

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH 11

This chapter contains a prophecy of the destruction of the Jews, and shows the causes and reasons of it; and is concluded with a prediction concerning antichrist. The destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of it, is signified by figurative expressions, (^{<3810>}Zechariah 11:1,2) which occasions an howling among the shepherds or rulers of Israel, on account of whose cruelty and covetousness the wrath of God came upon them without mercy, (^{<3810>}Zechariah 11:3,5,6) but inasmuch as there were a remnant according to the election of grace among them, named the flock of the slaughter, Christ is called upon to feed them; who undertakes it, and prepares for it, (^{<3810>}Zechariah 11:4,7) but being abhorred by the shepherds, whom he therefore loathed and cut off, he determines to leave the people to utter ruin and destruction, (^{<3810>}Zechariah 11:8,9) and, as a token of it, breaks the two staves asunder he had took to feed them with, (^{<3810>}Zechariah 11:10,11,14) and, as an instance of their ingratitude to him, and which is a justification of his conduct towards them, notice is taken of his being valued at and sold for thirty pieces of silver, (^{<3812>}Zechariah 11:12,13) but, in the place of these shepherds cut off, it is suggested that another should arise, who is described by his folly, negligence, and cruelty, (^{<3815>}Zechariah 11:15,16) to whom a woe is denounced, (^{<3817>}Zechariah 11:17).

Ver. 1. *Open thy doors, O Lebanon*, etc.] By which may be meant, either the temple of Jerusalem, which was built of the cedars of Lebanon;

“the gates of which are said^{f238} to open of themselves forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, when Jochanan ben Zaccai, who lived at the same time, rebuked them, saying, O temple, temple, wherefore dost thou frighten thyself? I know thine end is to be destroyed; for so prophesied Zechariah, the son of Iddo, concerning thee, “open thy doors, O Lebanon”.”

So Lebanon, in (^{<3800>}Zechariah 10:10), is interpreted of the sanctuary, both by the Targum and by Jarchi; or else it may be understood of Jerusalem,

and of the whole land of Judea, because it was situated by it; it was the border of it on the north side.

That the fire may devour thy cedars; of which the temple was built, and the houses of Jerusalem, which were consumed by fire; unless the fortresses of the land are meant. So the Targum paraphrases it,

“and the fire shall consume your fortresses.”

Ver. 2. *Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen*, etc.] By which are designed the princes, nobles, and magistrates of the land: so the Targum interprets them of kings and princes; (see Na 2:3 ^{<2510>}Ezekiel 31:3):

because all the mighty are spoiled; which is an explanation of the figurative expressions in the former clause, and in the following; and designs rich men, as the Targum paraphrases it, who at this time would be spoiled of their wealth and substance.

Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; which the Targum interprets of governors of provinces; and men of power and authority are doubtless intended; (see ^{<2302>}Isaiah 2:13 ^{<3010>}Amos 2:9):

for the forest of the vintage is come down; or rather, “the fortified forest”; meaning the city of Jerusalem, which was a fortified place, and like a forest full of trees, for number of inhabitants, but now cut down and destroyed; (see ^{<2306>}Isaiah 10:16-19).

Ver. 3. [*There is*] *a voice of the howling of the shepherds*, etc.] Which may be understood either of the civil rulers among the Jews, who now lose their honour and their riches; and so the Targum, Jarchi, and Aben Ezra, interpret it of kings; or of the ecclesiastical rulers, the elders of the people, the Scribes and Pharisees:

for their glory is spoiled; their power and authority; their riches and wealth; their places of honour and profit; their offices, posts, and employments, whether in civil or religious matters, are taken from them, and they are deprived of them:

a voice of the roaring of young lions; of princes, comparable to them for their power, tyranny, and cruelty: the Targum is,

“their roaring is as the roaring of young lions:”

for the pride of Jordan is spoiled; a place where lions and their young ones resorted, as Jarchi observes; (see Gill on “^{<249B>}Jeremiah 49:19”). Jordan is here put for the whole land of Judea now wasted, and so its pride and glory gone; as if the waters of Jordan were dried up, the pride and glory of that, and which it showed when its waters swelled and overflowed; hence called by Pliny^{f239} “ambitiosus amnis”, a haughty and ambitious swelling river.

