

Week 36 Chronological

August 31: Ezekiel 16 and 17

The LORD commands Ezekiel to remind Israel of how they were despised. In this text, Israel is compared to an unwanted baby. No one cared for it, the umbilical cord was not cut, it was not washed clean and rubbed with salts or wrapped in clothing. Instead, it was thrown out into the open field. God is the One that decided to make Israel live. He is the One that called Abraham out and laid the foundation for this nation to rise. The nation is His, and He is faithful to it, but they prostitute themselves with the gods of other nations. They do not have loyalty to the LORD. Because of their unfaithfulness, God will shame them. Other nations that were destroyed by God because of their sin were not as sinful as Israel is. God will restore these other nations so that Israel will be shamed.

Ezekiel tells the parable of the eagles. The great eagle mentioned in verse 3 is Nebuchadnezzar. He was a phenomenal military strategist. Lebanon in this passage refers to Israel. In ancient times, the Lebanon mountain range was covered in cedars. The cedar refers to king David's family and dynasty. The top of the cedar that is removed represents Jehoiachin, the king taken into exile in 597 B.C. The chapter ends with God's promise of restoration for the nation.

September 1: Ezekiel 18-20

A common adage at the time, and even today is "the sins of the father are visited upon the children". It was common belief during Ezekiel's writing and during Christ's time on earth that a parent's sin caused the child to suffer. God corrects this notion in chapter 18. The person responsible for their sin is the individual that commits it. We own our sin because we are the ones that commit sins, no one else. However, the human tendency is to put that blame on someone else. Adam tries to blame Eve and even God for falling into sin. David complains about being born into sin in some of the Psalms. At the end of the day, though, the only person we can blame for our sins is us.

The LORD is not vindictive. He wants the wicked to turn away from his or her sins. God does not delight in the death of the wicked. Instead, He takes pleasure when the sinner turns from his sin. Still, some will argue that God's way is not fair. God asks whose way is unfair, His or the way of the wicked. The question, of course, is redundant. God's way leads to life and righteousness. The way of the world leads to death and wickedness.

Ezekiel 19 is a lament, a sad song, mourning the princes of Israel. The mother in this dirge is Israel. The east wind represents Nebuchadnezzar and his army.

Some of Israel's elders come to consult The LORD. God tells Ezekiel that He will NOT consult with them. God reminds him that He swore an oath that He would bring them to the land flowing with milk and honey. God delivered on His promise, but they did not throw away their detestable things. They rebelled against God, the One that had been so good to them for all their history. God will one day rule over them completely. On that day, they will look back on their behavior and they will loathe themselves for their detestable behavior. It is not that God is

putting them to shame, they feel shame for what they did when they are confronted with His holiness and righteousness.

September 2: Ezekiel 21 and 22

When we see the phrase “son of man, turn your face toward” it is in a judgment context. God’s opposition to Israel is represented by the image of a drawn sword. An invasion is coming. It is not just the wicked that will be carried away, but also the righteous. It is a corporate punishment. Just as the righteous people in the Old Testament were not guaranteed safety from general disasters or judgments against nations, we have no guarantee either. We may have to suffer through general judgments. However, we are guaranteed that one day we will be joined up with Jesus and live with Him for eternity.

The two sins of shedding blood and making idols essentially summarize the violation of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments legislated how a person was supposed to act toward God and other people. Instead of loving God, they turn to idols. Instead of loving their fellow man, they act treacherously toward one another, shedding the blood of their neighbors. God’s indignation will be poured out on them.

September 3: Ezekiel 23 and 24

God tells the story of the two immoral sisters. They represent Samaria and Jerusalem. This chapter attacks Judah’s foreign alliances along with their idolatry. They have sought an alliance thinking that Egypt will protect them from the incoming invasion. This alliance is especially ridiculous because the Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites earlier in their history. God was the One that rescued them from Egypt. Rather than seek the LORD, put away their idols, and throw themselves at His mercy, they turn to another nation. God compares this to adultery, an offense that is odious and punishable by death. The adulterous cities will be destroyed. One thing to remember in this text is that adultery was a terrible offense in the Ancient Near East. Even pagan nations had hefty penalties for people committing adultery. (Of course, in those pagan nations, all they had to do was kill the husband of the wife and then engage in a relationship with the widow and that was perfectly acceptable).

Their prostitution leads to The LORD turning them over to the people that hate them. They will be an object of scorn. Since they have abandoned The LORD, they will bear the consequences of their indecency and promiscuity.

The date of the prophecy in chapter 24 is significant. This is the day that Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem in 588 B.C. Later in the history of Israel, this day becomes a day of fasting. Ezekiel has been pointing to this day for four years. The date is so significant that it is mentioned by the writer of 1 and 2 Kings (2 Kings 25:1) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1 and 52:4).

