

Tuesday, September 15, 2020—Ezekiel 15-18

“Don’t make me come up there!” Parents have yelled this warning to their warring children on the upper floors of their homes for years. Despite the admonition, the children are shocked when their grown ups burst into the room and begin to administer justice.

God had told His people for generations they would face severe discipline for their lack of spiritual discipline. Idolatry, injustice, and more had tainted God’s people and land. Now, there were many with Ezekiel in exile who could not imagine God’s allowing them to remain there. Surely, He was going to restore them. They were, after all, His chosen people.

God told Ezekiel to tell the people He had set His face against them (15:7). God had chosen Israel, nurtured her, and caused her to flourish, but she had used her abundance to court other lovers. God was giving over Israel to the wickedness for which she had sought (16:27). No outside force would be able to stop God’s plan (17:1-24).

God took no pleasure in the death of the wicked (18:23). He was sorrowful when His beloved people turned from Him, and He rejoiced when each one chose to walk with Him. His justice required that He look on each person and judge Him for His ways (18:30).

We are weak-willed and unfaithful (16:30-33). Admit to God those areas where you compromise and use His blessing for personal pursuits rather than for worshiping Him. Repent of those things so you might follow Him fully and live.

Monday, September 14, 2020—Ezekiel 12-14

God knows He is God. God knows His people are human. God knows the limitations that humans have in comprehending all that He is and says, so God communicates in a variety of ways. Nature tells of His glory. The Word describes His goodness. His prophets speak directly to people.

Ezekiel was the prophet to the exiles in Babylon. Their removal from their homeland had not awakened them to their need for repentance. They felt like this was a temporary setback even though God had told them for generations of His

desire for their repentance from sin and the devastating consequences if they didn't.

God asked Ezekiel to portray visibly what was happening back home—packing his bags, going through a hole in the wall, and being blindfolded. Their king would soon be deposed, blinded by the Babylonians, and led to join them. Their leader would lose his vision, and all those visions from the prophets would be fulfilled (12:1-28).

The people of God were desperate and wouldn't admit it. Men and women alike were prophesying that their setback was temporary and that God was going to bring them back home soon. They were completely ignoring all God had said for centuries to make themselves feel better. God was going to show them He was Yahweh and they were guilty (13:1-23). God wanted to recapture the hearts of His people (14:5).

Ask God to show you where your heart has wandered from devotion to Him. Repent and follow Him with joy and passion.

Sunday, September 13, 2020—Ezekiel 8-11

Ezekiel's prophecy did not come at once. Ezekiel remained available to the Lord as he experienced the frustration and misery of the exile. God is worthy of devotion on good days and in hard situations.

In a vision, God showed Ezekiel the idolatry happening in Israel. God had allowed many to go into exile. God was allowing Babylon to exert great power over Jerusalem. All of this was His judgment for their idolatry, yet they would not repent. They continued in the sin that condemned them.

There were some that grieved over the sinfulness that filled Jerusalem, and God saw them. He was going to preserve them in some way, but overall the city and the people would experience the consequences of the heinous sins they committed. God was going to remove His presence from the Temple (10:1-12, 11:23), and the city would fall to Babylon.

The people in Jerusalem felt they were only a short time away from rebuilding and flourishing. God said, in fact, the ones driven from the city were the

safest. God Himself was their sanctuary (11:16) in their foreign cities, and He would give the city back to them. They would remove the idols, and He would give them a new heart for Him (11:18-19).

Being in a tough spot may be the very place God wants to show you His provision and power. Pray for contentment with the Lord, not with circumstances. Give Him glory because of who He is, not how you feel.

Saturday, September 12, 2020—Ezekiel 4-7

Ezekiel lived in exile in Babylon for years before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army. Many who lived in exile felt their situation was temporary. “Surely, God will resolve this quickly. He won’t let us languish here for long.” God had told them that would not be the case, but they could not imagine living anywhere but Israel for long.

To emphasize the severity of their sin and the longevity of their judgment, God called Ezekiel to demonstrate visually the siege and destruction of the city. He told Ezekiel to eat little, and what he ate was of poor quality. God was showing His people the long-term effects of their sin and rebellion. Their sin exceeded the unholiness of the nations around them (5:7), and His judgment would affirm all He had said for years (6:10).

