

EZEKIEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ezekiel chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we have seen as we opened our study of Ezekiel last time, Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon when God called him into the ministry. It was during the second invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 597 B. C. that he was taken captive. Along with Ezekiel we see King Jehoiachin taken captive along with some ten thousand other Jews.

Then eleven years later, in 586 B. C., the Babylonians made their third and final assault upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah, destroying the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of God, and taking the remaining people back to Babylon as captives except for the sick, the elderly who remained behind.

So we are in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity and just several years before the final invasion of Jerusalem. And even in the midst of all this judgment there were the false prophets who were saying that there was going to be peace. They were saying that the Jews were going to return home shortly. That was not what was going to happen!

That is what Ezekiel was facing and as we will see this evening, God is going to give Ezekiel a series of illustrations that will show the destruction of Jerusalem. They refused to hear the Words of God and thus, God is giving them these illustrations to show them that these false prophets are wrong and Jerusalem is going to be destroyed!

Ezekiel is going to give four of these illustrations and they will cover Ezekiel 4:1 through Ezekiel 5:4. With that as our background, let's begin reading in Ezekiel chapter 4 beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

EZEKIEL 4**VERSES 1-3**

1. Ezekiel is to take a clay tablet and portray the city of Jerusalem and how the Babylonians will surround the city, cutting it off from help and from food. He is diagraming the things that would come upon Jerusalem. It is kind of like the Tele-straighter of today that they use to diagram plays in football.

Also, he is to take this iron plate that is to be placed between Ezekiel and this clay tablet. I think the idea here is that there will be no help from other nations; the Babylonians will completely cut them off.

Now this had to draw a crowd because if it didn't there would be no witness of what God was going to do through this illustration. John B. Taylor puts it like this as he wrote, "The actions were pointless unless they could be watched by a large number of people, and we must suppose that it was not long before the word got around that Ezekiel was doing some unusual things near his home. In a close-knit community like that of the Tel Abib exiles, nothing could be kept secret for long."

2. Now keep in mind that this did not take place during the first or second siege by the Babylonians. This was looking ahead to the third and final siege by the Babylonians that took place in 586 B. C. when the city, the walls, the Temple was destroyed and the rest of the people were taken captive. So Ezekiel is drawing a picture of what will happen to Jerusalem, and as we can see, the worst is yet to come!

VERSES 4-8

1. Okay, I am glad I am not a prophet like Ezekiel was. The Lord tells him that he is to lay on his left side for 390 days. Ezekiel was to bear the iniquity of Israel, their sin against the Lord. And I would imagine that he was a site to see.

Now what in the world did this represent? There is a lot of speculation out there and I think the best answer I could come up with at this time is that I am not sure what that is representing. When we do come to the judgment upon Judah it is another 40 years which comes to 430 years, the time that the Jews were in Egypt but again, not sure how that fits in at this time.

2. Now when Ezekiel has completed those 390 days he then is to turn over onto his right side and stay there for 40 days and again he is bearing the iniquity of Judah as they sinned against the Lord. Both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah were in rebellion against the Lord but the timeframe again I am not sure how that plays out.

God was using Ezekiel to give an illustrated sermon to the people that for three hundred ninety years Israel had been collapsing in carnality and that for forty years Judah had been burdened with iniquity, rendering God's people unable to stand for Him.

3. We also see that Ezekiel was restricted to the position God wanted him in to make this illustration and try and get the people's attention. What we need to understand is that these verses are not implying that Ezekiel was laying on his side around the clock for over a year. Think about that, "Pastor Joe taught on the book of Romans for over one year!" That does not mean I taught one year straight and I think that is the idea here.

But also keep in mind that this was not an easy thing to do for in verse 8 we see that the Lord “**. . . will constrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have ended the days of your siege.**” So it was not easy but the Lord kept Ezekiel on his left side for the 390 days and on his right side for the 40 days, probably for a good portion of each day as the people would witness his actions. And as they did he would prophesy of the coming judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sin!

VERSES 9-13

1. So as Ezekiel was laying on his left side for 390 days he was going to be limited in the amount of food to eat. This was to show that there would be a scarcity of food in Jerusalem, a famine in the land because the Babylonians had cut off their food supply as they surrounded the city of Jerusalem!

