

EZEKIEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ezekiel chapter 14 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Keep in mind that Ezekiel was taken into captivity during the second invasion upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah, in 597 B. C., and there in Babylon he is ministering to the Jewish people, showing them why the nation is going into captivity and that this judgment is very close.

As we will see in this chapter some of the elders who were taken into captivity are coming to Ezekiel to hear what God is saying and the Lord will speak through Ezekiel but not in a way that they wanted. They truly did not want to hear these words. You see, they may have looked fine outwardly but God looks at the heart and He exposes their sin as we will see.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Ezekiel chapter 14 beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

EZEKIEL 14**VERSES 1-3**

1. Ezekiel had established himself as a prophet of God among the Jewish captives in Babylon. And now these elders have come to Ezekiel to hear from God, which sounds good. In fact, as you read what they desire you may think that they are very sincere, but it is just a façade! “Oh Ezekiel, you are a man of God and we desire to hear from God. We are surrendered to Him and desire to hear what He has for us” is basically what they were saying!

The problem, as we see here in verse 3, is that it was all superficial, outward, and their hearts were still full of evil and idolatry, they were far from God. Yes, in Jerusalem they practiced their idolatry in the open, but now that some are captive in Babylon, they still are practicing it, maybe not outwardly but now in their hearts and that is where sin begins. And God exposes the heart of these elders to Ezekiel, showing them how evil their hearts really were and that God was not going to speak to a people who refuse to obey Him!

Like I have said, outwardly it looked good, but inwardly they still were rebelling against God. It is like the story of the little boy who was being punished by his father. And the father wanted him to sit in the chair, but he kept refusing. Finally, the boy obeyed his dad, sat down in the chair, and said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but on the inside I'm still standing!" That was the heart of these elders!

2. We would never do something like that would we? Of course we would and we do! People come to church carrying their Bibles, they look very spiritual, they sound very spiritual and that is all it is. It is a façade and it may fool us but it doesn't fool God. If you come to church and you hear what God has for you and then you go out and do as you please, you have set up an idol in your heart and it is called **SELF!** You don't want to hear from God you just want to look good and again, God will call you on it because He sees right through it, He sees your heart!

VERSES 4-11

1. The God who sees the heart of people is calling for them to repent and return to Him. He is not letting them continue in that condition but He is trying to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep. They saw the power, the wealth, the benefits of Babylon and thus, this idolatry that was inward would manifest itself outwardly in their lives. Listen to what one writer had to say regarding these verses and what Ezekiel was saying to them. He wrote,

So what was Ezekiel to do in response to such people coming to him to ask what word he had from the Lord? Verse 4 provides the answer: he was to let them know that God would “answer” them according to their idolatry. The Hebrew verb ‘nh (Niphal), here carries the sense of “respond,” and the overall meaning is something like what the greedy outlaw used to say in the western movie to those who wanted to split the loot with him: “I’ll give you what’s coming to you, all right!”

God would “answer” them, then, not by a prophetic message but by His wrath. The purpose was to purify the people, to “seize” them “by their heart” (v. 5) so that they would be wholly loyal to the Lord.

In other words, God’s judgment against idolaters was for the sake of proper belief, a generous act of cleansing so that His people might not continue estranged from Him who alone could save them, but might turn to Him away from idolatry (v. 6).

- Douglas Stuart, *The Preacher’s Commentary, Ezekiel*, p. 120

2. Now look at verse 9 again because some have a problem with what is being said to these false prophets, where their words are coming from. The Lord said, **“And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the Lord have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel.”**

Does that mean that God gave these false prophets the lies that they were speaking? Is He making these false prophets speak lies? I don't believe so. Remember the story in I Kings chapter 22. Ahab was the wicked king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he had many false prophets in his kingdom. They loved to tell him good things even though they were not true, it made him feel better I guess.

And yet among all those false prophets in the Northern Kingdom of Israel we see that God had his faithful prophet and his name was Micaiah. And in I Kings 22:19-23 we read, **“Then Micaiah said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’ Therefore look! *The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.*”**

Again, many have a problem here that God would do that or they just plain don't understand what is going on, they are confused. Let me see if I can clear this up for you. What I believe is going on here in I Kings and here in Ezekiel is this. When people harden themselves to the truths of God, God will allow these lying spirits, these demons to speak to them and they will believe them. It was their choice and God allowed them to receive what they wanted to hear even though it was a lie because they rejected the truth. You see, God doesn't lie, He is light and there is no darkness in Him at all! But if you reject the truth there are plenty of these demons, fallen angels that will give you what you want to hear, even though it is a lie!

