



Sermon Series Weekly Devotionals

Week of February 11, 2018

EZEKIEL 21

1. **READ** ch. 21, four oracles about the Sword of the Lord.

2. **REVIEW.** This chapter is an excellent place to see the reflection of our Lord Jesus in this strange prophet. In seven major ways Ezekiel points us to Jesus. Both Ez and Jesus:

- a) began public ministry at age 30 ... beside a river (Kebbar; Jordan) ... with the heavens opened, a voice, and the Spirit.
- b) were called the "son of man": Ezekiel—93 times; Jesus—81 times.
- c) mystified people with riddles and parables (E 20:49).
- d) bore the sin of the people in his body (E 4:4).
- e) had a zeal for the temple (E 8-11, 40-48).
- f) wanted everyone to know God (Ezekiel: "that they will know that I am the Lord" 70x; Jesus, "that they may know You" John 8:28 10:27 14:30-31 17:3).
- g) looked forward to resurrection and new life (E 37).

How does ch. 21 point us to Jesus? Well, Ezekiel is called "son of man" 7 times. But it is in v. 2 that we see Jesus most clearly, when God says: "Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem." Those words remind us of the turning-point moment in the Gospel of Luke (9:51: "Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem." The Galilee ministry is done, and now Jesus goes to Jerusalem to meet his fate. "Set his face"? What does that mean? 2 things: resolute determination, and judgment on sin. To Ezekiel, God adds "set your face toward Jerusalem, and preach against her sanctuary." Jesus set his face to go die for our sins. And in Jerusalem, he preached against the their \$\$ defilement of the sanctuary.

3. **MEDITATE.** It's so easy to dismiss Ezekiel as a quack, a neurotic, an obsessive. Whatever you think of him, think today of his Divine Brother, the 30 year-old Son of Man who repeated Ezekiel's message and then became your Savior.

4. **PRAY.** Thank heaven for the seven ways (above) in which Jesus was the "true Ezekiel."

EZEKIEL 22

1. READ ch. 22, four oracles about the Sword of the Lord.

2. REVIEW. The Lord takes his people to court! The arraignment (1-2) and summons (3) lead to the charges (4-5), the evidence (6-12), and pronouncement of sentence (13-16). Then comes the judgment (17-22) and its rationale (23-31). Jerusalem is guilty of the crimes of violence and idolatry. The “holy city” has become the “bloody city”; the “city of God” has become a “city of idols.”

In one of the most memorable and motivating sentences in the Bible, God says: “I searched for a man among them who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before on behalf of the land so that I might not destroy it, but I found no one” (30). It’s crisis time! There’s a hole in the (spiritual) city wall, and God is looking for someone—anyone!—to be a spiritual leader and stand in the gap, and repair the wall. There’s no one.

3. MEDITATE. Our Enemy attacks! He doesn’t target our strengths but our weaknesses, gaps in our spiritual wall. He and his demons attack your open emotional wounds, the chinks in your children’s armor, the besetting sins of your friends and and loved ones. What these people need is someone—anyone—who will stand in the gap and fight the Enemy. With prayer. With words of encouragement. Hebrews 3:13 10:24 James 5:19-20 For the sake of your family and friends, will *you* stand in the gap? As Babbie Mason sang:

I heard that you were hurting, that you were suffering pain,
But I didn't dare just turn my head, and look the other way.
For when your heart is aching, my heart is aching too
Let me help you bear your burdens, that's the least I can do
I'll be standing in the gap for you
Just remember someone somewhere, is praying for you
Calling out your name, praying for your strength
I'll be standing in the gap for you.

4. PRAY. Stand in the gap with prayer, for friends and family whose walls need repair.

EZEKIEL 23

1. **READ** ch. 23, with its “sister” chapter 16 the most shocking chapters in the Bible.

2. **REVIEW.** Like ch. 16, ch. 23 is a long chapter, full of talk of lewdness and prostitution. It portrays the passionate anger of the Lord as he watches his wife Israel cheat on him, lusting insatiably after other lovers. Israel’s two countries—Samaria (northern Israel) and Jerusalem (so. Israel)—are played by two sisters who became harlots when young (3,19) and continued even when old (43). Unfaithful to God, they panted after other lovers—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon. In angry passion, God handed Samaria over to her lover Assyria (5-10). You’d have thought her sister Jerusalem, seeing this (11-13), would’ve learned a lesson and gone back to husband Yahweh. Instead, she became more promiscuous. Thus, God says, I will give Jerusalem over to her lover Babylon (11-35). So it happened. As Assyria had crushed Samaria in 721 B.C., Babylon leveled Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

3. **MEDITATE.** We like to think of God’s “gentle side.” That is not the side we see here. In fact, modern interpreters are offended by the raw picture of God in chapters 16 and 23. Disregarding the story itself and its meaning, they loudly criticize the presentation of male v. female here, and Yahweh’s humiliation of his wife and use of violence to “heal” their relationship. What shall we do with the offensive God of this raw, abrasive chapter?

Unfortunately, some try to “defend” God by apologizing for these chapters. They are willing to discard Ezekiel’s politically incorrect God. Sensitive and sophisticated, they shudder to think of a Lion of Judah who roars, threatens, and kills. So they replace him with a friendly cat we can pet, leash, and trot out for show on special occasions.

What should you do? Stop apologizing for God. God is not a tame lion. He’s good, but he isn’t safe. And it’s very dangerous to begin thinking that God isn’t dangerous. Replace the wild Lion with a domesticated tabby cat, and our worship will weaken, our standards of purity will drop, our mission will shrivel up, our message will hollow out, and our transcendent God will disappear.

4. **PRAY.** Today, address your prayers to the wild, passionate God of ch. 23, in holy awe.

EZEKIEL 24

1. **READ** ch. 24, the parable of the boiling cauldron.

2. **REVIEW.** The residents of Jerusalem lived in a fantasy world. They told themselves that so long as the temple and city stood, God was on their side. When many of their relatives and friends (including Ezekiel) were dragged off to Babylon in 597 B.C., they told themselves that they must be God's favorites because he had spared them; the captives were the ones Yahweh was mad at. "We're God's *filet mignon*," they nodded piously, "those exiles are the throwaway shank."

Chef Yahweh corrects them by singing a cooking song, commanding "pile on the wood!" and "stoke the fire as hot as possible!" But he's not preparing a banquet; his mind is fixed only on destruction. In his rage he pours out the contents of the pot onto the fire. Lest any shred of hope remain, the fire is stoked so hot that every shred of meat or broth in the pot is burned and the pot purified of its defiling contents. The fog clears: living in the "Holy City" guarantees not security, but destruction. Even as Ezekiel speaks, the fire is being lit—Nebuchadnezzar has arrived and laid siege to the city (24:2). Her fate is sealed. They can spout clever proverbs and claim God's promises all they want, but they are fooling themselves. God has made up his mind: v. 14 is the most emphatic divine resolve in the book, with seven verbs—3 positive, 3 negative, and a final positive.

3. **MEDITATE.** This is sobering, huh? If we're just pretending to be fervent followers of Christ, but our heart loves our "stuff" (idols) more, we can't expect his smile. If we're mistreating our fellow humans—especially the weaker ones—we're playing pious games. Singing songs about the promises of God is no substitute for adoring obedience to him. God is telling us here that he *is* on our side when we're rejected and desperate, but not when we boast of special status with him though our hearts have wandered away.

4. **PRAY.** "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou biddest me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."