



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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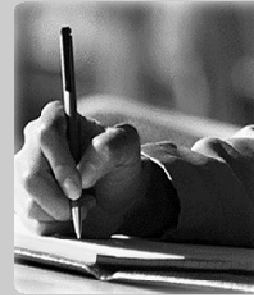


God's Big Plan For A Struggling People 5/6
HG132: True Leadership

Zechariah 9 - 11

Home Group Study Notes

6 November 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

If you are at a friend's or relative's house for dinner and you find a dead insect in your salad, what would you do?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon Notes

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Introduction

Chapters 9-14 differ from the first eight chapters of Zechariah in that no reference is made to the rebuilding of the temple, no visions are given to the prophet, and individuals such as Zerubbabel and Joshua, who were so prominent in the earlier chapters, are not mentioned at all. These last six chapters of Zechariah's prophecy focus on the coming of the Messiah and both His first advent (ch9) and second advent (ch10-12). These chapters comprise some of the greatest concentrations of messianic truth found anywhere in the Bible. I can't cover all three chapters this morning so I'm going to focus on the theme of the *True Leadership* of Shepherd.

1. The Messiah as the Faithful Shepherd, 9:16 - 10:12

The Bible often uses the image of sheep and a shepherd. Israel has always been God's special flock (Psalm 100:3) and God "the Shepherd of Israel" (80:1). The first shepherd we meet in the Bible is also the first man who died because of his faith in God, Abel, the second son to Adam and Eve (Gen 4:4). Abraham, was a shepherd (Gen 12:16). His grandson, Jacob, whose name later became Israel, was also a shepherd (Gen 30:31). Moses, the great lawgiver and the leader of Israel, worked for a season as a shepherd (Exod 3:1). David was a shepherd before he became king and shepherd over Israel (1 Sam 16:18). That most favourite of all Psalms (Psalm 23) begins with the words: "The Lord is my shepherd." It's no surprise, therefore, that Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd who "lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Throughout the Bible, the best-known passages that use the image of the shepherd describe the shepherd in a positive way. But there are places where the Bible talks about shepherds from a negative point of view. The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel railed against the shepherds of ungodly leaders, wicked kings, corrupt priests, and other prophets because they were leading God's people in the wrong direction. Zechariah 10-11 also talks about shepherds from a negative point of view and warns against following the wrong kind of shepherd and calls us to follow the right kind of shepherd.

Zechariah asking the Lord for rain in 10:1 can be seen as a rebuke to those who looked for Baal to provide favourable weather for the land. 10:3: "My anger burns against the shepherds and I will punish the leaders, for the Lord Almighty will care for His flock, the house of Judah." Notice here how the shepherds are equated with leaders. God is angry with them and promises to punish them because He cares for His flock. Where God's people end up depends on the type of leader or shepherd they follow. Though the shift from sheep imagery to horse imagery may seem slightly odd, the constant factor here is the Lord's care. A shepherd watches over His sheep, as a warrior gives attention to his horse.

4: What implications does God's provision for Israel have for believers in the church today?

5: While the ultimate 'false shepherd' is the coming Antichrist, there are also false leaders and false systems that people follow today. What is the appeal of these false shepherds? How can we warn people who are led by false shepherds?

6: When you are in difficulty, what sort of things do you look to for help? Could some of these things be alternatives to the Lord? What prevents you from turning to the care of your Shepherd-King? In what ways might you fail to reflect the care that Jesus, the worthy Shepherd-King, provides?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Consider the four images in Zechariah 9:14-17 that describe God's glory revealed in the Messiah. Why has Jesus chosen to reveal His conquering power in your life? How has He provided a shepherd's care for you? In what ways does His word reveal that you are His treasure and delight? When has He given you spiritual strength and nourishment?

2: Why do you believe God often chooses to use shepherd imagery to describe Himself and His leaders?

3: How has the Lord proven to be a faithful shepherd to Israel in its history? How does God promise to lead and provide faithfully for Israel in the future?

In vs4-5 God uses three images to describe the work of the Messiah: 'cornerstone' 'tent peg' and 'battle-bow.' A cornerstone was a block placed in the intersection of two walls to act as a foundation stone and the correct orientation of a building. As the cornerstone, the Messiah is faithful and reliable. Psalm 118:22 famously uses the same image to describe Christ's rejection by men: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." The 'tent peg' refers both to a peg in a wall that could support household items in the house (as in Isa 22:23-24), or pegs in the ground that secure a tent and support it so that it can accommodate a large family (Isa 54:2). In either case a tent peg created stability for a home.