3. And we see that our God is so gracious and so merciful that He is giving them one last chance to turn to Him. The tragedy is that they refused. And that is true even today. The Holy Spirit is drawing people to Jesus but many refuse to listen, they refuse to turn to the One who can take away their sins and they will enter into eternity apart from Him!

VERSES 12-21

1. As you can see, the land was so wicked at this point that nothing was going to stop the judgment of God from coming, not even these three righteous men; Noah, Daniel and Job. Keep in mind that Daniel was a contemporary with Ezekiel and was taken captive in the first invasion of the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians.

2. Why does the Lord list these three men and say that they can't even save the land, save the people? First of all we see that Noah was a righteous man and he and his family escaped the judgment of God. Just because Noah was righteous did not mean that judgment was going to be spared upon the wicked.

We see that Daniel was also a righteous man, he purposed in his heart not to defile himself and God honored that and raised him up in the Babylonian Kingdom. And even though Daniel loved the Lord and was a righteous man, it did not stop the judgment of God from coming upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah or upon Babylon.

And then there is Job and he too was a righteous man and endured much tribulation. But in it all he did not bring a false charge against God. And even though he was righteous, it did not stop the death of his children.

The bottom line is this. Each person is responsible for their relationship with God just as it was with Noah, Daniel and Job; they were only able to save their own lives through their faith that was seen in the way they lived, you might say their righteousness.

3. How does that relate to us? Think about it, we can't say, "Hey my wife is a Christian, so I am safe!" Or, "My parents are both Christians and thus, I am safe!" You are not, you can't live off your parents or friends or grandparents faith, it must be your own! You have to come to Jesus and repent of your sins and ask Him to be Lord and Savior of your life. No one can do that for you.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:30, **“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”** Thus, through the work of Jesus in our lives He is imparting to us the Wisdom of God! And if you are lacking wisdom, listen to what James tells us, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”** James 1:5-8.

Not only does God impart His wisdom into our lives, but we also see that He is imparting to us,

A. RIGHTEOUSNESS – We are declared “innocent” not just “not guilty” because of the finished work of Christ. Paul said in Romans 4:23-25 regarding the faith of Abraham on how he was saved by faith and not by works and how he relates that to us, **“Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”**

We have become righteous before God because Jesus has given to us His righteousness as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

B. SANCTIFICATION – By the work of Jesus in our lives He has made us holy, set apart for God to use and the moment we are saved, that sanctification process begins and it will continue until we go to be with the Lord, for God will complete this work He has started in us.

Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:13-17, **“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”**

C. REDEMPTION – Paul is speaking of our glorification, which is a settled fact if we have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Paul in Romans 8:30 tells us **“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”** Paul speaks of our glorification in the past tense because he is that sure that what God has started He will complete in each of us, He will bring it to pass, it is not maybe, He will bring it to pass for He already sees us as glorified in a positional sense through Jesus. Our freedom is found in Jesus!

So there is no one to blame but yourself if you reject Jesus. No one else can bring you to heaven; you have to make that decision for yourself. In a sense, the ticket has been purchased by Jesus but unless you take that ticket, unless you come to Jesus, you will never get into heaven!

4. Now as we read through these verses here in Ezekiel we see that God's judgment is severe but it is never greater than the sins of the people. In fact, God's judgment is always tempered with grace and mercy. We never fully get what we deserve!

VERSES 22-23

1. Now as we read this about this remnant we might be thinking that God is speaking of those who have returned to Him, those who are serving Him and that will bring comfort in the midst of this judgment. We see God's grace and mercy shining through but that is not what is being said here.

This remnant will be brought out from Jerusalem and be brought into exile with the other captives and the reason for this is because of their wicked ways. Yes this word "**remnant**" is usually used of the righteous but as you look at the context of these verses you can see it is not speaking of the righteous but the wicked. And the only benefit is that they would not be destroyed by the Babylonians, which brought comfort to them I guess, but would be taken captive instead!

