

Week 36 Devotion

As we continue reading Ezekiel, it might be important for us to remember that Ezekiel was a priest who had been living in Jerusalem during Babylon's first attack on the city. He was one of the people carried away to Babylon during the first exile, but when he and the others were taken from Jerusalem the city was still standing.

The city of Jerusalem wasn't destroyed until several years later, but 5 years into his time in Babylon, Ezekiel saw a vision. He saw a vision of the Royal throne chariot of God but the problem was that God's presence was supposed to be in Jerusalem, not Babylon. What is the glory of God doing outside of the temple? Well, we learned that the situation in Jerusalem had gotten so bad (Eze 8-11) that God removed His presence from the city and gave it over to their enemies.

The city was then destroyed and Ezekiel was charged by God to explain why these things were happening. In short, it was a combination of the peoples ongoing sin, their blatant idolatry, and their rejection of the covenant that they had made with God; and Ezekiel is going to spend a large portion of his book pointing out Israel's sins as the cause of their destruction and exile.

But along the way, God has a message for the other nations surrounding Israel and He even speaks about a New Covenant that will be fundamentally different than the one that came before. In the midst of God's judgment, there is a strong note of hope that God's mercy had not yet reached its end. There would come a time when God would raise up and bless His people once again by giving them a new heart and putting His Own Spirit within them.

Let's look at chapter 23-42 a little more closely.

Something to meditate on...

Ezekiel chapter 23 may be one of the more graphic and stomach-turning depictions of Israel's sin against God in all of Scripture. It pictures Jerusalem and Samaria as helpless little girls who had been left to die but God scooped them up, cleaned them off, raised them to be strong and beautiful women only to have them turn around and defile themselves in the worst way imaginable.

It is a horrifying image and one that haunts most fathers when you read of how a daughter can turn away from her father and treat herself so cheaply that she would give herself over to the lust of her flesh and to the wicked men of this world. But it is a picture that helps us to understand how God feels about Israel's rebellion. For God, it is a truly heartbreaking reality and we are the ones who have broken God's heart.

We don't like to think of ourselves in this way, but this is what our sin and idolatry look like in the eyes of God. In our sin, we have become idolaters who commit spiritual adultery to such a degree that it looks like a form of spiritual prostitution. And when we see it from this perspective

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it makes sense that God would bring down judgment upon us for such sin. It makes sense that God would bring down judgment upon the world for such sin.

But that is not the end of the story.

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

At the pinnacle of God's timing, He sent Jesus to become like one of us in order to win us back from our sin and idolatry. He came to make us clean once and for all. He came to draw us into His family and He gave His life to make our adoption a reality. Take some time this week to meditate on the fact that we are no better than Israel but in His love Christ came for us, lived for us, bled for us, died for us, and has been raised to rule as our Brother and King forever.

Something to discuss...

In chapter 24 of Ezekiel, we read that the final siege of Jerusalem has begun just nine years after the first exiles came into Babylon. The people had 9 years to repent of their sin and seek the Lord, but they refused to do so. To make matters worse God tells Ezekiel that his wife is going to die and this is a picture of God's own sorrow at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's wife was the delight of his eyes and Jerusalem was the delight of God's eye, but now they are both gone. This wasn't part of the job description that Ezekiel signed up for, but he would bear this and continue to serve the Lord. All the more because the message of God needed to be delivered.

But let's discuss the fact that they had 9 years to repent; 9 years to cleanse the idolatry from their midst and instead, they used those 9 years to go deeper into sin. And during those 9 years, God flooded the city of Jerusalem with prophets to warn the kings and people. Jeremiah was in the city and the people didn't listen. Zephaniah was there too and they refused to heed his warning. God sent prophet after prophet to warn them but the people did not follow their word.

I point these things out so that we understand that God didn't just spring this on the people, no He had been warning them for years. God wanted them to repent. He wanted them to turn from their sin and run back to Him. Jesus mourned in Matthew saying, "Time and time again, I wanted to gather you in like a hen gathering in her chicks, but you were not willing Matt 23:37)." God's broken heart still reached out to the people, but they refused His love and His Word.

Let's discuss with one another the incredible patience and mercy of God. Let's discuss how we have seen this patience in our own lifetime. Let's also discuss the fact that God is just to pour out His anger on man's sin, but not forget that His patience and kindness is intended to lead us to repentance.

Something to pray about...

In Ezekiel chapter 33, God tells the prophet to say this to the house of Israel,

11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Why will you die? This is such a haunting question and it comes from God. He is asking Israel, “Why will you continue in your wickedness to the point of death when you could simply turn from your sin and live?”

This is a good question for us to ask ourselves, our friends, our family, and others. It is a question that forces us to consider the current pursuit of our lives and the consequences that will come. It is a question that places God in the center of our minds and it forces us to ask, “Am I living my life in faithful obedience to my Creator and Redeemer?”

Let’s slow down and examine our hearts and ask ourselves this question. Let’s slow down and examine our lives and ask ourselves this question and pray that God would give us a heart of repentance. Let’s pray that we would not continue in sin like Israel, but instead that we would confess our sin in prayer, turn from our sin in repentance, and live.