

NOVEMBER 6

Ezekiel 14:12-16:42

Chapters 14 and 15 belong together, then chapter 16 will introduce a very disturbing image that will be used by God again in this book.

Ezekiel 14:12-23

Vs. 12-20 The message here is very straightforward. The people who remain in Judah and Jerusalem (these people in Babylon had been a part of that crowd) are so sinful, that if these three men were there, by their own righteousness they could only save themselves. Now, Daniel, from the book of Daniel, is listed as part of this trio. To understand the significance of his inclusion, look at Genesis 6:9 and Job 1:8.

So, who were these men? We understand Noah being in this group. He was the most righteous man on earth during his lifetime. Job was the most righteous man on earth at the time he lived and the only one that could have faced that kind of testing. This must mean that at the time of this writing, Daniel was the most righteous man on earth. Wow! What company to be named in. Daniel will be the next book we read and once we read the first six chapters, you'll never be able to think of them as disjointed children's stories again. This also means that at this most critical time for the nation of Israel, God had placed on earth, in Babylonian government, in world government, one of the most righteous, God-fearing and God-following men who has ever walked the planet. His impact is largely hidden, but we'll discuss it as time goes on. That a man like Daniel was even present shows God's grace, mercy and steadfast love to His people.

Vs. 21-23 Apparently the people in Babylon had already begun to reform a little. Even though they are praying for those left in Jerusalem, those in exile don't quite remember how bad their conduct was. When these people are brought from Jerusalem to Babylon, the people who are already in exile in Babylon will be appalled to see how idolatrous and evil these newcomers are. They will understand and *know* why God had to bring such cleansing to the city and the land.

Ezekiel 15

This is a very simple message. These people were so corrupt, they couldn't be used for anything, even as a peg in the wall on which to hang a vessel. Israel's purpose was to bear fruit for God. If you want an interesting connection between Israel's purpose and the church's purpose, read John 15:1-8. There is nothing wrong with being a branch in the vine unless you don't want to abide in the vine and bear fruit.

Ezekiel 16:1-42

This image of a whore expresses God's jealousy and sense of betrayal by Israel. We'll see it again in a few chapters. The focus here is on Jerusalem. The city is being used to represent the people. The people's hope was in the city and the temple, because of God's promises associated with the city. Yet, God would destroy the city and all that was in it. The judgment of Jerusalem would be a picture of His displeasure with the people.

Vs. 1-5 Verse 3 is important to note that the message is to the city. Apparently it was settled by Amorites and Hittites. The city now will become a picture of God choosing this people to be His people as He chose Jerusalem to be His city.

Vs. 6-7 This selection was on the basis of God's mercy and pity. Under His care the city/nation became healthy and grew.

Vs. 8-14 The image of God entering into a special relationship with people is common in Scripture. What is interesting in both the Old and New Testaments is that the image is marriage. We will see this image of marriage a couple more times in the OT, and in the NT we have the

image of the Bride of Christ. In both testaments, these special people are meant to show the salvation of God out of gratefulness for His blessing and deliverance. In a way, the image represented in the verses up to this point could be true of everyone who knows Christ.

V. 8 Notice that this covering is what took place in Ruth 3:9 between Boaz and Ruth.

Vs. 15-22 This is where the analogy with anything good and redemptive breaks down. Notice the description of ungratefulness. This was true of Israel as God's chosen nation and Israel is an example to all mankind. All mankind is guilty of this. Everyone enjoys the blessings of God every day, but rather than turning to God in Jesus Christ to give Him thanks, we use His benefits to ignore Him.

V. 15 is interesting. It was pride in the very beauty and privilege given by the Lord that sin took and perverted. This wouldn't be the first time that God's blessing was warped by sin. In Ezekiel 28:11-17 we'll find one of those passages that seems to rise above the description of a human, to a description of Satan and his fall. There, too, it is because of his God-given beauty and privilege that he chose to rebel against God.

Notice v. 17. They took what God gave them and made idols of them. Some of these idols were used in sexual worship rites.

