

EZEKIEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ezekiel chapter 17 as we continue our study through the Word of God. And as we will see, this chapter is going to open up with a parable or an earthly story with a heavenly meaning you might say. With that said, let's begin reading in Ezekiel chapter 17 beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

EZEKIEL**VERSES 1-6**

1. As this chapter opens up we see a riddle and a parable about two eagles (v. 7) and these are given by Ezekiel to the house of Israel or the Southern Kingdom of Judah. A riddle was a dark utterance or something that had to be interpreted. Many times in the Near East riddles were used in international politics. It would play out like this. If a King could not answer the riddle he could lose his independence or sometimes even his life. We see that here as the Lord puts this riddle to Zedekiah to answer and if he does not answer it he will lose his independence, he will be taken into captivity by the Babylonians, instruments of God's judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their sins!

A parable is an allegory or story pointing to spiritual truths. Thus, you might say that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning as I have said. These two words, riddle and parable are essentially synonymous.

Why did God speak to them with a riddle and a parable, why didn't He just tell them what He wanted? Because they refused to listen to Him and thus, as we are told in Matthew 13:10-17, **“And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”**

I like the way that H. C. Woodring put this, it is a good perspective. He wrote, “Because they did not have the love of the truth, they would not get the light of the truth.” The religious leaders rejected the truth, like many do today. And even though they may hear with their ears, they don't understand what it is all about. The truth is there for all who will receive it, but if you reject it, look out!

Now Jesus quotes out of a passage of Isaiah chapter 6 that speaks of Isaiah being sent to a people who would hear and not understand; their eyes may be open but they do not see. And in Ezekiel's day it was no different, in fact the captivity had already begun for the Jewish people! Babylon had invaded them twice and it was only a matter of time before they came in a third and final time and destroyed Jerusalem and took the remaining people back to Babylon with them.

The point is really very simple. God wants to reveal Himself to us but we must be open, we must have ears that want to hear what the Spirit is saying to us. We must have eyes that are open so Jesus can guide us. But make no mistake about it, God is speaking and people are not listening and that is the problem. And many are not even aware of their blindness as this story shows us. We are told,

A number of years ago a coal mine collapsed, and seven miners were trapped inside for three and a half days. Rescue workers dug feverishly, and when they finally broke through the caved-in mineshaft, the miners were whooping and hollering, obviously grateful they had been rescued - until one of the seven said, "Hey, why doesn't someone light a lantern?"

The other six looked at their friend, and they realized he was blind. The light was on. The lanterns were lit. The rescue team had brought light into the darkened shaft, but he could not see because he had been blinded by the cave-in. Until the light came through, no one knew who was blind and who could see. The light had to shine on all seven before anyone could differentiate between those who could see and those who were blind.

So, too, Jesus taught believer and non-believer alike in order to determine who was truly blind. The light was shining for those who wanted to see. But those who chose to be wicked wouldn't see the light, and it would only prove their blindness.

- Jon Courson, Application Commentary New Testament, pp. 93-94

Thus, the challenge here by God is to Zedekiah, the last King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah to figure this parable, this riddle out.

2. This first eagle is speaking of King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. And we are told that **“He cropped off its topmost young twig . . .”** What does that mean. This could be speaking of Jehoiakim who was an evil King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

And for a short time he was the vassal King for the Babylonians, he did what they told him to do. But then he rebelled against the King of Babylon for 3 years. He listened to the false prophets rather than the true prophets of God that were warning judgment was coming. He refused to believe that they were going into captivity. He believed, like the false prophets were telling him, that everything was going to be alright. Health, wealth and prosperity was the idea and not captivity! But most feel this is speaking of Jehoiachin who reigned for only for 3 months, and was taken captive by the Babylonians in 597 B. C. placing Zedekiah as their vassal King.