The key to me is what the last part of verse 23 says, "**...and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it;**" says the Lord GOD." God was justified in His actions upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah. God did not bring judgment upon them for nothing and it is out of this judgment that they will be reminded of God's justice and His grace. May we understand that fact, that God does nothing without cause!

EZEKIEL 15**VERSES 1-5**

1. Israel is spoken of many times in the Scriptures as the vine and God uses this picture to show them what is going to happen to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. First of all He is speaking of the grape vine and God is saying that a grape vine is really not good for making any furniture, not even a small peg to hang things on.

Not only that but it doesn't even burn well because it is consumed so quickly. Then what in the world is a grape vine good for? To bring forth grapes, of course! But, the nation was not bringing forth any fruit and thus God was going to judge them with fire. And as we read on we will see that point being made.

VERSES 6-8

1. God is saying that He is going to bring His judgment upon them just like a fire that devours the wood, so too will they be devoured in this judgment. Why was this judgment coming upon them? Because they were not producing fruit in their lives and there is no other use for a vine than to produce fruit.

2. How does that relate to us? Like Israel we see that the church is good for one thing. We exist for one purpose and that purpose is to glorify God by bringing forth much fruit. What is fruit? Galatians 5:22 says the fruit of the Spirit is love. And it is out of that love for the Lord as we bring Him good pleasure that we are able to love those around us.

In John 15:4-8 Jesus said, **“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”**

God has also designed us to bring forth fruit in our lives. And there is joy in doing what you were created for. Paul said in Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”** As we abide in Him we will produce fruit. It is what we were created for and that fruit then brings glory to God.

3. God’s desire was to draw them back. The reason for this judgment was for their sins but also God wanted to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep so they would return to Him. But they continued to refuse and God was going to have to hurt them to heal them! God’s desire is to bring us to Him and He will do whatever it takes. Don’t fight Him, receive Him into your life and you will be fruitful in your endeavors.

And for some, you may not agree with this but think about it. When you are praying for an unbeliever or a Christian who has gone into sin, do you pray for God to bless them? I hope not because in that blessing they are not going to see their need for the Lord or their need to return to Him. We should be praying for God to bring them to the point where they will surrender to Him, that they will receive Him as their Lord and Savior or they will repent and return to Him.

I realize that may seem harsh or unloving but think about it. Would you rather have God bless a person and see them spend an eternity in Hell or would you want to see them saved even though they had to go through some difficult times? I think the answer is easy; of course we would want to see them saved.

And for the saved person who is living in sin, do you really think God is going to let His child get away with that? Of course not because He loves them too much and tragically some have to hit rock bottom before they are willing to look up and return to Him!

EZEKIEL 16

VERSES 1-7

1. To demonstrate that his parable of the worthless vine was no exaggeration Ezekiel surveys Jerusalem's history from the city's birth to his own day. As I read this I feel it is speaking of both the city of Jerusalem and the people, they go hand in hand you might say. As the city goes so were the people you might say.

First of all in dealing with the land, if you remember, was occupied by Canaanites and specifically Jerusalem was occupied by the Jebusites before David conquered them back in I Chronicles 11:4-9 where we read, **“And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. But the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, ‘You shall not come in here!’ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). Now David said, ‘Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain.’ And Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, and became chief. Then David dwelt in the stronghold; therefore they called it the City of David. And he built the city around it, from the Millo to the surrounding area. Joab repaired the rest of the city. So David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him.”**

Also, the Amorites and Hittites were Canaanites who occupied the land that God is going to give to the Jewish people. Jerusalem, as we have read was born even though it was not looked at with favor at first. Now look at what it is today, the nations of the world want a piece of it and they want the Jews out. It is the place where God has placed His name and it is the place where God dwelt, in the Temple above the Mercy Seat between the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

So as we are reading through this keep in mind that the Lord is not speaking specifically here of the Jewish people but of the city of Jerusalem but as the city went so did the people! I do think that both apply but specifically, as verses 2 and 3 tell us the focus is **JERUSALEM!** But again, I don't think you can separate them. Let me show you what I mean.

2. Now let's look at the people and God did birth this nation. You see, before God made them a people, they were nothing. And as God, in a sense, birthed this nation the other nations ignored them, they had no respect for them and they just left this new born nation to care for itself.

