**Ezekiel Sermon #4**

**The End of the Road & God’s Remnant**

**Themes in Ezekiel:**

1. The sovereignty/glory of God. Theodicy.

2. The utter sinfulness of human beings. Israel sinful from birth (23:3) and worse than Sodom (16:46-48)

3. The inescapability (and justice) of God’s judgment. This is the main theme of Ch 1-24

4. The return of the Messiah/King and the restoration of God’s remnant to glory. This is the theme of Ezek 34-48.

**Last week: Ezek 18 God’s Justice.**

When people sin, people suffer, but when it comes to eternal life, we are responsible only for what we have done or not done.

 The soul who sins will die. Those who repent will be saved. Read Ezek 18:31-32

Today:

**Ch 19-24 The End of the Road For Israel**

**Ch 34-36 God Will Save a Remnant**

**IV. Ch 19-24 The End of the Road**

Ezekiel 21:1-5 I am going to cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked.

Remember Ezekiel 9:4 Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it. Then God comes and judges the unrighteous.

But, when it comes to physical judgment, the righteous do not necessarily escape physical consequences of the sins of the unrighteous. This is God’s justice. (remember last week Exodus 20:5 vs Ezekiel 18)

Ezekiel 21:18-24 Another visual parable. A signpost. Ekekiel acted this out, with the two names on the signs.

Ezekiel 21:18 Nebuchadnezzar comes to destroy (in 588 BC) and at a fork in the road chooses between Rabbah/the Ammonites and Jerusalem. He picks the arrow for Jerusalem (*belomancy* to the Greeks), he examines the images (*teraphim*) he examines the liver (*divination*) Nebuchadnezzar turns against Jerusalem. God can even use the work of diviners to accomplish his will. But because of their guilt, they will be taken captive.

Ezekiel 21:25-27 A ruin! A ruin! This was your life due to sin!!!

The End of the Road

Why? Ezekiel 23 1-4 Ohola and Oholibah

Oholah is Samaria/Ephraim/Israel/the Northern Kingdom

Oholibah is Jerusalem/Judah/the Southern Kingdom

The Hebrew words Ohola and Oholibah derive from the word for tent or tabernacle.

Ohola her tent

Oholibah my tent is in her God dwelt with Samaria and in Judah. (as he dwells in us in the Holy Spirit)

Ezek 23:5-10 Oholah began her prostitution in Egypt, and continued it with Assyria.

In this case, the “prostitution” is idolatry.

Q: v. 7 What have you given yourself to? What have you lusted after? What have you prostituted yourself to? God sees this as prostitution.

We “prostitute ourselves with “the handsome” (v. 6) and “the elite” (v. 7)

The world is very attractive. Let’s admit it!

Ezek 23:11-21 Oholibah was worse than her sister! [probably not literally, but because he dwelt in Jerusalem] First she prostituted herself with (trusted in) Babylon. Then she prostituted herself with (trusted in) Egypt. v. 20 is amazingly shocking. Sin is disgustingly ugly!!!!!!

Q: Would Judah agree that this is what they are doing? No way. We are just trying to play the political game to protect ourselves. They are using the things of the world, rather than relying on God.

 This is what our sin is like! We call it “pro choice” We call it “social drinking” “alternative lifestyle” I was “frustrated”

It is my “hormones”

“boys will be boys”

“keeping up with the Jones.”

God will turn away from us in disgust. (v. 18)

Oholah’s and Oholibah’s mistake was that they were not satisfied with God. Q: Are you satisfied with what God has given you? 1 Timothy 6:8 If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Ezek 23:22 Here is the take-home lesson. I will give you over to what you gave yourself to.

Like Romans 1:28-32 (and 2:24,26) God will give us over to the things we lust after. So that we end up doing things we “know… deserves death.”

You say: Who, me? God: Yes, you!

Ezek 23:28-29 You will become the very thing you hate. This is what sin does!!!! It will “take away everything you have worked for. (v. 29)

Illustration: A brother in Bak

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus came that we might have life!

Ezek 23:49 Then you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.

Ezekiel 24 The cauldron Ezekiel refuses to mourn.

Ezekiel 24:1-2

Jan 5, 588 BC A date to mark down. This is the date when Nebuchadnezzar put Jerusalem under siege. Here, as before, Ezekiel proves that he is a prophet—capable of knowing the future, as news of the siege certainly did not come for several months. Ezekiel got it exact!!!! The city did not fall for about two years. (2 Kings, Jeremiah)

Ezek 24:3-14 The cauldron with the encrusted layers of stuff is Judah with her unrepented sin.

Ezek 24:6 Empty it piece by piece without casting lots for them. Babylon will destroy indiscrimitately.

Ezek 24:11 Heat the cauldron glowing hot.

Ezek 24:12 Sin is a “heavy deposit.”

24:11,13 When God has finished pouring his wrath on Jerusalem it will get really hot, but then the impurity/encrusted junk in the pot will finally be cleaned.

v. 14 I will not have pity (as illustrated by Ezek 24:15-24 when Ezekiel does not mourn for his wife) (being a prophet of God can require a great cost to us)

THE END OF THE ROAD

Ezek 24:15-24 God tells Ezekiel to not mourn over the death of his wife.

