

Lecture 29 – Zechariah 11-14

“A Study in Prophecy”

Well – here we are – at the end of another year of POW. I want to congratulate each of you for hanging in there throughout this great study of the prophets and their respective prophecies. I know it's been difficult at times, but I hope you have, as I have, been blessed by God's faithfulness to His Word, which should bring us great trust in Him being a God we can count on that He'll keep His promises. Today's lesson covers the final four chapters of Zechariah, and Carol will next week wrap up all of this in what I know is going to be a tremendous teaching.

Zechariah is known as the prophet of hope – that's a description I would think most of us would be happy to have come to people's minds when they think of our names, right? Zechariah isn't just known as the prophet of hope, but he is also known also as the prophet of truth. Hope and truth belong together – hope without truth can be false and misleading; truth without hope can be harsh and defeating. However, when brought together – hope and truth – they bring the best out of each other. We can know that God's promises of hope are rooted in truth because He is the truth – remember one of the 7 “I ams” of John's Gospel, “I am the way the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.”

Chapter 11 deals with the time of the first coming of Jesus, His rejection, being sold for 30 pieces of silver, and the introduction of the foolish shepherd. In the first couple of verses, it is speaking to the prediction of the destruction of the government by the Romans – the invasion began in northern Israel from Lebanon – they would end up slaughtering over 1 million Jews. This invasion was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Jeremiah 25:34, “Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come; you will fall like the best of the rams.”

One of the more tragic components of human society is the offer of false hope. They're everywhere today – sadly, even some are in the church. A sister in the Lord recently sent me a letter that came in an e-mail that was professing a miraculous healing program that was centered in Scripture. It may have been perfectly fine, but there was a price tag to it, and it smacked of someone using God's Word to profit herself. It was well written and pretty convincing, but it felt ingenuous. I can think of no greater damage to the real promise of hope than those who offer false hope to those who so desperately need it. By its own definition of being false, the reality of the falseness will be revealed, and the people then become mistrusting to any concept of hope – even true hope.

Our reading tells us, though, in verse 3 of chapter 11, these false shepherds have been around a long time – the shepherds it is speaking to are the religious leaders in Jerusalem around the time of Christ. If there is any good news about false shepherds, they are always found out, and then their sin is judged – we can see that in this verse. If a false shepherd has hurt anyone, my heart goes out to you. For your own peace, you need to ask God to help you forgive this person. However, please know that it hurts the heart of God, and I hope you will find some comfort that He will deal with these people.

In verses 4-5, Zechariah is accurately predicting that the rulers were oppressing the people and had no care for the people. At the time of the coming of Jesus, the priesthood had been corrupted – these were the supposed spiritual leaders. Throughout the Gospels, we only saw Jesus “lose it” when he entered the temple and saw these leaders profiting from the people who had to use their hard earned money to purchase “acceptable” sacrifices.

The reason they were called the money-changers was the people would bring their legitimate money, but, in order to purchase the “acceptable” sacrifices, they had to exchange their money for temple shekels. Of course, they built in a skim

off the top in this exchange, so not only were they profiting from the sale of the “acceptable” sacrifices, they were making money in the exchange rate. Clearly, the Lord’s violent reaction to this abuse of true worshippers was a message that this practice is **NOT** acceptable to the true sacrifice – our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of God’s frustration with the attitude of the people – He’s going to let the Romans go to town on the people.

In verse 7 we learn of the shepherd having two staffs – one called “Favor”. “Favor”, or in other translations, “Beauty”, this literally means graciousness and speaks of the staff with the crook on the end to keep the sheep in line. As for the other staff called “Union” – “Bands” in other translations – this speaks of the making of a covenant – this staff was not like the crooked staff we think of in the first picture, but one that is more like a heavy club used to fight off predators of the flock.

