

EZEKIEL 14:1-15:8 – “IDOLATRY WILL BE PUNISHED – THE OUTCAST VINE”

OBSERVATION

Monday 7:30pm, H 106 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by doughnut/vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell # 714 425 9221; email – ptwente@gmail.com For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column.

GOD SPEAKS OF WHY HE WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE: the coming of the elders reveals why the LORD will judge His people!(vs. 1-11)

(vs. 1-5 –Their sin is exposed!)

Eze 14:1 Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.

Eze 14:2 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Eze 14:3 "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be

inquired (seek, ask, make inquisition) of at all by them?

Eze 14:4 "Therefore speak to them, and say to them,

"Thus says the Lord GOD: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, Eze 14:5 that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged (separated!) from Me by their idols." "

(vs. 6-11 – God exhorts them to repent!)

Eze 14:6 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

Eze 14:7 For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the LORD will answer him by Myself.

Eze 14:8 I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

INTERPRETATION

1 These probably came to tempt him, or get him to say something that would embroil him with the government. They were bad men, as we shall see in the third verse.

2 While the elders were sitting before him, and the LORD whispered secretly and powerfully into his ears.

3 They are not only idolaters in heart, but also worship their filthy idols openly which lead them in blindness, and cause them to stumble, so that he will not hear them when they call to him. When you are wrong in your heart, everything that comes out is wrong!

Hypocrisy was reigning in them. (*Is. 29:13; Mt. 15:7-9*)

4 To inquire of things which the Lord has appointed to come to pass. As his abomination has deserved: that is, he will be led with lies according as he delighted in it.

5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. That is, convince them by their own conscience.

6 Though God so threatened the people for their idolatry (*Eze 14:5*), yet He would rather they should avert the calamity by “repentance.” Their sin was twofold: (1) “In their heart” or inner man; (2) “Put before their face,” that is, exhibited outwardly. So their repentance is generally expressed by “repent,” and is then divided into: (1) “Turn yourselves (inwardly) from your idols”; (2) “Turn away your faces (outwardly) from all your abominations.” It is not likely that an exhortation to convert others should come between the two affecting themselves. (*1 Thess. 1:9-10*) – Refers to a change in mind and practice!

7 **The stranger** - They who sojourn among Israel, though they were not of Israel, were bound to abstain from idol-worship. **By myself** - “according to” Myself. He who comes to inquire with a heart full of idolatry shall have his answer, (1) “according to the multitude of his idols” - in delusion, (2) “according to the holiness of God” - in punishment. The inquiry was hypocritical and unreal - but God will answer not by the mouth, but by the hand, not by word but by deed, not by speech but by a scourge.

8 **And I will set my face against that man** — (See on Lev. 17:10). **and will make him a sign** — literally, “I will destroy him so as to become a sign”; it will be no ordinary destruction, but such as will make him be an object pointed at with wonder by all, as Korah, This idolatry brings a consequence from the LORD Himself if there is no repentance. His answer will be clear; His antagonism clear and evident; His objective/aim will be a message to others; His action will have ETERNAL results!

APPLICATION

NOTICE HOW CONTEMPORARY THIS BOOK IS!!! We must listen to Him when He speaks to us!

Are we, are you, setting up idols in your heart? How about our kids? Our jobs/career? Our things? Am I like those religious leaders of Ezekiel’s day?

Is there anything going on in my heart that is displeasing to God? Estranging or separating me from God? – Sex, pleasure, power, possessions? That which takes over your mind, your heart, your passions, your life, and is a substitute for God. It separates you from the true and the living God.

True repentance is so important and so necessary! It is our only hope! We must turn from our idols – from all things that separate us from the LORD!

That is the issue for us. The need to repent is the only answer to hypocrisy and secret sin!

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Eze 14:9 "And if the prophet is induced (persuaded, enticed, deceived) to speak anything, I the LORD have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel."

Eze 14:10 And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired.

Eze 14:11 that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God," says the Lord GOD.' "

THE CALAMITIES OF HIS JUDGMENTS CANNOT BE STOPPED (vs. 12-21)

Eze 14:12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying:

Eze 14:13 "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it."

Eze 14:14 Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD.

Eze 14:15 "If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts,

Eze 14:16 even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate."

Eze 14:17 "Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, 'Sword, go through the land,' and I cut off man and beast from it, Eze 14:18 even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered."

INTERPRETATION

9 And if the prophet be deceived when he has spoken a thing, **I the LORD have deceived that prophet**, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from My people Israel. The prophet declares that God for man's ingratitude raises up false prophets to seduce them that delight in lies rather than in the truth of God, and thus he punishes sin with sin, and **destroys those prophets** as well as the people.

