

The Prophets

Lesson #44

Ezekiel 9:1-16:63

Outline

- I. ***Judah's Iniquity And The Resulting Judgment (4:1-24:27)***
 - A. The vision of the exodus of God's glory (8:1-11:25).
 1. Judgment on Jerusalem and the departure of God's glory (9:1-11:23).
 - a) The man with the writing kit (9:1-4).
 - b) The executioners' judgment (9:5-8).
 - c) Vindication of God's judgment (9:9-11).
 - d) Coals of fire on Jerusalem (10:1-7).
 - e) Cherubim and Ichabod (10:8-22).
 - f) Judgment on Jerusalem's leaders (11:1-13).
 - g) The future of the remnant (11:14-21).
 - h) The departure of the Lord's glory from Jerusalem (11:22-25).
 - B. The Lord's reply to the exiles' invalid rationalizations of hope (12:1-19:14).
 1. The dramatic tragedy of exile (12:1-20).
 - a) Introduction (12:1-2).
 - b) A picture of deportation (12:3-16).
 - c) A drama of fear (12:17-20).
 2. The faithfulness of God: the present judgment (12:21-28).
 3. The condemnation of contemporary false prophets (13:1-23).
 - a) Judgment on the prophets (13:1-16).
 - b) Judgment on the prophetesses (13:17-23).
 4. The effect of the false prophets on the leaders (14:1-11).
 5. No deliverance apart from personal righteousness (14:12-23).
 6. Jerusalem, an unprofitable vine (15:1-8).
 7. Jerusalem's history as a prostitute (16:1-63).
 - a) The birth of Jerusalem (16:1-5).
 - b) The Lord's courtship and marriage to Jerusalem (16:6-14).
 - c) Jerusalem's prostitution with other lands and gods (16:15-34).
 - d) Jerusalem: judged a prostitute (16:35-43).
 - e) Becoming an example and byword (16:44-58).
 - f) Restoration: the promise of love (16:59-63).

Notes

Ezekiel 4:1-24:27

- The vision of the exodus of God's glory (8:1-11:25).

- Judgment on Jerusalem and the departure of God's glory (9:1-11:23).
 - The man with the writing kit (9:1-4).
 - The guards' means of entry resembles a regimented squad reporting in formation for their assignment. God has announced the sentence and will carry it out immediately in this vision.
 - The "writer's inkhorn" was a wooden palette with recesses for a pen and two colors of ink. This man marked them on their forehead with a mark of protection as the impending judgment drew near (cf. Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1). These people had a righteous attitude.
 - The executioners' judgment (9:5-8).
 - God carries out His promise of not having pity or compassion on those who are not marked. The indiscriminate slaughter in this vision corresponds to the indiscriminate slaughter by the Babylonians when the city falls later.
 - The execution occurs in two phases. The guards are to begin at God's sanctuary. As the most sacred location, avenging its defilement is paramount. As Ezekiel found himself the only survivor of the judgment, he became alarmed at the mass of people slain. Although he could appear hard, his heart throbbed with love for God and his people.
 - Vindication of God's judgment (9:9-11).
 - The Lord's response to Ezekiel's concern for the nation was to remind him that the iniquity of Judah was extremely great.
 - The Lord had not left, because He presently was judging Judah for her iniquity and would not spare anyone. He did know the wickedness of the people, for he would recompense them for it.
 - Coals of fire on Jerusalem (10:1-7).
 - The "man clothed in linen" is told to enter the sacred place among the wheels of the cherubim, indicating for the first time that he is a superhuman figure able to move in and around the Holy of Holies.
 - The coals represented purification as an element of judgment and, like the killing of the executioners, forecasts the fate of the city: it will be burned (cf. 2 Kings 25:9).
 - Just as the man in linen prepares to go into the city for judgment, the glory of the Lord prepares to go out of the city as judgment.
 - Cherubim and Ichabod (10:8-22).
 - For the rest of chapter 10, Ezekiel is captivated by the cherubim and wheels of God's throne chariot. With a number of mi-

nor differences, and one major one, this description repeats that of the first vision (1:15-28).

