

### Sunday, September 16, 2018—Ezekiel 19-21

“But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it would not be profaned in the eyes of the nations . . .” (20:9, 14). God loves people with an everlasting love. The people of God declared that in song numerous times as they interacted with Him, but God’s highest good is not loving His people and providing for them. God’s highest good is His own name, His glory among the nations. He loves and provides for people to see His greatness and goodness. He disciplines and destroys for the same reasons.

This desire requires that God walk a delicate line. He works to fulfill His promises, but He can’t overlook the sin of His people. They have promises to keep as well, and the history of Israel proves they are not good at fulfilling their word. Ezekiel 19 describes Israel as a lion caught in repeated traps and a vineyard torn up by the roots. There was always great strength and potential for fruitfulness, but Israel squandered every good thing God had given by following after idols instead of Him.

In His mercy, God was going to restore His people, and their return to Israel would illustrate the gravity of their sin and the majesty of God (20:42-44). His kindness would lead to repentance (see Romans 2:4). The process God was describing would take time. Ezekiel began chapter 20 noting “in the seventh year.” He began chapter one noting the thirtieth. In chapter 21, He describes His use of Babylon to bring all this to fulfillment.

Praise God for His mercy, righteousness, patience, and wisdom to bring glory to His name and good to His people.

### Saturday, September 15, 2018—Ezekiel 15-18

God wants the confession of His identity by the people of the earth. “. . . I am the Lord” (15:7). He is the Creator of all things. He holds all things together. He is worthy of worship and devotion. He wants there to be no doubt about who He is, and He wants people to live in response to His love and righteousness. People can confess that willingly, or they can learn that through the discipline and punishment found in rebellion.

No one should have known His greatness and walked in grateful submission like Israel. He took them when they were nothing and brought them into the abundance of the Promised Land, yet they grew arrogant and allowed their hearts to go after idols. They were spiritually prostituting themselves and would face the devastating consequence of treating other things and other people with the supremacy due only to God (16:1-43).

The very things they went to for pleasure would bring heartache, and God’s anger would finally be satisfied. They would know He was Yahweh, and the entire world would see that reality as well. The gods they trusted and worshiped had no power to save or satisfy, and the only way God could demonstrate that would be through punishment.

God was going to hold accountable the one who sinned (18:4, 20) but took no pleasure in the death of the wicked (18:23) because they enter eternity in a state not aligned with their design. He wants people to worship Him now and forever. Repent daily and walk in grateful worship.

### Friday, September 14, 2018—Ezekiel 12-14

God has made us for relationship with Him. We have eyes to see Him and ears to hear Him (12:1), but temptation leads us to rebel through sin. When we sin, we can no longer see or hear the truth, and we are led astray. These are the people to whom Ezekiel ministered. Though their sin had resulted in their exile to Babylon, they still did not see or hear.

To make matters worse, the prophets remaining in Israel were declaring visions from the Lord which were absolutely false (13:6). Obviously, if they could neither see nor hear, they were

receiving neither visions nor words from God. The design God puts in people, however, is so strong to know Him and be led by Him that these prophets were making up statements and attributing them to Him.

These false prophets were proclaiming peace when God was far from finished with His refining work. There would be no peace for some time. These false prophets were, thus, encouraging the wicked and discouraging the faithful, so God was going to put a complete stop to these liars in order for everyone to know that He was truly the great I Am (13:23).

God was holding the people accountable for the righteousness they lacked but which He had provided for them. He called them, as He had done for generations through the prophets, to repentance (14:6). The call is new every morning. Repent of self each day. Pray for listening ears and seeing eyes to hear, see, and know the Lord more fully.

#### Thursday, September 13, 2018—Ezekiel 8-11

God granted Ezekiel a distinct privilege—numerous visions which illustrated the truth of God's activity in the world. Though certainly strange, these visions were important for explaining the difficulty Israel was experiencing and the way God was working in them. Ezekiel had the unenviable task of seeing the visions and then trying to describe them.

In Ezekiel 8, God took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in a vision and showed him four different scenes of idolatry and disobedience. At one point, God told Ezekiel these were the reasons God was going to abandon the sanctuary (8:6). Ironically, in another scene, the people claim to be idolatrous because God could not see them. They believed He had already abandoned them. Hard times do not mean God is absent, only silent.

