

NOVEMBER 5

Ezekiel 12-14:11

In reading any of the books in the Bible, it is good to have an idea of what the entire book is about. You'll be able to do this yourself if you ask yourself that question while reading each book year after year. Take notes and make it your hobby to figure out the purpose of each book. As you read you can test your theory. God will not grade you as if you'll get docked points for "getting it wrong." Most Bible expositors differ slightly in their expression of what each book is saying. But God will reward you for digging and thinking, and the Spirit might even give you something that the well-known preachers never saw.

This is just me, but I think that in Ezekiel, God is preparing the exiled people of Israel for the return to the land, and He is preparing the future nation of Israel for the Millennial Kingdom. As God uses Ezekiel, this strange, mute, immobilized man, to jolt the people, God will focus them on who He really is and make them sick of their idolatry. We've seen the idolatry in the temple that caused God to leave the city. I'm sure that jolted the people. Today, God goes after them again for listening to false prophets, and the idolatry that was at the core of this deception. When Israel returned to the land, for the most part, idolatry is never mentioned again. God is preparing the people.

Ezekiel 12

Vs. 1-7 Somehow this became a big event. Remember that Ezekiel normally couldn't go out of his house. What that baggage meant might have been more than a back-pack. Whatever this was, it became a city-wide event. As Ezekiel put stuff out in front of his house in the morning, it became news. By the time evening came and he had made the hole, everyone was watching.

V. 2 The "eyes and ears" proverb is the same as in Isaiah and what Jesus quotes in the NT. It means they have the ability, but refuse to do it. It's willful.

V. 6 Covering his face would have an interesting application.

V. 7 What made this event even stranger is that, apparently, since God never spoke to Ezekiel during the event, Ezekiel remained completely mute. They could ask him what he was doing, but if anything, he could only grunt.

Vs. 8-16 The next day, finally, God let Ezekiel speak. Now he had everyone's attention.

Vs. 12-13 This is talking about King Zedekiah. Ezekiel wore the veil symbolizing the blinding of Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar. All of this took place just as Ezekiel said it would.

If you're underlining, vs. 15 and 16 have that very important phrase in them. Notice that this is said with a strong sense of assurance. God will make sure the lesson is learned.

Vs. 17-20 This is both a sign and a message. This happened somewhere in public, like at a feast, while Ezekiel was eating and drinking; or maybe he brought his own lunch to the marketplace. Ezekiel did this weird thing of eating and drinking with great fear and dismay. I'm sure all the parents rushed to make sure their kids were nowhere near this madman.

Vs. 21-25 Notice *And the word of the Lord came to me*. It will keep coming.

V. 22 The visions were false visions of hope. The people opened themselves up to listening to lies and putting their hopes in false gods. Now they wanted nothing to do with any prophecies including those that were true. They were lumping Ezekiel's sermons into this category of falseness. God didn't like this proverb.

Vs. 26-28 And the point of this sermon is... God is throwing their motto back into their faces. The fulfilling of this word would be soon.

Ezekiel 13

As you observe this chapter, keep in mind that these practices were taking place in Jerusalem as well as among some of the Jews in Babylon. The exiles in Babylon hadn't been cleansed yet, but it would come.

Vs. 1-7 This is against the false prophets. You wonder why these prophets preached. It was obviously for themselves and to be known. The effect of lies and unfulfilled visions is to dull, discourage, and deceive a people. Verse 5 shows that none of the prophets, except Jeremiah, put themselves in harm's way to help the city or the people by standing in the breach. This lack of a man with a heart for the people will be mentioned again in a famous verse in Ezekiel 22:30.

Vs. 8-16 Rather than building up the wall, they disguised and helped its decay. Notice v. 9. The wall in v. 10 was a dangerous, cracked wall that was smeared with a light coat of plaster to hide the cracks.

V. 14 God would make sure it fell and in that day they *shall know*...

Vs. 17-23 This is against the false prophetesses. They actually ventured into paganism with the magic bands. This sounds like Kabbalah bracelets.

V. 18 This was being done by the women and apparently it was like witchcraft and involved cursing people.

Vs. 20-23 God was going to hunt these women down and make it His personal goal to ruin them for this magic and for the effect it had had on the righteous. And He would do it in such a way that they *shall know*...

Ezekiel 14

Vs. 1-5 So, how do you understand v. 3? You could say "old habits die hard," but it is worse than that. These men still love their idols. They may have gotten rid of them, but they are still there, in their hearts. Just like a picture of a spouse or a child that you put on a desk or on the wall where you can look at it, these men still had those desires before their eyes. Yet, maybe torn by the disaster that has happened to them, they are coming to ask of the Lord, just not with their whole hearts. And God can see it.