Ezekiel’s wife is about to be taken away from him with a deadly blow. Ezekiel is commanded to not mourn or let his tears flow. Instead, he must groan quietly. He is supposed to carry on as if everything is fine. This is to serve as a sign for how Israel will respond to the fall of Jerusalem. They will not mourn; their turbans will remain on.

September 4: Ezekiel 25-27

Our reading today opens with judgments against the nations. Ammon will come under judgment because they rejoice when God's temple was desecrated, and Israel was laid to waste. The people of Moab were descendants of Lot and one of his daughters. The Moabites have a rough history with the Israelites. After Israel was released from Egypt, the Moabites introduced them to the worship of Baal. Moab, just like the Ammonites, take joy when Jerusalem falls.

Edom is descendant of Esau. There has been tension between Israel and the Edomites since Jacob and Esau were born.

Tyre was the most powerful city in Phoenicia. Phoenicia represented the original population that resided in Canaan before the Israelites arrived. After Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jerusalem, he went after Tyre for 13 years, but was unable to take it. However, Alexander the Great built a causeway to the island in the fourth century B.C. and took Tyre. Tyre enjoyed a longer period of peace, but it fell, just as God said it would, and it became an object of horror.

September 5: Ezekiel 28-30

Ezekiel 28:3 mentions Daniel. This is the same Daniel in the book of Daniel. His fame has spread during the exile. Daniel was one of the righteous that got sent away on the exile, but still maintained his integrity and still sought The LORD.

Sidon was another Phoenician port city. Tyre and Sidon are often mentioned together. God proclaims that He is against them. A plague will be sent against her and there will be bloodshed in the streets.

Ezekiel is commanded to turn his face to Egypt. This nation too comes under God's judgment. A sword will come against them. Egypt will be desolate and uninhabited for 40 years. After 40 years, God will gather these exiled Egyptians and restore their fortunes. After the Babylonians were defeated and the Persians took control, Egypt was never a great and formidable world power again.

September 6: Ezekiel 31-33

Though Egypt and Pharaoh rose in prominence, they both fall, and the fall is spectacular. The nation is compared to a lofty tree that is cut down. The tree remains just lying on the ground. The birds of the sky make their nests on the fallen trunk, demonstrating how desolate Egypt will be when it is toppled.

Ezekiel 32 is a lament for Pharaoh. Pharaoh is headstrong and cocky. He compares himself to a lion, but God compares him to a sea monster. God will capture him with His net and he will be hauled up. The coming destruction will trouble the hearts of many people and they will shudder. Egypt will be brought down to Sheol, it descends to the Pit.

Ezekiel 33 marks the beginning of a new oracle. Ezekiel is appointed as watchman and warned that he must warn the people. If he warns them and they continue the way to destruction, it is their fault. They are guilty. However, if Ezekiel is silent and they continue in their sin and destruction, Ezekiel is guilty because he did not warn them. I volunteer up at the middle school with the flag detail. The other day, about half of the team wound up on in school suspension. When I confronted them about the behavior that led to their consequence, several of them told me “But I didn’t do it, I was just there.”

I asked them if they knew what their friend was doing was wrong. When they responded that they knew it was wrong, I asked them, “If you knew it was wrong, why didn’t you stop your friend?” Ezekiel must give these warnings to the people, otherwise, their sin is his fault.

Ezekiel is informed that Jerusalem had fallen. Despite the city’s downfall, the people continue to rebel. They still put their faith in swords and strength, not in the One that is strong to save. They do not follow God’s law; they just do whatever they want.

September 7: Ezekiel 34-36

Ezekiel is told to prophesy against the shepherds. They are the priests that are supposed to care for God’s people. Instead, they abuse and exploit God’s sheep for personal gain. God is going to take the flock away from them to prevent the shepherds feeding themselves from the flock. The LORD explains that just as a shepherd searches for the scattered flock, He will search for His people all over and bring them back home. God will lead them to rich pastures and they will be well fed. They will have peace and any dangerous animals will be removed from their presence.

Ezekiel is told to face toward Mount Seir. Mount Seir was the ancient name for the various mountain regions south of the Dead Sea and on both sides of the Rift Valley. This prophecy is against Edom, the land established by Esau. This group, though they are related to the Israelites, have maintained an ancient hatred against them. They will become a desolation and they will know that He is Yahweh.

God promises restoration to Israel’s mountains and the restoration of her people. They had been performing terrible things in His sight, so He poured His wrath out on them. They were dispersed, but they will be brought back. This restoration is not meant to make them feel good about the awful things they did against The LORD. Instead, it is meant to make them feel shame for how they treated The LORD.