And of course God is using symbolism to describe the birth of this nation. Remember, Abraham was an idol worshiping Gentile before God called him. And Abraham walked through the land that God gave him, he never owned it. Now as the nation grew from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and his 12 sons that became the 12 tribes of Israel, a nation was being born.

And as they dwelt in the land, a famine broke out, which caused Jacob and his family to go down to Egypt where his son Joseph was sent by his brothers years earlier, sold into slavery. But now Joseph was second in charge of this nation, in charge of the food and Jacob and his children traveled down to Egypt and remained there. Down in Egypt they grew to some 2 million people from the 70 that went down. But now that Joseph has died and the Pharaoh's who knew of Joseph also died, there began this hatred towards the Jews and it grew and grew and the Egyptians made the Jews slaves.

As they cried out to God we see that God sent them a deliverer, Moses, to set them free. And as they journeyed, with a side track of 40 years, they entered the land that God had promised to them, the land of Canaan. And God is saying that He not only ordained their survival but He was going to make them His wife! This of course is the abridged version but read Exodus and you will get the full picture and then on into Joshua as they enter the land.

We see that God not only brought forth this nation but He cleansed them and He anointed them with oil. Why? He was preparing them for this marriage with Him. In fact, she was His queen!

Also, God gave them a land flowing with milk and honey. They were very prosperous as a nation. God truly blessed His people.

VERSES 8-14

1. J. Vernon McGee wrote this regarding these verses we just read,

I think the application to our lives is quite obvious: you and I have a pretty bad background. Adam and Eve became sinners, and you and I were born in iniquity. David said, "... in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5), and David is no different from you and me. What do you have to boast about? Even if your ancestors *did* come over on the Mayflower, they were just a bunch of sinners saved by the grace of God. That is our origin, our background - we were dead in trespasses and sin.

What did God do for Jerusalem? God said to her, "Live" (v. 6). To us He has said, "... Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). He has made a covenant that if you will trust Christ, He will save you. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Lord took that little illegitimate child, dirty and filthy in its own blood, and He said, "Then washed I thee with water." Likewise, we can know the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. "I thoroughly washed away the blood from thee"- the Lord Jesus bore my guilt on the Cross; there is no blood guilt on a child of God today. "And I anointed thee with oil"- He anoints the child of God today with the oil of the Holy Spirit. "I girded thee about with fine linen"- we can be covered with the righteousness of Christ in order that we might stand in the presence of God.

- J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, Vol. III, pp. 470-471

Yes there is the application to our individual lives and what God has done.

2. During the reign of David and then Solomon, the nation rose to a position of great power, wealth; they occupied almost all the land that God had promised them. If you remember, during the reign of Solomon the Queen of Sheba came to see if what she had heard was true about this nation. And when she arrived she said that what she was told was only half of what she saw. Jerusalem was beautiful and the Temple was the focal point! She was blown away at how prosperous this nation was. Not only did they have much wealth but God was protecting them from their enemies. Other nations recognized that if you went to war against Israel you were not only fighting against the people, but their God! Tragically, as we are going to see, the people grew tired of this relationship with the Lord and are going to try and find fulfillment, satisfaction with other lovers and it brought destruction upon the nation!

VERSES 15-22

1. Keep in mind that Jerusalem and the Jewish people were linked together. Jerusalem was a beautiful city and the eyes of the nations looked upon her. But instead of being a place for people to come and meet the living God we see that Jerusalem became a place of idolatry. She played the harlot and like the city so went the people.

They dressed themselves up, took possessions that God gave them, and used them to make false god's to worship in the high places. And the thought was, the higher up on the hill or mountain you were, the closer you were to these god's. And understand all this pagan idolatry was sexually oriented, it satisfied the flesh, and thus they were drawn into it, played the harlot and left their God.

And what God had given to them to worship Him by they were using to worship these other false god's by! And it got so bad that they even sacrificed their children to the god Molech in the fire!

Now think about what was going on. These pagan worship practices centered many times around sexual promiscuity as I have said. Thus, what is the result of sexual promiscuity? Children, and many times unwanted children. Such was the case in Israel. And what do you do with all these unwanted children?