Ver. 4. *Thus saith the Lord my God*, etc.] The Syriac version adds, “to me”; not the Prophet Zechariah, but the Messiah, who calls the Lord his God, as he was man and Mediator, (^{<407>}John 20:17) for what follow are the words of God the Father to him, calling upon him, and giving him a commission to

Feed the flock of the slaughter; meaning the people of the Jews in general, to whom Christ was sent as a prophet, to teach and instruct them by the ministry of the word; so “feeding” is interpreted of prophesying, by the Targum and Jarchi: and these are called “the flock of slaughter”, because of the cruel usage they met with from their shepherds and owners, mentioned in the next verse (^{<315>}Zechariah 11:5); and because they were appointed and given up to ruin and destruction of God, on account of their sins and transgressions; though there was a remnant among them, a little flock, afterwards in this chapter called the poor of the flock (^{<317>}Zechariah 11:7), who were the special care of Christ, and were fed by him in a spiritual manner; and may go by this name, because exposed to the cruelties of men, and are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, (^{<435>}Romans 8:36) these Christ was called upon by his Father in the council of peace to take care of, which he did; and in the everlasting covenant of grace he agreed to feed them; and in the fulness of time he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, who were as sheep without a shepherd; and he fed them with knowledge and with understanding.

Ver. 5. *Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty*, etc.] Not the Romans after Christ came, into whose hands they were delivered, and by whom they were slain in great numbers, not accounting it any sin to put them to death; but the priests, Scribes, Pharisees, and doctors, among the Jews, who ruined and destroyed their souls, by feeding them with poisonous doctrines; teaching them the commandments of men, and to observe the traditions of the elders; and to seek for life and salvation by the works of the law, which was a ministration of condemnation and death to them; and yet thought they did God and the souls of men good service:

and they that sell them; as false teachers make merchandise of the souls of men:

say, Blessed [be] the Lord, for I am rich; having devoured widows' houses and substances, under a pretence of long prayers; and enriched themselves through tithes of everything, and by other methods; as the Scribes and Pharisees did:

and their own shepherds pity them not; those who should have been concerned for the welfare of their souls had no compassion on them. Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, interpret this of God, the Shepherd of Israel; the verb being singular, though the noun is plural: so God is called Makers, Creators, (^{<490>}Psalm 149:2 ^{<210>}Ecclesiastes 12:1) and this sense agrees with the following words.

Ver. 6. *For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord,* etc.] Or spare them; but cause his wrath to come upon them to the uttermost, as it did at the time of Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans;

but, lo, I will deliver the men everyone into his neighbour's hand; this seems to refer to the factions and divisions among themselves during the siege of Jerusalem, when multitudes fell into the hands of the zealots, and heads of parties, and perished by them:

and into the hand of his king; Vespasian the Roman emperor; the Jews having declared, long before this time, that they had no king but Caesar, (^{<495>}John 19:15) and now into his hands they were delivered up:

and they shall smite the land; that is, the Romans shall lay waste the land of Judea:

and out of their hand I will not deliver [them]; as formerly out of the hands of their neighbours, the Philistines, Ammonites, etc. and out of the captivity of Babylon. It denotes that their destruction would be an utter one; nor have they been delivered yet, though it has been over 1900 years ago.

Ver. 7. *And I will feed the flock of slaughter,* etc.] According to the call and commission he had from his divine Father, (^{<810>}Zechariah 11:4) he determines to do as it was enjoined him, and as he had undertook:

[even] you, O poor of the flock; besides the people of the Jews in general, to whom Christ was sent, and he came to feed, there were a small remnant,

according to the election of grace, he had a special regard for; and whom he fed by the word and ordinances with himself, the bread of life; and with the discoveries of his love, and with the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises, the sure mercies of David. These are called “the poor of the flock”, because they were the poor of this world, as were the disciples and followers of Christ; “the poor have the Gospel preached unto them”; (~~AKB~~ Matthew 11:5) and because they were spiritually poor, or poor in spirit, (~~AKB~~ Matthew 5:3) who saw their spiritual poverty, and owned it; who bewailed it, and were humbled under a sense of it; and sought after the true riches; and acknowledged that all they had were owing to the grace of God: and who, as to the frame of their mind, are the meek and humble ones; or, as to their outward state and condition, afflicted ones, as the word^{f240} may be rendered; who were persecuted, reviled, reproached, and accursed by others, (~~AKB~~ John 7:49) and, as to their gifts and graces, the meanest of God’s people:

