

“Cast it Unto the Potter”

By Elder David Pyles

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. – Zech 11:12-13

Had this prophecy been recorded anywhere except the Bible, it probably would have captured the attention, fascination and heed of the entire world, but no such thing in a book that calls men to repentance and duty. In his vision, Zechariah saw a flock of sheep that had been neglected and exploited by bad shepherds for many years. Zechariah was therefore commanded in the vision to be their shepherd. He commenced by preparing for himself staves to serve as needful instruments to his new occupation. Curiously, he carved names into these staves, with one being named by a Hebrew word that means “union” and the other by a word meaning “favor.” The idea was that so long as he was shepherd, the flock would be united and in favor with God.

However, the flock surprisingly rejected this good shepherd. The only sheep who accepted him were the poorest of the flock. The shepherd therefore requested to be compensated for work already done, upon which he would leave the flock according to its own wishes. His labors were judged to be worth 30 pieces of silver. This was the price of a mere slave, so the prophecy said sarcastically, *“a goodly price that I was prised at of them.”* Since it was pathetic payment, the Lord said disdainfully, *“Cast it unto the potter.”* None would have expected this reaction because what does a potter have to do with a shepherd and a flock of sheep? Things became even more bizarre when these 30 pieces of silver were then cast to the potter *“in the house of the Lord.”* Why the house of the Lord? Why not give them to the potter at his place of business? All this was so strange that Zechariah’s contemporaries likely thought he had experienced a maddened hallucination rather than a bone-fide, inspired vision.

But all would radically change over 500 years later when Jesus, the Good Shepherd of Israel, was rejected by His own people, or by all

except for an impoverished remnant. About 40 years later, Israel was attacked by the Romans and scattered all over the world; hence, it ceased to be united, and the Jews have since endured extraordinary hardship, partly because they have fallen from divine favor. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of His persecutors by Judas, who committed the treasonous act for payment of 30 pieces of silver (Mt 26:14-15). When Judas later regretted his actions and attempted to return the money to the priests who had paid him, the priests regarded it as dirty and refused to take it. Judas therefore cast the money onto the floor of the temple and left. The priests then gathered the money and used it to buy a parcel of land called “the potters’ field” (Mt 27:3-7). This was a place where potters disposed of shards of broken pottery, but the priests intended to turn it into a burying place for strangers who died in the city.

The prophecy seemed bizarre at the time, yet it was fulfilled in a most amazing way. Finally, the prophecy embraces even the believers who read it. They are the otherwise broken and worthless shards of the potters’ field, but those shards were valued by the Good Shepherd, who bought them with His own blood.