And Zedekiah lasted for 11 years before his rebellion brought the Babylonians down upon him for their third and final assault upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

3. One writer sums this section up for us like this. He wrote,

Lebanon represents the land of Israel, and especially the kingdom of Judah. The cedar represents Jerusalem. The top of the cedar stands for the nobility of the city, especially the princes of the house of David. Nebuchadnezzar broke off the topmost of the twigs of the cedar. This twig clearly represents the youthful King Jehoiachin who was carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B. C. Jehoiachin was taken to a land of commerce, i.e., Chaldea, and a city of merchants, i.e., Babylon.

VERSES 7-10

1. We see here the Lord speak of another eagle and this second eagle was Egypt. And if you remember, under the reign of Zedekiah, he turned against the Babylonians and made an alliance with Egypt to help her destroy the Babylonians. He forgot or didn't care that God ordained this judgment and thus, he was trying to fight against the will of God. And this plan will not thrive, it will be put down. And that is what did happen, the Babylonians put down the Egyptians and then returned to Judah and destroyed them.

2. Again this is summed up for us by James Smith as he wrote,

How could the vine (Zedekiah) prosper when it had tried to spread beyond its prescribed domain? The first great eagle will uproot the vine, cut off its fruit so that it will completely wither and die. Zedekiah's reign will be terminated. All the heirs to the throne will be killed. The nobles of Judah will perish. No great power or army of soldiers will be at hand to thwart the great eagle in his vengeful attack (v 9). That Judean vine will utterly wither right in the spot where it was planted when the scorching east wind (Babylonian empire) began to blow against it (v 10).

- James E. Smith, An Exegetical Commentary on EZEKIEL, p. 117

3. Now if there is still some uncertainty about this God is going to explain what He is talking about as we read on. He will give us a little more details of this riddle or parable.

VERSES 11-21

1. As we have seen, this first eagle was King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. And this first King taken by the Babylonians is either Jehoiakim but more than likely it was Jehoiachin who only after three months as King he was taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was trying to weaken the nation, humble them so they would not cause any more trouble for him, but they still rebelled and in the end they lost because they were not only rebelling against the Babylonians, but against God!

Now in the place of Jehoiachin was Zedekiah, a vassal King appointed by the Babylonians. Again, this was done to keep the nation in check so they would not rebel against Babylon.

But Zedekiah broke his covenant that he made with Babylon and he did this by going to the Egyptians for help to defeat the Babylonians. And so the Babylonians came and put down the Egyptians and when they were done they came and destroyed Judah as I have said. And Zedekiah was taken captive to Babylon where he eventually died there.

2. Now verses 18 and 19 are interesting because they speak of this oath that Zedekiah made with King Nebuchadnezzar. This is the oath that he ended up breaking. We may not think much of this oath except that we are told, “**... ‘As I live, surely My oath which he despised, and My covenant which he broke, I will recompense on his own head.’**”

How was this God’s oath that King Zedekiah broke? Because God told them, He warned them that they were going into captivity for their sins and that they were not to fight against the Babylonians but surrender to them. Thus, this oath to surrender to the authority of the Babylonians was also an oath unto God!

Thus, when King Zedekiah broke this covenant with the Babylonians he was fighting against the will of God. He was ignoring what God had said and God held him accountable for his words and actions. In fact, the Scriptures speak of Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant because he was carrying out the will of God by bringing this judgment upon Judah and the other nations for their sins. So when Zedekiah broke his covenant with Babylon, he was breaking the covenant with God.

3. Also, as you look at verses 20 and 21 you see that you can't escape, you can't fight against the will of God and win. Man tries to do that today just as they did in the days of Zedekiah but God is the creator of heaven and earth and thus, there is nothing that is too difficult for Him to do or is beyond His ability!

