zechariah chapter 9, a prophecy began which spoke about Alexander the Great. It didn't mention his name, but it was talking about the conquest of the Grecians, the Macedonians under Alexander the Great, moving down from Syria and through Tyre and Sidon and through the Philistine cities toward Jerusalem.

And it gave the cities, actually, in the order that he actually invaded them, although the prophecy was written 200 years before Alexander lived. And it also had said in chapter 9 and verse 8 that God would camp around his house, meaning the temple, and preserve it from the invading armies, and that he did. We saw how the Josephus records Alexander the Great had a dream from God and the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem had a dream from God that he should wear certain garments.

And Alexander had had a dream about meeting this priest in these garments and so

forth. So Alexander was very impressed with God, the God of the Jews, and also the high priest showed him the prophecies of Daniel chapter 8, which mentioned that a Grecian ruler would conquer the Persians, which is exactly what Alexander was in the process of doing. So he realized that he was even prophesied hundreds of years earlier in the Jewish scriptures.

So this made, obviously, a positive impression on Alexander, and he favored the Jews. He didn't destroy the temple. So this is a prophecy about that.

It traces in the first eight verses of chapter 9 the advance of Alexander from northern Syria down to Jerusalem, but it mentions the weeping and the disaster and the overthrow of these other cities, but it says God will protect his house, which he did, and the temple was not molested by Alexander, nor Jerusalem itself. And then, because the prophets do this, having pointed out that God saved Israel, or the temple in this case, from a massacre and an overthrow by Alexander, the prophets, whenever they do this kind of thing, they also look forward beyond that to the ultimate deliverance and salvation that God will bring his people, and that is through Messiah. And so immediately after talking about God sparing the temple in the days of Alexander the Great, which was 320-something years before Christ, he leaps forward to talk about Christ, and he says, Rejoice greatly, this is chapter 9, verse 9, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, Behold, your king is coming to you.

He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. And we know that this verse is quoted in the New Testament as being fulfilled at the triumphal entry of Christ on Palm Sunday, and therefore we know without question that the time between Alexander and Christ has been leapt over in the space of two verses. Verse 9 is about Jesus, the previous verse is about Alexander the Great's time.

So you can see the prophets do this, and if you study through all the prophets, you'll find this is very, very commonplace. They'll talk about God bringing the exiles back from Babylon, from captivity, and then in the same breath practically we talk about Jesus delivering people from captivity and saving, and there'll be scriptures that the New Testament quotes about Christ. So we need to be aware of this in this section of Zechariah as well as in any other part of the prophetic scriptures.

You're going to find mingled prophecies about God's deliverance of his people in some short-range situation, in this case initially two centuries after Zechariah, but then they remind the prophet or the Holy Spirit to say, and there's a greater deliverance than this that God is going to bring about eventually, ultimately through the Messiah, and so he has leapt forward to that time. And I've suggested that verses 9 through 12 of chapter 9 were referring to the salvation that Christ would bring, although in symbolic terms, and then it goes back to the time shortly after Alexander the Great, in 333, and at least through the end of chapter 9. Now you may not know the history, so I'll just tell you,

Alexander died quite young. He was about 32 when he died, and he'd already conquered essentially the Persian Empire and most of the world that he knew of, and he died very young, and he left no successor.

As I understand it, he had sons, but they were assassinated after he died so that his generals inherited his kingdom, and there were four of them that fought among themselves to get his kingdom. They did not succeed in wiping each other out, so they divided it up. One of those generals was Seleucus, who ruled the Syrian region that Alexander had previously conquered at the beginning of this chapter.

The beginning of this chapter starts in Syria with Alexander conquering it, and later the Seleucid dynasty, which were descended from one of Alexander's generals, Seleucus, they ruled in Syria that portion of Alexander's empire that he had conquered. And one of those of the Seleucid dynasty was a man named Antiochus IV, who also went by Antiochus Epiphanes, and he desecrated the temple, sacrificing a pig on an altar to Zeus in the holy place of the Jewish temple. The Jews, who were pious, of course, saw this as an abomination.

In fact, Daniel had spoken of it in advance in Daniel chapter 11. He called it the abomination that makes desolate, or the abomination of desolation. This abomination that Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed this pig to Zeus in the temple, both an unclean animal and the wrong god in the holy place.

So this led eventually to a revolt by some Jewish priests, and their sympathizers, an old priest named Mattathias and his four or five sons. I think there were five sons. The most famous of them was Judas Maccabeus, son of Mattathias.

Maccabeus gave his name to the whole revolution. It's called the Maccabean Revolt. And there are some books written about this revolt in the apocryphal books of the Catholic Bible, but although we don't accept the inspiration of those books, they are historically accurate.

At least 1 Maccabees is. Josephus tells about this too, and others who know of Jewish history. The Maccabean Revolt finally resulted in the throwing out of the Syrian power and Antiochus' troops.

Over a period of about three years, guerrilla warfare with these Jews, who started out with nothing better than slingshots against armed and armored troops. God gave them the victory, and it was a great deliverance. So once again, the temple was vindicated.

Now remember, Zechariah is living at the time when the temple was rebuilt. His ministry began when they started rebuilding the temple after the Babylonian exile, and his ministry encouraged the people in that until it was actually built. So the temple was built from bottom to top in Zechariah's lifetime.

