



## Sermon Series Weekly Devotionals

Week of January 14

### EZEKIEL 5

1. **READ** ch. 4-5. While reading, picture Ezekiel's dramatic performance.

2. **REVIEW.** Many of God's prophets were put on stage by God to deliver dramatic performances—"sign-acts"—to convey His message visually and powerfully. But Ezekiel wins the Oscar for most performances. None were by Ezekiel's own choice; he was God's puppet. In his first drama (4:1-5:4), God has him act out the siege, fall and deportation of Jerusalem. Why? Because the exiles there in Babylon were optimists. Since they'd heard Jerusalem still stood (it would not fall for another five years), they told each other, "God will never let Zion, it's the city he loves. Any day now, we'll be going home. Next year, Jerusalem!" By this drama, God has Ezekiel destroy that hope. For Ezekiel, his first acting gig was ghastly, the worst thing he'd ever had to do. For his audience, it was disturbing, and they refused to believe it.

Why? Why? Why is the Lord so angry? Why is he destroying his own people with sword and famine and plague? The final words of v. 13—the key to the whole book—give the answer: Yahweh's behavior is driven by his **PASSION**. The word is "jealousy." Don't confuse it with envy, a desire for what belongs to another. God is righteously jealous—he passionately desires the love of his bride, Israel, who belongs to him. Israel cannot be surprised. Since the beginning, Yahweh has told Israel that he is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3).

3. **MEDITATE.** We recoil at the kind of God we see in these verses—furiously angry, jealous, vengeful. We are tempted not to accept this God, to create for ourselves another God who is modern and mild, like the harmless George Burns or wise-cracking Morgan Freeman who've played God in the movies. Will you give the real God a chance?

4. **PRAY.** Speak to God the words of the worship song "How He Loves" several times, feeling the painful discipline of lines 1-2, and moving through line 3 to the realization of God's passionate love in lines 4-5.

*You are jealous for me—love like a hurricane, I am a tree  
Bending beneath the weight of your wind and mercy  
When all of a sudden I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory  
And I realize just how beautiful You are  
And how great Your affections are for me.*

## EZEKIEL 6

**1. READ** ch. 6. While reading, look for the line that is repeated 3 times, and for the verse that reveals God's deepest emotions.

**2. REVIEW.** When God cleans house (1-10), there will be death on the hilltops (1-7). That's because hilltops and "high places" are where pagans love to build their altars and erect their idols. Even on the Mt. of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, Israel's pagan kings sponsored shrines of pagan worship. Although Ezekiel's real audience consists of his fellow exiles—his primary goal their spiritual transformation—for dramatic effect (as in ch. 5) he pretends to address a third party.

Did you glimpse God's emotional grief at being rejected by his beloved? As her savior and spiritual husband, Yahweh is crushed by Israel's infidelity to him.

At the end of each section, we see the most repeated phrase in the book (72x). "I am crashing into the world to punish evil," God informs us, "with one great goal—that all the world, and especially my own people, 'will know that I am the LORD (Yahweh).'"

**3. MEDITATE.** Ever noticed that what folks *don't* know *can* hurt them? What's the one thing that God wants the world to know, but that most don't know? Which of your friends need to know that "He is the LORD"? When do you and I tend to forget that "he is God"?

**4. PRAY.** Pray for your family and friends, for yourself, and then for the lost world. Every time you end a thought, insert into your prayer: "I know that you are the Lord."

## EZEKIEL 7

**1. READ** Ezekiel 7. While reading, notice two things: (1) The key words “end,” “day,” and “doom”; (2) The purpose statement “that they will know that I am the LORD.”

**2. REVIEW.** God had charged Ezekiel to be the sentry (3:17) who should warn the people when He (God) was about to attack. That time is now! Having just spotted the enemy, Ezekiel blasts three trumpet alarms (2-4,5-9,10-27), staccato outbursts of warning: *An end! The end has come! Here is the day! Here it comes! A disaster! Look out!* The prophet’s excited cries should have sent chills running down their spine, and thrown them into a frenzy of action. But they yawn with indifference. Like the villagers in Aesop’s fable, they’ve stopped believing the wolf will come.

When the day of the Lord comes on the earth, it will have an economic impact—the world economy will collapse (12-13,19); a psychological impact—people will be paralyzed emotionally (14-18); a physiological impact—strength and bladder control will fail! (17); a religious impact—all false religions will fall (19-24); and a political impact—peace and order will collapse (25-27).

**3. MEDITATE.** If the end should come, are you ready? Has the delay in the Lord’s return made you complacent or indifferent?

**4. PRAY.** Imagine that the Lord, even now, is planning His soon return. Welcome Him back. Pray the Lord’s Prayer (“thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth..”).

## **EZEKIEL 8**

**1. READ** ch. 8. While reading, imagine you are 30 year-old Ezekiel.

**2. REVIEW.** We discover that Ezekiel did not lie on his side “24-7”, as 4:4-6 implied, for now he is receiving the Jewish leaders in his home. But while they are there, God seizes his consciousness and in a supernatural vision he sees the Divine Person again (1:26), is transported back to Jerusalem, and gets a guided tour of the Temple. The moment he arrives, two sights catch his attention. The first is an outrageous statue, perhaps of Astarte the goddess of fertility—a direct challenge to Yahweh, whose house this is, and who sits enthroned a few feet away in the Holy of Holies! The statue is a pathetic contrast to the second thing that catches his eye: “the glory of the God of Israel.”

His tour guide, none other than Yahweh himself, then shows him three more abominations, each greater than the one before. But worse even than these religious evils, says Yahweh, are the moral evils—the crimes against humanity, oppression of the poor—that fill the land. For this reason, God says three times that he is resolved to pour out wrath on his nation. From now on his ears are closed to all their prayers for mercy.

**3. MEDITATE.** If you are a Christian, you are God’s house/temple. Is your “temple” clear, with pure worship of the Lord alone? Or cluttered, with other idols that claim territory that belongs to him?

**4. PRAY.** The Lord knew the thoughts and the actions of these powerful people, even though they hid behind closed doors. “Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven.” If there are thoughts or actions you need to confess to the Lord (1 John 1:9), do it now.