4. Now as we finish up this chapter we will see that the last 3 verses speak of Jesus and His Kingdom.

VERSES 22-24

1. God is saying that He is going to take all the Kingdoms of the world and bring them down and Israel will once again be lifted up. And this is not a maybe, the Hebrew is emphatic or it is certain, ***"I Myself will take."***

And of this "tender one" we see that it is speaking of Jesus. You see, on the mountain the stem of Jesse, the root of David, will be planted and this is speaking of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom on the earth. One writer put it like this,

Here the Lord speaks of another planting that would take place. From the cedar, which speaks of Israel, from the house of David specifically, He says He would plant Him a branch that would flourish. Under this new tree, all the other trees would dwell. Even the fowls of the air, which speak of evil in the Bible, would be under its authority.

Who is this tree? Jesus (Isaiah 11:1). Planted on what mountain? Calvary. With His blood, Jesus reclaimed the world from the grip of Satan and when He comes, all the trees of the field shall indeed clap their hands (Isaiah 55:12).

- Jon Courson, Jon Coursoun's Application Bible Old Testament, Volume 2, p. 638

Amen to that and make no mistake about this, the Bible is very clear, God is going to establish His Kingdom on this earth, He will sit on the throne of David and there will be Jews and Gentiles in the Kingdom Age. We see this spoken of in Daniel chapter 2. Here we see that Daniel is interpreting a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had which represented all Gentile world Kingdoms and in verse 44 we read, "**And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold - the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.**" Daniel 2:44-45.

This is a done deal, this is going to happen! God's kingdom will be established! How do I know that? Because Daniel tells us that this dream is without a doubt coming to pass and he says
- THE DREAM IS CERTAIN AND ITS INTERPRETATION IS SURE!

EZEKIEL 18**VERSES 1-4**

1. We also see this proverb in Jeremiah 31:29-30 and think of it like this. This proverb that was once current in Jerusalem was now being heard in Babylon, the Jews who were in captivity were saying this same proverb. And understand that this concept is totally wrong. The basic idea here is that the children are paying for the sins of their father. They are a product of the environment they grew up in. That should sound very familiar because it is what the world is saying and teaching us.

And I can understand how the world can believe this because they have nothing else to attribute their behavior to. But to see this in the church is appalling! First of all as a Christian, if you believe that the things you are now doing is because of the way you were brought up, then has God really gotten a hold of your life.

Some of you may be taken back by that but what do the Scriptures say of this new life we have in Christ? We are told in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

Not only that but we do have a free will and thus, we are responsible for our own actions, the things we do and say. Thus, if you are under the control of the Holy Spirit, if you walk in the Spirit then the lusts of the flesh will not control your life. You are a new creation in Christ! Don't forget that.

And the bottom line is this for the saved and unsaved, you are accountable for your own actions, your own behavior, what you do and what you say and you can't blame others. Isn't it interesting that what the Jews were saying back then we are using those same excuses today!

2. And I want you to notice what God is saying, what His response is to all of this. God is telling them not to use this proverb anymore because it is not true. You can't blame your parents, your environment, the color of your skin, your nationality, or anything else you can think of and has been thought of.

You can't even say, "***The devil made me do it!***" Why? Because you are accountable for your own actions, for what you do, not for what your parents have done as I have said. We are living in a world where everyone is blamed except the guilty party, and God is saying, "Don't listen to what the world is saying, they are wrong. It is the person who sins, they shall die. They are responsible for their own actions!"

3. This is an important subject and God is going to deal with this even more in Ezekiel chapter 18. And please understand that I am not saying that some people don't have a tough life, they may have been in bad situations, but God can give you the power to rise above that. Let me share these words regarding this issue because again, it is important for us to understand and as Christians, we should not blame others for our sin! We are told,

Sometimes warnings get twisted into excuses. The people of Ezekiel's day, suffering from the consequences of a history of rebellion against God, found it easier to blame their ancestors for sin than to take responsibility for their own offenses. We can understand their predicament. Their immediate circumstances held little hope. News had reached Babylon about the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. Plans to return to the promised land would be marred by descriptions of devastation.

The wreckage of God's judgment seemed too great to be restored. It was easier to sink into pessimism. The bitter proverb about sour grapes and teeth set on edge (18:2) became a slogan of resentment for the people. Instead of examining their own behavior before God, they excused their sin by blaming their parents.