Now some wonder how Ezekiel could get this food if he was to be on his side all day. One writer had this to say, “How could Ezekiel be commanded to make bread while lying bound upon his side? Several commentators think that this inconsistency is proof that all of these symbolic actions transpired in vision where such a thing is possible. However, if the prophet’s immobilization occupied only a part of each day there is no inconsistency. Once Ezekiel had performed his daily demonstration - lying facing the model of the besieged city - he apparently arose and performed the other symbolic acts that related to the siege.” (James E. Smith)

2. As you read verses 10 and 11 you see the amount of food and drink that he was able to eat each day and it was not much. He had about 8 ounces of bread to eat and about 21.3 ounces of water to drink, about 1 pint. Again this represented the famine that was coming upon Jerusalem.

3. Not only was there a shortage of food and water but there was a shortage of fuel to cook the bread. Thus, the use of dung for fuel, mixed with straw and left to dry was practiced throughout the Middle East where there was a scarcity of wood. This burning dung burned slowly and it did give off a foul odor, as you can imagine. But God does not tell him to use animal dung but human waste. This was an unclean act for the Jews to do and thus, it was a sign of judgment against them. (See Leviticus 26:14-33; Deuteronomy 23:12-14)

How will Ezekiel respond to this command by God to use human waste to cook his food?

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 14-17

1. Ezekiel is horrified by this because he kept himself kosher, he obeyed the Mosaic laws, he was a priest and now God wants him to defile himself! John B. Taylor makes these comments in regards to what is taking place here. He wrote,

“While the prophet could accept calmly the limitations imposed on his diet, his whole being revolted at the command to bake his bread over a fire of human excrement. This was intended to show the defilement which would come upon the exiles through their being compelled to live and eat in a heathen environment. They would not be able to ensure that the meat they bought or were given had been killed correctly according to Levitical requirements, nor were they to know if it had been offered first at heathen sacrifices. . . .

It seems strange that God should command a thing and then just as quickly retract it or modify it. He certainly did not treat the apostle Peter in the same way when he saw the sheet containing unclean animals let down before him on the housetop in Joppa (Acts 10:14f.). Perhaps the original command was never intended to do anything more than illustrate the uncleanness of their diet, which would never have come over to Ezekiel or his watchers (cf. verse 12, in their sight; could this have been acted out?), if the cow's dung had been used from the start. At all events, it is gratifying to note the concession that God graciously made to his servant's priestly scrupulousness on this occasion."

- John B. Taylor

Now even though God was gracious and allows Ezekiel to use cow dung to bake his bread with it does not decrease the seriousness of what was coming upon Jerusalem. This is a warning of the coming famine upon Jerusalem. It is going to get so bad that the women will boil and eat their own children. Many people will starve to death during this time.

Why was God doing this? Look at the last four words of this chapter, "**. . . because of their iniquity.**" All these illustrations, all these object lessons showing what was coming for Jerusalem and the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was the result of their sin and the judgment of God upon them for it!

2. As we move into chapter 5 of Ezekiel we see more object lessons to show of this coming judgment.

EZEKIEL 5**VERSES 1-4**

1. Talk about your man's man. This guy gives his head and face a shave with a sword! I don't know about some of you men out there, but when my wife takes my razor to shave her legs and then I use it on my face, it is not a good thing. I have so many cuts from hacking my face and placing toilet paper to stop the bleeding that I look like the mummy by the time I am done! Well, it is not that bad but you get the idea!

Here Ezekiel cuts off the hair on his head and on his face and we might not think much about that but in that culture, when a man lost his beard, it was a disgrace. Also keep in mind that Ezekiel was a priest and his hair was a sign of his consecration to God's service as Leviticus 19:27 says, "**You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.**"

And, according to Isaiah 3:24 and 22:12, the shaving of the head was a sign of mourning. And if a priest shaved his head he was defiled as Leviticus 21:5 says, "**They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.**"

This not only showed how the Jews were defiled before God but also shows that there was nothing left to do but mourn over the death of the nation, the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

2. But that is just part of this object lesson. When he cuts his hair he is to divide it into three parts. He is to take 1/3 and burn it with fire and that spoke of death by famine and pestilence. Then he was to take another 1/3 and cut it up with the sword and this spoke of death by the sword. And the last 1/3 was to be scattered in the wind representing their captivity. Now as we move on in a few minutes we will see this explained in a little more detail.

