

## NOVEMBER 7

### Ezekiel 16:43-17:24

It is hard for us to imagine what it was like for the exiles living in Babylon, receiving news from Jerusalem, watching world events and hoping Babylon would be defeated. They hoped that Jerusalem would survive and that they could return to Israel. But there were these disturbing men. A Jew named Daniel was chief advisor to Nebuchadnezzar. He was obviously a traitor, as were the other three Jews who were responsible for the showcase province of Babylon. They were all working for the enemy. Then there was this awful prophet back in Jerusalem, Jeremiah, who was really, really negative. But worst of all, living among them, there was this very spooky prophet who couldn't speak, or move from his house. However, when he did speak and when he did move, there was a dark sense of awe and power in what he said that confirmed that God would judge Jerusalem and its people for their sin.

Ezekiel 16:43-63

Vs. 43-52 The Spirit changes the analogy slightly, from a whore to a family of whores.

V. 43 Notice how important it was for Israel to have remembered God's selection of Abraham and the covenant God made with him. God chose Abe and from him, God made Israel into a nation. Their salvation and deliverance from Egypt was to have been remembered and celebrated. That was to have always confirmed God's love and given them a heart of gratefulness to follow in faith. That is exactly the same for us.

V. 45 I don't think this is describing the origin of the people of Israel. Here are two possibilities. First, the mother and father could be talking about the DNA of their abominations and idolatries. Second, the mother and father could be talking about those who originally built Jerusalem. I think this is more likely since a focus of God's judgment is on the city itself. The Jebusites who were in Jerusalem, when Joshua came into the land, were probably descended from the Hittites and the Amorites. Notice that as this analogy goes on, other cities, Samaria and Sodom, are referred to. So, it would make sense that the mother and father of Jerusalem were Hittites and Amorites. The sickness of Canaan came from these people and God judged it through Israel, but Israel adopted their worship and became infected by their ways.

V. 52 This is shocking just reading it; and for Ezekiel's audience, it would have been a cause for them to want to kill the prophet, except that the supernatural sense around Ezekiel made them realize the words were from God. When God took Ezekiel back to Jerusalem and he viewed all of the idolatry, we saw how corrupt the city was. Add to this the fact that God had had His presence there. That made their sin that much graver and inexcusable. I was reading this morning as Jesus sent out the seventy, *For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* (Matt. 11:21) Sodom is mentioned in this too. Jerusalem, of all places on earth, had no excuse for this behavior. Israel of all people had no excuse for this depth of sin and faithlessness.

Vs. 53-58 What ought to stand out here is the millennial blessing promised to both Samaria and Sodom. That really surprises me.

Vs. 59-63 Even in punishment, God promises to remember His covenant with Abraham and make a new covenant with Israel. God will restore Israel at the close of the age. Notice v. 60. When the kingdom comes and all three cities are restored, Jerusalem (the Jews) will then become a "mother" to these "daughters." I guess this means that Israel will be a source of spiritual connection and help for them.

V. 62 There's that promise again.

V. 63 And here is a final rebuke for Israel.

## Ezekiel 17

This parable was probably a response to rumors being heard from Jerusalem that Egypt would rise to save them. This prophecy was given before Zedekiah actually joined up with Egypt and rebelled against Babylon.

Vs. 1-6 This eagle was Nebuchadnezzar, whom God sent to take Jehoiachin to Babylon, and then Neb took some of the "seed" and planted it there in Babylon next to the rivers. Ezekiel's audience was this seed. About 12,000 craftsmen and businessmen were taken in that deportation.

In all of this, Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy Jerusalem but left there a "seed" of David, Zedekiah. I think this act of mercy was because of the influence of Daniel and because of what God had done in Nebuchadnezzar's life. Everything was OK.

Vs. 7-8 This is the offer of Egypt. Verse 8 says that they had already been planted and made secure.

Vs. 9-10 But Zedekiah was now being enticed to make a treaty with Egypt. By rebelling against God and Nebuchadnezzar, both Jerusalem and Egypt would be punished by God.

Vs. 11-15 This is an explanation of what happened.

Vs. 16-21 This is what God vows to do about it. Note v. 21.

Vs. 22-24 This is God restoring Israel in Zion with His Son, the Son of David, the Messiah.