The law of cause and effect may be obvious, but the exact connections sometimes elude us. Sin always has consequences. The second commandment (Ex. 20:4–6; Deut. 5:8–10) points out that the sin of idolatry (a sin from which flow many others) causes effects that can last generations. But Ezekiel had to remind the people that experiencing hardship as a consequence of the sins of ancestors was not the same as judgment for one's own sins. Suffering caused by another's sins does not excuse willfully sinful behavior.

God made it clear to the Israelites and also to us: We may suffer for someone else's misdeeds, but we will be judged for our own. "I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways" (18:30). What should be our response? "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions" (18:30). This will lead to "a new heart and a new spirit" (18:31). Perhaps the clearest evidence of our fallen human nature can be heard in our quickness to blame others when we ought to examine ourselves and remember that we are accountable to God. His message to us is persistent: "Therefore turn and live!" (18:32).

- Earl, D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen,
Ronald Barclay, Wayne H. House, H. Wayne,
Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary,
Ezekiel 18:1-3

I think the message is clear. We are responsible for what we do, what we say. What if someone gets mad at me and yells at me and I hit them? Think about it, and even if you didn't hit them but you devoured them with your words, you are wrong. You can say that they made you act that way but it was your choice. You can surrender to the Spirit of God or you can let the lust of your flesh get the better of you. It is your choice, don't ever forget that!

VERSES 5-9

1. What does God desire of us? He tells us here in these verses. He says that the man who practices justice and righteousness will live under the blessing of God. And as you read about this man you see that he is a man who put God's Laws ahead of his own personal interests. And that tells me his actions were born out of his love for God and these things then flowed from his life. He didn't engage in spiritual fornication by uniting himself with the god's in the groves or on the mountain shrines. He was sexually pure before God. He didn't take advantage of people but ministered to them. His actions were just and he walked in the ways of God. And God says this man shall live!

2. Now as we read on we will see the contrast between this righteous man and the wicked man and the difference is huge and the outcome is the judgment of God, they will die in their sins, they will not live!

VERSES 10-13

1. Don't miss the point here. The Lord is telling Ezekiel that if a righteous man has a wicked son the son can't live off the righteousness of his father. He is responsible for his own actions. And if he continues down that path of wickedness he will die in his sins! Clearly the point of this passage is personal responsibility for sin. The righteousness of his father could not save him. He bears the responsibility for his life of sin!

VERSES 14-18

1. Here is the third point that the Lord is making. You can have a very wicked father or parent but you don't have to follow in their footsteps! You see, you have a choice to make. And this point is so important for us to understand as I have said because children love to blame their parents for their life and the reality is that they are responsible themselves. They don't have to follow down that path but they certainly can choose to go that way!

This should just make sense to us. God is showing us that if we are wise we will learn from our father's mistakes and we won't travel on the same road that he did, if he was wicked. That means if your father drank, if he used drugs, if he was abusive, if he was unfaithful in marriage, if he was unjust, or whatever immoral wicked action you want to place there, you don't have to do those things. That should be a comfort to many of you whose father or even mother were not godly, they were not good. You don't have to be like him!

2. And like I have said, our society has done just the opposite. They have taken the flaws of parents and used them to justify the actions of their children. Society may see it that way but God doesn't! Each person is responsible for their own actions. God has not dealt you an unfair hand. I am not saying things were not difficult in the situation you were in or are in now. But we all go through difficult times.

The thing is this, do you want to continue that behavior in your life? I hope not because you don't have to. Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**" Don't forget that!

3. Now some may wonder about this wicked father that is spoken of here but guess what, he can't live off his son's good behavior; the wicked father is accountable for his own actions. He couldn't blame anyone else nor did he get away with anything. If he continues down this path of wickedness he will die in his sins!

4. Some of you may still be struggling with this because of the situation you have come out of or the one you are in but listen carefully to what the Lord is saying here. And as we continue reading on you will see that these verses will once again show us how each of us is responsible for our own actions, the things we do and the things we say. We can't blame anyone else!