But now he's in his later life prophesying about the future fate of the temple. And one thing he said was God would deliver the temple from harm when Alexander came. Another is obviously that God vindicated the temple by driving out the one who had desecrated it, Antiochus Epiphanes, through the Maccabean Revolt.

These are both instances of God coming through miraculously for Israel to spare his temple. And once again, after talking about the Maccabean victories, I believe the prophet talks about the New Testament, the salvation of Christ, and the results of his deliverance too. Because there's no active deliverance of God in the Old Testament that gets wasted.

That is, the discussion of it always gets followed by the discussion of the Messiah and ultimate deliverance. So some part of chapter 10, I suggested in our last lecture that it might begin at maybe verse 9, but actually we had some discussion after the lecture with some people, and it occurred to me it's possible all of chapter 10 could possibly be about the Messianic era, the era in which we live. Again, the language is figurative.

This is poetry, and you're not going to have a literal, you know, history written advance kind of a thing. It's not prose. But the victories that are described there could well be the victories of Christ and his church.

It's also possible that the Maccabean victories are still in view at the beginning of chapter 10, and then it switches over to be talking about the Messiah's time. In any case, when we come to the end of chapter 10, we come to, I believe, Jerusalem comes under judgment when the temple is no longer protected. And we know there came that time.

In A.D. 70, the Romans were permitted to destroy the temple. And it's not simply that God wouldn't protect it. It's that God brought them to do it.

Jesus said that a judgment was coming upon the Druze because of their rejection of him and that God was going to bring judgment on their city and on their house. Jesus walked out of the temple and said, Your house, meaning the temple, is left to you desolate, meaning your house, not God's. The temple is no longer God's house.

In the early stages of Jesus' ministry, he spoke of the temple as my father's house. He said, Do not make my father's house a house of merchandise. But by the end of his ministry, it wasn't his father's house anymore.

His father moved out. It was your house, you guys. It's left desolate.

You have dishonored God sufficiently that he's disowning this house, and it's going to go down. And Jesus wept over Jerusalem. In Luke 19, he said, If you had only known this, in this your day, the things that make for your peace, but now they're hidden from your eyes.

And I say that your enemies will come to you, and they will build siege mounds around you, and they will lay you even to the ground, even with your children within you, and not one stone will be left standing on another. That is Jerusalem. The city would be torn down.

And later, in Luke 21, the disciples were telling Jesus, Look at this temple, these beautiful stones. And Jesus said, Do you see this? Not one stone will be left standing on another. It will be thrown down.

And they asked him, When shall this be? And what shall be the sign this is about to happen? And he gave them a long discourse in which he said, This generation will not pass until this happens. So Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and said it would happen in that generation, the generation of his disciples. And it did.

He made the prediction in 30 A.D. It happened in 70 A.D., 40 years later. So all of that was predicted by Jesus and said to be a judgment of God upon Jerusalem and the Jewish people who had rejected him. And that's why there's no temple in Jerusalem today and has not been since 70 A.D. It's been over 1,900 and something years.

The temple was not permanently protected. In the years between Zechariah's time and Jesus' time, God did protect the temple twice from Alexander, who would have destroyed it, and from Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated it. And the Jews would never have used it again if they'd never been able to drive him out or rededicate the temple.

The fact that they did is celebrated every year as Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, when they rededicated the temple after the Maccabean victories. So that's what Hanukkah celebrates. Now, all that having been said, God protected the temple twice, but not forever.

After the rejection of the Messiah, the temple was destroyed and never rebuilt. This is the stage in the development of things that we come to in chapter 11, which finishes this three-chapter section. I believe by the end of chapter 11 we have a prediction that God's going to give Israel over to the Romans.

It's couched in symbolic language, but I think if we follow closely, we can see that this is what it is. Now, the opening verses of chapter 11 say, Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars. Wail, O Cyprus, for the cedar has fallen because the mighty trees are ruined.

Wail, O oaks of Bashan, for the thick forest has come down. There is the sound of wailing shepherds, for their glory is in ruins. There is the sound of the roaring lions, for the pride of the Jordan is in ruins.

Or actually in the Hebrew, the thicket of the Jordan is in ruins. What is this talking about?

Ostensibly, it's speaking to trees. Lebanon was famous for its cedars.

The Cyprus trees were common in the area and the cedar had fallen. There's the oaks of Bashan. These are the mighty trees, the thick forests, reputed for their thick and lush forests.

And these are coming down, but not literally. This is not really about deforestation, because trees often are symbolic of people or other things. For example, it says in Isaiah 61 and verse, I think maybe three or so, it says that we should be called the planting of the Lord, the trees of righteousness.

Isaiah talks about trees clapping their hands in the Messianic age. Trees are often symbolic for people. Remember John the Baptist said that Jesus was coming and his axe was at the root of the trees and every tree that doesn't bear fruit is going to cut down and throw in the fire.

Every tree that does bear fruit is going to keep up. And Jesus, when his disciples said, don't you know you've offended the Pharisees? Jesus said, every plant that my father's not planting will be rooted up and thrown out. People are like trees, because trees are supposed to bear fruit and people are supposed to bear fruit.

A fruitless tree is like a person who's not spiritually what they're supposed to be, not producing spiritual fruit and they get plucked up. Now here trees, I think are symbolic also for the simple reason that there's no significant time really prior to the time of Christ at least that we would say the trees of all these regions were destroyed. Now Josephus said that when Jerusalem was under siege by the Romans and I'm not saying this is talking about that.