They offered them as a sacrifice to the god of prosperity, Molech. You see, if you sacrificed your child you were ensuring prosperity for yourself or so they thought. Thus, they killed two birds with one stone in a sense. They got rid of all these unwanted children that were being born from their sexual promiscuity and they were securing a blessing, prosperity for themselves.

What they would do is go to the south of Jerusalem, to the Valley of Hinnom, and get a fire going. And in this fire they placed these brass idols of Molech with his arms outstretched. And they would drink, yell, bang these drums, working themselves up into an altered state of consciousness. Then they would take their children and place them in these burning hot, outstretched hands of Molech as a sacrifice. They burned them in the fire!

2. And we have talked about this before. People read that and they are outraged at the brutality of that kind of activity and yet we do the very same thing today! Now we don't call this god Molech today but it is the same god we worship. It is the god of prosperity.

You see, with all the sexual promiscuity, the sexual freedom that has been encouraged today there are a lot of unwanted children being conceived. And because that interferes with our lifestyle, we are not financially ready to have children, these children are aborted or should I say killed in the womb. A mother's womb is a place for protection, nurturing! That my friend's is not any different than what Israel was doing. You see, God said that they are His children, and like Israel, we are killing His children!

3. How could they do these things? How could they turn from God, the One who brought them into existence? The reason is simple. They forgot where they came from and what God had done for them. That is a dangerous place to be. Never lose sight of what God has done, is doing and will do in your life!

In Jeremiah 2:2-3 we are told, **“Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the LORD, the firstfruits of His increase. . . .”’**” God wanted them to remember the joy they had when they were first in love with Him. It was a beautiful relationship and that is the kind of relationship that the Lord wants with us. If you take your eyes off of Him you ***WILL*** worship false gods and they may not be little statues but they will be something that is more important to you than God. And as you travel down that road you will move farther and farther from God! We will see that as we move on.

VERSES 23-34

1. Like I said, it is a slippery slope downward for Jerusalem and the Jewish people and that is exactly what we see here. This lust for these gods continued to grow and still they were not satisfied. The land was filled with pagan worship sites.

And I am sure that as they looked back they could not believe how far they had fallen! We are told in Jeremiah 2:21-22, **“Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me,’ says the Lord GOD.”**

God did everything He could to make them a vine that would produce good fruit. But they turned from Him and their sins were before the Lord. They were born to produce fruit and as Ezekiel said back in chapter 15, the grape vine is good for nothing except to produce fruit, to produce grapes. And that is true in our own life; we were created to bring forth good fruit to the glory of God.

And what is tragic here is that they had moved so far away from God, their practices were so evil that even the pagan nations around them were blushing, they were embarrassed at what God’s people were doing. It shocked them!

2. Religion, like drugs can become an addiction. I am not talking about Christianity because that is not a religion, it is a lifestyle. Religion is man trying to reach up to God, Christianity is God reaching down to sinful man and pulling him out of the mire of sin that he is in! Yes, I guess I am addicted to Jesus but He alone can save, He alone is God and what He has for me is not to hurt me but to help me to grow and mature in the faith. These other religions make you feel good about going to Hell, just like drugs. They make you feel good and they are destroying your life!

But look at how addicting some religions can be and we see that here with Jerusalem and its people. They had become addicted to these practices and yet, it was still not enough for them. What once satisfied them wasn't doing it anymore just like drugs. And they degenerated farther and farther into wickedness to try and satisfy their fleshly desires. It is as Jesus said in John 8:34, **“... ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’”** May we not forget that truth! You have been set free in Christ, don't place yourself back into that bondage that He has delivered you from.

3. As you look at verses 28 and 29 you see that both Assyria and Chaldea were among Jerusalem's lovers and yet, even with all of that they were not satisfied. Why is that? Because you will never find the satisfaction you are looking for outside of Jesus. You may find temporary satisfaction but it will not be that lasting satisfaction that is only found in Him as we rest in Him!

Again, some may want to argue and say that they are satisfied without God and in the end; they will find that they are wrong. Why is that? Because you will never satisfy the flesh, the flesh always wants more. You will always need a bigger home, fancier car, better job, more money, more possession, and-so-on.

And if you drink from this well, you will thirst again. Jesus tells us we need to drink from Him because if we do we will never thirst again. We will find satisfaction, joy, contentment in our lives. The choice is ours, to be satisfied in Christ or to lust after other things, play the harlot and never be completely satisfied!