And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; Jarchi, agreeably to the Targum, interprets this of the division of the kingdom of Israel into two parts, in the times of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Some think persons are meant. In the Talmud^{f241} it is explained of the disciples of the wise men in the land of Israel, who make each other pleasant by their doctrines; and of the disciples of the wise men in Babylon that corrupt one another, or object to one another: according to Aben Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah are intended: others, the good king Josiah, and the bad king Zedekiah: others the priest, and the king, as Abendana observes; and Kimchi explains it of the different manner in which the Lord led the people, according to their behaviour to him; when they behaved well, they had good kings and governors, which led them in a right way, and they were filled with good things; but when they behaved otherwise they had evil kings, and evil befell them. The first of these staves some render “clemency”,^{f242} lenity, kindness, gentleness; and suppose it has respect to the kind and gentle manner in which God dealt with the Jews before the times of Christ, both as to civil and religious things; as to civil things, by bringing them into and settling them in a pleasant land, a land flowing with milk and honey; by giving them wholesome laws, by which they were governed, such as no other nation had; and by setting over them judges, to protect, defend, and deliver them; and kings to rule over them, very wise and good, especially some of them, David, Solomon, etc.: and as to religious things, by giving them a revelation of his mind and will, his

word, statutes, and judgments, he did not give to other nations; and by sending prophets to instruct them in them, and stir them up to the observance of them; and by appointing a place of worship, and settling the form of it; setting apart men to the office of priests, and ordering sacrifices to be offered, with the whole of temple service; which were the beauty of the Lord, to be beheld in his sanctuary: and then the latter, called “Bands”, which some render destroyers^{f243}, may denote either the destruction of this people, when they sinned against God, either by the Chaldeans or by the Romans; when severity was exercised on them, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost, in the ruin of their nation, city, and temple: and others think these may refer to the different usage of the Roman emperors, with respect to the Jews, who, for the most part, used them kindly, until the times of Nero; but afterwards, by him and other emperors, they were treated very roughly, until they were utterly destroyed by them; but as it plainly appears from the context that this is spoken of no other shepherd but Christ, and of no other feeding but his, they must design the instruments he makes use of, and still continues to make use of, in feeding his people. Shepherds commonly have but one staff, rod, or crook; but Christ has two: so the psalmist makes mention of a “rod” and “staff”, when speaking of Christ as a Shepherd, (^{1920b} Psalm 23:4) and these two staves some interpret of his twofold way of government, lenity to his people, and severity to his enemies; but rather it denotes the very great diligence and care Christ takes of his flock, both in guiding and directing them, and in protecting and defending them from their enemies: he fed his people in his own person when here on earth, with his staff “Beauty”, or “clemency”; he was sent, and came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and had great compassion on them, as being like sheep without a shepherd; their present shepherds, or who bore that name, being such as are before described: and his tenderness and gentleness towards them appeared in his calling sinners to repentance; in his gracious invitations to come unto him; by his kind reception of them; his affable and courteous deportment towards them; the gentle reproofs and suitable instructions he gave them, and the comfortable truths of the Gospel he delivered to them; and, during his personal ministry, he suffered his disciples to go nowhere else with his Gospel; and, at his resurrection from the dead, ordered them to begin preaching at Jerusalem, and to continue preaching to the Jews first everywhere, as they did, until they rejected the Gospel; and then Christ broke both his staves, or removed the Gospel, and the ordinances of it, which I think are meant by these staves: for these staves are not only ensigns of the shepherd, as

