

1. Ezekiel 7 follows on from our last reading regarding the coming judgment on Judah for her sins. Three more times God says that this judgment is coming “so that they will know that I am the Lord.” There is only one God; His name is Jehovah; He alone rules in the affairs of His created universe.
2. Ezekiel makes it clear that there is a “cause and effect” relationship between the coming judgment and Judah’s sins. (He says this 7 times in Chapter 7).
3. The whole land of Judah (countryside and city) would be affected by this judgment. Ezekiel 7 and Jeremiah 18:18:
 - A. The opponents of God’s prophets in Jeremiah’s time were going to attack and ignore Jeremiah’s words, because they thought the teaching of the law, the counsel of the wise and the words of the prophets would still go on. (Jeremiah 18:18)
 - B. Ezekiel 7 says they will try to get a vision from the prophet, and the teaching of the law and the counsel of the wise will be lost to them.
 - C. Two important aspects of this:
 1. It shows a progression. While rejecting Jeremiah, they still wanted God’s blessing, when they got around to really seeking it. They thought God would still be waiting. Ezekiel delivers the message that the people of Judah had delayed their repentance too long and judgment would fall.
 2. The reference to prophet, priest and elders shows us the function of those offices in ancient Israel:
 - a. The prophet supplied the vision and answered the question: “Where are we going - what is God doing?”
 - b. The priest was the instructor in the law, the Scripture.
 - c. The elders helped the people apply those precepts of Scripture to the problems of everyday life.
 - d. We still need people today to cast vision, instruct and help us apply Scripture to life.
4. Chapters 8 and 9 - the second vision of the Book of Ezekiel. He is lifted up “by the Spirit” (while in Babylon) and he sees the Temple in Jerusalem. God shows him the abominations actually happening at the Temple, which was why He was so angry with His people:
 - A. The “idol that provokes to jealousy” at the North Gate (the one the king used to go to the Temple) - the kings of Judah were worshiping an idol that they had put in the Temple of the Lord.
 - B. Ezekiel digs through the wall to find the elders of Judah worshiping snakes and detestable animals whose images had been placed on the inner walls of Jehovah’s Temple.
 - C. The women at the North gate of the Temple are weeping over the demise of Tammuz, a Sumerian god of vegetation, whose worship involved fertility rites.
 - D. Men are in the courtyard of the Temple, praying with their backs to the Temple and their faces toward the sun, which they are worshiping.
5. We have encountered many names of God, wonderful, comforting names that remind of us what God does:
 - A. Jehovah-Jireh - the Lord will provide
 - B. Jehovah-Nissi - The Lord our Banner
 - C. Jehovah-Raah - The Lord is my Shepherd
 - D. Jehovah-Raphah - The Lord who healsIn today’s passage there is another name for God:
 - E. Jehovah-Makkeh - The Lord who strikes (or smites) - It is a bit obscure in English, but in Hebrew it is not.
6. In Chapter 9 and angel is sent to mark the foreheads of the faithful.
 - A. As in the Passover, God is marking His faithful ones.
 - B. “The word for ‘mark’ is the Hebrew letter Tau - the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Scripture of Ezekiel’s day that mark was written as X - a cross. The early Christian commentators took special note of that linking it back in time with the Passover and forward with the cross of Christ.”

1. Chapters 10 and 11 continue on with Ezekiel's second vision. What we read yesterday was terrible and terrifying. But at the end of Chapter 10, Ezekiel sees the most terrifying thing of all: The Shekinah glory of God lifts, hovers and then departs from the Temple in Jerusalem.

A. From the time Solomon constructed the Temple, God's glory had dwelt there, no matter what. He was with them and when they cried out in repentance, He saved them.

B. When His glory departs, He is no longer with his people and He may not hear and respond to their cries.

C. Ezekiel's cry: "Ah, Sovereign Lord, will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?"

1. God's answer: One day the people of Israel will be regathered in their land without idolatry and false gods. After the return from Babylonian captivity, they were never idolatrous again.