The presence of God brings life and restraint. Those who know Him and acknowledge Him receive His peace, but they also conduct their lives for His pleasure and to His standards. When they do not listen, they will not hear. When they forget His watchfulness, they cast off discipline and engage in shallow efforts and evil ways. God had not abandoned them, but they were living as if He had. He could not bear that much longer.

If the people wanted to be like the nations around them, worshiping their gods and living their cultures, God would remove Himself and allow those nations to invade. They were obeying man, not God (11:12). He was leaving those who thought He had already left and protecting those who had been scattered and would return (11:17-21).

Thank God for His presence, grace, and discipline.

#### Wednesday, September 12, 2018—Ezekiel 4-7

Hope is a gift from God. Hope of a coming rescue or a powerful judge allows the weak to feel strong and the imprisoned to see freedom. Sometimes hope is misplaced and needs to be crushed.

Ezekiel and his fellow countrymen had been in captivity for 30 years, yet they remained hopeful that they would soon return home. They had hope that the city was prospering despite their captivity. God told Ezekiel to act out a siege of the city and to dress as a captive and eat sparingly for 390 days to illustrate the dire straits of their home. God had told them Jerusalem would fall, and this was surely coming (4:1-17).

God was allowing the dismantling of His people and their city because they had rebelled against Him. This was the fate He foretold (6:10), and they provoked His jealousy (5:13) by going after other gods. He had to cleanse the land, and Ezekiel was to tell the people the work was not done. He would, however, preserve a remnant (5:3) and one day begin again. There was the hope, not in current settings, but in God's grace.

God's goal was for people to know He was the one true God (7:4). God has made people to know and worship Him. He provides salvation not so people will have eternal comfort but so they will have Him. When the blessings of relationship become more important than He is, the idols which promise the same blessings for less effort become more seductive.

Pray for renewed hope and joy in Jesus and in Him alone.

### Tuesday, September 11, 2018—Ezekiel 1-3

God rarely works quickly. He works according to His will which rarely lines up with the will of His people who are suffering, impatient, or anxious. When He came to Ezekiel in a vision, the people had been in Chaldean captivity for 30 years (1:1). He told them through Jeremiah they would be there for 70 years, but many likely believed this would not be. Almost halfway through that time frame, He spoke to Ezekiel.

The good news is that God spoke. He could have remained silent. The challenging news was that God wanted Ezekiel to share what he saw and heard, so Ezekiel had to put into human description the appearance of eternal, celestial beings. Repeatedly, Ezekiel used terms such as “the likeness of” and “looked something like” to share his thoughts. What God revealed was important to grasp.

Ultimately, Ezekiel saw the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God (1:28), and he bowed down in worship. As God spoke, He referred to Ezekiel as “son of man” and charged him with going to His people, “the rebellious pagans,” (2:3). He made his face like flint (3:9) so Ezekiel could match their hardheadedness and share the truth without compromise. He was a watchman over the people (3:16) responsible for telling them of the coming judgment and calling them to repentance.

Jesus referred to Himself as Son of Man because He, like Ezekiel, was calling them to repent and follow Him in worship and obedience. Praise God for revealing Himself through Jesus. Tell others of His calling.

### Monday, September 10, 2018—2 Chronicles 33-36

“God ain't never had a grandchild. Only a child will do.” Faith, as the gospel song testifies, is a personal decision. One does not receive salvation simply by being related to someone who has been redeemed. Every individual must confess faith individually.

Though Manasseh had seen the faithfulness to Yahweh of his father, he chose to sin audaciously. He restored pagan idols. He worshiped the stars. He sacrificed his children in fire. He consulted mediums, and he set up an image in the Temple itself. God was understandably angry (33:6).

The anger of God opened the door for the Assyrians to take Manasseh into captivity. There, Manasseh sought the Lord and found favor from Him. God restored him to Jerusalem, and he removed the idols he had installed and told Judah to serve Yahweh (33:16). He had come to a point of personal revival, but the people did not share in that change.

When Josiah became king, he had to undo the sinful rebellion of the people and the horrible example of his father Amon. In the process of cleaning the Temple, his workers discovered the book of the Law (34:15). What should have been central to the identity and practice of God's people had been shelved and forgotten for generations. No wonder the people had strayed. The guiding light had been turned off.

Eventually, a foreign king would heed the word of the Lord and restore God's people and rebuild God's Temple (36:22-23). Praise God for His guiding Word. Walk in faith with Him today.

