

5 Zechariah 9-11 TRUE LEADERSHIP

From your own experience what does bad leadership look like?

In Zechariah 9-11, the central issue is leadership. As we'll discover, so much of this part of Zechariah is about the history of bad leadership for the nation of Israel. But it's also about the saving redeeming leadership that God promises to provide. It's a section of Zechariah that contains both bad news and good news. The nation of Israel—has to go through pain and suffering at the hands of their oppressive leaders, but God won't let that situation go on forever—he will ultimately be the perfect leader for them.

One thing to note as we explore this last part of Zechariah—we've now moved into the portion of Zechariah's message which are called 'oracles'. There are two—chapters 9-11, then chapters 12-14. These oracles can be confusing for the modern reader. They employ poetry and drama. And they don't contain a straight chronological message, rather repeat the same story over and over, from various different angles.

Read Zechariah 9:1-17

1. How would you describe God from the language that's used in verses 1, 4, 6, 13-15?

In Zechariah's time none of these cities and nations were that powerful—these were enemies of Israel from centuries earlier. It seems these past adversaries of Israel are representative of any power that comes up against God's people. God is their great warrior and He will watch over these people and overthrow the oppressor.

2. What makes the figure of verses 9-10 surprising given the description of God in the surrounding passages?

For the Israelites of Zechariah's day, they would have understood that much of God's promises in chapter 9-11 were still ahead of them, yet to be fulfilled. As v16 says. 'The Lord their God will save them *on that day*, that is, a future day. These promises were about the time when God's messiah would finally arrive. Fill in the following table to show other ways this day of salvation is described.

Passage	What will the Lord do for his people?
10:6	1. 2. 3.
10:8	1. 2.

Read Matthew 21:1-11

3. What are the parallels between Jesus’ situation and the situation Zechariah foretells? (note especially the political context)

4. What should be the conclusion about Jesus?

5. What aspects of Zechariah’s prophecy are left unfulfilled after Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem?

6. How does Jesus the gentle one, the one who rides in on a donkey, not a war-horse—bring salvation and restoration?

7. What aspect of the gospel message of Jesus (Zechariah 9:6-7,10) did the early Jewish Christians have trouble with? (see Acts 10:34-36). Why do you think this would have been hard to accept?

Read Zechariah 11.

8. Already in chapter 9 (v16) and chapter 10 (v2-3) God speaks of his leadership over Israel in terms of a shepherd to his flock. It’s a picture of care and love. But in chapter 11, this imagery of shepherd and flock takes a very sinister turn. From verse 4 onwards God asks Zechariah to make an illustration in his actions—that is, be the shepherd leader to Israel just as God has been throughout the history of the nation. As recorded in this passage, how does Israel respond to Zechariah’s/God’s leadership?

9. According to this passage, what have the leaders and the people themselves been like?

10. According to this passage, what will be the shepherd's response?

There are many elements of this oracle that are hard to work out. Who are the three shepherds in verse 8? Who is the shepherd God will raise up in verse 16? But it seems the overall message here is to show what Israel has been like all along and how God responded to their hard heartedness. Eventually God did what he promised—because they rejected God as their great shepherd, he broke the united nation of Israel/Judah and scattered the people to the surrounding nations (the exile). Read the below passage to see how this judgement from God was described at the time.

¹⁴ But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God. ¹⁵

They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them.

They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do....

²⁰ Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence. 2 Kings 17:14-15, 20

11. In verse 12, there is mention of the people paying Zechariah the prophet/shepherd the price of thirty pieces of silver. But then God commands Zechariah to throw it to the potter who worked at the temple (the temple required a constant supply of ceremonially clean vessels for its activities). What do you think this throwing of thirty pieces of silver symbolises?

12. Let's zoom straight to Jesus. **Read Matthew 26:14-16 and 27:1-10.** Note the Jewish leadership's treatment of Jesus recorded in these passages. Considering Zechariah 11, what will be the Lord's attitude to the Jewish leaders?

Jesus is not like the leaders of Israel. He presents himself as the good shepherd. The significance of this title is demonstrated in John's Gospel where we read of Jesus healing a man born blind. We pick up the story after the man has been expelled by the Pharisee for testifying about Jesus. **Read John 9:35-10:15.**

13. What connections are there between Jesus' teaching in this passage and the teaching in Zechariah 11?

14. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5. What should shepherds be like and what should sheep be like?

15. Are there any specific implications of this for your conduct, or for conduct within church or growth group?

Pray Give thanks for Jesus who was the long promised king, who gently came into Jerusalem and gave his life for us. Pray for all of us at freshchurch - that leaders would be like Jesus, that is, be good shepherds who care and sacrifice for others. Pray for protection of God's church from bad shepherds who would seek to lead God's people astray.