VERSES 19-20

1. Where in the world did they come up with this idea of being punished for the sins of others?

Maybe, like people do today, they misinterpret what was being said in Exodus 20:5, “**... For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.**”

It is out of this that we see today this idea of “generational curses” or because your father was a womanizer or an alcoholic you are going to be one and this curse will continue on for four generations! There is no such thing. We are born in sin that is the problem and the solution is Jesus! But what have we read here in Ezekiel, that you will not be punished for the sins of your father is so clear, so this can’t be what God is speaking of here in Exodus and if they would only read on to verse 6 of Exodus chapter 20 it would clear things up.

In Exodus 20:6 we are told, “**but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**” In other words, you have a choice to make, to follow in your father’s footsteps or to follow your heavenly Father. If you love the Lord, if you are serving Him why would God punish you? He wouldn’t and thus, this is just foolishness to think of these generational curses. God told the Jews to no longer speak of such foolishness and He is doing the same today!

2. As we have seen and will continue to see in this chapter, God is telling us over and over again that we are responsible for our own actions. Why? So we won’t let society, the philosophies of this world give us a false hope that we are not responsible. We are!

Thus, “Ezekiel carries his subject one step further. Men are not locked in, either genetically or environmentally, to a life of sin. By the grace of God, and the assertion of their own free will, men can change their character, conduct and destiny. In these verses the basic thesis is that men are not punished for sins after they repent of them.” (James E. Smith, An Exegetical Commentary on EZEKIEL, p. 123)

3. But what if there is a wicked man and he turns from his wicked ways, what happens to him? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 21-23

1. Now before we think too highly of ourselves we need to remember that we all started out in sin, we all were separated from God. You see, we had inherited the sin of Adam and we have our own sin and thus, we all fall short of perfection, far from it.

That is the bad news. The good news for us is that the Lord is saying that if we turn to Him, repent of our sins, we shall live; God will extend His mercy to us. It is as Proverbs 28:13 says, “**He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.**”

And that forgiveness is found in Jesus and once we repent of our sins, turn from the direction we were heading and turn to Jesus, then our sins are forgiven because they have been paid in full by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary!

And as you look at verse 22 you see that God will not remember our sins! What a glorious thought. If we turn to Him He will forget all of our sin, all our transgressions!

It is as David said in Psalm 103:11-12, **“For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”**

Also, in Isaiah 43:25 we read **“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.”** We have a hard time forgiving but God does not, and He will remember our sins no more if we come to Him.

2. And I am sure you have heard people say, and maybe you have said this before, “The God of the Old Testament is a vengeful and wrathful God while the God of the New Testament is full of grace and mercy!”

Of course that is not true. God does not change and the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament! And look at what the Lord says here, that He gets no pleasure in destroying the wicked. In fact, as you read verse 23 and verses 30-32 you can see the heart of God pleading with sinful man to turn from his evil ways so that he may live.

But God is a holy and righteous God who must judge sin. He has done everything possible in providing a way out from death and that is through Jesus Christ. But again, the choice is yours! You can't blame God for where you are going but you can thank Him if you have come to saving faith because He has provided the way for you to enter in and that is through Jesus Christ!

VERSE 24

1. Here is a difficult section for some. They read this and they believe you can lose your salvation and this is seen in what you do; the good or bad that you do. We are not sure how much good you need to do to enter in or how much bad you need to do to lose your salvation but they believe it can happen. I don't and I will explain in a minute. First of all one writer had this to say in regards to losing your salvation and this verse. And I don't agree with this. He wrote,

A righteous man is one who is in the right relationship with God. Such a person can backslide to the point of being lost. He can choose to follow in the path of iniquity, and become involved in all the abominations of the wicked. He will die in his transgressions. One must be faithful until death in order to receive the crown of life. . . .

