

September 3

Ezekiel 32:1 - 33:20

Today we examine Ezekiel 32 and a portion of 33. Today's reading includes the 6th and 7th prophecies or oracles against Egypt. They are particularly graphic. Comparing them to a "lion among the nations; you are like a monster in the seas" he is bringing to light their pride and abuse of power. They "thrash[ed] about in...streams, churning the water with your feet and muddying the streams." So, God would deal with them. In this text, God makes it a point to highlight that it is HE who would bring about their demise. notice how many times God says that HE would do it:

- I will cast my net...
- I will throw you...
- I will let all the birds...
- I will spread your flesh...
- I will drench the land...
- I snuff you out...
- I will cover...
- I will darken...
- I will bring...
- I will trouble the hearts...

And God's devastating work against Egypt will be recognized by the nations who look to Egypt for leadership and protection and they would shudder. No matter how powerful a nation, they are merely tools in the hand of God to accomplish his purposes. This includes Babylon, who in this instance "will come against you [Egypt]."

Interestingly enough, God tells Ezekiel to "wail for the hordes of Egypt" since they will be thrown into a pit which includes other nations. They too would be in the pit.

- Assyria is there...
- Elam is there...
- Meshach and Tubal are there...
- Edom is there...
- All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there...

Why would God tell Ezekiel to "wail" for these wicked nations? Well, it is because God says "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live." This is why he is consistently pursuing his people Israel that they would turn from *their* wickedness and live. God would not have them suffer the same fate as these other nations.

This is why God has appointed Ezekiel as a "watchman" for Israel. "I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel..." God says. The watchman was to stand guard at the wall, looking to the distance for any coming danger. As danger approached he would blow his trumpet and warn the people of the coming danger.

This was an incredible responsibility. The watchman could not “sleep on the job” or people would die. He could not neglect his responsibilities without devastating consequences. God was giving Ezekiel an incredible job description. He was supposed to warn the people of the coming danger because of their continued disobedience and neglect of who God, what he has done and what he requires of them.

God is clear that failure to do the job of a watchman would result in death. And the death of the people would be on the watchman’s head, for he failed to do his job. However, if the watchman was faithful in his duties and blew the trumpet, and warned the people, yet they fell to the sword because *they* failed to take heed of the warnings - then, their blood would be on their own heads.

Wow. What a tremendous responsibility. But what a generous God who affords persistent, consistent warnings to protect his people from themselves. Unfortunately, we know the story and the people failed to repent and destruction came. Jerusalem fell.

Here is where the prophet takes a turn and is no longer the prophet of doom, but rather is the prophet of hope and restoration for his people. God’s love and mercy and grace shine in 33:10-16. God hates the punishment that is due to those who are disobedient and wicked. He would prefer to be merciful and says if they “turn away” from sin and toward righteousness, they may live. “None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him.” God is gracious.

So, let me end with a few questions for you today:

- 1) Do you lament the fall of the wicked? When the wicked nations, rulers or “celebrities” of our world are reaping the fruit of their wickedness, do you mourn for them? Ask God to help you to “take no pleasure in the death of the wicked” and to pray that they would turn.
- 2) God has commanded you and I to be “watchmen” of sorts. As Christians, we are commanded to proclaim the great news of Jesus to those who are far from God. How are you doing with this great privilege and responsibility to share the gospel of Jesus? Today, you can be a watchman by “tell[ing] your friends of all that God has done for you and the mercy he has had on you.” (Mark 5)
- 3) Are you able to be thankful for the hope of the gospel? Ezekiel was both a prophet of doom and a prophet of hope to his people. I am thankful that God has brought hope through his Son, Jesus, rather than doom.

Today you can be thankful to God for the hope he has given you in Jesus, yet don’t forget to mourn for those around us who are doomed apart from him.

God Bless.