V. 20 is appalling and Malachi 2:15 shows another reason why God was totally upset with this.

Vs. 23-29 Israel not only committed "adultery" by taking on the gods of the surrounding nations, but rather than depending on God, they looked for help from these other nations in terms of treaties and security. You see this in Solomon's political marriages, and particularly with King Asa, when he sent gold to have Syria attack the northern kingdom rather than take the matter to God. (2 Chr. 16:1-10) We have already seen how God leveled Egypt. Then we saw how God destroyed the Assyrian army in a night. Why would you seek these nations for help? But Israel did. Look at Psalm 78:5-7. They were to have only sought hope in God.

Vs. 30-34 The imagery here is that of brazen, open harlotry. A normal harlot would have made a chamber in private quarters. Israel did it openly in every square and wide place in Jerusalem. What are referred to here are shrines and memorials throughout the city that were actually small worship stations. These also had a political/economic purpose in that they could say to a Babylonian with whom they were doing business, "Look over there. We have a little statue of Nebo. You want to go worship?"

A normal harlot was paid for her work. Israel invited other nations in, adopted their gods and may have given them financial incentives for bringing their business to Jerusalem. Some of this probably happened to open up trade with other nations. Honoring their gods would have shown good will. God didn't think so.

Vs. 35-42 The judgment God would bring would be very specific and connected to their sins. None of the gods Israel worshipped would help them and none of the nations they connected with would save them. In fact, the nations whose favor they sought would all have a hand in exposing their sin and punishing them.

For us in the harvest, we need to stay in the Word and allow lessons like this to wash our hearts and our motives. The Lord is our hope and this world is where we work. The world is not our hope. It is easy to put our hope in people and in strategies, but the Lord has recorded these events and judgments to help us keep our eyes on Jesus and to stay focused on the blessing of seeing others come to Him and become disciples, who make disciples.

1 Corinthians 10:11 *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

Hebrews 7:18-28

Vs. 18-22 You can tell this was written to believers, because the unbelieving Jews we see in the NT would have gone nuclear if they had heard this. When Jesus made the new covenant with the bread and the wine, we know He could do it because He is God. Here, it is also stated that on the human side, He could do it because of God making Him a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Notice how Psalm 110 is being relied on again. Who knew those words would be so important? God Himself made an oath.

Vs. 23-25 Since Jesus lives forever, you only need this one priest and He intercedes continuously for His people. This was something good for them to remember in the situation they were facing. Hey, that's good for me to remember too.

Vs. 26-28 Why would they want to go back to the law knowing this? They would have to deny Jesus Himself.

Psalm 106:1-12

I mentioned something yesterday about how helpful it is to know the point of something while you are reading. So, we'll be reading this for the next two days. Verse 47 will give you an idea of when this was written. If you understand that, it puts this history into a slightly different light and you understand the appeal being made in all of this song.

Vs. 1-3 If you read v. 47, these words take on some interesting significance. The mention of God's goodness and His *steadfast love that endures forever* are something the exiles had experienced in a strange land during their punishment. As we'll see in Daniel, and have seen in Esther and Nehemiah, God still did show Himself mighty.

Vs. 4-5 Now we have the plea. Notice the request for remembrance, for salvation for the people, gladness for the nation and glory for God's own inheritance.

Vs. 6-12 The sin of the nation is summarized in forgetting their salvation. How God saved them from Egypt was supposed to have made a lasting impression. God knew they would forget; and through their pride in God's blessing and perversion of the glory and beauty He gave Israel, all mankind would see that we need a spiritual cure, not just a physical fix.

Proverbs 27:4-6

V. 4 seems to stand alone, but it is very powerful. With both *wrath* and *anger*, a person will give regard to their own safety, but the motto of *jealousy* is "blow up the world." Jealousy is both anger and wrath with a sense of mission and dark abandon.

Not that we can attribute to God the nasty side of our emotions, but think of the jealousy He is talking about in Ezekiel. It definitely fits the scenario.

Vs. 5-6 We still don't get "speaking the truth in love." Most often we just avoid the subject. That's not love.