Verse 8 is likely speaking to the relationship God had with the religious leaders of Jesus’ time – the three shepherds were probably the prophets, priests, and rulers –they hated God, and He hated them. Verses 10-11 tell us, “Then I took my staff called Favor and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. It was revoked on that day, and so the oppressed of the flock who were watching me knew it was the word of the LORD.” “Favor” or “Beauty” is Jesus Christ - with the crucifixion and death of Jesus, God’s covenant with the Nation of Israel was broken; no longer could they relate to God by the covenant of the Law – they could only come to God based on faith with the Gentiles. The breaking of this *conditional* covenant caused the removing of the Favor, the graciousness of God, from the Nation of Israel. The breaking of the Union staff would be symbolic of breaking the bond that was in place between the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel. With God breaking these staffs – or His favor over the Jews – this would result in the Romans wiping out Jerusalem and scattering the Jews in 70 A.D.

Verses 12-13 speak of an amazing prophecy that was fulfilled in the betrayal of Jesus. Judas Iscariot, likely disappointed that Jesus had not come to physically rule, betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. When Judas came to the realization of the lie behind his betrayal, he confessed his sin, and he had betrayed innocent blood. Judas would return to the temple and throw down the 30 pieces of silver and go and hang himself. We pick up the story in Matthew 27:6-7, “The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners.”

A potter’s field was a piece of property belonging to a potter – it was the place where the potter would dispose those pieces of clay that didn’t become part of his finished work. In Jeremiah, God is compared to the potter – we are in the potter’s hands. When we’re not moldable and yielding to the potter’s hands – this is our choice – not God’s, we sentence ourselves to a dry portion of our lives and become hardened, brittle, and ultimately broken. The good news is this potter’s field that we put ourselves in was purchased, in effect, by Jesus. To the rest of the world, it sees us as having no value. To Jesus, this burial place for foreigners cost Him His life.

He places our broken pieces onto His potter’s wheel and lovingly begins the process of reshaping us into a beautiful vessel of honor. The process, though, is often painful – being molded and shaped by the circumstances of life can be at times overwhelming. What we need to remember that throughout these times, we are always in the Potter’s hands, and He is in control. It may not feel like it, but we are of great value to the Potter – proven in His sacrifice for us, and He will not stop forming us until we get to heaven. There will be no potter’s field there – it will be a gallery of glorious finished pottery – all giving glory to the One Who purchased us and molded us into His own image.

This particular prophecy is a great testimony to Jesus as the Messiah. How many people in recorded history were betrayed over 30 pieces of silver? Then how many of those were the money thrown into the house of the Lord? Then out of that group how many of those were used to purchase a potter's field? For critics of Jesus being the Messiah – that He manufactured some of the prophecies about the Messiah – this is one, of many, Jesus had no control over. Think about who came up with the price for Jesus – the religious leaders! Of any people, they would be the *least* likely to come up with that specific amount as anyone who knew this section of Scripture would link it to the price paid for betraying Jesus. He also had no control what would happen to the money and what it would ultimately be used for. This is why I struggle with people who say they can't "get there" with Jesus being the Messiah. It's not that they *can't* get there, it's that they *won't* get there. "There's" a **big** difference. Belief is a *choice*, and everyone is accountable.

In verse 15, we are introduced to the third of three shepherds in chapter 11. The first shepherd was the wailing shepherds – the religious leaders of Jesus' time. The second shepherd was the Good Shepherd – the Lord Jesus. And now we're introduced to the foolish shepherd. This is a portrait of the coming antichrist.

I'm going to expand a bit on question 6a of the homework where it asked to describe the characteristics of the foolish shepherd. For me, I find it helpful to compare one thing against the other to better emphasize the truth of each other.

The foolish shepherd will not care for the lost. Speaking of the Good Shepherd in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." The foolish shepherd will not seek the young. Matthew 19:14 tells us about the Good Shepherd, "Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." The foolish shepherd will not heal the injured. Luke 5:17 tells us that the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus healed as many as 40 people

and no doubt countless more that were not documented. Finally, the foolish shepherd will not feed the healthy. John 6:11 speaks to Jesus feeding the five thousand with five barley loaves and two fish.

