

August 19

Ezekiel 19-22

I want to begin today by giving a HUGE happy birthday to my blonde-bombshell treasure, my daughter Haiven who turns 9 today. Congratulations sweetheart, I love you!

Chapter 19 is a special kind of literature -- it is a dirge -- the kind of song you sing at a funeral. The style of its poetry in Hebrew is lost in translation for each verse is a couplet comprised of three beats followed by two beats. When you take several English words to translate one Hebrew word, it sort of spoils the beat and hides the poetry. Nevertheless it is there. The lioness mother is probably Judah.

This is the lament that God gave to Ezekiel in Tel Abib near Babylon. Judah was finished. Zedekiah would be her last king until the King of Kings would come in the far distant future. The vine that is Israel has been stripped of its fruit and set ablaze.

It is entirely possible that by now one or two of you are saying: 'Yes, yes, we realize that God was angry with Israel because of the sin of idolatry -- that is very evident by now. And we know that the phrase, 'Then you will know that I am the Lord' is important already. And we know that God is angry and we already know Jerusalem will be judged. We already heard that Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites is going down, too. How many more times is God going to make Ezekiel say all this?

It was important for Ezekiel to be saying all these things for a number of reasons. And it is important for us to be reading them, despite all the repetition. In Tel Aviv, by the waters of Babylon, there was a new generation growing up in exile. They had to hear and learn of what God was doing and why. It was important also because many of Ezekiel's counterparts, even though they had heard God's Word many times, still did not believe, and still would not realize that God's blessing will not forever stay with a rebellious and idolatrous people -- since they still hadn't listened, the message hadn't changed.

That is the reason for all of the repetition here. It is also the reason for God's refusal to listen any longer to the prayers of the elders of Israel. 'Tell them,' God says, 'that I will no longer allow them to inquire of me. I'm through answering their prayers because they are rebellious and unrepentant.' The greatest single cause of unanswered prayer in our day is the unconfessed sin of the petitioner, and the rebellious refusal of the pray-er to act upon the information and commands that God has already given to him or her.

It is like Haiven asking me "Dad, what do you want me to do?"

I answer "Clean your room."

A couple of hours they come back. "Dad, what can I do?"

I say "Did you clean your room?"..... "No"..... "Well, clean your room, and then come ask about the next thing."

Big question for you today. Do you have anything you need to turn from? Is there anything God has told you to do that you are refusing to do? Well, do what he says first, and then come back in prayer. He wants to use people who obey him. So, Obey!

One of the things you might be holding back on is the concept of the Sabbath. Ezekiel 20 gives us some fresh insight into the purpose of the Sabbath. In the Ten Commandments we are told to "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." Even though, by the authority of the apostles, the New Testament church changed its Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday to commemorate the resurrection, it is quite clear that the principle of keeping and honoring a Sabbath is still important.

If you are watching this in 2012, today is Sunday. What are you doing today?

The day of the week is not the key thing. You could practice Sabbath on Saturday or Monday, or Friday. But do you spend one day a week in rest and worship? God designed us for that. We thrive the most when we practice the Sabbath. He gives us more life, more of him, more longevity, and more joy when we practice the Sabbath. But so many ignore it..

He made it for us and for him. What is significant here is that Ezekiel says that one of God's purposes in commanding us to keep a Sabbath is so that we would remember that the Lord has made us holy. It is not just a day for worship, rest and above all else re-creation (yes, we pronounce that re-creation!). It is a day to be reminded that God has set us apart for His exclusive use! Remember that next Sunday; it may help you to view the day in a very different way.

Alright, that is enough for today. May God's blessings rest with you today and every day.