4. And the picture here is very sad. God had made these people His queen but they degenerated into nothing more than a tramp. And God is amazed at the depths they were willing to sink to. He is saying that at least a harlot got paid for her service. But His people were paying others to show them how to satisfy their flesh, how to worship their god's. God gave them much wealth, protection, and-so-on, and they were giving it all away!

VERSES 35-43

1. All these nations that once saw Israel governed by God, were now going to see their nakedness, how they are when they are apart from God and joined to idols. And the judgment for committing adultery, murder and idolatry was death! There was judgment for these wicked activities. (See Leviticus 20:1, Leviticus 20:10, Numbers 35:16-21, Deuteronomy 22:22-24).

These nations, the ones that Jerusalem was in bed with in a sense, will be the ones that God uses to bring judgment upon His people. Their land will be stripped bare and Jerusalem's nakedness will be exposed for all to see!

And as you look at verse 39 you see how Jerusalem will be stripped bare. We saw that with the Northern Kingdom of Israel when they were taken captive by the Assyrians and we are going to see that take place again with the Southern Kingdom of Judah as the Babylonians come and take them captive. All their possessions will be taken away!

2. Why did God do this? “**Because you did not remember the days of your youth . . .**” In other words, they forgot their God and God was now bringing this judgment upon them so He could awaken them from their spiritual sleep. He was trying to bring them back!

VERSES 44-52

1. And the proverb they were saying is that as wicked as their parents were, the children were no different. Idolatry, immorality, the sacrificing of their children to the god Molech, they were all involved in these practices. Thus, when the judgment fell no one was going to be able to say that it was unfair or unjust.

2. And the Lord tells Ezekiel that Jerusalem was no different than the nations they drove out as they entered the land of Canaan. In fact, they became worse, so much so that the pagan nations blushed at the things this nation was now doing.

As I look at our nation and what we look like, it is embarrassing. I remember several years ago I rented a movie and my mom, my wife and I were going to watch it. It was called, “Analyze This” with Robert De Niro and Billy Crystal. It was about an Italian mobster who was depressed and needed help to get back on track so he could break people’s legs again or something to that extent. It was a comedy.

As we were watching it, and keep in mind that my mom was watching it with us, I was so embarrassed because of the language. I had to apologize to my mom because of it, I was blushing! But many today see these things as a non-issue, it is not a problem as we sink deeper and deeper into sin and we get used to it!

3. After the Lord says that Jerusalem was no different than the other nations He calls out two nations that they and we are very familiar with, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Sodom. Remember, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had no good kings, they all were wicked. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had several good kings. And, of course, Sodom was wicked and judged by God for her wickedness. And the Lord is saying that the Southern Kingdom of Judah was even more wicked than Samaria to the north and Sodom to the south! Not a good thing.

Now when we think of Sodom we think of homosexuality and that is the sin that brought Sodom down, that is what brought the judgment of God upon them. But that was only part of their wickedness and just a symptom of their disease. You see, before the judgment of God fell upon them the land was very fertile all year long. They didn't have to work hard.

Thus, all these blessings lead to idleness, they had no compassion on those in need, and they became very prideful. And as the saying goes, "Idle hands are the devils workshop!" That is what we see here. All that idle time lead them into all kinds of wickedness and judgment came upon them, the land was destroyed, which remains barren today, it looks like the lunar landscape!

And look at America as one writer wrote, "Pride was the very sin that sent Satan reeling out of heaven - yet we in America are falling into that same tendency because we take pride in our country. Is patriotism wrong? No - as long as we understand the secret of our success, the source of our strength. It's not our defense, diplomacy, democracy, or economy. America has been great, as the early patriots knew, simply because God has shown grace to us." (Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary – Old Testament Vol. 2, p. 635)

And the conclusion of this is that compared to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Samaria and Sodom looked good! Can you imagine that and yet it was the case, that is how God saw it and He is not wrong! It would be like saying, compared to America Isis looked good!

VERSES 53-59

1. I believe that this is looking into the future, a time of restoration when the nations will be restored, which is ultimately seen in the Kingdom Age. And it is prior to the Kingdom Age, during the Tribulation Period, that they will recognize how wicked, how sinful the children of God were.

