

NOVEMBER 12

Well today we get one very sad chapter in Ezekiel and a part of one very famous, inspiring chapter in Hebrews. Amazingly they are both connected by the price faith pays to follow God.

Ezekiel 24-26

Ezekiel 24

This is probably one of the grimmest chapters in the book. I think it is sad and sobering.

Vs. 1-2 Notice this time notation. You'll also find it in 2 Kings 25:1 and in Jeremiah 39:1 and 52:4. It is an infamous date for Israel. Although Ezekiel is hundreds of miles away, he is told of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. This would last for about two years.

Vs. 3-14 This is another parable of the total cleansing the people needed. In an earlier chapter the people had called the city a pot. Here, God says the pot is totally corrupt and needs to be melted down.

Vs. 15-18 The death of Ezekiel's wife and his lack of mourning would be a sign to the people. I'm not sure what the message was that he brought the people that morning. I don't think the message was that his wife would die. It might have been the message in vs. 3-14, of the siege of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was only 34 when this happened, meaning that his wife was young too. All of this would have been a shock for the community. It isn't shocking that someone in their 30's would die. That happens. It was probably that God knew she had a problem and was going to die of a stroke and He had it coincide with this event. On our part, however, we think that since God was involved at all, that He should have saved her and spared Ezekiel and his wife this sorrow. Humanly speaking, and slightly hidden behind our emotions and reasoning, is the feeling heaven is on earth and everything good is to be enjoyed now in this time and in this body. To go to heaven is to lose everything. In our heads, we know that this earth is wrecked and true life will only begin when we are with the Lord, but our feelings tell an entirely different story. God understands this, yet in His love and unfathomable wisdom, He makes the choices and asks us to trust. We have this entire book that tells us what's going on and that we should trust, so we have been talked to and prepared. Still, it's a shock; yet He makes the wise choice. And still, He understands and knows our loss.

As disciples, when we say, "Take my life," we mean, "And do something cool with it." We have the idea that the men in the Bible must have had great lives, especially if they had a book named after them. Not so. Lots of younger people died, but you'd have thought that God would have gone easy on Ezekiel and spared his wife. Yet if she was a follower too, she had yielded her life to God. Jesus said to His followers to "take up their cross daily." The cross meant death. Once again we come to the place of asking what we really understand about discipleship and following Christ on this planet. What is this, down here, really all about? Some believers still believe that heaven is really on earth and to die is total loss. That's not what the Word shows us and a disciple of Jesus knows better.

This is why I like the RSV translation of Romans 8:28, *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.* The "with" gives the sense of God using us, for His good in His purpose, but not necessarily for the comfort and longevity of our life on earth. This life isn't about us and happiness on earth. This also fits well with Romans 8:36, *As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'* For the sake of God, for the good purpose God is working in the world to see Christ exalted and the lost saved, sometimes it is better that we die young or suffer misfortune.

This was the life of sorrow that was typical of many of the prophets and great men of the Bible. Having a book of the Bible named after you almost certainly meant you suffered. They were used by God for the good, and they are now at rest with God enjoying the benefits of where they put their treasure. As disciples, we give our lives to Christ, as He gave His life to His Father.

Vs. 19-24 The community was appalled at her death and even more at Ezekiel's behavior. That she was *the delight* of Ezekiel's eyes (v. 16) meant that this was a very loving relationship, and it would have been a deep loss for Ezekiel. For Ezekiel not to mourn publicly was not human. God got their attention.

Vs. 25-27 This would happen two years later. Notice that Ezekiel was mute and that his muteness would be taken away. I wonder how he had communicated with his wife. Maybe privately he could talk.

Ezekiel 25

This is pretty straightforward. These prophetic judgments were for the events surrounding the taking of Jerusalem, and the joy the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and Philistines would have in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-7 The Ammonites (Jordan) had an alliance with Israel, but rejoiced when Nebuchadnezzar decided to destroy Jerusalem and let them off the hook. God would remind Neb to return to the Ammonites and clean house. Notice that the Ammonites would know Yahweh is the Lord.

Vs. 8-11 The Moabites would be judged too. Verse 11 says that they too will know the Lord.

Vs. 12-14 The Edomites would only know God's vengeance and by Jesus' time had ceased to be a people. They were eventually absorbed into Israel. More on that when we get to Obadiah and Malachi.

Vs. 15-17 These people had always been a pain in the neck for Israel. By Jesus' time these people also were gone.