One shepherd proclaims *and* lives to be the truth – the other proclaims to be the truth but the proof of his proclamations reveals he is a liar. We all must ultimately make a choice to whom we’re going to choose to be shepherded by – the Good Shepherd or the foolish shepherd. Don’t let the foolish shepherd “pull the wool over your eyes.” Wiersbe perfectly states that rejection of the truth leads to the acceptance of the lies. When the Jews rejected the Truth – the Messiah, they, by definition, chose to believe the lies, and they paid a terrible price for this. May God have mercy on us and give us the wisdom and the light to recognize what is true and then the faith to follow it.

Verse 17 offers an interesting judgment that will come upon the foolish shepherd. “Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!” Revelation 13:3, speaking of the beast, or the antichrist says, “One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast.” What’s described both in verse 17 and here in Revelation is that there will be an assassination attempt on the antichrist, but he will miraculously survive this attempt.

Kicking off chapter 12 is a great verse giving proof that God is the Creator, “The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person.” I believe we need to consistently remind ourselves of this important fact. I don’t know about you, but I can so easily be overwhelmed by the problems in my life that I lose perspective on the magnitude and power of the One Who paid His life for me *and* Whose beloved

possession I am. How big must God be that He can stretch out the heavens – imagine stretching out your arms and what fits between them. The heavens – the universe – fit within God’s arms. It boggles the mind. We serve a very big God, and since He is the Creator, His creation is subject to Him. That includes the forces of darkness that cause the problems in our lives. He Who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Amen?

From Wiersbe’s commentary, Lin mentioned last week two oracles, or burdens, that focus on the first and second advents of the coming Messiah. Chapter 12 is the second oracle where it takes us to the end times. Beginning in verse 3, we’re going to read over the next 3 chapters the phrase, “In that day” sixteen times. “In that day” speaks of “the day of the Lord” – the day of wrath and judgment that the prophets wrote about in the books of Joel and Zephaniah and Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6-19. This is the time that will precede the Kingdom Age. Some scholars include the Millennium – the 1,000 years of Jesus’ reign – as part of the Day of the Lord.

In verses 3-9, we read of an attack on Jerusalem by all the nations of the earth, but God will make Jerusalem “an immovable rock for all the nations.” A common question for many people today is where does the United States fit into the Day of the Lord? I can see three scenarios: 1) should the rapture take place prior to the beginning of the Tribulation period, the Christian component of the nation – a sadly declining component when it comes to support for Israel – will be removed leaving a weakened country and almost certainly falling in line with the other anti-Israeli nations; 2) our country continues down the path it is currently on of reducing its support for the Nation of Israel and will ultimately get to the point of complete abandonment. May God have mercy on us should we ever get to that point. 3) a third scenario is the United States crumbles under its failed economic and social policies and becomes a shell of what it once was and is no longer a

factor in the global economy, political, and military picture. This last scenario may seem impossible for anyone to comprehend, but the United States is already the longest running democracy in human history – we’re living on borrowed time. Because of our debt structure, we’re also living on someone’s borrowed dime, and that bill is going to come due one day. Perhaps the Day of the Lord for the United States will be the eventual reckoning of the house of cards to which its economy is now constructed. I hate to sound so defeatist, but without a huge revival of the Lord in this country, it is difficult to listen to the false claims of hope that today’s politicians are professing. That being said, with God, all things are possible.

During this attack on Jerusalem, God will empower the Jews – even the feeblest of them with the power of David. We learn in 1 Samuel 18:7 this power of David killed tens of thousands of enemy soldiers. They will also be like God – like the angel of the Lord going before them – this is the same Angel of the Lord who slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. Verse 9 speaks the great promise, “On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.”