2. A "near and far" fulfillment of prophecy - right after captivity and at the end of the age

2. The four living creatures (also seen in the first vision) are identified here by the Lord Himself as "cherubim".

A. Their first responsibility was to act as attendants and protectors of a sacred shrine.

1. The Temple (Ezekiel 41:18-20)

2. The Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24)

3. The Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18-20)

4. The throne of God (Psalm 18:10)

5. Similar to the description of seraphim in Isaiah 6

3. At the conclusion of the second vision he tells the other exiles what he has seen and then is commanded to act out 'going into exile'. It is a depiction of what is going to happen when King Zedekiah tries to escape through the wall of the city - he is captured and brought to Babylon to die. He was to this in advance of it actually happening so "then they will know that I am the Lord."

4. Ezekiel was a "sign" to the people.

A. We are also to be "signs" for the people of our generation to see - we bear a message and we are a message. Jesus described this as us being "the light of the world."

B. Other people who were signs to their generation:

1. Noah, and Enoch and Methuselah, his ancestors

2. Abraham, so mightily blessed by God (to be a blessing)

3. Jonah, preaching through Nineveh after the whale spewed him up

4. Lazarus, resurrected from the dead by Jesus

5. The Gadarene demoniac, a hopeless case miraculously changed

1. Chapters 12-24 are one section of the book, comprised of messages about the people of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.
2. These messages answer the objections raised against Ezekiel's message:
 - A. 'We are God's chosen people and the Temple is His dwelling place - He will not abandon us.'
 - B. 'Other prophets predict wonderful things - why should we believe Ezekiel?'
 - C. 'Jeremiah said that Jerusalem would be destroyed - it hasn't happened yet!'
3. They are already in exile in Babylon and still refusing to believe Ezekiel about what else is going to happen. False prophets tell people what they want to hear in order to profit themselves. Jesus echoes the words of Ezekiel 13: "They lead my people astray saying 'peace, peace' when there is no peace and when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash." Judgment will fall no matter what the false prophet says, and the judgment on those false prophets will be a fearful one.
4. Important issues dealt with in these chapters:
 - A. God's main bone of contention with the elders and the nation as a whole is idolatry.
 1. They did worship idols made of wood and stone, as we have seen.
 2. But in Chapter 14, God complains about the idols that are in their hearts.
 - a. What is an idol? "Anything that stands in the place of God and gets my primary attention and worship"
 - b. Biblical example: The rich young ruler...the sight of a graven image would have horrified him - but his riches were more important to him than God - his wealth was an idol.
 3. The Epistle of I John, (written several hundred years after Judah returned from the exile in Babylon and ceased idol worship) ends with these words: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" - idols of the heart.
5. Ezekiel uses 3 of the most righteous characters in Scripture to illustrate how wicked the society of Judah had become: Noah, Daniel and Job, saying even their presence in society would not make a difference.
 - A. Noah - God saved Noah, and for his sake, his family, being the only righteous man He could find.
 - B. Job - Satan could not make him sin against God.
 - C. Daniel - He was alive at the same time as Ezekiel - a young man at this point, but one who already had a powerful testimony as a righteous man.
6. The point - righteous people do make a difference in society. But when a society goes too far from God, even these godly people can no longer influence that society, and judgment follows.