instruments of guiding, directing, and protecting the flock; but emblematical, as their names show; and emblems they might be of the stay and staff of food, of the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, (^{<218B>}Isaiah 3:1) and we find that Christ's rod and staff, in a mystical sense, are of use to feed, refresh, and comfort, as well as to guide and direct, (^{<220B>}Psalm 23:4) by the staff "Beauty" we are to understand the Gospel, which was preached to the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem, which is beautiful and pleasant in itself; the doctrines of it are so, such as those of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation by Christ; and such are the promises of it, being absolute and unconditional, sure and suitable to the cases of God's people, and likewise its ministers, (^{<250B>}Isaiah 52:7) and the ordinances of it comely and lovely; and besides, it sets forth the beauty of Christ, and represents the saints' beautifulness in him; and it is like the shepherd's staff; of great use in feeding the flock, not only by supplying with food, being food itself, milk for babes, and meat for strong men; and by directing to Christ, his covenant and church, where it is to be had; but by setting right such who are going in wrong pastures; pushing forward such as are backward to duty; fetching back such as are driven away, or backslidden, and preserving the whole from wolves and bears: and by the other staff, "Bands", the ordinances of the Gospel are designed, which are of use to keep the saints together, and to direct them to proper food; particularly the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which, as it is a feeding ordinance, and sets forth Christ, as food for faith, his flesh which is meat indeed, and his blood which is drink indeed; so it is a knitting and uniting ordinance, and is fitly expressed by "bands"; is not only a means of knitting the affections to Christ, whose love is so fully expressed in it; but of uniting the hearts of believers to one another, who herein become one bread, and one body, and feed together; and have communion with each other, and maintain their church state in a comfortable manner; and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; and the ordinances of the Gospel, though they are such bonds as are disagreeable to graceless persons, who are for breaking them asunder; yet they are a yoke that is easy, and a burden light to the people of God, (^{<340B>}Psalm 2:3 ^{<411B>}Matthew 11:30). It may be observed, that the word for "bands" is rendered "pilots", (^{<327B>}Ezekiel 27:8,29) and masters or governors of ships, (Jon 1:6) and is so rendered here^{f244}; and as churches may be compared to ships, (^{<688B>}Revelation 8:9) so may ministers of the word to those who have the government and direction of them; and whose business lies in the ministration of the word, and the administration of ordinances, and taking care of the discipline of the

Gospel: this seems to be the evangelic sense of these words; and they express the manner in which Christ fed his own dear people in Judea, partly by his own ministry, and partly by the ministry of his apostles, while he had an interest there, until the sins of that nation brought utter ruin upon them. It is a most ridiculous application made of these two staves by Antoninus, archbishop of Florence^{f245}, that Zechariah, being of the Dominican order, took to him in the person of God two staves; the one he called “Beauty”, which is the order of the preaching Friars; and the other “Bands”, which is the order of the Minors:

and I fed the flock; with the said staves, as he had determined; which includes the doing of the whole office of a shepherd; taking an exact account of his sheep, that none be lost; going before them, and setting them an example in the exercise of grace and discharge of duty; leading them to the still waters of his Father’s love; to the fountains and fulness of his own grace; to the rich provisions of his house, and the green pastures of Gospel ordinances; feeding them himself, and with himself, the bread of life, the hidden and heavenly manna; appointing shepherds under him, whom he qualifies to be pastors, gives them to his churches as such, and who receive from him the doctrines of the Gospel to feed them with; and protecting them from all their enemies, the roaring lion, Satan, wolves in sheep’s clothing, false teachers, and the world’s goats, who thrust with side and shoulder, and push with their horns of power; as well as by seeking that which is lost; bringing back that which is driven, or drawn away; binding up that which is broken; strengthening the weak; healing the sick; and watching over the whole flock night and day, lest any hurt them.

Ver. 8. *Three shepherds also I cut off in one month*, etc.] Not Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, as is suggested in the Talmud^{f246}; nor David, Adonijah, and Joab, who died in the space of a month; nor the three kings, Jehoash, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, who died by the hand of their enemies in a very little time; which is the sense of some, as Abendana observes; nor the three last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, according to Aben Ezra; nor the three Maccabees, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, as Abarbinel; rather the three sects among the Jews, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, instead of which last some put the Herodians; and others the Scribes; though some are of opinion that the three sanhedrim or courts of judicature among the Jews are designed; but it seems best of all to interpret them of the three orders of magistrates among them, princes, prophets, and priests; and the “cutting” them “off” may denote the cessation of civil government,