10 **The punishment of the prophet** - They are both equally guilty; both have left the Lord, and both shall be equally punished.

11 That the house of^p Israel may no more go astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, says the Lord GOD. Thus God's judgments against the wicked are admonitions to the godly to cleave to the Lord and not to defile themselves with the same abominations. Note God's concern!

12 At the same time as before, continuing the prophecy, and a denunciation of judgments; for it does not seem to begin a new prophecy.

13 Son of man, when the land sins against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of its bread, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it. (*Lev. 26:14-22; Jer. 14:11-12; Ez. 5:12, 16-17; 6:11-12; 7:15; 12:16*) – **First judgment mentioned is famine**
14 Though Noah and Job were now alive, which in their time were most godly men (for at this time Daniel was in captivity with Ezekiel) and so these three together would pray for this wicked people, yet I would not hear them. Meaning, that a very few (which he calls the remnant,) would escape these plagues, whom God has sanctified and made righteous, so that this righteousness is a sign that they are the Church of God, whom he would preserve for his own sake. (*Gen. 18:16-33; Jer. 7:4, 6, 9, 16; 11:14*)

15 Evil and hurtful ones. God makes use of lesser creatures to do damage to a land, and the fruits of it, as locusts, caterpillars, &c. but the former seem to be intended here, which sometimes God threatens and sends to a people disobedient and rebellious; "make it childless" . **so that it be desolate**; having neither men nor cattle, corn or tillage, or any other fruit. For fear of them: not only the inhabitants of the land should be destroyed by them, but even travellers, that the land must be a most desolate place, where only wild beasts were to be seen, ranging about at pleasure. **Second judgment mentioned is wild beasts.**

16 Noah, Daniel, and Job; as they were not, two of them not being in the land of the living, and the other in Babylon; it would have been all in vain; the Lord was determined upon the destruction of them, and by means of these, as one of his sore judgments: or by my life; for it is an oath with which God swears by himself. **they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters**; meaning not adult persons, but little ones, infant sons and daughters. **They only shall be delivered**: as Noah with his family was in the ark, when amidst wild beasts; and Daniel in the lions den; and Job, with whom the beasts of the field were at peace, *Job 5:23*;
17 God says that **He intends to bring a sword upon the land**. He is going to allow Nebuchadnezzar into the land, and he will destroy it. **Third judgment mentioned is sword.**

18 Before mentioned: *as I live*, says the Lord God, **they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters**: believe me no more, or be it so and so, if they do; it is in the form of an oath, and in the same manner it is expressed in *Eze 14:16*; but they

APPLICATION

True repentance results in our not straying from the LORD or profaning Him with our sin, resulting “that they may be My people and I may be their God”!! That’s God’s desire! “Get rid of the idols, I want to be the God in your life! I want to be the Lord of your life, and I want you to be My people!” Note Jesus’ words in Mt. 4:17 “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38, (Peter saying,) “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 3:19 Note the seriousness of “persistent unfaithfulness”. Are there any areas in your life that of this or near to this?

When we get to the point of God’s judgment for sin and idolatry, it will not be stopped even though there are some righteous men – Noah, Daniel and Job are used as examples! Your righteousness can only avail for you, no one else!!

Note the importance of understanding that each person is responsible to God for his or her own sin!! He will not punish us for sins of others, but neither will the righteousness of others atone for our own sin!! The only time this principle was abandoned was in the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ—who died to pay for our sin!

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OBSERVATION

Eze 14:19 "Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast,

Eze 14:20 even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."

GOD'S JUDGMENTS VINDICATED (vs. 21-23)

Eze 14:21 For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it?

Eze 14:22 Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, both sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it.

Eze 14:23 And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it," says the Lord GOD.

INTERPRETATION

19 Or the plague, which is the destruction that wastes at noon day; this is from the Lord, and a sore judgment it is. By corrupting the blood, which is done when a man is seized with the pestilence. It may be rendered, "because of blood"; and so express the cause and reason of the judgment, the shedding of innocent blood: **to cut off from it man and beast**; man by the pestilence, and beast by some contagious distemper or another. **Fourth judgment mentioned is pestilence.**

20 Noah would not have been able to save his own family in that city—"they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Daniel saved a couple of empires, but if he had been in that city he could not have helped them at all. That is the reason that God got Daniel out of Jerusalem. God's people wouldn't hear him, but an old pagan king in Babylon listened to Daniel and made him prime minister.

21 **My four severe judgments** - Sword, war. Famine, occasioned by drought. Pestilence, epidemic diseases which sweep off a great part of the inhabitants of a land. The Noisome Beast, the multiplication of wild beasts in consequence of the general destruction of the inhabitants.