That was the warning that Jeremiah gave the people of Judah, “**“And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,’ says the Lord, ‘with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.’”** Jeremiah 27:8.

3. Now there are a few pieces of hair that remain and Ezekiel is to take these and bind them into the hem of his garment, hide them in his clothes you might say. And even with some of these, they will be taken into captivity, die by the sword, famine or pestilence. This may be speaking of those who fled to Egypt after they killed Gedaliah and there in Egypt the King of Babylon came down upon them. They went there for safety and they did not find safety in the world, they should have looked to the Lord.

But there is a very small amount of his hair that is not destroyed and that is speaking of the faithful remnant. God always has His faithful remnant and He sees them through this time of judgment.

Now we do see this played out for us in Jeremiah 44:26-29 as we are told, **“Therefore hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: ‘Behold, I have sworn by My great name,’ says the Lord, ‘that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, “The Lord God lives.” Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end to them. Yet a small number who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, who have gone to the land of Egypt to dwell there, shall know whose words will stand, Mine or theirs. And this shall be a sign to you,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will punish you in this place, that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for adversity.’”** I believe this is what Ezekiel is speaking of.

VERSES 5-9

1. Now some may see that God’s judgment is harsh, that it was unfair, but God is going to show them why this has come upon them. And if you think about it, they should have known this in the first place; they just closed their eyes to this and hardened their hearts to this. Their own Scriptures spoke of what would happen if they turned from the Lord, just read Deuteronomy for instance, just one book that clearly states this and God did warn them over and over again.

Not only that but the prophets of God were warning them that if they did not turn from their wicked ways judgment was coming. And once again they just closed their eyes to this and hardened their hearts to what the prophets of God were saying!

God had set a standard for them to live by. But they didn't live up to the standard. In fact, they had gotten so bad that God saw their behavior, the things that they were doing, worse than the Gentile nations they drove out of the land of Canaan. They had become worse than the heathen nations! They were to be set apart unto God and they turned from Him. They were to be holy and they were wicked.

And here are words that any people or nation trembles at, the Lord told them in verse 8 of Ezekiel chapter 5, “**. . . ‘Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.’**” What a sad and tragic statement by the Lord and it was not the Lord's fault, it was Judah's as they had turned from the Lord and the Lord held them accountable for their actions!

2. Now before we get smug and think we are so much better, we are not! Keep in mind that we as Christians are also called to a higher standard. Peter tells us, “**Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’**” I Peter 1:13-16.

Think about that for a minute. If you do not stick out like a sore thumb in this world that is darkness it is because you are not shining. The church today wants to blend in with the world and thus, we accept the immoral practices of the world. We are to be holy, separated unto the Lord for His use, for His glory, we are to shine for Him! It is a warning to us as Christians because we do not want to hear that the Lord is against us! That call cannot be ignored!

3. Now listen to what is going to come upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah because of their wickedness, their refusal to turn back to the Lord.

VERSES 10-17

1. This is what we read about in Ezekiel 5:1-4 with the cutting of his hair. There would be famine and pestilence, many would die by the sword, and others would be scattered to other countries or into captivity.

Think about this for a minute. This judgment was going to be so severe, the famine so intense, that the people were going to resort to cannibalism just to survive! In Deuteronomy 28:53-58 God warned His people of this very thing if they turned from Him, **“You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD.”**

Keep in mind that this warning was given before they even entered the land of Canaan, the Promise Land! And yet they did not heed the warning and now judgment was coming upon them, not just with famine and pestilence, but with the sword and many would be taken into captivity as I have said!

2. Now we read this and there are some who see the God of the Old Testament as an angry God, a God of judgment. Let me say this, the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament and He is unchanging!

Also, we must keep in mind that God did everything possible to prevent this judgment from coming, but the people refused to heed His Words. They kept pushing Him and pushing Him farther and farther away until judgment came! In fact, we will see in our study of Ezekiel that God is pleading with His people to turn from their wicked ways because He gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But they refused to turn and thus, the righteous judgment of God came upon this nation to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep.

3. J. Vernon McGee shares with us what one young Jewish man thinks of the God of Israel! This is very interesting to me. He wrote,

A brilliant young Hebrew, who was a chaplain at the University of Pittsburgh a number of years ago, attempted to show that God did not exist. His argument was based on the premise that the God of the Hebrew Bible is depicted as the faithful protector of His chosen people, but at least six million Jews had died at the hands of the Nazis.