Verse 10 then reveals, “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication.” Upon the conclusion of the attacks against the people, God will fulfill this prophecy of pouring out His spirit on the Jews – Ezekiel also spoke of this in chapter 39:29, “I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.” The prophet Joel as well speaks of this glorious moment in the history of Israel in chapter 2:28-29, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

The witness of the Spirit is always the crucified Lord, so with the pouring out of the Spirit on the Nation of Israel, it will be then they recognize Jesus as the

Messiah – the one that they pierced - this brings them to repentance and the mourning of their sins. The mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo mentioned in verse 11 speaks to the time when Josiah the King – one of the best kings - was killed – there was a great mourning then.

With the truth of Jesus being revealed, heading into chapter 13, there will be a cleansing of the nation. Idolatry and listening to false prophets, which have always been problems with the Nation of Israel and apparently will still be issues in the future, will be dealt with by the Lord. We read that even parents will put to death their children should the children become false prophets. The false prophets will attempt to hide, but as Numbers 32:23 shows, hiding sin only lasts so long “But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.” There is no secret life with the Lord – He knows everything. Our sin will find us out, and He will be there at that moment when we’re found out waiting and hoping we’re ready to repent and ask for forgiveness. The Lord takes no joy in the pain of our sin – just look at the wounds in His hands and side to see what the pain of our sin did to Him.

Verse 7 says, “Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the LORD Almighty. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” This is of course speaking to Jesus – He Himself referenced it in Matthew 26:31 when speaking of His crucifixion, “Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’” Where were the disciples when Jesus went through His trial and crucifixion? In the end, only John hung in there – the rest were scattered protecting themselves.

Verse 8 tells us the Jews are going to go through a great holocaust in the Tribulation period – 2/3 will die. The antichrist’s covenant that he made with the

Jews to construct the Temple will be broken upon its completion – it will be 3 ½ years into the Tribulation period. At that point, the antichrist will seek to destroy the Jews in the land. Verse 9 tells us the remaining 1/3 of the Jews will survive, and they will call on His name, and He will say, “They are my people.” They will finally say, “The Lord is our God”. What a great day that will be for the Jews. What is described in Verses 1-3 of chapter 14 is the time when Jerusalem will be destroyed by the antichrist – he will be heading up a 10-nation federation against Jerusalem. Those who listen to Jesus will flee to the wilderness – the rest will be caught up in the great battle – the Battle of Armageddon – this is when the Lord will come.

In Verse 4, Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is just east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. This is a picture of the modern day Mount of Olives. Verse 4 is telling us there is going to be a cataclysmic change – it will change the geological formations. A river will flow forth from Jerusalem – ½ to the Dead Sea and the other ½ to the Mediterranean. The Dead Sea will be healed. All the geography will change because of this. There won’t just be geographical changes, but there appears to be going to be a change in the astronomical arrangements. It will be kind of a twilight zone – at evening, it will still be light.

We then arrive at our memory verse, which is worth repeating – let’s say it again, “The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.” For those who chose to fight against Jerusalem, verse 12 describes in pretty graphic detail the judgment that will come upon them – their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. If you listen to

accounts of the effects of a nuclear event, it is not a stretch to see that something of that sort is causing these kinds of horrible physical judgments.

Verse 16 – which is after the Battle of Armageddon – tells us the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem – not just the Jews – will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. As a reminder, this Festival was, interestingly, the seventh and final feast given to Israel by the Lord. What does the number 7 symbolize in Scripture? Completion. This festival was to be an annual reminder of God's provision during the forty-year wilderness sojourn – and also celebrated the completion of the harvest. This is the most joyful and festive of Israel's feasts, so it is only appropriate that this feast will continue into the Kingdom Age as it reminds us to worship and celebrate the Lord for His provision through this terrible time.

