

Ezekiel, Son of Man
Class 3 - April 16, 2014
Reading: Ezekiel 8-11

Chapter 8

After the difficult time of prophesying on his side is over, God once more comes to Ezekiel. He pulls Ezekiel by his hair (perhaps a symbolic reference to the force of the Spirit) and takes Ezekiel to Jerusalem. It might have seemed to be a joy to be there, but the images he sees will leave him crying.

First Ezekiel is shown an image called only "jealousy". This is not Jehovah who is called Jealous, but a false image. Perhaps it was even meant to represent Jehovah, but it only invokes God's anger. While the image is unnamed, there are many times where images were left in the Temple. 2 Kings 23:4-11 describe Josiah's purge of idols, and a number of them were found in the temple and the courts of the temple.

Second, he sees through a wall to a room in which one of the sons Shaphan is offering incense to drawn images of beasts and creatures. This too is idolatry, not in a carving, but an image.

Third, he is taken to the north door of the court of the temple. There he sees woman weeping for the Babylonian god Tammuz. Tammuz is only mentioned here, but was quite prominent in the Middle East (known sometimes as Tammuz-Adonis). Tammuz is commonly called a life/death/rebirth god, as he "died" each year at summer solstice and is "reborn" at the winter solstice. He was commonly worshipped by mourners in the form seen by Ezekiel.

Fourth Ezekiel is taken to see twenty five men worshipping the sun. Josiah had struck down horse images drawn for the sun gods of the Canaanites. Could these twenty five be the same as in chapter eleven?

God has great reason to be furious with Israel. The Bible says that the false gods of worship are in fact demons (Deuteronomy 32:17, I Corinthians 10:20). With these image of false worship, God prepares Ezekiel for His wrath that is to come.

Chapter 9

God's wrath is brought out now with six men given axes (or hammers) to kill the inhabitants of Jerusalem. One of these men, a scribe, is told to first mark all those who mourn because of the sins of Jerusalem. Then they are told to go through Jerusalem, without any pity, and kill every single person without a mark. This could be an anti-type of the mark of Revelation 1:7.

What a horrific image to watch! God has used "destroyers" in times past (I Corinthians 10:10, Revelation 9:11) to bring justice to the unrepentant, but to be a first hand witness (in a form) of this is horrific. Ezekiel falls on his knees in grief, and asks God if there will be any mercy. God makes it clear that this is a penalty well earned by Jerusalem; they have brought this blood on themselves.

Images like this will be used in Revelation to once more mark God's fulfilled promises to Jerusalem. The leaders of Jerusalem once remarked that they would have the blood of Jesus on their hands (Matthew 27:25). The parallel is a city full of blood, and blood cries for blood by nature (Genesis 4:10, 9:5).

Chapter 10

Perhaps now comes the most difficult part of this revelation. Ezekiel must bear witness to God departing from the Temple. He sees once more the great "vehicle" he saw in chapter one, which represents the glory of God. He sees it leave the temple. It is interesting that when God first came into the temple, it was born witness to by all. Now, as He leaves, neither the priests nor the people note this event (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

With the temple vacant, what prohibits its demise? The people of Jerusalem laud the temple as the certainty of their salvation, believing that God would not let His place be destroyed (Jeremiah 7:4 "*Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.'*") But the people NEVER BOTHERED TO LOOK to see if God was there!

In the time of Christ, it was concluded that the Holy Spirit of God (called the Shekiniah) had departed the temple, and had never returned. "*The (temple of Herod) was missing five things: the Ark, the Ark-cover, Cherubim, (heavenly) Fire and Holy Spirit (Shekiniah)*" - Yoma 21b, Talmud

Chapter 11

Who is responsible for wicked leaders? Both the leaders, and the people who allow them to lead. Jeremiah had come to the leaders, and had sent a letter to the people in exile that God's will for them was to settle into their captivity as a divine will (Jeremiah 29:4-5). These leaders directly repudiated the words of Jeremiah, instead saying there would be no need to build, as they would not be captives. "Safe as meat in a pot" seems an odd saying, because what is the fate of the meat? But God keep His word. Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Ezekiel then bears witness to the death of one of Judah's princes. Again he pleads to God "will He not remember His people"? Now God makes a new promise, a repeat of the promise for the remnant in chapter six. This promise can be seen in a dual light. First, it refers to the return from captivity that would occur in seventy years. Second, it can be seen as the promise of Christ and the new covenant. Particularly, Jeremiah is at the same time speaking about a covenant which brings with it a new heart (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

But for now, Ezekiel is a prophet of destruction, not redemption.