- The intense focus on the cherubim is understandable. The cherubim's basic function was to protect sacred areas. Since the holiness of God's house has been compromised, these cherubim stand ready to escort God's presence away.
- Scripture declares that this departure would occur if the people strayed from God's ways (Deuteronomy 31:17; Hosea 9:12). In 1 Samuel 4:21 a similar example of the departure of God's glory at a time of judgment was memorialized by the name of Eli's grandson "Ichabod," which means "inglorious." Once again, in Ezekiel's day God was writing "Ichabod" over Jerusalem and Judah.
- Judgment on Jerusalem's leaders (11:1-13).
 - God informs Ezekiel that these "princes" are irresponsible and wicked leaders who provide advice in the city to Zedekiah. They counseled Zedekiah to run from Babylonian domination into the waiting Egyptians' arms.
 - The leaders' claim that Jerusalem is a "caldron" hints at the idea of the city's inviolability, especially as believed by the nobility.
 - He reminds these leaders that their actions were not hidden from God; He knew exactly what they were thinking, saying and doing.
 - These corrupt leaders and their followers would be brought outside the "caldron" of Jerusalem and struck down by the dreaded sword of foreigners. Babylonia would execute this judgment, slaying the Judeans throughout the land (cf. 2 Kings 25:18-21).
- The future of the remnant (11:14-21).
 - While the exiles had been interested in every word they could receive from "back home," those in Judah had generally assumed the wickedness of those deported and bade them good riddance.
 - The full significance of these themes is not present in this passage. Instead, their introduction here merely forecasts a fuller development in the announcement of blessing in chapters 34-48.
 - The new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 provided for a change of heart and a new spirit. This new spirit would be the outpouring of the Spirit promised by the prophets (Joel 2:28-29), further developed in Ezekiel 36:26-27, and initially instituted in Acts 2:16-21. The new heart and spirit would re-

place Israel's old heart of stone (Zechariah 7:12), which had become so hardened against the Lord and His ways.

- The departure of the Lord's glory from Jerusalem (11:22-25).
 - After God had encouraged Ezekiel about the future restoration of the Judean remnant, His glory departed east from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. His presence among Israel is hereafter pictured as removed (until His return in 43:1-4). Judgment was now certain!
 - Ezekiel was brought back to Babylonia in the vision, and the vision stopped. He then recounted the entire vision to the exiles who had been observing his symbolic siege and had seen him caught up in the vision. This response was the complete opposite of the first one.
- The Lord's reply to the exiles' invalid rationalizations of hope (12:1-19:14).
 - The dramatic tragedy of exile (12:1-20).
 - Introduction (12:1-2).
 - The introductory phrase indicates the beginning of a new series of messages.
 - God reminded Ezekiel that he lived among "a rebellious people." Ezekiel had been warned of this in his commission (2:3-8), but now he would experience that reality.
 - The exiles had not grasped the serious consequences of Ezekiel's warnings. They still hoped for an early return to Palestine, for they viewed the continued preservation of Jerusalem and Judah as signs of security.
 - A picture of deportation (12:3-16).
 - Ezekiel's symbolic acts undoubtedly drew curious spectators. His very public packing of his belongings depict a move to another place.
 - In the evening he dug a hole through the mud-brick wall of his house. Leaving through the hole, Ezekiel carried his bag like an exile. Next he covered his face and went to another place while all the people watched.
 - Ezekiel carefully refers to Zedekiah, consistently calling him "prince" instead of "king." Ezekiel's sympathies lie with King Jehoiachin, from whose deportation Ezekiel marks time.
 - A drama of fear (12:17-20).
 - Ezekiel's actions displayed the fear and horror that would come on the citizens of Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah when their towns were destroyed and lay in ruins.