the sealing up of vision and prophecy, and the putting an end to sacrifice; which is much better than to interpret them of the three Roman emperors who succeeded Nero; that is, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, who were put to death by their own subjects, within the space of a year and some days^{f247}; and which is a term of time that can not well be thought to be expressed by a month; which either signifies in general a small space of time; or, if a certain month is meant, either it designs the month Nisan, in which Christ suffered, when of right sacrifice should have ceased, as well as then prophecy was sealed up, and there was no more of it among the Jews, nor any civil government in their hands: or else the month Ab, in which the city of Jerusalem was burnt; and so an end was put in fact to all the above offices there. It may be that a month of years is intended, as in (^{411D}Revelation 11:2 13:5) and so Abarbinel here interprets it; though he applies it to the times of the Maccabees; but it may respect the thirty years, or thereabout, which were between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem, within which compass of time the above events were actually and manifestly fulfilled:

and my soul loathed them; because they did not perform the duties of their office; the civil magistrate did not govern according to the laws of God; the prophets did not teach sound doctrine; and the priests did not do their service aright, nor teach the people the use and end of sacrifices, and in them direct to the Messiah, as they should have done: wherefore Christ expressed his dislike of them by words in his ministry, particularly in Matthew chapter twenty three, (^{423B}Matthew 23:1-39) and by deeds, causing vengeance to come upon them to the entire removal of them: or, “my soul was shortened”, or “contracted in them”, or “towards them”^{f248}; his affections were lessened towards them; he loathed their ways and works, which were not good; and he rejected and cast them off as his people, and wrote a “loammi” on them; took away his Gospel from them, and abolished their civil and church state:

and their soul also abhorred me; which is the reason of the former; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“and my Word cast them away, because their soul abhorred my worship;”

all ranks and orders of men among the Jews had Christ in abhorrence; they abhorred his person, his name, his miracles, his doctrines, his ordinances, and his people; this they did because of his mean appearance; and because

of his inveighing against their traditions, superstitions, and immoralities; and this appeared by their contemptuous rejection of him as the Messiah; by their crucifixion of him; and by persecuting his disciples and followers.

Ver. 9. *Then said I, I will not feed you*, etc.] That is, any longer; either personally, or by his apostles; he fed them himself, during his public ministry; and afterwards by his apostles, whom he ordered to preach the Gospel to the Jews first; but that being contradicted, blasphemed, and despised by them, they were ordered to turn away from them, and go to the Gentiles: this shows that not the shepherds only, but the body of the people, abhorred Christ and his Gospel: and therefore it was taken away from them:

that that dieth, let it die; literally, by the pestilence, that going by the name of death in Scripture; and spiritually, they that are dead in sin, let them continue so; let them die through famine of the word they have despised; let them die in their sins, and die the second death, they justly deserve:

and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; literally, by the sword; spiritually, the meaning is, that whereas some were in righteous judgment appointed to ruin, vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; let them be left to themselves, to a judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, and be cut off as unfruitful branches, and be no more in a church state here, and hereafter cast into everlasting burnings:

and let the rest eat everyone the flesh of another; through famine; or destroy each other in their internal divisions, which was the case of the Jews, when Jerusalem was besieged; (see ^{<485>}Galatians 5:15).

Ver. 10. *And I took my staff, [even] Beauty, and cut it asunder*, etc.] Signifying that he dropped his pastoral care of them: the Gospel indeed, which is meant by the staff “Beauty”, cannot be made void; it will have its designed effect; it is the everlasting Gospel, and will endure; its blessings, promises, doctrines, ordinances, and ministers, shall continue, till all the elect are gathered in, even unto the second coming of Christ: but then it may be removed from one place to another; it may be taken from one people, and given to another; and which is generally owing to contempt of it, unfruitfulness under it, and indifference to it; and this is the case here, it designs the taking away of the Gospel from the Jews, who despised it, and the carrying of it into the Gentile world; (see ^{<213>}Matthew 21:43 ^{<413>}Acts 13:46,47):

that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people; not the covenant of works, that was made with all mankind in Adam; that was broke, not by the Lord, but by man; and was broke before the Gospel was published; nor the covenant of grace, for this was not made with all the people, nor can it be broken; but the Mosaic economy, the Sinai covenant, called the old covenant, which gradually vanished away: it was of right abolished at the death of Christ; when the Gospel was entirely removed, it more appeared to be so; and this was thoroughly done at the destruction of the city and temple. The last clause may be rendered, “which” covenant “I have made with all the people”; the Gentiles, having promised and given orders to send the Gospel unto them, which was accordingly done.