One writer sums this up by saying,

Samaria represents the old northern kingdom of Israel, the survivors of which were known as Samaritans in New Testament times. Sodom represents the Gentile population that had not been fully assimilated into the political structure of Israel. Many of these “Canaanites” worshiped Yahweh along with other gods. Ezekiel envisioned the day when such aliens, cleansed and converted (cf. Jer. 12:16), would have equal standing as part of the people of God (cf. 47:22-23). . . .

If God restores Jerusalem, he must also restore the two sisters, for they had sinned less. The three sister cities are depicted returning to their former state, i.e., their former situation in their heyday. Ezekiel is speaking of spiritual transformation under images of physical reconstruction.

- James E. Smith, An Exegetical Commentary on EZEKIEL, p. 114

So we see that Sodom represents the Gentile nations, Samaria is the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem will also be restored in the Kingdom Age.

2. As we finish up this chapter we will see God temper His judgment with His mercy. We never fully get what we deserve!

VERSES 60-63

1. As we can see, God is going to restore the nation, not because of their faithfulness but because of His. Remember the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis chapter 15. How Abraham cut the animals in half and the idea was that both parties of the covenant would walk through them, ratifying the covenant.

The word **“covenant”** means “to cut.” Now if someone broke the rules of that covenant, it would make it null and void. But this was a serious commitment you were getting into, and it was not broken just like that. But if you remember, when this covenant was sealed Abraham was asleep. And it was the Lord, the glory of God, the Shekinah glory that passed through these cut animals, and thus, this was a unilateral covenant based totally on God’s faithfulness, not mans.

If you don't understand that you could come to the wrong conclusion that God has forsaken Israel and has now given all the promises to the church. That is totally wrong. Galatians 3:15-18 points that out as Paul said, **“Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”**

Also, in Romans 11:25-27 Paul picks up on how the nation of Israel will be restored one day. Paul said, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’”**

2. When will the nation of Israel, the Jews recognize Jesus as their Messiah? They will come to saving faith during the Tribulation Period. In Zechariah 12:10 we read, **“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”**

And in the New Testament Jesus says, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”** Matthew 23:37-39. They will recognize Jesus as Lord and call upon Him and all Israel will be saved!

3. The same is true when it comes to our salvation. You see, it is based totally upon God’s faithfulness, not mine or yours. If it was up to us to sustain it, we would be in trouble! All we must do is receive it by faith. Remember what Jesus said in John 10:28, **“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”**

Now it does seem very clear but the Greek is even stronger in making this statement. You see, it is written in the middle voice. Let me explain. If it was in the active voice you would say ***“I threw the ball.”*** If it was in the passive voice you would say, ***“The ball was thrown to me.”*** And if it is in the middle voice you would say, ***“I threw the ball to myself.”***

You see, God not only gives us salvation, but He sustains it. John 10:28 could be read this way, ***“And they shall never ever do anything to cause them to perish.”*** God has given to us eternal life, and there is no fear because perfect love, God’s love towards us, casts out that fear. Our salvation is not dependent upon us, but God, and He is faithful!

Does that mean someone who says they are saved can live in sin and they can’t lose their salvation? First of all if you can live in sin and never feel the conviction of God upon your life I doubt if you were saved in the first place. The things we do reflect who we belong to, not for salvation but for identification!

4. Let me close this evening with these words,

This happy ending to the allegory, however, is not the only part of it that has meaning for us. The history of Jerusalem's sin is very much a mirror for our own past state. When we sinned against the God who loves us and cares for us, we made ourselves undeserving of His rescue. When we who without Him were lost and helpless, grew to ignore Him and even openly rebel against Him, imitating those we admired in the world rather than imitating His Son, we acted no better than the harlot Jerusalem in the allegory.

Yet there was always hope for us, because God still loved us. No matter how far we may have degenerated, we were not too distant to be redeemed, if only by faith we would respond to God's call. In His mercy He has even loved the "citizens of Sodom," as it were. And they are we!

This is good news. As the allegory has a happy ending after a miserable beginning, so can the life of anyone who finds Christ. Therefore let us never forget that no one is beyond redemption and that no disobedience cannot be overcome by true conversion to Christ!

- Douglas Stuart, *The Preacher's Commentary, Ezekiel*, p. 137