- God would teach them through the horrors of judgment. His judgment was still a manifestation of His love; for if He had not cared for them, He would never have disciplined them.
- The faithfulness of God: the present judgment (12:21-28).
 - God declared that the exiles' proverb would be heard no more, for judgment was imminent. On the contrary, the Lord would create a new proverb.
 - Not all Israelites were cynical. Instead, their problem was apathy. Ezekiel's exile audience admit the truth of his words but they deny their applicability.
- The condemnation of contemporary false prophets (13:1-23).
 - Judgment on the prophets (13:1-16).
 - With sarcastic irony, God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy against the prophets of Israel. The sarcasm arises from God calling them "prophets" although He will later deny that they act in any way like a true prophet.
 - Unlike these false prophets, true prophets interceded for their comrades' well-being and spiritual condition (cf. Genesis 20:7; 1 Samuel 12:23; Psalm 99:6-9; Jeremiah 15:1; 42:1-4).
 - God questions the prophets in vs. 7. If they admit God's charges, they reveal themselves as charlatans. If they reject His accusations, they deny God's word that "I have not spoken."
 - Judgment on the prophetesses (13:17-23).
 - These women were involved in divination and sorcery. Their practice of witchcraft was common in the ancient Near East -- especially Babylonia and Egypt.
 - Witchcraft was forbidden in the Mosaic covenant (Leviticus 19:26). The practice of the false prophetesses was to tie bands of cloth to their wrists and place veils over their heads as they cast spells over people's lives in order to bind them and hunt them down. These women caused the righteous to die and kept the wicked alive.
 - The sorceresses' fundamental mistake was believing that God was no different than other gods under their control. However, God is greater than any hexed bracelet or amulet worn by these women or anyone else.
- The effect of the false prophets on the leaders (14:1-11).
 - Some of the Judean elders in the exile came before Ezekiel. These "responsible" leaders came to seek clarification from him about his denunciation of the prophets and to inquire from him what God's ways for them should be.

- The only way for Israel to avoid utter annihilation is for them -- any of them -- to repent. The responsibility for their future is largely in their hands.
- The actions of these people and God's response will become entrenched in popular lore, and mere mention of them will speak volumes, much like "Judas Iscariot" or "Pearl Harbor" do today.
- No deliverance apart from personal righteousness (14:12-23).
 - Ezekiel says that even Daniel, their contemporary, who was prophesying before Nebuchadnezzar in the city of Babylon, if he teamed up with the likes of Noah and Job, could not save the nation.
 - Ezekiel illustrates his point through four common vehicles of judgment: the sword, famine, noisome beasts and pestilence. If any of these judgments were to come on the land, not even the personal righteousness of a Noah, a Daniel, or a Job would be able to deliver another person from judgment -- even a member of his own family.
 - When these unrighteous people would go into exile in Babylonia, the exiles already there would observe their deeds and see how wicked the Judeans had become. As the exiles saw the Judge of all the earth doing right (Genesis 18:25), they would be comforted in their sorrow over what had happened to Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem, an unprofitable vine (15:1-8).
 - This parable implies that the exiles had asked about God's consistency. They understood that they were his chosen people, his choice vine, and did not believe that God's judgments would destroy Judah as Ezekiel had proclaimed.
 - The parable shows the worthlessness of a vine except for bearing fruit. Its wood was too soft, weak and crooked for building. It was not even fit for making a peg on which to hang a utensil or clothing. If a vine was naturally of so little value, it certainly could not be expected to be useful when burned.
 - In the parable the inhabitants of Jerusalem were likened to the vine. Just as the vine was profitable only for fruit-bearing, so Judah and Jerusalem were to be fruitful. The nation never was like other nations (trees) in military strength and riches except when they were trusting in the Lord (cf. David's reign).
 - The reason for this fiery judgment was once more made clear: Judah had been unfaithful to the Lord and his covenant. They had failed to be a blessing to the world. They had disobeyed God's ordinances and had sinned. They were worthless and useless because of their idolatry.

