

"THE END IN STORE FOR INIQUITY"

I. Introduction

- A. In this chapter, we see Ezekiel sounding the alarm and alerting the people of Israel of the imminent arrival of danger.
- B. The point of no return had been reached for God's people.
- C. There was no way for them to escape the judgment that was about to come upon them for their iniquity.
- D. As one commentator points out, while people often think that the message announced by prophets is 'Repent, the end is near', "Ezekiel's message in this chapter is: 'It's too late to repent; the end has come.'" [Duguid, 117]

II. A Just End (1-9)

- A. In the first part of the chapter, we see that the end that was about to come upon Israel was a just end.
 - 1. Their punishment will be in keeping with their conduct.
 - 2. We see this in the Lord's repeated assertion, "I will judge you according to your ways."
 - 3. Judgment is always according to works.
 - 4. It shows no pity, because it would be an injustice to do so.
 - 5. Those who expect God to evaluate them on the basis of how they have lived their lives are in for a dreadful surprise on judgment day.
 - 6. To ask God to judge you by your works is to be condemned by your works, because all of the works that we do are polluted by our

sin.

7. In God's just tribunal, sin always pays its wages, the wages of death.
 8. This is why Christ is the only way of escape from the wrath and judgment of God.
 9. God only gives the gift of eternal life to those who have died to sin in Christ.
- B. The end that Ezekiel was announcing to Israel was going to be all-encompassing.
1. It would extend to the four corners of the land.
 2. There will be no place to hide from it.
 3. This is a picture of what will take place on the day of judgment.
 4. The wicked will cry out for the mountains to fall upon them so that they can be hidden from the wrath of the Most High, but their cries will all be in vain.
- C. In verses 5-9, six different terms are used to describe the coming calamity.
1. It will bring "disaster upon disaster," like massive waves relentlessly pounding up against a storm-tossed craft.
 2. It will mark "the end," a term whose agricultural background suggests the end of a harvest season, the time to reap what has been sown.
 3. It will bring Israel's "doom," a term whose meaning is uncertain but may suggest the notion of a leash by which captives would be led away.
 4. It will mark the arrival of God's appointed "time" of recompense.

5. The joyful shouting that was heard when they worshipped at the high places will be replaced with the sound of "tumult."
6. Lastly, it will be "the day," which is a reference to the day of the Lord, that dreadful day that was foretold by Amos, Isaiah, Joel, Zephaniah, and other prophets.
7. This tells us that the judgment that Israel experienced at the hands of the Babylonians was a typological foreshadowing of the judgment that will come upon the world at the last day.
8. Consider how the day of the Lord is described in Isaiah 13:
"Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless." (vv. 9-11)
9. The punishment that will come upon the wicked on that day will be infinitely worse than any of the horrors that man perpetrates against his fellow men within history.
10. And as we have already said, this punishment will be perfectly just, because it will be exactly what this world deserves.

III. An Unavoidable End (10-22)

- A. This brings us to the middle section of the chapter, where we see that the end that is about to come upon Israel is unavoidable.
 1. This point is expressed most clearly in verse 13, where it says that the vision of doom that is being described here will not turn back.
 2. One of the reasons why it was unavoidable was because it was the natural outcome of Israel's prideful spirit.

3. This is what is meant in verse 10 when it says, “pride has budded.”
 4. Pride can be described as idolatry of the self.
 5. It is a matter of setting ourselves above everything else.
 6. But God makes it clear in his Word that he will not let the proud remain in their lofty place forever.
 7. When the time is ripe, they will be cast down.
 8. This is why it is so important for us to listen to the Scriptures when they call us to walk humbly with our God.
- B. The notion of Israel reaping what they have sown is also conveyed in verse 11, where it says that their violence blossomed into the rod that God would use to punish them.
1. Ezekiel 7 shows how this punishment will have a devastating impact on the nation’s economy.
 2. They will lose the abundance of their wealth.
 3. The most influential people will be brought to nothing.
 4. Transactions in the marketplace will come to an end.
 5. It is noteworthy that we find a similar description of the final judgment in Revelation 18, where the downfall of Babylon causes her merchants to mourn over the fact that they can no longer ply their trade there.
 6. Such passages remind us of how easy it is for people’s lives to get bound up with their money and possessions.
 7. When things fall apart for people whose lives are so intertwined with wealth and earthly goods, those people bemoan the fact that their material prosperity is slipping away from them.