All his righteousness that he has done will not be remembered for his trespass that he committed, and for his sin that he has sinned; in them he will die. The former righteous acts of the backslider are not credited to his account. Such a backslider has committed a trespass and a sin. He has rebelled against God in casting aside his former way of life. He willfully has adopted a sinful life. For this twofold transgression he must die the death of a sinner.

- James E. Smith, An Exegetical Commentary on EZEKIEL, p. 123

First of all we have to understand that this is a person who “**practices iniquity.**” And I don't believe you can lose your salvation. In fact, I don't think that is what is spoken of here. But I do believe you will bear fruit of the relationship you have. Either good fruit as you are attached to Christ or bad fruit if you are not. In other words, you will know them by their fruits!

Remember what John said in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”** Notice that they left the church but they never were really part of the body of Christ because they were not believers. They were tares among the wheat you might say. Difficult to see until they left and you saw the fruit they brought forth.

Also, remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23, **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”**

Those are some pretty sobering words. But don’t misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. He is saying that there are those who go to church, maybe even serve in the church and yet they have not obeyed my Words, they never came to saving faith and thus, they will be cast out. The key to me is that Jesus *NEVER* knew them; it wasn’t that He knew them at one time and then they departed from Him, they left Him!

And we can spend much more time on this to show you that once Jesus saves us we can never be snatched from His hand but let me make one last point. Paul, in Philippians 1:6 said, **“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”**

Who began a good work in you? Jesus did! Who will complete the work that He started in you? Jesus will! So if Jesus begins and ends this work in our lives then He is working in us from beginning to end. Then what is the work that He is doing? He is saving us, He will bring us to heaven, it is a done deal and Peter even points out for us that God has reserved a place for us in heaven! We can't lose our salvation because there was nothing that we did to save ourselves in the first place!

But what if someone is living a wicked life, like we read of here in Ezekiel? There are those who live a good life you might say and then take a turn away towards wickedness. They never were saved in the first place and thus, they are just bearing the fruit of their nature! It is the tares among the wheat and it can be difficult to tell the difference at times. I hope that helps.

VERSES 25-29

1. Look at what they are doing here! They were trying to justify their wicked actions by saying that God is not fair. But God turns the tables on them. You see, God's way is fair, it is right, it is just. God is a holy and righteous God and He must punish sin. But He is also gracious and merciful and He has provided a way for our sins to be forgiven, and that is through Jesus. You see, our salvation is a free gift of God that we must receive by faith.

Now think about this. If man had any say in how a person is saved then salvation would be corrupted. And if you look at religion today, that is exactly what we see. Man has made it difficult to get to God and God has said we just need to come to Him through Jesus! Some have to pay money to get out of Purgatory and get into heaven. Others have to work and work and they still don't know if they are getting in.

We can know if we are going to heaven, all we must do is repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. John put it like this, “**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.**” I John 5:13.

VERSES 30-32

1. Once again we see the heart of God for sinful man. The compassion, the love, the reaching out and pleading with sinful man to turn from his sins and turn to Him! Now some may argue that the Bible teaches that we are to also do good works to get into heaven. Jesus does His part and we have to do ours!

And one of the places they will go to is Philippians 2:12-13 where we read, “**Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**”

There it is, we need to work out our salvation! First of all if something you are reading seems to contradict what the rest of the Scriptures are saying, then pray and look deeper because you are missing something.

The part that people miss is that it is God who is working in us but then what God is doing on the inside we have to live out in the things we do and the things we say. We are working out our salvation or what God has done in our lives. We don't do these things to be saved but it is the evidence of our salvation!

In a sense it is a partnership. God works in us to give us the desire and the ability to do His good pleasure. Then we need to exercise or put into practice those things. You see, He wants you to partner with Him to give Him permission to work in your life. So, in a sense, you get a new heart, a new spirit, by allowing God to give it to you.

2. And this chapter closes with the heart of God pleading to man to turn from his wicked ways so that he can live and not die! Our Lord is so gracious, so merciful, so loving and yet people reject Him!