Notably, the punishment for those who don't go up to Jerusalem and worship the King will be the removal of rain. There is a strong relationship between God and water. John 7:38 tells us, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." Revelation 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." Finally, imploring husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, we are, "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." The Word of God brings living waters, which bring life and cleanses. When we walk away from the Lord, we become dry and life is less full and satisfying. We find ourselves thirsting for something more, but we're not finding it absent from God. Therefore, you can see the wisdom in God's punishment for those who choose not to come to Jerusalem and worship the King is the removal of rain – the removal of those living waters that bring life and cleanse.

I want to conclude by touching on a verse back in chapter 13. Upon the Jews revelation that Jesus is the Messiah, they asked the question, “What are these wounds on your body?” The answer is, “The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.” What must it have taken for Jesus, who suffered such immense and completely undeserved punishment, torture, ridicule, and ultimately death to be able to call these people who performed all these things – His friends? Imagine the most cruel, insensitive, and even inhuman person in your life – now think of calling that person your friend. Maybe this person is an abusive parent or spouse. Maybe it’s the person who was driving drunk and killed someone close to you. How could it be possible to call that person your friend?

There’s only one way –forgiveness. When we think of these people in our lives – we see them for the evil acts they perpetrated on us. That’s only natural. That, however, IS NOT how God sees them. John 3:16 tells us For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Do you see any exclusion in this verse? He doesn’t say ‘He loves the world’ or ‘whoever believes’, except.... does he? God sees each and every one of us as He originally created – which was rooted only in goodness. It is our sin that darkens us.

Only in complete and total forgiveness can God look past the sins in our lives and see the finished product He sees in you and in me. He sees us, through the blood of His Son, as if we never sinned at all and never will again. You can only arrive at that point if you have completely and totally forgiven someone once and for all. Now you may be thinking, “Dan, you don’t know what this person did to me – I can’t forgive Him.” You’re right, I won’t even attempt to understand the pain you’ve experienced, and I’m fully aware that you, by yourself, cannot forgive this person. It goes against our human nature.

And there's the point. When we come to faith in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" At the point of salvation, the part of us that is wounded and cannot forgive is nailed to the cross, and we become a totally new creation that is completely forgiven *by* and at peace *with* God. We are given the Holy Spirit and the mind of Christ – the power of God dwells in us – and that includes the power to forgive. It was the power of God that forgave you and me of all of our past, present, and future sins, and it is the power of God that will allow us to forgive those as Christ forgives us.

Why is this so important? Forgiving others does two very important things. First, it frees us from the grip others' sins have had on us. The depth and strength of this grip cannot be overstated, but neither can be overstated the freedom and peace we experience once we have totally forgiven someone. The second thing forgiving others does, is it frees us up to love unconditionally. With the removal of your concern for the harm someone has caused you – or is even still causing you, you can love someone in a manner that these people have likely never experienced before. This is agape love – driven by the power of God that drove Jesus to the cross to die for us while we were still sinners. The foundation of forgiveness is love – love conquers all, and love is the best way to demonstrate Christ to those God brings into our lives – even the worst people.

What I'm speaking of is Kingdom living – this is the way it will be in the verses we're reading about with Christ ruling and reigning. The thing is, we don't have to wait until then to start living in the Kingdom – we can start now – by asking God to reveal to each of us the depth of the forgiveness that He has extended to us and then requesting His power to forgive others, so we may offer what we've been given by Him who paid a much greater price than we have to.

Many of you expressed an appreciation for the daily inheritance verses to go meditate on I offered at the end of last year. I'm going to offer a new set of verses for this summer – beginning with next Friday and ending the day before we start back up again in the Fall. These verses will be emphasizing the Kingdom of God as well as what the Bible says about those who are blessed by and dwelling in God. I've put some hard copies out by the doors, and my website will release a new verse each day.

I want to thank you for your faithfulness to this study. I have no doubt you will be blessed. May you enjoy your time off and reflect on the fulfilled promises of God we've read about this year to strengthen your faith that God is a God who keeps His promises. Let's pray.