Ver. 11. *And it was broken in that day*, etc.] In right, the day Christ died; apparently, when the Gospel, the substance of it, was removed; and, in fact, at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction:

and so the poor of the flock; (see Gill on “³⁸¹⁰⁷Zechariah 11:7”):

that waited upon me; as servants on their masters; as clients on their patron; as beggars at the door for alms; as attendants on the worship of God, for the manifestations of himself, for the performance of promises, and for answers of prayer: or “observed me”^{f249}; what he said and did, his word, and his ordinances; what he abolished, and what he instituted:

knew that it [was] the word of the Lord; either that Christ the Shepherd was the essential Word of the Lord; or that the prophecies concerning the destruction of the Jews, their civil and ecclesiastical state, were the word and decree of God now fulfilled; or that the Gospel taken from them is the word of the Lord, which he is the author of; his grace is the matter and substance of; and which he speaks by his ministers; and may be known by the matter and efficacy of it; by the refreshment and comfort it gives; by its leading souls to Christ; and by the harmony, agreement, and uniformity of its doctrines.

Ver. 12. *And I said unto them, If ye think good*, etc.] Not to the poor of the flock that waited on him, and knew the word of the Lord, and valued it; but to the other Jews that despised Christ and his Gospel:

give me my price; or, “give my price”^{f250}; what I am valued at by you, to Judas the betrayer: or the price due unto him for feeding the flock, such as faith in him, love to him, reverence and worship of him. So the Targum

paraphrases it, “do my will”. Kimchi says the price is repentance, and good works:

and if not, forbear; unless all is done freely, willingly, and cheerfully; (see ^{<4016>}Ezekiel 2:5,7) or, if worth nothing, give nothing:

So they weighed for my price thirty [pieces] of silver; the price a servant was valued at, (^{<0213>}Exodus 21:32) see the fulfilment of this prophecy in (^{<4015>}Matthew 26:15). The Jews own ^{f251} that this prophecy belongs to the Messiah; but wrongly interpret it of thirty precepts given by him: in just retaliation and righteous judgment, thirty Jews were sold by the Romans for a penny, by way of contempt of them ^{f252}.

Ver. 13. *And the Lord said unto me*, etc.] The Prophet Zechariah, in a visionary way representing the sanhedrim of the Jews, the chief priests, scribes, and elders:

Cast it unto the potter; for the purchase of his field, in order to make a burying ground of it for strangers:

a goodly price that I was prized at of them; this is sarcastically said; meaning that it was a very poor price; and showed that they had no notion of the worth and value of Christ, the Pearl of great price:

and I took the thirty [pieces] of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord; it is a question with some what these pieces of silver were; they are commonly understood of silver shekels. So the Targum, in (^{<0216>}Genesis 20:16 45:22) renders pieces of silver by shekels of silver; and Eusebius ^{f253} calls these here thirty staters, the same with shekels; which, if common shekels, reckoned at one shilling and three pence, made but thirty seven shillings and sixpence; and if shekels of the sanctuary, which at most were but two shillings and sixpence, thirty of these would make but three pounds fifteen shillings; and therefore may be truly called, ironically speaking, “a goodly price”; being no more than the price of a servant, as before observed: but Drusius objects to this, seeing a potter’s field was bought with this money; and asks, who can believe that a field near so populous a city as Jerusalem could be bought for thirty shekels? and observes, from R. Elias Levita ^{f254}, that it is a rule with their doctors, that all silver mentioned in the law signifies shekels; in the prophets, pounds; and in the Hagiographa, talents: this is said, but not proved: to understand these of pounds, indeed, would make the price considerable, and sufficient for the purchase of a large field; for a silver maneh or pound with the Jews