8. What a sad picture this is, especially when we take into account what is said in verse 19 about the silver and gold that the people possessed.
 9. When the day of wrath comes upon them, they will cast their precious wealth into the streets.
 10. Only when it is too late will they see that their silver and gold cannot deliver them from the wrath of the Lord.
- C. In verses 14-18, we are given a description of the psychological impact of the day of wrath.
1. When the trumpet is blown to summon people to battle, nobody will respond.
 2. They will be emotionally paralyzed by what has come upon them.
 3. The first part of verse 17 says that their hands will be so feeble that they cannot even lift them for battle.
 4. And the second half of verse 17 literally says, "every knee will flow water", which probably indicates a loss of bladder control.
 5. The basic point is that these people will be so overcome by what is coming upon them that they are utterly incapacitated.
- D. In verses 20-22, Israel's misuse of the temple treasures is dealt with.
1. Because they used these things to fashion idols that are detestable in God's sight, he will make the temple itself into something detestable.
 2. It will be given into the hands of unclean foreigners, who will plunder it and profane it.
 3. The place that was formerly the Lord's dwelling place will be abandoned by him.

4. This will be the fulfillment of the covenant curse that was issued in Leviticus 26, when the Lord said, "I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas." (v. 31)

IV. A Tragic End (23-27)

- A. We turn now to the final paragraph of the chapter, where the tragic nature of what is about to take place is emphasized.
 1. The people whom God had delivered from captivity in Egypt will be led away in chains.
 2. The worst of the nations, the wicked Babylonians, will take possession of their homes.
 3. In the midst of their anguish they will seek peace but they will not find it.
 4. One disaster will follow another.
 5. Unfounded rumors will give them hope for a moment, only to give way to more unfounded rumors.
 6. The situation that is described here is utterly desperate.
 7. It is a picture of loss and anguish.
 8. This is the tragic end that lies in store for those who cherish iniquity.
- B. The chapter ends by describing one more tragic aspect of what Israel will experience when they face God's judgment.
 1. There will be a total loss of religious and political leadership.
 2. While they showed no interest in the messages that the prophets had previously delivered to them, when they finally do look for a

prophetic vision, there will not be one.

3. When they finally clamor to hear God's law, there will be no priest to teach it to them.
4. When they long for the counsel of godly elders, it will not be available to them.
5. They waited too long, and now it is too late.
6. What a solemn reminder this should be to us not to take God's Word or the church's ministry for granted.

V. Conclusion

- A. While this passage is indeed quite ominous, it also shows us that God had a gracious purpose in sending this judgment upon Israel.
 1. We see this in the repetition of what we have previously referred to as the 'recognition formula,' the phrase, "Then you will know that I am the LORD."
 2. In the Bible, knowing God means loving him as God.
 3. Israel should have known the LORD, but they had forgotten him.
 4. They had head-knowledge of him, but their hearts were far from him.
 5. God was going to use this calamity to cause a remnant of his people to have a renewed knowledge of him in their hearts.
- B. One of the lessons that we can learn from this text is the importance of meditating on the life of the world to come.
 1. Don't take the blessings that await the redeemed in heaven for granted.

2. Don't ignore the dreadful end that awaits the wicked in hell.
3. The way to remain faithful throughout our lives is always to keep our minds fixed upon these eternal realities.
4. Though it sometimes seems like the world will just keep going on as it always has, an end is coming.
5. May God help us to be watchful as we await the arrival of that day.