EZEKIEL 19

VERSES 1-4

1. This lamentation or song of sorrow is for the Kings of Israel. And this is a lamentation that comes from the heart of God, the same One who wept as He looked down upon Jerusalem and the destruction that was coming upon her for rejecting Him.

The lioness spoken of here is the nation and specifically the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Her cubs were the Kings of Judah and we see one of them spoken of here and we will look at the second one as we read on in the following verses.

This first young cub is Jehoahaz who became King after the death of Josiah. And he only reigned 3 months before Pharaoh Necho II captured him and took him to Egypt, where he died in captivity. (II Kings 23:31-34, Jeremiah 22:11-12).

2. Now we will read about the second young cub.

VERSES 5-9

1. Now as we look at this second cub or King in Judah we are not sure if Ezekiel had in mind Jehoiakim who ruled Judah for 11 years or his son Jehoiachin who ruled Judah for three months. In either case they both were evil King's and because of that the Lord brought His judgment down upon them.

Jehoiakim reigned 11 years and for the last 3 of those years he rebelled against Babylon before he was taken into captivity. According to what Jeremiah 22:19 tells us, he was buried outside Jerusalem but it would seem that Babylon was outside Jerusalem and he died in captivity in Babylon.

Jehoiachin, who only reigned for 3 months, was also captured by the Babylonians and taken to Babylon where he lived out the remainder of his life. And for 37 years he was in prison there until he was released by the King, Evil-Merodach.

2. In this next section we have the parable of the withered vine, which speaks of the last King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Zedekiah.

VERSES 10-14

1. In this parable of the withered vine is as follows. The mother is the Southern Kingdom of Judah and she is compared to a vine rather than a lioness. And it was fruitful, had vigor and the picture is the former glory days of the nation as they prospered with righteous Kings on the throne. The leaders were good and the nation was blessed.

We then read that she was plucked up, she was brought down and the picture here is that of an east wind. The prevailing winds in Israel come from the west bringing moist air from the Mediterranean Sea. But the east wind, also known as Sirocco, blows dry air in from the desert.

But I don't believe the Lord is talking about a literal wind here. I believe the picture is of the Babylonians who would come down upon Judah and like a wind; the nation will be shriveled up under the heat of their oppressors.

As great as the Southern Kingdom of Judah was, in the end it was brought down to nothing! And it did not have to be that way but because they refused to repent and get right with God, judgment came upon them – **“The fire consumed them.”**

2. As I begin to wrap things up this evening let me close with this. All that the nation placed their hope in, its leaders, its wealth, failed them. Does that sound familiar? It should because we see that same mentality in our nation.

We are 2 years away from elections and we will have a new President. What amazes me is not that the unsaved put their hope in the elected officials, but how much faith Christians place in these men. And as they get into office how quickly we shake our heads at the things they are doing.

In other words, they did not bring salvation to the nation like we thought they would. We saw that with Judah as they looked to their leaders and their wealth and their this and their that but in the end, they did not look to the ***ONLY*** one who could deliver them, God!

Turn to Revelation chapter 5 and let me give you some real hope. In Revelation 5:1-4, we read, **“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.”**

This scroll is the title deed of the earth and as John looks, no one can take it, no one can help. And John begins to weep convulsively like many do today over the condition of not only this nation, but the world. They are looking for someone to step in and save them but they refuse to look up to God for He alone can save us!

Listen to what we are told in verse 5 of Revelation chapter 5, **“But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’”**

Did you see that? Who can save us? Not this world, not the philosophies of this world, not money or wealth or silver or gold or health or jobs or this or that, ***ONLY JESUS SAVES!*** He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah that will put down all rebellion. He is the root of David who will produce bountiful fruit.

It doesn't matter if you are looking at the events happening in this world, in this nation, in this state, in your neighborhood or in your life, Jesus is the only Leader who will never let you down, He is the only One who can save. And I will close with this. Who are you looking to for salvation? May it be Jesus!