was of the value of sixty shekels, (³⁶¹²Ezekiel 45:12) and thirty of these make two hundred and seventy pounds; but then this would not in an ironical way be called “a goodly price”: and as to the objection about the purchase of a field with such a sum of money as thirty shekels amount to, it may be observed, what Grotius seems rightly to conjecture, that this was a field the potter had dug up, and had made the most of it, and so was good for nothing but for such an use, for which it was bought, to bury strangers in. It is also a difficulty to fix it certainly to whom this money was ordered to be given, and was given. It is here said “to the potter”; but Jarchi and Kimchi observe, that some of their interpreters render it the “treasurer”; **a** and **y** being sometimes changed for one another; thus, the Targum paraphrases it,

“under the hand of the treasurer;”

and so others^{f255}; and indeed the money was given to the chief priests and elders, some of whom might be in that office, (^{417B}Matthew 27:3,6) though there is no need of such an alteration of the word, since the money Judas took for betraying Christ, and cast into the temple to the priests, they took up, and gave it to the potter for the field they bought of him with it; and, in the evangelist, the phrase by way of explanation is rendered, “for the potter’s field”, and may be here properly enough translated, “for the potter”; as the particle **l a** is sometimes used^{f256}; that is, to be given to him for purchase money^{f257}: and whereas the money is said to be cast, or given to him, “in the house of the Lord”, i.e. in the temple, it appears a fact, in the accomplishment of this prophecy, that it was cast into the temple, (^{417B}Matthew 27:5) and was took up by the priests; who, in all probability, sent for the potter thither, and agreed with him for his field, and paid him his money there; for there is no reason to believe that he had a workhouse for his business in the temple; though it may be he had one near it; (see ^{248D}Jeremiah 18:1,2) and worked for the service of it, since earthen vessels were used in temple service^{f258}. The accomplishment of all this is in (^{417B}Matthew 27:7-10).

Ver. 14. *Then I cut asunder mine other staff, [even] Bands,* etc.] By which is meant, either the removal of the form of civil government from the Jews; or the abrogation of the Mosaic law, and the carnal ordinances of the Jews, in which judaizing Christians joined them, until the destruction of Jerusalem; or rather the ordinances of the Gospel, which, upon taking that away, ceased:

that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel; the Gospel and Gospel ordinances being removed from the Jews, there was no more work of conversion among them; their church state came to nothing, and an entire disagreement between them and the Gentiles ensued: and so it is when God takes away his word and ordinances from a people, they are unchurched and their brotherhood is broken, those being the bands which keep them together; and therefore, when loosed, their unity and society cease. There seems to be an allusion to the case of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and of the ten tribes; the former are often signified by Judah only; and the latter by Israel or Ephraim: the division between them was made in the times of Rehoboam, which continued unto their respective captivities; after the Jews' return from the Babylonish captivity, there was some show of an union between them; some of the ten tribes returning with the Jews, and coalescing in one state; and moreover, at their certain stated feasts, they came from different parts of the world, and joined together in religious service; (see ~~4000~~ Acts 2:1-47) but, upon the dissolution of their civil and church state, this friendly correspondence was broken off, and their communion with each other ceased: and as for the Jews, after the Christians were called out from among them at Jerusalem, and removed to Pella, they fell into internal divisions and quarrels among themselves, which lasted during the siege of that city; and when it was taken and destroyed, their brotherhood and union among themselves were broken to such a degree, that they were scattered one from another; and now know not of what kingdom and tribe they are, whether of Judah or Israel, or of what tribe in either.

Ver. 15. *And the Lord said unto me*, etc.] The Prophet Zechariah:

Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd; the meaning is, that the prophet should put on the habit of a shepherd, and take a scrip and staff in his hands, and represent a foolish shepherd, hereafter described.