The image of the 'battle-bow' depicts the Lord's fearlessness and conquering power. As a result of the Messiah's strength and stability, vs5 promises that He will cause His people to fight "together they will be like mighty men." Because the Messiah will be present to empower them, God's people "will overthrow the horsemen" and triumph over their enemies.

God explains what will happen to Israel under the faithful leadership of the Messiah in 10:6-12. There are 21 predictive statements in these verses, a number of which focus on the Lord's personal actions on behalf of His people. For example, the declaration in vs6, "I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph" not only assures God's power to His people, but also re-emphasizes God's intention to unite the southern kingdom of Judah with the northern kingdom, represented by "the house of Joseph." The phrase "I will restore them because I have compassion on them" emphasizes God's care and provision for His flock. "I will answer them" vs7, signifies His nearness to His people and responsiveness to their needs, resulting in their strength in battle and renewed joy.

There is also shepherd imagery in the promise vs8: "I will signal for them and gather them in." This signal was a whistle that shepherds would use in calling their sheep. Even though God's people were scattered in distant places, they would return as He called (vs9). God not only mentions the places from which the Lord would deliver His people, such as Egypt and Assyria, vs10, but also the places to which He would bring them: "I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon." Even in the promised land, the people would be so numerous there would not be enough room for them.

After judging and disarming the powers that had captured His people, and after overcoming any obstacle that would have hindered them from returning, the Lord promised vs12: "I will strengthen them in the Lord and in His name they will walk." Zechariah 10 emphasises the truth that the work of the Messiah, God's faithful shepherd, is to deliver, strengthen, save and care for God's people. His faithfulness was demonstrated in bringing back Judah from the exile.

However, it is also significant that this passage, written after the Babylonian exile, is clearly oriented to the future. James Montgomery Boice notes that this passage refers to a future re-gathering, not the re-gathering of the people from Babylon following the exile. That was already history at the time of the writing of this chapter. The prophecy must concern a yet future day. The re-gathering may have begun with the re-establishing of the modern state of Israel. This will be a great re-gathering in which the scattered flock of the Messiah is returned to its own land and to great material and spiritual blessing.

2. The Wailing of the Fallen Shepherds, 11:1-3

Vs1-2 talks about three different types of trees: the cedar, the cypress, and the oak. Trees in the OT were often used to stand for leaders and kings. Zechariah laments: "Wail O pine tree for the cedar has fallen" means that Israel's leaders are falling. The leaders are being taken down, and they are crying out before God because of their destruction. Notice the words of vs3: "Listen to the wail of the shepherds."

It's the sound of mourning and despair. These shepherds/human leaders who had depended on their own strength, their own wisdom, their own resources, their own cleverness, and their own ingenuity, at the expense of humbly following the leadership of the Lord, the true Shepherd of Israel, found themselves defeated.

These verses describe the results of what happens when the people of Israel reject the Messiah. There is strong reason to think this is a prophecy of what took place in AD 70, when the Roman army, under the leadership of General Titus, completely destroyed Jerusalem and tore down the temple: "until one stone was not left standing on top of the other."

As we think about the wailing of these fallen shepherds at the destruction of Jerusalem, we are reminded that human leaders always fall short. That is true for political leaders, spiritual leaders, family leaders, academic leaders, business leaders - whatever category of leader you want to name. If we place our faith and trust in a person we will be disappointed. Even at their very best, human shepherds fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). These three verses point to our need for a shepherd, not tainted with sin and selfishness, but a shepherd who far surpasses the shortcomings of human shepherds, a shepherd like the Lord Jesus.

3. The Wisdom of the Forsaken Shepherd, 11:4-14

In 11:4 God calls the prophet Zechariah to be shepherd of the flock "marked for slaughter." Apart from the life of the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus, it is nearly impossible to interpret Zechariah 11:4-14. If we do not understand this passage is pointing to Jesus, it makes no sense at all. But in light of Jesus, God's wise but forsaken Shepherd, this passage makes perfect sense.

In vs7 Zechariah began to shepherd this flock. Shepherd's use a staff which was used to guide sheep, sometimes to correct sheep and sometimes to rescue the sheep. But here Zechariah says that he "took two staves" and he calls one staff 'Favour' which means God's blessing, joy, and promise to His people. He called the other staff 'Union' which speaks, first of all, of the union between God and His people, but also of the union of God's people together, bringing Israel and Judah together under one shepherd.