1. Ezekiel 15 is actually a Hebrew poem. Ezekiel uses two main images to portray the nation of Israel - the vine and the bride.
2. The vine:
 - A. Isaiah 5 - the first vineyard parable in the Bible
 - B. Jesus' parable of the fate of the vineyard owner's son who came to collect the rent from the tenants
 - C. John 15 - the vineyard image is laid down upon the church and used by Jesus to explain the relationship that exists between Himself and each of His followers
3. The bride: Book of Hosea applies the image to Israel; Ephesians 5 applies it to the church.
4. Relationship between the Israel of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament:
 - A. One school of thought completely separates the two as different entities entirely. This extreme leads to even saying the Sermon on the Mount is irrelevant to us today because it was spoken to a Jewish audience, and the Olivet Discourse applies only to Jews.
 - B. Another school of thought that completely identifies the two tends to rob some portions of the Old Testament prophets of their most obvious meanings.
 - C. The chapters we read today remind us that "even though Israel and the Church are not identical, they are connected because they stand in essentially the same relationship to God and the same images are used to describe them."
5. The vine image in Ezekiel 15 focuses on the wood of the vine (not the fruit as in Genesis 49). The wood is not even rigid enough to serve as coat peg, and when it has been scorched by fire, it will be even more useless. Meaning: the destruction of Jerusalem is assured, even if you do not wish to believe it.
6. Chapter 16 - this elaborate tale is a graphic and shocking allegory.
 - A. The 'Canaanite origin' statement is referring to moral decadence.
 - B. The Amorites and Hittites had influenced the people of God in adverse ways.
 - C. The story: A baby girl is rescued after being left to die, bleeding in a wilderness. On a second trip, the traveler who had saved her finds her grown to a marriageable age. He purifies her, makes a queen of her and finally marries her and makes a covenant with her.
 1. Some Bible scholars see this as God's covenant with Israel on Mt Sinai. Adultery and faithlessness on her part follow, to the point where she pays her lovers instead of being paid herself.
 2. Israel is the harlot being depicted here and the "lovers" she has run after are Egypt, Philistia, Assyria and Babylon.
 - a. This showed her lack of trust in God.
 - b. She often paid for her political alliances out of the Temple treasury - God's money.
 - c. She gave God's land to other nations in making these alliances.
 - d. These alliances (particularly through marriage) brought with them the obligation to worship false gods as a symbol of their submission.
 3. Spiritual adultery often led to physical adultery, as in the prostitution involved in the worship of fertility gods. It led to gross immorality and child sacrifice. God was utterly disgusted (and so were the nations to whom Israel prostituted herself) and said Samaria and Sodom were more righteous than Judah was at this period in their history.

1. Ezekiel 17, 18 and 19 are separate literary units, each a message from God.
2. Chapter 17 is an allegory, about Babylon, Egypt and Jerusalem.

A. Interpretation:

1. The first great eagle is Nebuchadnezzar, coming and snatching away the nobility of Jerusalem and taking it to Babylon. He makes Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, king and expects subservience from him. Zedekiah seeks help from Egypt, breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar and this brings God's punishment on him. (A vow made to another person is binding in God's eyes.) In the end, Egypt is of no help to Jerusalem in lifting Nebuchadnezzar's siege.
2. God plants a shoot of the cedar tree high in the mountains of Israel and it flourishes - God is assuring Israel that she will not be totally destroyed.
3. Chapter 18: Ezekiel, at God's direction, lays down a very important principle: "God will never require payment from me for the sins of someone else. God will not judge you for someone else's sins." Verse 20 is the key verse: "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged upon him." I will answer only for my own sins to God.
4. The 3 examples of a father, son and grandson who are righteous, unrighteous and righteous again remind us of good King Hezekiah (father), very bad King Manasseh (son), and good King Josiah (grandson).
5. Though Ezekiel does not develop the theme of the universality of sin here, he does not contradict it, either. The point is: God's judgment is never unjust.
6. Chapter 18 ends with a call to repentance. The door is still open - "Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!" (18: 31-32)
7. Chapter 19: It is a dirge, a funeral song given to Ezekiel in Tel Aviv, near Babylon.
 - A. Subjects of this lament: Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, taken captive to Egypt in 609BC; Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, exiled to Babylon in 597BC; Zedekiah, also Josiah's son and the last of the Davidic line of kings.
 - B. It was historical (had already happened) and prophetic (Zedekiah had yet to happen).
 - C. The 'lioness mother' is probably Judah.
 - D. Judah was finished; Zedekiah would be her last king until the King of Kings would come in the far-distant future. The vine that is Israel has been stripped of its fruit and set ablaze. The kings are finished.