22 Though there shall be great desolations in the land of Judea, **yet a remnant shall be left** that shall come here also as captives; and their account of the abominations of the people shall prove to you with what propriety I have acted in abandoning them to such general destruction. This speech is addressed to those who were already in captivity; i.e., those who had been led to Babylon with their king Jeconiah.

23 There **is no part of the conduct of God towards man that is not dictated by the purest principles of justice, equity, and truth. He does nothing but what is right; and whatever is right to be done, that ought to be done. In God's justice there is no severity; in God's mercy there is no caprice. He alone doth all things well; for he is the Fountain of justice and mercy.**

APPLICATION

We see in verse 21 that the results of God's four judgments cannot be stopped. – by sword; by famine; by beast; and by pestilence!

We need to be praising and thanking Him continually for His purity, His justice, His equity, His truth and His mercy!!!

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OBSERVATION

THE REALIZATION THAT GOD’S JUDGMENTS CANNOT BE STOPPED. (vs. 1-8) This is the first of three messages to the elders:

1 - **The Worthless Vine** (Ez. 15:1-8); 2 - **the Unfaithful Wife** (Ez. 16:1-63); 3 – **Two Eagles and Three Shoots** (Ez. 17:1-24)

Eze 15:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

Eze 15:2 "Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any other wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest?

Eze 15:3 Is wood taken from it to make any object? Or can men make a peg from it to hang any vessel on?

Eze 15:4 Instead, it is thrown into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned. Is it useful for any work?

Eze 15:5 Indeed, when it was whole, no object could be made from it. How much less will it be useful for any work when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned?

Eze 15:6 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

Eze 15:7 and I will set My face against them. They will go out from one fire, but another fire shall devour them. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them.

Eze 15:8 Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,' says the Lord GOD."

INTERPRETATION

1 The destruction of Jerusalem had been represented under various types and similes before, as of a siege, and a sharp razor; and here of a fruitless and useless vine, only fit for the fire; which was delivered out by a spirit of prophecy. The usefulness of the wood of the vine can be seen here. The image of the vine is often applied to Israel - (*Ps. 80:8-19; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Matt. 21:28-46*). Originally a lowly vine when planted in the Promised Land but increased and prospered – under David and early in Solomon’s reign, but then sin and idolatry set in! Wild grapes were beginning to be borne instead of the fruit for God’s glory.

2 Which brings forth no fruit, no more than the other trees of the forest do: meaning that if Jerusalem, which bore the name of his Church, did not bring forth fruit it would be utterly destroyed.

3 The carpenter and joiner, the house or ship builder, are employed in; as to build houses of, make beams, rafters, floors, build ships with, make masts of, or any vessel or utensil for the use of man? it never is; it is not fit for any such purpose. It is not fit to make a peg of to hang a hat on; and much less for anything that requires more strength.

4 Judea is like a vine branch thrown into the fire, which seizes on both the ends, and scorches the middle: so both the extremities of the land is wasted; and the middle, Jerusalem, is now threatened with a siege, and by and by will be totally destroyed.

5 Before it was cut into pieces, and east into the fire, it was not fit to make so much as a pin of to hang anything on; so Israel, when all together, before the ten tribes were carried captive, or the Jews before the captivity of Jeconiah, were useless and unfruitful, and to every good work reprobate. As its wood is good for nothing before it is burned, its ashes are useless after. (*John 15:6*)

6 Now follows the application of the simile: **as the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel;** to be burnt, as other trees of the forest are, and along with them: **so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem;** to be destroyed along with other nations by the Chaldeans; they being no better, but as bad, if not worse, like wild vines among forest trees; and therefore must fare no better: this was the decree and determination of the Lord. **Note we see here a picture of the inhabitants of Jerusalem**

7 And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and you shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. Though they escape one danger, yet another will take them. **Note the true identity of the LORD is shown here.**

8 They have persisted in unfaithfulness. They are the worst of sinners, and shall have the heaviest of punishments. Can men suppose that it is possible to hide even their dark hearts from God? **God’s reason for judgment is proclaimed here!**

APPLICATION

We see here the vine tree, apart from bearing fruit, is only fit for burning!

We believers, who must abide in our Lord Jesus Christ to be fruitful! Without Him or apart from Him, “we can do nothing”. We lose our spiritual power, wither and fail to bear fruit for His glory!

Here we see that a vine that does not bear fruit is useless and worthless!

So what about you and me? Are we bearing much lasting fruit because of our abiding in Christ or are the “wild grapes” being produced?

Again notice the reason for God setting His face against the inhabitants of Jerusalem and having fire devour them – “persisted in unfaithfulness”

Next time in Chapter 16, we will be shown in great and rather shocking detail the unfaithfulness that God is talking about in the message of “the unfaithful wife”. We will also see His grace and His mercy in that where “where sin abounds, grace does much more abound”!!