

Ezekiel
December 30, 2007
Chapters 12-17, Emphasis 16

I. Sin Has Its Results

Ezekiel's message of death and exile are not ones that deportees wanted to hear. As such, they looked for reasons not to believe these messages or the messenger who brought them. In chapter 12-19, ten prophecies give us seven additional reasons why the exile is necessary:

1. Judah failed to submit to God's chastening and rebelled in the face of captivity.
2. Judah rejected divine revelation. True prophets were ignored, while false prophets and the idolatry that they approved were accepted.
3. Judah failed to fulfill the purpose of fruitfulness for which God had created.
4. Judah had a long history of unfaithfulness to God.
5. Judah depended on political alliances for security rather than looking to God to sustain the nation.
6. Judah was responsible to God for sin though they were reluctant in accepting it.
7. Judah already was spiritually dead; so its political life also was allowed to die.

What messages is the Lord sending you that you do not want to hear?

II. False Prophets

Chapter 13 discusses ten things that false prophets do that is wrong:

1. They speak out of their own will.
2. They made people to be prey rather performing a ministry for them.
3. They had no crisis ministry or ability to fortify lives...they could not strengthen the walls.
4. They claim their revelations were divine to deceive their followers.
5. They fail to stand against sin and declare an empty message without truth.
6. They preach a message of peace, prosperity, and safety in the face of imminent judgment.
7. Their ministry provokes the wrath of God and invites His judgment.
8. They often used false methods and occult practices to legitimize their work and control their victims.
9. They encourage iniquity by word and personal example.

10. They set up the worst idols, their own self-will.

III. Noah, Daniel, and Job

Ezekiel 14:13-14

13 "Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, 14 even if these three men — Noah, Daniel and Job — were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.

NIV

While we might have bad leaders and bad prophets, ultimately we are all accountable to God. The Nuremburg Defense (“I was ordered to do so.”) is no excuse. Even the wisest of men can only be saved personally by the righteousness imputed from the Lord. One man following God can make a difference, but that man cannot force others to follow God.

IV. Introduction to Chapter 16

This is longest unit in the book of Ezekiel. It is in the form of a lawsuit. In this chapter, we see Jerusalem, which is the nation of Judah, going full circle:

1. She begins in a destitute and hopeless natural condition.
2. God lavishes His love on her and elevates her to the status of royalty, after rescuing her from certain death.
3. She snubs her Deliverer and divine Benefactor by running after other gods and dispensing His gracious gifts to strange lovers.
4. She discovers that God is as passionate in His judgment as He had been in love, and she loses everything that she had ever possessed.
5. After the judgment she experiences a new outpouring of divine grace, is forgiven of sin, and accepted as His covenant people again.
6. She recognizes that the past disruption in her relationship with the LORD was not the fault of God, but her own, and she experiences shame.

One should not seek the entire history of Jerusalem in this chapter. What is chronicled is only to bring out certain points. Yet, this chapter left a mark on Jewish culture. According to Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the Mishna, this chapter should not be read nor translated in public because of the shame associated with it. (Feinberg)

Ezek 16:1-3

16:1 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices 3 and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.

NIV

Ezekiel starts this vision, as with many of his vision, pointing out to the deportees of the sin in Israel/Jerusalem's past. The goal of the Israelites was not to be like the Canaanites. The Amorites and Hittites were two of the larger groups of people who were in Canaan before the Israelites arrived. By referring to Jerusalem as having Canaanites roots, God through Ezekiel is showing how far that the city has strayed from His stated desire for it, especially when we see that the Canaanites represent mankind at its worse.

Ezek 16:6-7

6 "Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" 7 I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare.

NIV

An abandoned infant cannot live without help. In this case, "kicking about in your blood" would indicate that the infant was dying. The LORD intervenes, allowing the child to live by His word alone. As the child reaches greater levels of maturity, the nakedness of a baby gives way to nakedness susceptible to sexual advances. The problems have changed, but the dangers are just as great.

Ezek 16:15

15 "But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his.

NIV

God has given Jerusalem much...indeed, it is not too much to say that God has given Jerusalem everything that the city has. Yet the city uses God's gifts in ways contrary to God's desires.

Ezek 16:20

20 "And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough?

NIV

One bad decision leads to more until Jerusalem is a moral desert.

Ezek 16:49-50

50 "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. 50 They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.

NIV

The sin becomes as great as that of Sodom. If God punished that city, how could he ignore Jerusalem? How do you think that the deportees want to return to Jerusalem would take this statement?

Ezek 16:59-61

59 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. 60 Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

NIV

Yet there is hope for the deportees.

V. Symbolism in Chapter 17

Ezekiel uses a lot of symbolism in his book. Sometimes he explains it; sometimes, we are not told. While it is always debatable when we are not explicitly told, the following is one explanation for the symbolism in this chapter:

“Eagle”	Nebuchadnezzar
“Lebanon”	Jerusalem (or Judah or Israel)
“Topmost crown”	Jehoiachin and his nobles, taken captive
“Seed of your land”	Zedekiah
New “vine”	Jerusalem under Zedekiah
“Another great eagle”	Egypt

The vine of Judah stretches out to second eagle of Egypt to take nourishment from it despite the agreements with the first eagle or Babylon.

VI. Some Questions for the These Chapters

1. What Jewish kings did Ezekiel portray?
2. What king arranged the deportation of the king of Judah?
3. What animal depicts the destructive work of false prophets?
4. Upon what did the people of Judah rest their hopes?
5. What did the prophetesses receive for their pay?
6. What was the sin of the elders?
7. To avoid a national disaster what must the Jews do?
8. What inward attitude prompted Judah to desert the LORD?
9. What heathen people did Judah resemble in her morals?
10. What foreign power did Judah court in her disaster?