

Zechariah 11:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

Analysis

And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. The shepherd performs a symbolic act of breaking the staff called "**Beauty**" (No'am, נֹעַם), representing grace, favor, and covenant relationship. "**Cut it asunder**" (va-egda, וַאֲגִדָּה) means to cut down, hew, break—a decisive, violent action signifying the end of something precious.

The purpose is explicit: **"that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people"** (le-hafer et-beriti asher karati et-kol ha-ammim, לְהַפִּיר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הָעַמִּים). The verb hafer means to annul, frustrate, break—ending a formal covenant relationship. The covenant "with all the people" likely refers to God's unique relationship with Israel among the nations, the covenant favor that set them apart. Alternatively, it may refer to God's restraint of the nations from destroying Israel—a covenant arrangement that kept pagan powers in check.

This breaking of the "Beauty" staff prophesies the end of the old covenant system. When Israel rejected their Messiah, the Mosaic covenant with its temple, priesthood, and sacrifices became obsolete. Hebrews 8:13 states: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The temple's destruction in AD 70 marked the visible end of the old covenant economy.

Historical Context

Jesus announced the new covenant at the Last Supper: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). His death inaugurated a new covenant, rendering the old one obsolete. The book of Hebrews extensively develops this theme: Christ's priesthood supersedes Aaron's; His sacrifice supersedes the temple system; the new covenant fulfills and replaces the old (Hebrews 7-10).

The breaking of "Beauty" had visible historical fulfillment in AD 70. The temple where God's presence had dwelt was destroyed and never rebuilt. The priesthood ended—no more sacrifices could be offered. The covenant signs (circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws) lost their significance as markers of God's special people, as the gospel went to all nations without distinction. The favor Israel enjoyed as God's uniquely chosen nation transferred to the church, composed of Jews and Gentiles united in Christ (Romans 11:11-25; Ephesians 2:11-22).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the breaking of "Beauty" (the covenant of favor) relate to the end of the old covenant and the establishment of the new covenant in Christ's blood?
2. What does this teach about the conditional nature of covenant relationship—that persistent rebellion leads to covenant breaking?
3. How should this inform our understanding of the church's relationship to Israel in God's redemptive plan?

Interlinear Text

וָאֶקַח	אֶת	מַקְלִי	אֶת	נָעַם	וָאֲגַדְתִּי	אֶת
And I took	H853	my staff	H853	even Beauty	and cut it asunder	H853
H3947		H4731		H5278	H1438	
לְהַפִּיר	אֶת	בְּרִיתִי	אֲשֶׁר	כָּבַדְתִּי	אֶת	כָּל
that I might break	H853	my covenant	H834	which I had made	H854	H3605
H6565		H1285		H3772		
הָעַמִּים:						
with all the people						
H5971						

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 11:7 (Parallel theme): And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

Psalms 89:39 (Covenant): Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

Jeremiah 14:21 (Covenant): Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

Psalms 90:17 (Parallel theme): And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Luke 21:32 (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Hosea 1:9 (Parallel theme): Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

1 Samuel 2:30 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:

but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour,
and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

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