It may not be, but one interesting thing is Josephus said when the Romans were besieging the city of Jerusalem before they destroyed it, before they conquered it, they had to make siege works to get over the walls and such and they cut down the local trees. And Josephus specifically says all the forested areas that had been full of trees before, there wasn't a single tree left. All the garden areas were like wilderness because all the trees had been taken down.

And so in a literal sense, when Jerusalem fell, there was a removal of the trees. The trees were come down. I don't think that that's what these verses are talking about, but I do think probably it is talking about the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

And I'll tell you why. Because the rest of the chapter I think would support this. But more than that, it says there's a sound of wailing of the shepherds.

Thus it says in verse 3. There's going to be a lot of reference to shepherds in the rest of this chapter. Zechariah himself is going to play the role of a shepherd. He's going to take two shepherd's staffs.

He's going to remove three shepherds. There's going to be a worthless shepherd. There's going to be a cruel shepherd later on.

There's a lot of shepherds here. Shepherds are a figure of leadership of God's flock. Israel was metaphorically God's flock of sheep.

David says the Lord is my shepherd. And Jesus said he was the good shepherd. He spoke of his disciples as his sheep.

My sheep know my voice. So it's a very common metaphor in scripture for God's people to be his sheep and for the leaders of God's people, Christ himself and other leaders, are called shepherds. In fact, when Paul addressed the elders of the churches and when Peter did too, both Paul in Acts 20, verse 28, and Peter in 1 Peter chapter 5, both of them said to the elders, shepherd the flock of God which is among you.

So they were shepherds. The leaders of the church are shepherds. And the leaders of Israel were called shepherds.

And if you look back at Ezekiel 34, I think it provides the backdrop for all this shepherd talk that occupies this chapter of Zechariah. In Ezekiel 34, it begins this way. In verse 1, Now this would be the leaders, the political and religious leaders, the priests, the governors, even possibly the false prophets, the people who provided leadership, spiritual and civic for Israel.

Prophecy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophecy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves, should not the shepherds feed the flocks? And he talks about how they abuse the flocks. You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool.

You slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. You benefit from the flock, but you don't feed them. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost, but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.

So they were scattered because there is no shepherd and because they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. Now God's people being sheep, the predators that eat sheep are the Gentile nations. Daniel saw, or actually, yeah, Daniel had a dream in Daniel 7 about four Gentile nations.

They were likened to a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a ten-horned beast, but they're all predators. You see, God's people were domesticated by God. They had the law.

They were under God's care. He was taming them with his law and with his oversight. The Gentiles had no such caretaker.

They were like wild animals, and they were a danger to the sheep. So what he says to the shepherds, you should have protected the sheep, but instead you were so selfish and so neglectful. You didn't lead the sheep in a spiritual direction.

You didn't feed them spiritually, so they weren't spiritual, and they ended up worshiping idols, and they had to scatter them to Babylon where they were victimized by the Gentiles, that is, the wild beasts. And so also here we're going to read about the bad shepherds of Israel, I think, in Zechariah 11, 3. There's a sound of wailing shepherds, for their glory is in ruins. Their glory is the temple.

The glory of the leadership of Israel is that temple. It was like one of the seven wonders of the world. It's a beautiful building, world famous, and their glory is in ruins.

The temple's coming down. This would have to be 70 AD because there's no time after Zechariah's time except then that this actually happened. So we've jumped past the Maccabean period to the time even of Christ and the aftermath of his coming when judgment came on the temple.

And when it says, there's a sound of lions, of roaring lions, verse 3, and the thicket of the Jordan is in ruins. Now thicket, the words, it says pride here in the New King James, but thicket is in the Hebrew. It's kind of interesting because if you look back at Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 4 talked about the Babylonians coming, and what they did was destroy the temple.

Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came in 586 BC and burned down the temple and destroyed Jerusalem and carried them into captivity. The same thing the Romans did in 70 AD, only six centuries earlier or so. But Jeremiah in chapter 4 spoke of the coming Babylonians, which would be very parallel to the coming Romans later on.

And he said about Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians coming against Jerusalem in Jeremiah 4, 7, he says, the lion has come up from his thicket and the destroyer of nations is on his way. That's Nebuchadnezzar. He has gone forth from his place to make your land Israel desolate.

Your cities will be laid waste without inhabitants and so forth. So this predicting Nebuchadnezzar coming who has wasted other nations. He's now coming to their land, Israel, and he's going to lay it waste too, and he did.

But notice Nebuchadnezzar, the invader is called the lion coming out of the thicket. And here in Zechariah 11, 3, it says there's a sound of roaring lions and the thicket of the Jordan is in ruins. They're being driven out of the jungle, apparently, and attacking.

This is not literal lions here. This is as no more literal than Nebuchadnezzar is. But the Babylonians coming was a Gentile power coming to devour God's sheep, Israel.



The Romans were the same thing. Gentile power coming to devour Israel. The Babylonians and the Romans did exactly the same thing, only six centuries apart from each other.

And so we have in Zechariah, the book begins with the rebuilding of this temple and it reaches so far as to reach to the point where the temple that they built will be destroyed. Although he tells of two instances in the interim where God actually protects the temple supernaturally, not this time. Why not? Well, that's what the rest of this chapter 11 talks about.