He wrote, "To believe in the God of the covenant today you must affirm that their Creator [that is, of the nation Israel] used Adolph Hitler as the rod of His wrath to send His people to the death camps, and I find myself utterly incapable of believing this. Even the existentialist's leap of faith cannot resurrect this dead God after Auschwitz."

This young rabbi speaks of the death of God as a cultural event. Wistfully and sadly he comes to the conclusion that there is no God because the God of the covenant is a God who would protect Israel and would never let anything happen to them. May I point out that he never takes into consideration, as Ezekiel did, that there might be something wrong with the people upon whom the judgment came. They had turned their backs upon God and had denied Him. They had been given a special privilege, and that privilege created a responsibility which they did not measure up to.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, Vol. III, pp. 450-451

And again, if he would just read the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures he would see that God used Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument of judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah because of their sin! And Nebuchadnezzar was not a nice guy and the things he did to the Jewish people were not good. But God's judgment was issued through him. Also, God used this to bring His people back into the land so what we see as horrible, God turns around and uses it for good. I am not saying that what Hitler did was right, but God used the evil for good!

4. Keep in mind that there were thousands of Jews in captivity already and yet they still refused to repent, they still refused to get right with God. They felt everything was okay and the false prophets were telling them that they would be going home soon! It is amazing how blind we can be to what is happening around us!

5. Now again, before we are too harsh on them, what about us? How many come to church and they leave the same way that they came in, unchanged! The message doesn't affect them. If God's Word is not affecting your life it is not God's fault, it is yours! You have hardened your heart to what God wants to do.

I don't want to offend anyone but Isaiah 55:8-11 puts it like this, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

Yes we can't know an infinite God, an all knowing God but God has revealed Himself to us through His Word. And thus, as we take it in it is refreshing, it is life sustaining. And God's Word will accomplish in our hearts what He wants but we must let Him in, we must be open to what He has for us.

Paul, in Hebrews 4:12-13 said, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”**

May we allow God’s Word, by His Spirit, to cut away the hardness from around our heart and draw us close to Him, to make us more sensitive to Him! We can hide our heart from a lot of people, but you can’t hide it from God, He knows all. May we give Him the garbage in our life and let Him fill us with His Spirit and His love.

6. Now there is one more point that I want to talk about before we move on and I think it is important. If God did not judge sin then the sin of man would destroy the nation, it would destroy man. God was gracious and merciful in dealing with their sin to preserve the nation and the people.

And when you look at this world and you see what sin is doing, how much longer before the sin of man destroys man? But God is gracious and merciful and He will deal with a Christ rejecting world, He will deal with the sin of man and then He will establish His Kingdom on this earth as Jesus rules and reigns for 1,000 years! Sin is destructive and it must be dealt with and that is what we see here.

EZEKIEL 6**VERSES 1-7**

1. When you read that God is calling for Ezekiel to speak to the mountains of Israel it seems very strange. But keep in mind that the people refused to listen and heed the words of God, they turned against Him, and thus, God is going to pronounce judgment upon their places of worship and that is why he is going to speak to the mountains, at least they would listen!

Now in these groves and in these mountains the children of Israel worshiped these false gods. And the worship of these gods would degenerate into sexual orgies, it satisfied the flesh but it was an abomination before the Lord. They were committing spiritual adultery as well as physical adultery. And yes, they may not have had Playboy or Penthouse magazines to stimulate their flesh, but they did have these idols that were carved into things that stimulated their flesh. It did the same thing.

Make no mistake about it, sin is destructive and we see that here. As much as these groves brought them much enjoyment they were going to become their graves as God was going to bring judgment upon them for their idolatry. Keep in mind that Jerusalem had not been destroyed by the Babylonians yet, but it was coming!

2. As you read through these verses you see that everything they placed their trust in was going to be taken away in this judgment. You would think by this point, as many people have already been taken into captivity as I have said, that they would be awakened out of their spiritual sleep. But it hasn't awakened them yet and God was going to finish the work, the nation was going into captivity.

3. Notice why God is doing this, “**. . . you shall know that I am the LORD.**” He wants them to repent and return to Him. And we will see this thought over and over again in this chapter, some 4 times in these 14 verses. There is no God like our God, He stands alone and people can either accept it or reject it. If they reject it they need to understand there are consequences to their actions; God’s wrath will come upon their lives.