God wanted the people to know He was the only true God. They had given themselves to detestable practices that honored the idols of the peoples around them. Those idols had no power over Yahweh, and His judgment on those idols, those practices, and His people would prove who was the only One truly worthy of worship, love, and obedience. Their suffering would make meaningless the gold, silver, and precious jewelry that they had spent so much time worshiping and longing for (7:15-22).

Affirm to God that He is the one true God in your life. Give Him the full attention of your mind, affection of your heart, and allegiance in your actions for His glory and your good.

Friday, September 11, 2020—Ezekiel 1-3

September 11 is an annual reminder of tragedy and loss, but the lessons

only remain if one generation teaches the next. Yearly observances give the opportunity to tell those stories and apply those truths.

They Babylonian exiles would gather at the Kebar River to share their struggles and to remember their lives in their homeland. In the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, Ezekiel saw a stunning vision. He saw four creatures with wings and wheels, and he saw the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh (1:28). What he saw drove him to his knees (1:28).

God told him to stand up. He gave him the solemn task of speaking to his own rebellious people. Though they were in exile, they still were not repenting of the sin that sent them far away from home. Ezekiel could not be rebellious like they were. He had to obey and do the hard work God gave him (2:10). God promised to give Ezekiel a hardened determination that would not yield to his people's unwillingness to listen and repent (3:9). Ezekiel was overwhelmed for a week (3:15).

God came to Ezekiel again and told him of his great responsibility. Ezekiel had to warn the people because God had told him to do so. To disobey would bring guilt on Ezekiel. To obey would then put responsibility on each person as he decided whether to do what God said (3:16-27).

Tell the story of Jesus—His love for all and His call to repent. Pray for determination that outweighs skepticism or refusals to believe.

Thursday, September 10, 2020—2 Chronicles 33-36

God allows suffering. He isn't cruel. He doesn't enjoy watching His people struggle and hurt, yet His wisdom allows Him to see the refining and maturing that can come from the difficult road. Suffering will happen.

Manasseh was one of the worst, most ungodly and idolatrous kings Judah ever knew. He rebuilt altars. He sacrificed his children, and he led the nation to commit more sin than the nations God had driven out before them. God allowed him to lead for 55 years.

Why would God allow this heinous leadership to go on so long? No one can say definitively, yet the Chronicler says Manasseh experienced repentance

later in his reign (33:10-17). No matter how long sin has occurred, God listens to the repentant. Manasseh is proof.

Amon did evil in Yahweh's sight, but then Josiah became king. Little by little, he purged the country of evil. In the 18th year of his reign, in the process of restoring the Temple, the workers found the Book of the Law. How did something so central to the identity of Judah and the function of the Temple become lost? Without intentionality in obedience, everyone drifts from God's call and design. Josiah stopped the drift. The kings who followed Josiah did evil, and the judgment of God finally came to Judah. They were carried into exile to Babylon (36:20).

Suffering under a godless leader or in self-inflicted exile all happens under the watchful, caring eyes of God Himself. Examine your walk daily for the need to repent, trust, and obey.

Wednesday, September 9, 2020—2 Chronicles 30-32

God can unite the most disagreeable people because they realize their common need for a savior. Jesus made disciples of Matthew, the Roman tax collector, and Simon the Zealot, who wanted to overthrow Roman rule. He can even bring unity between Republicans and Democrats.

When Hezekiah was king, he saw the fall of the northern kingdom, Israel. There had been conflict between Judah and Israel for generations, so he could have rejoiced over their fall or forgotten them, but when Hezekiah reinstated the Passover, he sent word to the residents of Israel that they were welcome to participate. He knew they were all in need of a sacrificial lamb to take away their sins. Common need led to community worship.

Hezekiah led the people to continual worship as well. From the third to the seventh month, they brought tithes to the Temple. Hezekiah helped them see worship wasn't once a year or once a week but every day.

"In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered" (31:21). When a foreign king threatened, Hezekiah reminded the people they served a greater power (32:7-8). The

foreigners asked how God would deliver Judah when He hadn't saved Israel. Hezekiah prayed, and an angel destroyed them (32:21).

The successes Hezekiah experienced led him to prideful mistakes (32:25). God can bring unity and humility, but the task is never-ending. Pray for daily surrender to the God who loves and leads to flourishing.