And it's in the form of an acted prophecy. Zechariah in this acted prophecy is told to take two staves and to do certain things in relation to the people who are like sheep. It's like he's playing the role of a shepherd now.

And there's a certain interaction between him and them that would seem to require their cooperation because he's not the only actor in this. They are too. The people are involved too.

And I don't know if they just played into his hands or if this never really happened physically. This could have happened in a vision because prophets had visions and most of Zechariah's earlier chapters happened to him in a trance or in his sleep and he saw eight visions in the first six chapters. This could be a vision.

We're not told whether he literally did this or whether it only happened in a vision where he was a player in the vision and the people did these things. Whatever it is, he's in the garb of a shepherd. He's got shepherd's staves.

He's shepherding the people who are like sheep and there's other shepherds that he removes and so forth. And it seems to me, although it wouldn't make really any difference at all if it was acted out really or in vision, the fact that it's described means that it's communicated as truly as if it had been acted out. But this is what the rest of the chapter is.

It's about this drama in which Zechariah plays a shepherd and I would say he plays Christ, the shepherd. He stands in for Jesus in the role he plays here. And let's read the rest of the chapter and I'll go back and make some sense of it if we can.

Thus says the Lord, my God, feed the flock for slaughter, whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt. Those who sell them say, blessed is the Lord for I am rich and their shepherds do not pity them. Sounds very much like the description of the shepherds that God rebuked in Ezekiel 34 that we just read.

For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land. This is of Israel, says the Lord, but indeed I will give everyone to his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king and they shall attack the land and I will not deliver them from their hand. Now this is the

prophecy, but then he describes the actions that were to act out this.

The basic message of this action is given in these two verses, especially verses five and six, that there are bad shepherds and God is angry at them and he's going to punish them and he's going to punish the land because of the degeneration, the spiritual degeneration and deterioration of their morals, which is the shepherds fault, but the sheep have gone that way and the whole land is apostate therefore and so he's going to deliver them over to the hand of another king of a neighboring nation, which is going to be Rome, the Roman Empire here. It says, and they will attack the land at the end of verse six and I will not deliver them from their hand. So this is the time he won't deliver.

Alexander the Great attacked them and God delivered them and Titus of Epiphany has attacked them and God delivered them. This time another person is going to come and attack them and I'm not going to deliver them. This is going to be when the temple succumbs to a foreign invader and of course we know what happened in 70 A.D. They didn't just burn down the buildings.

They destroyed the whole nation. Without a temple, the Jews didn't have a religion. They had to make up their own religion.

That's what the Talmud was about. After the temple was destroyed, the rabbis had to come up with traditional things to be their religion and they're written in the Talmud. So modern Judaism is Talmudism.

It's not following the Old Testament because the Old Testament requires sacrifices and temple and priesthood and altar. They haven't had that for 2,000 years. So Judaism ever since that time is a man-made religion and their capital city was removed, Jerusalem, and they were all taken away.

They weren't allowed to be there anymore. So the whole nation disappeared. Its politics, its religion, its population, all gone.

This was the final end of that rebellious people. Now you might remember that there was in one of the earlier visions in Zechariah a reference to the curse that in chapter 5, I believe, was this scroll with the curses on it flying and it went into the house of everyone who violated the law and it destroyed their house with the timber and the stones and all that. And I pointed out that that was an allusion back to Leviticus chapter 14.

It was discussed what to do about a house that has leprosy. Now no house literally has leprosy because leprosy is a disease that's on people and such. But a house apparently could have some kind of a growing mold or something that made it uninhabitable.

And so the law said that they should scrub it off and if it comes back they should remove the stones and take them away, rebuild it, put in new stones, new plaster, and if it came back then it was done. They had to dismantle the whole house, carry off all the materials

that had been built up off to an unclean place and it's the end of that house. And it specifically says stones and timber will have to be dismantled.

The house has to be consumed. And that's what the prophecy, the vision in Zechariah chapter 5 said that if there's an outbreak of this leprosy of sin again that had once caused them to be taken away into Babylon but now they're back. They're getting another chance.

The stones have been replaced. The bad stones had been taken away captive into Babylon and died there. These are new stones.

These are good stones. The house of Israel is being re-established now as a house that once had leprosy but now has a new chance not to. But if that leprosy re-emerges it's going to have to be taken apart permanently.

And that's what we see here. The house was rebuilt with better stones in Zechariah's day but after several generations and centuries it became just as corrupt as before. Corrupt enough, in fact, to murder their Messiah.

We don't know whether the people who were taken into Babylon would have done such a thing as that. They did do similar things to the prophets so they probably would have. But the fact that Jesus' generation of Israelites crucified their Messiah means that they had become every bit as bad as any generation before them.

And Jesus told them that. He says, all the righteous blood shed from Abel to Zechariah is going to come on this generation. He said to his people.

And he's talking about the judgment that would come upon them. And this is it that Zechariah is talking about. This is the end for Israel.

Because of what? Because of what happens in this acted prophecy. Verse 7, So I fed the flock for slaughter. That is, I acted in the role of a shepherd although they were destined eventually to be slaughtered.

Why? When Jesus came, it was already decided that Israel was going to be destroyed. And God only sent Jesus to find the faithful remnant to rescue. Why do I know that? Because before Jesus even started preaching publicly, John the Baptist was sent.

