

# Zechariah 11:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

## Analysis

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**And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.** After portraying the rejected Good Shepherd, Zechariah now must enact the role of "**a foolish shepherd**" (ro'eh ewili, רֹעֵה עִוִּיל). The term ewili (עִוִּיל, "foolish") doesn't mean lacking intelligence but morally perverse, wicked, and destructive—the opposite of wise and good. The "**instruments**" (keli, כֵּלִי) are the tools of the shepherd's trade: staff, rod, scrip, and sling—but these will be wielded by a worthless leader.

This symbolic action introduces verses 16-17's description of the worthless shepherd who exploits rather than protects the flock. He fails to care for the perishing, seek the wandering, heal the broken, or feed the healthy—instead, he devours the sheep and tears them apart. This anti-shepherd represents wicked leadership God raises as judgment upon Israel for rejecting the Good Shepherd.

Interpretations identify this foolish shepherd variously: immediate application to corrupt leaders in Zechariah's era, typological fulfillment in figures like the false messiahs and corrupt priests of the inter-testament and first-century period, and eschatological fulfillment in the Antichrist who will deceive Israel during the tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12). Jesus warned that though they rejected Him who came in His Father's name, they would receive another coming in his own name (John 5:43)—the ultimate foolish shepherd.

## Historical Context

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Throughout Israel's history, wicked leaders exploited God's people: corrupt priests like Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:12-17), evil kings like Ahab and Manasseh, false prophets who proclaimed peace when there was no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). These leaders consumed the flock rather than feeding it, fulfilling Ezekiel 34's condemnation of Israel's shepherds.

The first-century witnessed numerous false messiahs who led followers to destruction (Acts 5:36-37). After rejecting Jesus, Israel experienced devastating judgment under Roman oppression, culminating in AD 70's destruction. Church history records how false teachers infiltrate whenever true shepherds are rejected (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

Eschatologically, this foolish shepherd prefigures the Antichrist—the final false shepherd who will deceive many, establish himself in God's temple (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and bring unprecedented tribulation before Christ's return destroys him (Revelation 19:19-21). The pattern repeats: reject the true shepherd, receive false ones.

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. What characteristics distinguish true shepherds from foolish shepherds in church leadership today?
2. How does rejecting faithful biblical teaching open the door to deceptive false teachers?

3. What does this prophecy teach about God's judgment sometimes taking the form of giving people the leaders they deserve?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה	אֵלַי	עוֹד	קח	לךְ
said	And the LORD	H413	H5750	unto me Take	H0
H559	H3068			H3947	
כָּל־י	רֹעֵה	אֶלְוִי:			
unto thee yet the instruments	shepherd	of a foolish			
H3627	H7462	H196			

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