

Zechariah 11:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter. God commissions the prophet (representing the Messianic Shepherd) to "feed the flock of the slaughter" (re'eh et-tson ha-haregah, רְאֵה אֶת-צָאן הַהֲרֵגָה). The term haregah means slaughter, killing—these sheep are doomed, destined for destruction. The phrase recalls Isaiah 53:7: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." This flock represents Israel under corrupt leadership, heading toward judgment.

The command "**Feed**" (re'eh, רְאֵה) means to shepherd, tend, pasture—providing care, guidance, and protection. God sends a faithful shepherd to this doomed flock, offering them one final opportunity for salvation. This is Christ's ministry to Israel: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Jesus came to feed and save the flock heading toward slaughter (the destruction of AD 70).

The phrase "**Thus saith the LORD my God**" establishes divine authority for this mission. The prophet speaks as representative of the true Shepherd who comes on God's commission. This is an enacted prophecy, where Zechariah performs symbolic actions representing the Messiah's future work among Israel.

Historical Context

This begins the symbolic shepherd narrative extending through verse 17. Zechariah performs prophetic actions representing the Messiah's ministry and

Israel's rejection. The "flock of the slaughter" depicts Israel in Jesus's day—outwardly religious but inwardly corrupt, under Roman occupation, with false shepherds (Pharisees, Sadducees) leading them toward destruction.

Jesus fulfilled this commission perfectly. He came as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), feeding Israel with truth, healing their sick, calling them to repentance. He wept over Jerusalem's impending doom (Luke 19:41-44) and repeatedly warned them to repent before judgment came. His parables depicted the religious leaders as wicked tenants who would kill the vineyard owner's son (Matthew 21:33-44). The flock's "slaughter" was Rome's destruction of Jerusalem—precisely because they rejected their Shepherd.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does it reveal about God's character that He sends a shepherd to feed even a "flock of the slaughter"—those heading toward judgment?
2. How did Jesus fulfill this commission to feed Israel, and how did they respond?
3. What does this teach about the urgency of responding to God's provision before judgment comes?

Interlinear Text

הַבְּרִiggָה: צָאַנְתָּה אֶת רְעֵבָה אֶלְכָה יְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים
H3541 Thus saith H559 the LORD H3068 my God H430 Feed H7462 H853 the flock H6629 of the slaughter H2028

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.

Matthew 23:37 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

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