And John is the one who said that his axe is at the root of the trees. He's about ready to throw the fruitless trees into the fire. He's got a fan in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff.

That is the faithful remnant in Israel who were from the apostate ones. He's going to gather the wheat into his barn and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. This judgment upon the fire of the chaff and the fruitless trees is a reference, I believe, to the

judgment that was coming on the nation which did, and Jesus and John both warned about it.

But Jesus was there to find the fruitful trees, to find the wheat who were not the chaff and to save them, gather them into a place of safety, which he did. And we know that when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, the Christian Jews escaped, the ones who had become faithful to Christ. The disciples actually escaped from that Holocaust and it only came upon those who had rejected Christ.

That is historically documented by Eusebius, the historian. So, Jesus came and fed the flock though they were already destined for slaughter. He was finding anyone that would follow him so that they wouldn't have to be slaughtered.

But he was feeding Israel. He came to preach and he taught to Israel generally at the temple and the synagogues. Many of the people he preached to were those that were going to die if they didn't listen to him and they didn't.

And he says there in verse 7, in particular, the poor of the flock. Probably this refers to the remnant, to the peasants, the common people. It was mainly the aristocracy and the priests and so forth that really opposed Jesus.

And those who followed him were largely the poor. We know because when he spoke to his disciples, he said, blessed are you poor for yours is the kingdom of God. So, probably the poor just stands for the humble ones, the ones that were not the powerful ones, the type of people that followed Jesus.

And it says, I took for myself two staves. Now, these are implements of a shepherd. The one I called beauty and the other I called bonds and I fed the flock.

Now, a shepherd usually only has one staff, but he took two and these were symbolic. One he called beauty, the other bonds. Now, if you have different translations, it probably has different names for them.

Even the margin of the New King James, which I'm reading, gives a different name for them and most translations will not make it beauty and bonds, but something like grace and union. That's what we have, I think, in the margin of the New King James, if I'm not mistaken, grace and unity. I'm going to favor grace and union or unity as the preferred translations of these Hebrew words.

Most translations do. I think the only reason the New King James goes beauty and bonds is because the King James did and the New King James follows the King James very closely, but modern Hebrew scholars prefer the words grace and union for the translation of these two Hebrew words. So, one staff represents grace, the other union.

Now, what does that mean? Well, we'll find out as we go along, but I'll just give you a

hint. Grace speaks of the relationship between Israel and God, their favored relationship. Grace means favor.

And grace speaks of their favored status as a nation with God. Union speaks of their cohesion and their unity as a people with each other. So, it's like the vertical and the horizontal relationship that they have with God and with their fellow Jews.

Now, both of these staffs, we'll see, both can be broken. The first one that breaks is grace. So, God breaks off the favored status that he has with Israel and they are no longer favored.

Later, he's going to break the other one, which he says he's going to set the brothers against each other. There's going to be disunity in the Jewish society. And so, that's what these two staffs are going to mean.

I'm just giving you a heads up about that. We're going to see that as we go along. So, he had one staff called grace and one called union or unity.

And I fed the flock. Now, he says, I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them and their soul also abhorred me.

There were other shepherds there before Jesus came. Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests and such. I don't know what the three shepherds are.

Maybe that's the groups. No one really knows for sure who the three shepherds are. But certainly, they are the shepherds that were his predecessors.

Those who were leading Israel before he showed up. It could be probably all the different branches of Jewish leadership. And they abhorred Jesus.

They certainly did. They engineered his crucifixion. And he didn't like them much either.

He says, I dismissed them. I basically said, you're off duty now. Remember when Jesus told the parable about the vineyard, which represented Israel and the kingdom of God.

And he said, the vineyard was lent out to tenants who were supposed to take care of it. And they were supposed to produce fruit. That means the leaders of Israel were supposed to lead the people to become fruitful.

Spiritually fruitful. But they didn't. And whenever God sent his prophets to complain about it, they beat him up and killed him.

That's what he said. The master sent his servants and the tenants beat him up and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Finally he said, I'll send my son.

The story is at the end of Matthew chapter 21. The master said, I'll send my son. And

they said, well, let's kill him too and we'll own the vineyard.

This is what the leaders of Israel did when they saw Jesus. This guy is too popular. He's going to have our job.

Let's kill him and then we can keep our position. And Jesus therefore said at the end, therefore the kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it. Taken from the leaders of Israel and their nation and given to someone else.

So he dismissed them. He dismissed the prior leadership. He dismissed those who had been such bad shepherds and such bad vineyard keepers.

And he says, I abhorred them and they abhorred me. So he never did get along real well with the main leaders of Israel. And they end up killing him.

Verse 9, Then I said, I will not feed you. I'm done. Let what is dying die and what is perishing perish.

Let those that are left eat each other's flesh. Now, what he's basically saying here is when he was rejected by Israel, he said, Okay, I'll just take my flock. I'll take my disciples and we'll just leave Israel to its fate.

And that's what he was basically saying when he walked out of the temple in Matthew 23. He said, Your house is left to you desolate. It was mine.

It was God's. It's not God's anymore. It's yours.

We're leaving. You can have it and I'm leaving you to your fate. And that's why he said not one stone of you will be left standing.

Another of your enemies is going to come and get you. You're going to die. I tried.