VERSES 8-10

1. God always has a faithful remnant that loves Him and serves Him, even during this dark time in Israel’s history. And these people will be a witness of the Lord wherever they may go. Yes they walked away from the Lord but they have returned to Him and God will spare this faithful remnant.

I like the idea that God has a witness of Himself wherever we go. That should be the case, as people look at our lives they see the love of God. As they look at our lives we are shining so brightly the joy of the Lord that they are drawn to Him. We are living stones and people will many times come to their conclusions about God based on how we represent Him! We need to shine brightly in this dark world showing people the way to God through Jesus.

2. We also see here the heart of God for His people. The Lord was broken over their unfaithfulness. They had wandering eyes and went after other lovers, leaving the Lord. But make no mistake about it; judgment will come upon them for their actions. These are not idle words by the Lord. They will know who the true and living God is.

Listen again to what the Lord was doing with them, “**And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them.**” In other words, they needed to pay attention because the Lord is going to bring about what He has promised and the desired outcome of all this is that they will “**know that I am the LORD.**”

VERSES 11-14

1. The Lord tells Ezekiel to clap his hands and stamp his feet, why? To get the people's attention, to awaken them from their sleep you might say. Make no mistake about it; Ezekiel was a very animated prophet as we have seen. And as he is doing this he then speaks of the judgment that is coming because of all their abominations before the Lord. There is no escape!

2. I think there is an important lesson for us here. Who are we going to serve? Who are we going to worship? Will we sacrifice our lives to idols and in the end die worshipping them or will we sacrifice our lives to the Lord as a living sacrifice, dying to self and living unto Him? Paul put it like this in Romans 12:1-2, “**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [spiritual worship]. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**” The choice is ours!

But the picture that is painted here of those who worship these idols is nothing but death and destruction. You see, all those places of pagan worship, all those places they went to so they could satisfy the flesh, all those places they thought gave them happiness, fulfillment, will now be nothing more than places of death for them. The groves will turn into their graves.

Or we can turn to the Lord and give our lives unto Him as a living sacrifice. You see, God wants us to examine our hearts and our actions before Him. God alone deserves to be worshiped and if you move away from Him you will find the things you put your trust in will leave you high and dry. You will be empty, you won't be satisfied.

And as we have seen in this chapter, the Lord wants to make Himself known to them again. In these 4 verses we see that the Lord repeats Himself twice by reminding them, "**Then you shall know that I am the Lord.**" That was the Lord's desire for Israel and it is His desire for us!

3. As we move into Ezekiel chapter 7 we will see the description of the Babylonian invasion.

EZEKIEL 7

VERSES 1-4

1. The people would be judged according to their ways. That is, they would bring judgment upon themselves. Now in saying that don't lose sight that our God is patient, He is longsuffering. You look at the stories in the Bible, you look at your own life, and you can't deny that fact.

Peter, in speaking of God's coming judgment said, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**" II Peter 3:9-10.

2. As you read this notice the complete destruction upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah. “**An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.**” So it is not just Jerusalem but all the land of the Southern Kingdom of Judah including Jerusalem, “**Now the end has come upon you.**” God warned them and they refused to listen!

Think about the world before the flood. The wickedness of man was evil continually and the judgment of God was coming upon the world. And God told Noah to build an ark that was some 450 feet long, some 75 feet wide and some 45 feet high. It took him some 120 years to complete this project and there was no rain that fell on the earth, no large bodies of water to launch this boat that was close by.

And for 120 years Noah heard all the remarks that people were making regarding this project that God instructed him to build. Understand this; those 120 years were years of God’s grace. God said in Genesis 6:3, “**. . . ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh . . .’**”

And in those 120 years no one listened to the message of Noah. Then, as the door of the ark closed, as it began to rain, the age of grace was over and the judgment of God began. People today can make fun of our message but once again the age of grace is coming to an end and the day of His judgment is fast approaching. May people not miss this opportunity that God has given them to come to Him! The time is short and as we have seen, it happened to the nation of Israel and it is going to happen again, this time on a global scale! Make no mistake about it, if you refuse His grace you will receive His wrath, that’s just the way it is! You will not escape this judgment from God, “**. . . you shall know that I am the LORD!**”

VERSES 5-13

1. I can picture the Lord shaking His head and saying these words of judgment. You see, it didn't have to come if they returned to Him and heeded His words. But they refused and the age of grace came to an end and the day of God's judgment was upon them.