Zechariah says that he led God's people in such a way that in one month, vs8, he "got rid of the three shepherds." Who are these three shepherds? Historically, there are more than 40 different interpretations, but the one that seems to make the most sense, to me at least, is that these three shepherds are the three types of leader that God gave to Israel: kings, priests and prophets. But the kings and the priests and the prophets of Israel all failed to provide the godly leadership God required from them.

The kings of Israel turned away from the living God and started following after idols. The priests stopped being holy men and started abusing the people. The prophets stopped being God's spokesmen and started saying things just to please the people and the kings. As a result, the Messiah came and ruled over God's people with favour and with union. He replaced all of the inadequate shepherds that had come before Him because He is the only wise and true shepherd. We see how God's people responded to this wise shepherd. "The flock detested me and I grew weary of them." Jesus came to rule over God's people with wisdom, but they, too, rejected the Messiah as their Shepherd.

As we think about Israel's rejection of Jesus, it brings to mind the question, Why do people reject Jesus today? Some people reject Jesus because they don't want to admit that He is God. Some refuse to give up control of their lives to Him. Others reject Him because they think they know everything about Him and find Him to be outdated. They want someone or something that is more sophisticated and intellectually challenging.

Some reject Jesus because they're embarrassed to follow Him in a culture that increasingly mocks and ridicules His name. Others don't want to follow Jesus as their Shepherd because it would mess up their life and the pride they have in it. When Jesus walked this earth, the people of Israel used all of those reasons to reject Him.

What did the Shepherd do when His sheep rejected Him (vs9-10)? He said He would not be their shepherd and he took the staff called 'Favour' and broke it and did the same thing with the staff called 'Union.' He left them without a good and wise shepherd.

After resigning as a shepherd over his flock, Zechariah asked for his wages, which leads to one of the most striking messianic prophecies in the Bible. Vs12 was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, but prophesies exactly how He would be rejected, in great detail: "I told them, 'If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.' So they paid me thirty pieces of silver."

In Exodus 21:32 thirty pieces of silver was the amount someone paid for a slave who had been injured to the point that he was no longer able to work. An able-bodied slave would receive twice that amount of money. So basically, the people said to their shepherd, who had ruled over them and guided them with such wisdom and love: "You are worthless to us. We will only pay as much as we would pay an injured slave." Zechariah sarcastically called this amount a "handsome-price." And so disgusted was he with his wages that he went to the temple and threw the money to the potter who was working there, perhaps supplying vessels for the priests. According to Matthew 27:1-10, Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, brought the money back, and threw it into the temple. The priests took the money and used it to buy an abandoned potter's field as a cemetery for strangers.

Jesus came as God's great, wise shepherd, and yet, he was forsaken (John 1:11). Here's the truth we see illustrated in these verses: We must not reject Jesus, because He's the Shepherd we need the most. If we reject Jesus, He will ultimately reject us (Matt 23:37-38). When we refuse to follow the Lord as our Shepherd, we will inevitably follow someone or something that will lead us to destruction.

4. The Worthlessness of the False Shepherd, 11:15-17

In the final verses of this chapter God calls Zechariah to do something very unusual. Earlier, he had portrayed a good shepherd, but now he is asked to portray a foolish, evil, and worthless shepherd. Vs16 shows that this kind of shepherd will not care for the sheep, will not seek them when they wander away or heal them when they are hurt. Instead, his only purpose will be to devour and destroy them - even to the point of tearing off their hooves.

The prophet's actions are designed to show that, despite having God's Messiah, Israel will turn to false shepherds. Jesus spoke of this when He said, "I have come in My Father's name, yet you don't accept Me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him" (John 5:43). These false shepherds would come to abuse the people of Israel. They would take advantage of them and harm them. Many theologians say that the ultimate expression of the foolish shepherd is the Antichrist of the end times, who will deceive and abuse not only Israel but the entire world (Rev 13:7). Vs17 ends with a word of condemnation for this false shepherd. He would be struck in his arm, representing his strength, and his eye, representing his intelligence. Ultimately, the true Shepherd will triumph over the false (Rev 19:19-20).

As I suggested earlier, where and how you end up will depend on what kind of shepherd you follow. False shepherds always end up being butchers. They always drive God's people to destruction. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads us to life in all its fullness.