I tried to turn you people around. But you abhorred me and therefore I'm done. And it says in verse 10, And I took my staff, grace, representing the vertical relationship of favor between God and Israel, their favored status, and I cut it in two, or I ruined it, I broke it, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples.

So God broke the covenant that he had with Israel. Why? Is he a covenant breaker? Not at all. They were covenant breakers.

You see, God had actually said to them he would do this way back in Deuteronomy. He said, If you break my covenant, I will just destroy you. In fact, look, if you would, back to Deuteronomy when Moses was still addressing Israel at the time the nation was formed.

This was in the infancy of Israel as a nation. He warned about the long-range

consequences of their violation of the covenant that God had made with them. And certainly killing the Messiah is a violation.

He says in Deuteronomy 28.15, He says, But it shall come to pass if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all his commandments and his statutes which I command you today that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. And then it's a long, long litany of curses. Financial, health-wise, invasion by enemies, and all kinds of things.

There'd be famine, there'd be no rain. These curses would come upon them if they violate his covenant. And at one point, he says in verse 63, He said, And it shall be that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing.

And you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. So, I mean, it's not like he didn't warn them. Hundreds of years earlier, in the time of Moses, Moses told them when they were found, if you violate God's covenant, just as he delighted to bless you, he's going to take the same delight in destroying you and removing you.

So, this is what, of course, is going on. The covenant that God made is now broken. They broke it first, so he broke it.

They said, You're done, I'm done. And he took that staff that represented that covenant relationship between him and them, that vertical favored relationship, and he said, I broke it that I might break the covenant that I made with them. So, basically, of course, God didn't break this covenant prior to making a new covenant, though.

This breaking of the old covenant took place with the making of a new covenant with the disciples. Jesus was in the upper room with the disciples. He handed out a cup and said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

You drink that and you're in the new covenant with me. And Hebrews 8.13 says, where there's a new covenant, the old one's obsolete. By making a new covenant with the remnant of Israel that were in the upper room with him there, he was breaking off the old covenant, making it obsolete.

So, this is what happens here in chapter 11 when he breaks that staff. They rejected him, so he said, I'm done. I'm breaking this covenant.

No more grace here. No more favor toward you. I'm breaking this covenant I made with you.

And then, the next verse, verse 11, Zechariah 11.11, So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock who were watching me knew that it was the word of the Lord. Now, notice the poor of the flock again are his disciples, apparently.

The nation as a whole was under judgment and didn't even know it. But the disciples were paying attention. They saw that it was over for the nation and they entered into the new covenant with him, so they saw him break the old covenant and understood that this was the word of the Lord.

They knew where the favor of God was going to be in the future. It was not going to be with the nation of Israel but with Christ himself and those who followed him. They were his remnant and the believers.

Then I said to them, if it is agreeable to you, give me my wages and if not, refrain. So they weighed out for my wages 30 pieces of silver and the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter. That princely price, this is sarcastic, it's a low, very, very cheap price that they set on me.

So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them to the potter's house, to the potter's, to the house of the Lord for the potter. There we go. Then I cut into my other staff union that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel so that the vertical relationship was first broken when the covenant between them and God was broken when he made a new covenant with the remnant and abandoned the rest.

And then the result was that Israel disintegrated. Its social relationships horizontally disintegrated and you only need to read Josephus' description of what happened during the Jewish war and especially the siege of Jerusalem to know that they were killing each other off worse than the enemy was killing them. When the Romans had besieged the city of Jerusalem and had them hemmed in and the Jews in there couldn't get out, the Jews inside instead of banding together to fight off the Romans, they broke into three warring bands and killed each other off.

It was crazy. You read Josephus and you know these people have gone nuts. They had.

All unity, all brotherliness among the Jews it just was taken away from them. Of course, once people are done with God and he's done with them, it's not long before society deteriorates. I mean, think about it.

Our nation has left God when? Not so very long ago, formally, the last few decades and look what's now. People dividing into racial warring camps and so forth. You might say, racism's been with us forever.

Yeah, but racial violence is a new, renewed thing and frankly because of political correctness, everybody's minority is hypersensitive about anything that might be considered as a slight to their minority and there's all this hostility. The nation used to be one nation under God, but it gave up on God and now it's not one nation anymore. It's just every man for himself or every warring group for themselves.

That's how it is. When a nation forgets God, it soon loses its social cohesion too and that



definitely happened to Israel as we read the story in Josephus how they just became haters of each other and killers of each other because God had abandoned them. They abandoned him first.

Now, where it says there, I said to them, you know, if it's agreeable to you, give me my wages, whatever you think I'm worth and if you don't want to pay it all, don't give anything. So they weighed out for my wages 30 pieces of silver. Now, it's clear from what he says after that that this was an insult.

He's basically saying, what do you value me at here? I've served as a shepherd. I want severance pay. I'm leaving.

So just give me what you think my service is worth. And what they gave him was not much. You know, it's a small amount.

Now, it's exact value in modern currency, it would be difficult to say. But it's clearly an insult because it's so little. Now, we know that Judas betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver and this is a scripture that is said to be fulfilled in his doing so.

But as you can see, this isn't a direct prediction that Judas would betray him for 30 pieces of silver. The 30 pieces of silver is the value that Israel placed upon Jesus, which is an insultingly low value. And that's what happened when Judas said, how much will you give me for him? They said, here's 30 pieces of silver.