Ezekiel 26

This pronouncement against Tyre and Sidon will actually go through chapter 28, and there will be one of those descriptions of the pride and downfall of Satan later in this message to Tyre.

This chapter is the destruction of the city. Just as a short summary of events, Tyre rejoiced over the destruction of Jerusalem, but Nebuchadnezzar returned to assault them too. There were settlements on the coast, but the main city of Tyre was an island about a half a mile from shore. Nebuchadnezzar went after the city for 18 years and finally took it by surrender. Later, this proud city defied Alexander the Great too. He actually filled in part of the Mediterranean Sea, making a road out to the city on the island, and then destroyed it completely.

Vs. 1-6 This chapter was written about nine months before Jerusalem fell. Apparently Jerusalem, in its hey-day, had been Tyre's competition for traveling merchants. They were expecting a windfall since Jerusalem was on the verge of complete destruction. Tyre was proud and arrogant and they are mentioned often in Jesus' own pronouncements of judgment. Here God says Tyre would be punished and plundered.

Vs. 7-14 As mentioned above, some of this destruction would come with Alexander the Great. As invincible as Tyre thought they were, God would keep bringing judgment until they were completely destroyed.

Vs. 15-18 Now it gets interesting. The nations would mourn because of the loss of this city that satisfied the vices and desires of the world. You'll see something similar if you read Revelation 18:9-19.

Vs. 19-21 God will bring their glory *down to the pit*. He promised that Tyre would never again have the honor they had had before. And they haven't.

Hebrews 11:1-16

So, if we understand the hard times these believers were facing, we can understand why the writer now turns them to the "hall of faith." Following Christ by faith is the only answer for them, but it will mean hardship and persecution. In the next chapter, the example of suffering faith will be Jesus. Here, the author is showing that following in faith has never been easy.

Vs. 1-3 Notice that all of these aspects of faith are built upon us having valid information. This faith is built upon assurance, conviction, commendation and understanding that come from the Word and the revealed character of God. Faith is not irrational belief in a feeling and pie-in-the-sky.

Vs. 4-6 The lives of Abel and Enoch are summarized by v. 6. Notice that one of these guys was murdered and one of them never died, but both pleased God and were used by God for good. Notice that part of faith is based in knowing God, and part of it is seen in seeking Him.

V. 7 There is a lot in this simple verse and story. Noah had faith and heeded God and was saved from death on earth. Eternal salvation isn't mentioned here, but the faith to obey certainly played a role in all of this. Noah's faith condemned a faithless and sinful world just by following God.

Vs. 8-12 Abraham is the great example of faith in the OT and also in Romans. Abraham and Sarah had everything going against them. They were old; they came from the city and were strangers in a strange land. Actually, following God in faith, they always had God.

V. 12 Just as trivia, *as good as dead* is used by Paul talking about Abraham's faith in Romans 4:19. We've read about the life of Abraham. Anyone who thinks the lives of Abraham and Sarah were easy hasn't read closely.

Vs. 13-16 This understanding that we are aliens on earth seeking a homeland that is not here and is with God is very important both for the people in Hebrews and for us. Nothing erodes our faith like wanting heaven and comfort on earth. Jesus said that the seed that didn't bear mature fruit wanted peace and pleasure on earth. Jesus said He didn't come to bring peace on earth, but instead people would be divided, based on each person's response to Jesus and His sacrifice to save mankind.

Psalms 110

I have to think that this very messianic psalm was written sometime after David was promised that his offspring would continue on the throne and sometime before his actions with Bathsheba. Think through every verse. Some of these clearly apply to the Lord's coming at the end of the Tribulation.

V. 1 This verse looks so simple, but it is one of those proofs that the Christ had to suffer and enter into His glory. This was a command for the Messiah, the human Son of Man, to come and sit at God's *right hand*. The only way for Him to get there was to suffer for mankind. To sit at God's right hand is the ultimate statement of His authority and kingship. And to think, He is sitting there not just as God the Son, but as a human who now has authority over the human race. This also means that everything necessary for salvation and redemption is finished.

Vs. 2-4 You recognize v. 4 from Hebrews, right? He has not only been given all power and authority in heaven and earth, He is the only mediator of forgiveness and peace with God.

Vs. 5-7 Verses 5 and 6 seem pretty easy to understand. Verse 7 suggests the King's vigor, energy and freshness as He brings justice to the earth.

Proverbs 27:14

I think the thought here is to greet people according to who they are. Or, as we see elsewhere, to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn. A positive attitude doesn't always win the day if it is poorly expressed.