

Zechariah 11:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

Analysis

Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. After cutting off the false shepherds, the Good Shepherd announces withdrawal from those who reject Him. "**I will not feed you**" (lo er'eh etkhem, נֹאֶתֶּךְ) is judicial abandonment—ceasing to provide pastoral care. This recalls Jesus's words: "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! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37-38).

"**That that dieth, let it die**" repeats for emphasis the consequences of rejecting the Shepherd's care. "**That that is to be cut off, let it be cut off**" speaks of being removed, destroyed—the same verb used in verse 8. Without the shepherd's protection, the flock faces death and destruction. This prophesies the horror of AD 70, when those who rejected Christ faced Rome's legions.

"**Let the rest eat every one the flesh of another**" (ve-ha-nish'arot tokalna ishah et-besar re'utah, וְהַנִּשְׁאָרוֹת תָּקְלִנָּה אֲשֶׁר רְעוּתָה) prophesies cannibalism—the ultimate horror of siege warfare. This fulfills Deuteronomy 28:53-57's covenant curses. Josephus records that during Jerusalem's siege, a woman named Mary actually killed and ate her own infant—a fulfillment so shocking it became infamous throughout the Roman world.

Historical Context

Jesus withdrew from Israel's leadership class and increasingly focused on His disciples, preparing them to take the gospel to all nations. After His resurrection, He commissioned them: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), effectively bypassing the temple system and religious establishment. The apostles initially preached in Jerusalem, but after Stephen's martyrdom, persecution scattered them to the nations (Acts 8:1-4).

The predicted horrors came to pass in AD 66-70. Josephus's account reads like commentary on this verse: rival Jewish factions fought each other, destroying food supplies; famine became so severe that people ate leather, grass, and eventually each other; those who tried to escape were crucified by the Romans (up to 500 per day); the temple was burned and destroyed; over a million died. Those who rejected the Shepherd experienced what He warned: "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does God's withdrawal of shepherding care reveal about the terrifying consequences of persistent rejection?
2. How does this verse demonstrate that Jesus's warnings about judgment were not vindictive but loving attempts to prevent disaster?
3. In what ways can individuals or churches today experience similar withdrawal of God's gracious care through persistent rebellion?

Interlinear Text

Then said H3808 **I I will not feed** H853 **let it die**

H559

H3808

I I will not feed

תָּמָם וְתִּתְּמַכֵּן מִ

H853

let it die

let it die

H4191

תפ"ד

תפוח

וְהַבְשָׁאָר וְת

and that that is to be cut off and that that is to be cut off

H3582

H3582

and let the rest

H7604

רעותה: בישר את אשיה תאכֵלנה

eat

every one

H853

the flesh

of another

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 43:11 (Parallel theme): And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword.

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