- Graciously, the exiles could still be useful and fruitful for God, but only if they remained faithful to Him. To cause them to return to Himself, the Lord brought this ruin on those living in Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem's history as a prostitute (16:1-63).
 - The birth of Jerusalem (16:1-5).
 - Ezekiel is going to confront Jerusalem as a prosecutor would in a courtroom. He would show just how corrupt Israel's history was by tracing the history of Jerusalem, which became the capital of Israel and the symbol of the nation.
 - The reference to Jerusalem's father as an Amorite and her mother as a Hittite shows how the city came into being. Jerusalem was a Jebusite city when the children of Israel entered the land under Joshua (Joshua 15:8, 63) and a member of the Amorite league that joined together against the Hebrews at Gibeon (Joshua 5:1).
 - Jerusalem had been treated in a manner similar to a child left to exposure on birth. In fact, they allowed this city to lie exposed as an unwanted child throughout the period of the judges, a widespread custom in the ancient Near East that was used to eliminate unwanted children.
 - The Lord's courtship and marriage to Jerusalem (16:6-14).
 - The Lord visited Jerusalem and claimed her in marriage by spreading his garment over her (cf. Ruth 3:9). He entered into a marriage covenant with Jerusalem (cf. Psalm 132:13-17).
 - Jerusalem was made exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty under the reigns of David and Solomon. Her fame and beauty became renowned throughout the ancient Near East as the capital of the leading nation of that day (1 Kings 10; Lamentations 2:15).
 - From start to finish, Jerusalem owed every good thing it had become, even its very life, to the wonderful affection of God.
- Jerusalem's prostitution with other lands and gods (16:15-34).
 - No sooner had the Lord crowned Jerusalem with beauty and fame as His bride than she began to trust in her beauty rather than in God who gave it to her.
 - From rebellion under Solomon, Jerusalem, as the capital of Israel, gradually led the nation down the path of corruption. While the gifts of God were not inherently evil, Jerusalem became married to the gifts rather than to the Lord.
 - It would have been enough if Jerusalem had simply entered into the abominations of the pagan religions, but she became an advocate of these heathen practices.

- The Lord cried out to Jerusalem, condemning their weakness in soliciting suitors in his place. Jerusalem has a rebellious and disobedient heart of infidelity. She is without excuse!
- Jerusalem: judged a prostitute (16:35-43).
 - Those nations Jerusalem had loved in fornication and those she had hated God would use to strip her bare of all her riches and blessings so that all might see the barrenness and nakedness of Jerusalem and Judah without God's blessing.
 - By this punishment, God intends to put a stop to Jerusalem's prostitution. If she is dead, she can no longer pay her lovers tribute money. Only the death of the city can redeem the situation.
 - After her judgment, she lay in burned ruins. The remnant of her population was taken captive into Babylonia. There the Israelites turned from idolatry to monotheism, learning the lesson God's judgment was designed to teach.
- Becoming an example and a byword (16:44-58).
 - To have a bad reputation in death was considered a fate worse than being forgotten entirely (cf. 2 Samuel 18:18; Psalm 83:4; Ezekiel 21:32).
 - Jerusalem's sins made Sodom and Samaria seem righteous. If their names were bywords for wickedness (as "sodomy" still is), Jerusalem's name should be uttered with greater contempt. Sodom and Samaria were utterly destroyed for being less wicked than Jerusalem.
 - Despite the punishment of Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem for their sins, this is not the end of the story. As the structure of the covenant shows, God never intended curse to be the last word.
 - God would not only restore Jerusalem but would also restore Sodom and Samaria. That restoration would humble Jerusalem and humiliate her for all her wickedness.
- Restoration: the promise of love (16:59-63).
 - Jerusalem sneered at God's warnings. Eventually, He had to remain true to His covenant and withdraw all blessings and introduce curses.
 - The "everlasting covenant" reminds one of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and would be ushered in by Christ. At that time, all nations (even Sodom and Samaria) would share in the blessings of that covenant.
 - This restoration would cause Jerusalem to know that the Lord was her ever-present, always faithful God, who had chosen her of His own accord in the past and would save her in the future.