So the prophecy doesn't follow the same plot exactly of what really happened except there's the thing that it has in common which the New Testament sees as a parallel. In this acted parable, the Jews valued the shepherd at 30 pieces of silver. He was actually worth much more than that.

He actually said, don't give me anything if you don't want to. If they had given him nothing, it might be less than an insult. They might just say, well, you know, we never really were all that satisfied with you.

But say, oh, we'll pay you what you're worth and give some little tawdry amount, 25 cents or something, you know. It was more than that. But the point is, to give so little, it's a slap in the face.

It's an insult deliberately. And so also, when Judah said, what will you give me for Jesus? And they said, here, 30 pieces of silver. The parallel is, in both instances, in the prophecy and in the real story of Jesus' betrayal, that's the value.

That was placed on him. It wasn't 29 or 25 or 36. It was 30.

30 pieces of silver, the exact amount. So that's why there's seen there a fulfillment. It's not a fulfillment of an action.

The action was not predicted. The amount of money was predicted. That they would value Jesus up.

And that's the connection there. And so he says, he was insulted by the advice. The Lord said to me, throw it out.

Throw it to the potter, that princely price that they sell on me. So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter. Now this is particularly close to the fulfillment because when Judas decided later that he regretted having betrayed Jesus in Matthew 27, the opening verses, it says when he saw that Jesus was arrested, he was grieved and he took the money back to the chief priest who had given it to him.

He said, I've betrayed innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? You deal with it. And so he threw the money down in the temple, in the house of the Lord.

And lo and behold, they thought, well this is blood money. We can't just put this in the general treasury. We'll have to find something to do with it.

And so they found a field for sale. And guess what? The owner of the field was a potter, a guy who happened to do pottery. And they bought a potter's field to bury people in.

So the 30 pieces of silver were thrown into the house of the Lord and it went to a potter. And that's really what is predicted here 500 years in advance. It says, give it to the potter and in the house of the Lord.

So this is a very clear fulfillment of prophecy that took place. Though the way that the story of this acted parable fits with the story of the betrayal is not exact. It's still in principle the same.

They valued Jesus at this price, not more, not less. 30 pieces of silver exactly. And what happened to that 30 pieces of silver is exactly what the prediction says would happen to it.

Alright? So, having dealt with the 30 pieces of silver, it says in verse 14, that I cut into my other staff, union, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. Breaking the first staff was breaking the covenant he had with them. Breaking the second staff was breaking the brotherhood between them.

So it's a horizontal alienation that takes place with this second action. And as I said, that definitely did happen. That did happen.

Israel just divided into very mutually hostile camps and never was reunited. Because they were wiped out by the enemies. Now it says in verse 15, And the Lord said to me, Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd.

For indeed, I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand, but he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Now, the tearing of their hooves in pieces could simply mean he insensitively leads them over rocky ground where their hooves get destroyed, which a good shepherd would find a better path for the sheep where they don't get injured. Or some commentators think it means that he'd be so ravenous in eating them he'd tear their hooves apart to get the meat between the hooves.

In other words, they're just insensitive and ravenous and totally self-centered. Who's this foolish shepherd? Well, after Jesus was rejected as their shepherd, who's the next leader that came over Israel? The Romans. The Romans became their governor.

The shepherds that they'd had in Israel before they were Jewish defaulted on their duty. Jesus came and offered himself and they wouldn't have him. So he said, okay, you don't want a good shepherd, you're going to get a bad shepherd.

You're going to get a shepherd who will tear you up, who will hurt you real bad. And you're going to be sorry you had this one, but that's all that's left after you reject me. You either take me or you get the Romans.

I think Israel understood that somewhat because when Pilate said to them, shall I crucify your king? What did they say? We have no king but Caesar. Our shepherd is the emperor of Rome. He's our king, not this king, not this shepherd.

We reject this shepherd, we'll choose Caesar to be our shepherd. He said, okay, he'll be your next shepherd, but he's going to be cruel. He's going to destroy you.

You want this shepherd? That's all that's left after you reject the good shepherd. There's only a bad one left. And so this refers, I believe, to the fact that God gave them over to the Romans and did not protect them.

In fact, he intended for them to fall to the Romans. And the temple was destroyed. And this brings us to the end of this section because chapter 12 begins another entire prophecy.

But in verse 17 it says, Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock. A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye. His arm shall completely wither and his right eye shall be totally blinded.

Now, unlike the verses just prior to verse 17, verse 17 is written in poetry. You can see that by the way the text is laid out in your English translation. You've got paragraphs in the verses before and you've got verse in verse 17, like poetic verse.

And my thought is this is kind of like a eulogy. After the dust is settled after we see the

rejection of the Messiah and the Romans come and destroy everything. This is sort of like a soliloquy or a poem thinking back to what became of those shepherds that should have done better.

Those shepherds that hated Jesus. Those shepherds that didn't feed the flock. They brought this disaster on them and on themselves because it talks about the worthless shepherd who leaves his flocks.

Now, Jesus had talked about worthless shepherds that leave the flocks. When he talked about himself as the good shepherd he contrasted himself with others who cared for the sheep. He called them hirelings because they didn't love the sheep, he said.