Vs. 4-5 This looks like God saying He would take immediate and personal action against anyone who filled their hearts with their gods. At this time, the Jews were the only people in the Babylonian Empire who could refuse to worship any god but their own, Yahweh. It was an unheard of exception for an exiled people. God did it and if the people rejected Yahweh, they showed their sickness and their need for judgment. God will eventually cleanse the people of idols.

Vs. 6-8 It seems that God Himself will now take every idolater and false prophet and make an example of them to the people.

Vs. 9-11 Remember back to Ahab and Jehoshaphat and Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:8. Both kings had already decided to do something wrong, but thought it would be good to get God's approval. So the lying prophets all told them to go ahead. Jehoshaphat thought it was all fishy, so he asked if there was a real prophet; and Micaiah was brought out of prison. Micaiah had seen a vision of the demons coming before God and God sending one to be a lying power in the mouths of the false prophets as a punishment against Ahab. That is what is happening here. If the people have itchy ears and seek teachers to say what they want to hear, God will let it happen, but the point even in that judgment is that some may see all of this and turn and be saved.

Hebrews 7:1-17

Vs. 1-3 There is a lot here we can't understand. Our first impulse would be to dismiss this as flowery, sermonic language. But this is one of these places where God reveals something that

has only been hinted at in the past. We met Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and it does raise a few questions. I've always wondered how many other witnesses to God there were in the world, on other continents, we never knew of. Suddenly we find this guy who is representing God. Not only is Melchizedek a great guy, but Abraham shows him respect. He's got a rescue mission going in Jerusalem, spreading the Word about Yahweh.

Then in Psalm 110 suddenly it says that the Messiah will be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. So the Spirit is saying that this is really important.

Now, hundreds of years after that psalm, and 20-30 years after the death, resurrection and departure of Jesus, almost at the end of the time of the apostles, this writer and the Spirit tell us something more about Melchizedek and Jesus. I find this very interesting how and when God lets more information flow to His people.

V. 3 If this verse is taken literally, it means that Melchizedek may have been an angel. There is Jewish tradition that indicates that they had that understanding. It is just conjecture, but you wonder in those days how God spoke to people who sought Him. Why not angels? Whatever Melchizedek was, he was a priest of the Most High God whose priesthood was "forever" and greater than the priesthood of Aaron under the law.

Vs. 4-10 The point here is that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. Abraham didn't worship Melchizedek, but worshipped God through the mediation of Melchizedek, showing that Abraham, the inferior, went to the superior person to honor and learn of God. The Jews would have understood that Melchizedek was a very special character and a mysterious mediator of God.

Vs. 9-10 This is an interesting application, once again showing that Jesus' priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood.

Vs. 11-17 This shows that going back to the inferior law with its inferior priesthood is foolish. Jesus, the Messiah, is the ultimate mediator for mankind, after the order of Melchizedek.

Just so we don't forget what is happening here, these people are in danger. They are tired and under pressure to be quiet and retreat to safety. It's no different than the danger each disciple faces every day. We are under the constant pressure to be comfortable, to be inoffensive, to be self-focused, and to be "used to" our salvation. What the writer to the Hebrews is doing is showing them Jesus. Jesus is the center of our faith and our lives. It is impossible to know Him and still be content on earth. It is impossible to know His salvation and not care about the salvation of others. It is impossible to call Him Lord and not follow Him into the harvest. If any of these are possible for us, we may have fallen to what the Hebrews had fallen to. The answer, as we are seeing, is nothing other than Jesus. We need to rekindle that first love, if it's possible, and follow Jesus our Savior.

Psalm 105:37-45

Vs. 37-38 It wasn't Israel's effort that did this. Israel's glory was the mercy and love of God. With all we have read about idolatry, we can understand God being so upset about their sin.

Vs. 39-42 And God did all of this because of His promise to Abraham, the man saved by faith. The truth for Israel here is that God will always honor that promise, so there is always hope and they should always follow.

Vs. 43-45 God brought them out with joy and gave them a position, but to what purpose? That is in v. 45 and it was to have been Israel's witness to the nations. As Israel obeyed and was blessed, the nations would see and would know.

V. 45 Praise the Lord! God provides deliverances and we've read about a lot of these. We experience a lot of little deliverances in our lives, and through them God puts a new song in our

mouths. That's what The Psalms are all about. Now, we are involved in this harvest in bringing news of the greatest deliverance to people who desperately need to hear it. Although the message is at once very serious and very good, because we have experienced it and know Jesus, we can deliver the message with a tone of praise.

Proverbs 27:3

And because it is so heavy and foolish, the Lord is telling us, warning us, not to react to it.