These people were being punished because of their disobedience, and now, they still wouldn't obey God and accept the changes He had made in their nation and in their lives. Even as disciples following in the harvest, it is hard to accept changes that don't meet our desires or expectations. Yet, if our only goal on the planet is to live for Christ in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples, that simplifies life for us. Not only that, abiding in Christ means we see and expect His hand to lead us. Regardless of where He leads us, there we are with Him. This morning I was reading in Philippians and in Romans, and what struck me was that Paul expected harvest wherever he went. Actually, Paul even bore fruit in prison. As Jesus said in John 4, the fields are always white for harvest.

## Hebrews 8

Vs. 1-2 The writer is summarizing, saying that we have the best priest and that He is sitting in the right place. Just as trivia, remember that it is not only important that Jesus is God, but it is especially important that He is a man sitting at the right hand of God. He is the human who can reclaim humanity and lead mankind to righteousness before God. He has authority over mankind and has disarmed and judged the spiritual authorities that have been "lording it over" sinful mankind.

Vs. 3-5 This is showing that Jesus is not a priest of the old covenant. Not only that, it shows that the temple and temple service were still going on, indicating that this was written before 70 A.D.

For trivia: The Romans destroyed the temple in 70 A.D. Both Paul and Peter died in Rome in Nero's persecution in 67 A.D. The apostle John survived and wrote his Gospel, his letters, and Revelation around 90 A.D., twenty years after the temple was gone.

Vs. 6-13 In showing that the first covenant was incomplete and passing, he quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34. We just read that. Laura found it interesting that in today's reading of Ezekiel we heard about the covenants, both old and new.

The new covenant goes back to the Abrahamic covenant encompassing the plan of God to bless all nations and therefore, to redeem all mankind. The new covenant, as expressed in Jeremiah and throughout the OT, has both spiritual and physical promises. The church does not inherit the physical promises of a land, or being regathered to Jerusalem and having a king/Messiah reign in

Jerusalem. Those physical promises are for Israel. The church does inherit the spiritual promise of salvation, spiritual rebirth and the Holy Spirit. The church becomes the Bride of Christ. The point here for the people receiving this letter is that the old covenant, and therefore the following of the law, was not a place for them to return for peace and safety.

Vs. 10-11 I think the Jews understood this promise as being connected with the Holy Spirit and the kingdom. In Peter's Pentecost message in Acts 2, he mentioned the promise of the Holy Spirit. Also, when Jesus promised the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:5, it prompted the disciples to ask about the kingdom in v. 6. They associated the Holy Spirit with the restoration of Israel.

### **Psalm 106:13-31**

We still have one more day in Psalm 106. You have to read ahead if you want to get the full point of all of this. The writer is showing how unbelieving and hard-hearted the people were. Yet, God still showed them mercy.

As an aside, it looks like Paul knew this psalm pretty well. Some of what he says in Romans and in 1 Corinthians 10 sounds like this section today.

Vs. 13-15 This is Numbers 11:20.

Vs. 16-18 It is incredible to think that the people openly rebelled in the presence of the cloud and the pillar of fire. God Himself was present with them. What were they thinking?

Vs. 19-23 Here is Moses interceding for the people after their incredible act of disobedience. Verse 20 sounds like Romans 1:23.

Vs. 24-27 This is the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea that launched the people into 38 years of wandering in the wilderness. (Num. 13-14)

Vs. 28-31 This happened at the end of the entire 40 years of wandering. (Num. 25)

The men mentioned in vs. 23 and 30 give me the feeling that the psalmist and the Spirit were encouraging people to stand in the gap for the people as they prayed for God to bless the remnant. As disciples in the harvest, regardless of how the Lord is using us, by following the Lord and seeking to reach the lost and make disciples, who make disciples, we are standing in the gap for our generation.

### **Proverbs 27:7-9**

V. 7 There is a healthy hunger in life and I think we are to have it in the harvest. Jesus promised that those who chose to be hungry would be satisfied. If our hunger is because of the mission and the desperate need on this planet, the Lord himself sweetens all that is bitter. What a difference this makes from one person to another.

V. 8 If a person came from a nurturing home, but rejected what he gained there, we would think he had made a mistake. Think too of the people in Hebrews. They found a home in Christ, but now they are in danger of drifting from that home.

V. 9 To understand this, think of someone who has strengthened you. Anyone can show us what is wrong, but it takes a friend to add strength to counsel. *Wait on the Lord, be strong and let your heart take courage.* (Ps. 27:14) Ultimately, with the Spirit, this is why the Word and prayer are so important. Our hope and greatest resource have to be fully in the Lord.