This is in John chapter 10 and verse 11 and following. John 10, 11 and following says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep. And flees. And the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

Now, Jesus is basically saying, I'm here to be the good shepherd. If I don't shepherd the sheep you just got these self-interested hirelings. It's just a career, just a job for them.

And when the wolf comes, the Romans, these guys don't protect the sheep. They run away. They leave the flock and let the wolf eat them.

And that's essentially what the leaders of Israel were guilty of in rejecting Christ and failing to protect the sheep from spiritual danger. They brought judgment upon them. And the Romans came and devoured them.

And so I think this little poem at the end of chapter 11 is reflecting on those shepherds who are responsible for this happening. The worthless shepherd, woe to him. He leaves the flock.

He doesn't take care of the flock. A sword should be against his arm and against his right eye. Why? Because his arm should be protecting the sheep and his eye should be watching over the sheep.

The shepherd's arm and his eye are what the sheep depend on for their safety. And he's not using them for that. And therefore his arm shall completely wither and his right eye shall be totally blinded.

Now this is symbolic, of course. This is poetic. It's not saying that these people will literally go blind and they'll watch their arms wither.

It's saying because they did not employ their eyes and their arms as a shepherd should to protect sheep, well, they're going to lose them. They're going to lose the use of them.

Actually, what happened to these people is they were killed.

But it's like the eye that wouldn't watch for the sheep is going to be blinded. The arm that wouldn't care for the sheep is going to be withered. And that is simply a poetic way of saying these shepherds are coming under a judgment suited to their neglect and their crime.

And so what we've had, if we would reflect back on chapters 9 through 11, we have a whole panorama from a time a little bit after Zechariah's time all the way up until Jesus' time and a little beyond. And the theme of it is this temple that was built in Zechariah's time will someday go down again just like the one they replaced. Zechariah and the people of his time they built a temple that replaced Solomon's temple.

What happened to Solomon's temple? It was taken down by the Babylonians because of their sins. This temple too was going to eventually go that way. It'd be 600 years and in the interim there'd be several times God would protect it.

His protection against Alexander the Great is followed by reference to Christ coming out of Dacuy because Christ is the ultimate future protector of the remnant of his people. You see, even though Jerusalem was destroyed there was a remnant in Israel that became the disciples of Jesus. They were the faithful remnant, the poor of the flock, who were spared.

And so, in a sense, Israel continues in its remnant. The majority of the apostate were wiped out and the nation was dissolved. But Israel continued in its faithful remnant who were the followers of Israel's Messiah.

The true Israel is the follower of the true Messiah. And so, the Messiah came and rescued the true Israel just as God had rescued the temple in Jerusalem in the days of Alexander. Then the Maccabean Revolt was another case where Israel was threatened by foreign invaders and God saved them through the Maccabees.

And then it reflected on the fact that Jesus, again, would save his remnant, the remnant of Israel, which is his church, and they would be delivered from their enemies too. And that's what chapter 10 was about. And then, of course, after these two events it talks about the real shepherd coming, Jesus, prefigured in a vision or enacted parable, one or the other, of Zechariah himself playing the role.

And his rejection by the flock and by the other shepherds caused him to break both the covenant that God had with Israel and the brotherhood that Israel had among themselves and dissolve them into nothing, which they became. Israel, as a nation, became nothing. Now, of course, there's a nation of Israel today.

Since 1948, some of the Jews have come back and with the support of the United Nations, they've got a nation again. But it still isn't what they lost. There's no temple

there.

There's no priesthood. That was the central thing that defined Israel's special status in the old days is the worship of Yahweh. He's not worshipped there.

In fact, the nation's entirely secular. There are religious Jews there and atheist Jews there. But the nation of Israel today is a secular nation.

They're emphatically secular. They say, we're not religious. We are a modern, secular nation.

Yeah, Jews who worship God can be there. So can Jews who are messianics and so can Jews who are Buddhists and Jews who are atheists and Jews who are New Agers. They're all there.

The nation is not what it was. It's not a holy nation. It's a secular nation where some godly people live, outnumbered by those who are not.

And the government itself is officially not godly, not religious. So even though there is a political entity in that spot today, it is not what was lost. It's not a restoration of what was lost.

The temple's not there. Some people think it will be, but it seems to be a long way off if it is. And I don't even know if it will be.

The point here is the temple that was built in Zechariah's day was destroyed after God gave him several chances, supernaturally preserving it, and he eventually sent the Messiah to supernaturally save those who were the faithful remnant. And then those who were not saw the end of their commonwealth and the end of their religious system. So that's what chapter 11 is about.

Now when we come to chapter 12, it's a three-chapter running prophecy also. And in my opinion, I won't go into it now because it's time to quit, but I believe chapter 12 begins with the Maccabean Revolt and runs up through the coming of Jesus and ends, in my opinion, with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. again. These two prophecies, the one in chapter 9-11 and the one in chapter 12-14, both begin with the words, the burden of the word of the Lord, but the first one is against Hadrach, which are the pagans.

The second one is against Israel. Chapter 12, verse 1, the burden of the word of the Lord against Israel. And so the focus here is going to be more on the judgment that comes upon Israel for their rejection of the Messiah.

And I believe that chapter 14, although many people take it to be about the future and the end times, I believe that as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we'll find that it's really talking about the destruction of Jerusalem also. But we'll have to do that another

time. And so we'll stop there.