

Week of August 21-28

Ezekiel 7 The Destruction of the Whole Land

God announced that He was bringing an end to the whole land of Israel and that it was coming soon. This judgment would come because the Lord was angry with His people for their abominable sins. He would not restrain His punishment but would bring the consequences of their sins on them. Then they would know that God was the true God.

The fact that the message had to be repeated over and over by several prophets can only be understood because of the popular belief by the Israelites that Jerusalem could never fall. Its destruction was inconceivable to the Israelite. Jerusalem was invincible. As long as God was God, His Temple and Jerusalem would stand. This had been the message of Isaiah when the kings of Judah had feared for Jerusalem's safety and were toying with the idea of turning to heathen nations for assistance. But now the situation was different after 150 years of blatant sin. The people were living in the past, but God was judging the present. His verdict was that the end was about to happen.

Ezekiel 8 The Idolatry in the Temple Exposed

The nation of Judah still existed at Jerusalem, although many of them had already been carried into exile with Jehoiakim. The temple was destroyed five years later. But now God shows Ezekiel the cause of His judgment. In his vision, Ezekiel saw God reach out and pick him up by his hair and transport him to Jerusalem by the Spirit. The Lord set him down at the north gate of the inner court of the Temple where there was an image of an idol. He was shown every form of hateful and defiling idolatry practiced in the Temple by the elders and others of Israel.

The principal crime of humanity, the highest guilt charged upon the world, the whole procuring cause of judgment, is idolatry.

Ezekiel 9 The Coming Slaughter of the Jews in Jerusalem

God visited the Temple in His glory and took His place on the side that looked towards the city and, after having shown the prophet the terrible sins committed there, gave the command to execute everyone except the remnant who wept and sighed over all the sins they saw around them. He used six men to carry out the executions and a seventh clothed in linen. *Could this be Jesus who identified the names of the remnant, the redeemed, the ones God the Father had given Him? The six were there for destruction but He was there to show mercy.*

Ezekiel 10 God Prepares to Judge Jerusalem

Jerusalem is left to be destroyed as God's glory presided over the judgment. God left His throne and stood at the door of the Temple and told Ezekiel to take personal knowledge of the sins and idolatries which had defiled the Temple. God stood in the doorway to direct the judgment of Jerusalem and had a mark put on the godly to protect them from the judgment. This personal intervention of God, both to show the evil known to Him, to mark and spare the remnant, and to direct the judgment, is described in this chapter.

Ezekiel 11 The Glory of God Departs Jerusalem

God judged the leaders for their sin who comforted themselves with the thought that Jerusalem was impregnable. The leaders were to be brought out and judged all the way to the border of Israel. One of these wicked men died in the presence of Ezekiel, which brings out the sorrow of his heart and his intercession for Israel. In reply, God distinguishes those in Jerusalem from the captives. As for

the captives, God had been a sanctuary to them wherever they were. He would restore them and give them back the land. He would purify them and give them a new heart. They would be His people, and He would be their God. But as for those who walked in their sin, their ways would be visited upon them in judgment. *The remnant was always set apart, and individual conduct was the condition of blessing. The faithful are always established as the people of God in the end.*

God then left Jerusalem and stood on the Mount of Olives, from which Jesus ascended, and to which He will again descend for Israel's glory. This part of Ezekiel's prophecy ends here.

Ezekiel 12 The Flight, Capture, and Blindness of Zedekiah Predicted

This chapter talks about the flight and capture of Zedekiah who would be carried to Babylon though he would not see it because his eyes had been gouged out. All the force and power of Judah would be ended, and the land laid desolate; a small remnant of captives would declare to the unfaithful the atrocities which had brought the judgment. The judgment was soon to come because God's patience with His people had led them to the unbelieving proverb that God would not interfere, but now His prophecies of judgment would not be delayed.

Ezekiel 13 The False Prophets and People Punished Together

There were many false prophets in Israel who claimed to be spokesmen for the Lord and assured the people that all would be well. They were like those who whitewash a wall to hide its defects. The Lord would purge these deceivers from the covenant community. His judgment would come like torrential rain, violent wind, and destructive hailstones and batter the whitewashed wall to the ground.

The Lord also condemned the false women prophets who misinformed the people with lying messages gained by divination. Their activities had a devastating effect on the righteous, and these diviners encouraged the wicked to continue in their evil ways. The Lord would expose them as frauds and free His people from their negative influence.

Ezekiel 14 Repent and Turn from Idols

The elders of Israel came and sat before Ezekiel. Then God lays out before Israel the new principles on which He would govern them. God Himself will judge them according to their sins. God could only say to them, "Repent." The prophets and people would be punished together. No one could hinder the execution of the judgment. They would only save their own lives by turning from sin. Now God was bringing all His judgments upon Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a remnant would be spared. And so it was that the judgment of God was a burden to the heart of one who loves the people; but when they see that the name of God had been dishonored, they will know that it was right for God to destroy Jerusalem.

How many people in the church today toy and play with sin and think they are getting by with it? Judgment is inevitable. They have idols in their hearts. God's message throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament is to repent.

Ezekiel 15 The Only End of a Fruitless Vine

This chapter shows that the grapevine could only be used for fuel to be consumed. A grapevine cannot be cut into lumber or used for pegs to hang up pots and pans. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were useless and worth nothing more than a grapevine. They were to be destroyed.

Ezekiel 16 Jerusalem Condemned and Humbled by Samaria and Sodom

Remember that Jerusalem is the subject of this prophecy and not Israel. Jerusalem had used all that God had given her in the service of her idols and to purchase the favor of the Egyptians and the Assyrians. She had no idea of independence and of standing alone, leaning on God. She would be judged as an adulterous woman.

Ezekiel traced the whole history of Jerusalem. Her origin was in the land of the Canaanite, an Amorite her father, and a Hittite her mother. She was an abandoned child, born and forsaken. In this condition of helplessness, she was found and nurtured by God. The prophet's description of the tender care of God is beautiful. At maturity the child was taken in marriage, and loaded with benefits. The renown of the glory of her apparel "went forth among the nations." Then came the downfall, and in words of living fire the prophet dealt with the awful unfaithfulness of the wife as she trusted in her beauty and turned to harlotry prostituting her husband's wealth. All the gifts which had been lavished on her in love were turned into the means of prosecuting her evil choices. The harlotry of Jerusalem had been worse than other nations in which the harlot receives gifts, in that she had given gifts to seduce others. Even the daughters of Philistia were ashamed of her lewdness. Because of God's hatefulness of the sin, the punishment of Jerusalem would be terrible.

God would turn her lovers against her. With terrible vengeance they would come on her and strip her of all her ornaments and clothing, exposing her to shame. In contempt she would be spoken of as the daughter of her mother the Hittite, as a sister of Samaria and Sodom. Ezekiel declared that Jerusalem had been more corrupt than either of these. Jerusalem's sin had been the more heinous in that she had professed to set the standard for her sisters, but had been more abominable than they had been. Yet all this shame to be brought on the guilty city was that she might repent and turn to God and return to her former state of beauty. The last part of this terrible story is when Ezekiel foretold the restoration of Jerusalem as God remembered His Covenant and re-establishment of it.

The main point of this lengthy chapter seems to be that God's willingness to restore Jerusalem, despite the magnitude of her sin, offers hope for other sinful nations, even those who violate his moral standards in blatant ways. It also offers hope for today's sinner.