And as you read these verses you see the total destruction of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and as bad as that was these words I think are even more destructive. In verse 9, the last part of that verse we are told, "**. . . Then you will know that I am the LORD who strikes.**"

There are so many wonderful names that the Lord has in the Scriptures and they relate to how He ministers to us, that He will provide, He is our banner, He sanctifies us, He is our peace and-so-on. But if you don't receive Him, if you reject Him you will see Him as "**the LORD who strikes.**"

2. Now in verses 12 and 13 we see this idea of buying and selling land. You see, when you sold your land, you sold your inheritance. And as much as the buyer was rejoicing you would mourn. But in this judgment, no one will win; they all will be wiped out! The land won't matter anymore because they won't be in it. They will either be in captivity in Babylon or dead because they rejected the Lord and now He has smitten them for their sins!

VERSES 14-19

1. You are not going to be able to escape this judgment. If you tried to run, the Babylonians would overtake you and kill you. If you remained in the city, the armies of Babylon will encircle the city, cutting off the food supply and you would starve to death or die of pestilence. For the few that were left in the land, they will have no strength within them. They will be in mourning over all that has taken place upon them and their city.

And as much as gold and silver was important to them before, now it is worthless. When you are starving to death you can't eat gold or silver and if there was no food it didn't matter how much money you had. Psalm 49:6-7 puts it like this, "**Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.**"

You can't buy your way into heaven! In other words, riches are spiritually valueless, only Jesus can save you! Thus, the door is open for both the rich and the poor to be saved. All can come to Him, but many times riches get in the way. What do you trust in or more importantly, who do you trust in?

VERSES 20-22

1. The wealth that God gave to His people, the gold that was used in the Temple, was made into idols. God wanted these things to be used in the worship of Him, to bring Him glory, but instead they used it in a way that was an abomination to the Lord and God held them accountable for their actions. The Babylonians will come in and take the wealth of the nation, they will defile the Temple!

VERSES 23-27

1. Make no mistake about it; the Babylonians were a wicked people. And as they came upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah their brutality was seen and it brought great despair, hopelessness to the people of God. And now, when there is no way out, as the Babylonians have broken through the walls of the city, they will be looking for a prophet of God to tell them what is going to happen. First of all God already told them they just refused to listen and now it is too late. God tried to speak to them but they refused to listen and His judgment came down!

Just listen to how the people of God responded to the message that Jeremiah gave to them. We are told in Jeremiah 44:16-17, **“As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble.”** And now, since they refused to listen to God and His prophets, God was not going to speak to them and judgment was coming.

Now keep in mind that this judgment was not to destroy them. God is going to hurt them to heal them. He is bringing all this upon them so they will know who the true God is! That is how this chapter ends, **“... Then they shall know that I am the LORD.”**

2. Now let's fast forward this to our day. When you look at what is happening in this world and you see what the Bible has to say about the last days, the Lord's return for His Bride, the Church is getting close and thus, so is the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period. But just like the people were not looking for the judgment of God back in Ezekiel's day, many are not today. Let me share this with you as I begin to close this evening. We are told,

So it is in our own day. Not many are looking for the end, let alone preparing for it or anxiously awaiting it. But the end draws near, and with it exactly the same necessary divine wrath on ungodliness that has always accompanied God's decisive acts of intervention in human history. Lack of preparation for God's judgment is a sad reality. Most people simply will not heed such warnings and will be caught unaware and unprepared to face their creator and judge.

People of Noah's day were not ready for anything as cataclysmic as the Flood. They thought they had plenty of time (Matt. 24:38-39). And so it was in Ezekiel's day regarding the fall of Judah. "It can't happen now," they thought. And so it is in ours. Yet because we simply do not know when that day will come, we ought to be all the more, not less, watchful (Matt. 24:42-44).

- Douglas Stuart – The Preacher's Commentary – Ezekiel, pp. 72-23

May we be like Paul and not only say but live because, “**. . . the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.**” Titus 2:11-15.

You see, not only looking for the return of our Lord but living for Him and thus, we seek to be holy as the Lord commands us. And what the Lord has given to us, what we look forward to, let others know and don't let anyone ***DESPISE YOU – THE TIME IS TOO SHORT!***