Ver. 16. *For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land*, etc.] Not in the land of Judea, but in the Roman empire; and so not Herod, nor King Agrippa, as Kimchi; nor Antiochus Epiphanes, as others; nor those wicked priests and princes, who governed after the times of Zechariah; nor the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's times, though they are often called fools by him, and were truly foolish shepherds; nor even Titus Vespasian, who destroyed the city and temple; nor Bar Cozba, who set up for the Messiah, and was a false one; or any other of that sort. Calmet^{f259} thinks this designs

the Roman emperors, successors of Tiberius, under whom Jesus Christ was crucified. Caligula succeeded Tiberius. Claudius Caligula, and Nero succeeded Claudius: everyone knows (adds he) the characters of those princes, that they were truly foolish shepherds, mad, wicked, and cruel: but rather it intends shepherd, or shepherds, not in a civil, but in an ecclesiastic sense; all such after Christ, who took upon them this office, but did not perform it aright, as heretics, false teachers, with which the first ages abounded; and especially it points at the bishop of Rome, and all under him, when he fell off from the true doctrine and discipline of the Gospel, the man of sin, or antichrist, as Jerom rightly observes; who, though his coming is according to the working of Satan, yet may be said to be raised up by the Lord, because he suffered him to rise; and by his secret providence, and wise ordination in righteous judgment, he came to the height of his power: with him agrees the name of a “shepherd”; he calls himself the vicar of Christ, the chief shepherd and bishop of souls; Peter’s successor, who was ordered to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ; and universal pastor, and a single one, that will not admit of any associate. The character of a “foolish” one belongs to him, though he would be thought to be wise; nor is he wanting in wicked craft and cunning, but ignorant of the pastoral office, and how to feed the church of God; and is a wicked or evil shepherd, as the word^{f260} used is pretty much the same in sound with our English word “evil”: he governing the flock, not with and according to the word of God, but according to his own will and laws; for his “instruments” are laws of his own making, an exercise of tyrannical power over kings and princes, unwritten traditions, pardons, indulgences, etc.:

[which] shall not visit those that be cut off; not that cut off themselves, or are cut off by the church; but such that go astray, wander from the fold, and are in danger of being lost; *twdbwa*, that are perishing, as Jarchi explains the word; these he looks not after, nor has he any regard to their spiritual and eternal welfare:

neither shall seek the young one; the lamb, the tender of the flock; he will not do as the good shepherd does, carry the lambs in his arms, (²³¹¹Isaiah 40:11) or, “that which wanders”^{f261}; that strays from the fold, and out of the pastures, or the right way:

nor heal that that is broken; that is of a broken and of a contrite spirit; or whose bones are broken, and consciences wounded, through falls into sin:

nor feed that that standeth still; that can not move from its place to get fresh pasture, but is obliged to stay where it is, and needs supply and support there:

but he shall eat the flesh of the fat; that is, as the Targum well explains it,

“shall spoil the substance of the rich;”

(see ~~668B~~ Revelation 18:3,7):

and tear their claws in pieces; take all their power and privileges from them; all which well agrees with the pope of Rome.

Ver. 17. *Woe to the idol shepherd*, etc.] Or, “the shepherd of nothing,”^{f262}; that is, no true shepherd, that is good for nothing, for an idol is nothing in the world, (~~480B~~ 1 Corinthians 8:4) and who is an idol himself, sits in the temple of God, and is worshipped as if he was God. (~~500B~~ 2 Thessalonians 2:4 ~~668C~~ Revelation 13:4,8,15) and is an encourager and defender of idolatry:

that leaveth the flock; has no regard to its spiritual concerns; does not feed it, but fleece it, and leaves it to the cruelty and avarice of his creatures under him:

the sword [shall be] upon his arm; with which he should feed the flock:

and upon his right eye; with which he should watch over it:

his arm shall be clean dried up; his power shall be taken away from him; the antichristian states, which supported him, shall withdraw from him; the ten kings shall hate the whore, strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire, (~~667C~~ Revelation 17:16):

and his right eye shall be utterly darkened; not only given up to judicial blindness, which has been always his case; but his kingdom shall be full of darkness, (~~668D~~ Revelation 16:10) his hidden things of darkness shall be exposed; all his crafty schemes will be confounded; and all his wit, cunning, and subtlety, will cease; and everything desirable to him will be taken away from him. His “arm” may denote his secular power, which shall be taken away from him: and his “right eye” his knowledge of the Scriptures, judgment in controversies, and infallibility pretended to by him, which will cease, even in the opinion of men. Ben Melech interprets it the eye of his heart or mind; and so Aben Ezra.