(this is happening while Jerusalem is under siege)

Ezek 24:15 I am about to take away the delight of your eyes. (Judah is the delight of God’s “eyes.”) Yet, do not lament or shed any tears.

The point: God loves Judah as Ezekiel loves his wife. But because of their sin, God will destroy Judah and will not mourn over it.

Message: God’s love does not disprove or cancel out his justice and his wrath.

Q: How did God feel about the people in Sodom and Gomorrah? He loved them intensely. It is not that he did not love Judah. Far from it.

Q: Do you treat sin lightly? Do you act as if sin is not a terribly problematic thing?

v. 24. When all this happens, “you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.”

Ezekiel 24:25-27 Ezekiel will be prophetically silent for two years—until news of the fall of Jerusalem arrives.

Ezekiel 33 Transition chapter bridging Ch 24, Ch 34 (as we will see below)

Ezekk 33:21-22 585 BC A messenger arrives (Ezekiel 24:26) Jerusalem has fallen! Ezekiel is vindicated as a prophet. v. 22 Ezekiel again begins to prophesy to the people (Ezekiel 24:27) Here we see that CH 33 is a bridge.

The content of his message is to change dramatically.

Jerusalem has fallen! Bad news, right? No! God’s wrath has been poured out and is complete, and now it is time for God to come to his people with love and mercy.

Ezekiel 33:30-33 Ezekiel is now a popular preacher, but they still are not doing what he tells them.

**V. Ch 34-48 The Messiah is coming. God Will Save a Remnant.**

Now that the working of God’s wrath is complete, the rest of the book will be a comfort. Ezekiel preaches good news. A remnant will repent, return, be restored and the City will be rebuilt!

Prophetically, this is us. This was all prophesied in Deut 30:1-6

v. 4 Some of us were banished from God to the most distant land under the heavens.

God can still bring you back into a relationship with him. There is hope as long as you are alive!

There is some double (and even triple) prophecy here:

1.The restoration of Judah to Jerusalem under Cyrus.

2. The restoration of God’s kingdom under the Messiah.

3. The final restoration of God’s people in the ultimate Messianic kingdom (heaven).

**Ezekiel 34 Shepherds, sheep and the Good Shepherd.**

Bad leadership/shepherding is condemned,

Godly leadership/shepherding is described

A future perfect leader/shepherd is prophesied. Jesus Christ, the “good shepherd John 10:11-18 What is a good shepherd? One who lays down his life for his sheep. (John 10:18)

Ezek 34:1-6

What is the job of the shepherd?

1. Ezek 34:2 To take care of the flock. NOT to take care of yourself! They had taken advantage of their position as shepherd and had used the sheep.

2. 34:4 Take care of the weak. One key measure of a Jesus church is how the shepherds care for the weak (as opposed to the “sharp”)

3. 34:4 Bring back the strays.

4. 34:4 Bring in the lost.

This has been my goal, personally, since I came here and it is my goal for 2023.

Q: Who will you take care of?

Q: What stray will you bring back this year?

Q: Will you bring in a lost sheep this year?

The worst possible charge against a shepherd: v. 4 You have treated them harshly and brutally. The result of bad shepherding: The sheep are scattered.

Sheep can be annoying. Young Christians create problems.

Ezek 34:7-10 God’s response to bad shepherds.

v. 10 1. I will hold you accountable.

2. I will remove you from leading the flock. I will rescue my flock from you. May it never be that God has to rescue his flock from us.

34:11-16 God: If the shepherds will not do it, then I will shepherd my sheep, and I will create a remnant.

v. 14 good pasture good grazing land rich pasture.

v. 15 I will tend my sheep.

This is a double prophecy about Judah and about the Church.

34:17-21 The sheep are not completely without responsibility. Do not blame it on bad leadership.

 Do not muddy the water—keeping the best for yourselves. Do not make of yourself a “fat sheep.”

Q: Have you muddied the waters (v. 18) for other Christians by your actions?

Q: Are you a “fat sheep.” (v. 20) Do you take care of yourself first and others come in a distant second?

34:22-31 God’s shepherd—the Messiah—is coming! (John 10:14 I AM the Good Shepherd). Jesus the branch of Jesse, David will tend them!!!

v. 26 Showers of blessing!

v. 27 Much fruit! Security. Freedom (John 8 31f)

v. 28 Living without fear (1 Jn 4:18 perfect love drives out fear)

v. 29 Spiritual food. He will give us the bread of life. No longer will we hunger. Life to the full John 10:10

Ezekiel 36 The mountain of the Lord

36:22-23 It is not for your sake that I do this. It is for my holy name and for my holiness.

We need to remember this. Reminds of Deut 7:7-9

36:24-32 You will be a remnant devoted to me. A prophecy of the New Covenant.

-from all nations 24

-cleansed with water 25

-a new heart and a new spirit (born again) 26

-receive the Holy Spirit 27

No wonder Jesus challenged Nicodemus that he should have known this was coming. (John 3:10)

-blessings (physical rather than spiritual because this is the Old Testament) 29-30

-repentance 31

- v. 32 But remember I am not doing this because you were doing so awesome.

-much fruit

Ezek 36:33-38 God calls a remnant.

Your ruins will be rebuilt. This is your life in Christ.

 …like the garden of Eden v. 35 Symbolic of being in the Kingdom of God.