

Ezekiel Chapters 11-13 - John Karmelich

Title "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses!"

As I've stated many times in the past, one of my bible teaching mentors (Walter Martin), loved to state: "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses!" He meant if people aren't interested in the good news of salvation, they must know the consequences of the law! In other words, God's in charge so we must accept that! If we refuse, He'll find ways to make that point clear. He won't violate our free will, but He will do things to make it obvious He's in charge and we must deal with that! In effect, it's what Ezekiel is told to preach in this section. He condemns Israel's civil leaders as they were saying God's judgment is not on the horizon! He also gets his "licks in" at false prophets, who preached to the Israelites where he is (in captivity in the Babylonian Empire (Iraq today)). The point for us is God calls us Christians to preach the good news about Jesus. If people won't accept that, they must realize the bad news as well! It means we should know the negative arguments as well as the positive ones about eternity. I'll share a few thoughts on discussing the good news and potential bad news about salvation in this lesson.

OK then, let's talk about these chapters and how they apply to our lives! We last left Ezekiel in what I call a "Star Trek Transporter moment" where he finds himself in Jerusalem (which he knew well). We saw the religious leaders in the last chapter in effect with their backs to God as they assumed He's not a part of their world! Ezekiel was made aware those Jewish religious leaders turned to other deities. Now in this chapter he focuses on the civil leaders. He correctly accuses them of being responsible for death in the city of Jerusalem (for not listening to God which caused the Babylonians to conquer there!) Yes, I know Ezekiel can't be heard by them (it's a vision)! The Jewish refugees in Babylon will realize he's a prophet and God is aware of all their actions! (Keep that in mind the next time we sin!) It is a matter of realizing not only does God know all things, but He judges our actions! Does that mean He'll make us recall all our sins when we die? There is NO condemnation for those who trust in Jesus (Romans 8)! It also means everyone else faces His judgment. Ezekiel wrote this part to make us focus on the "Moses' consequences", (to keep it simple) of turning from God!

In Chapter 11, the religious leaders say in effect, we in Jerusalem are safe behind the walls! The funny part is those same leaders make a run for it by digging through the wall. They're caught and brought to the Babylonian leader who was camped on the edge of the land of Israel. The Israel King was punished by watching his kids die in front of him, then he is blinded! His children's death was the last thing that he saw before he was taken blind to live the rest of his life in Babylon. In effect Ezekiel predicted all of that and when they compare notes between those already in Babylon and the last captives after this, the Israelites will discover and confirm Ezekiel was a profit.

The good news of these chapters is it's not all bad news. God makes a promise that Israel as an entity's not going to make a complete end of itself. After all God promised He'd make Abraham's descendants into a great nation. As I like to say, if Jesus will rule the world from Israel one day, Israel must exist in that moment in time and believe in Jesus! Most of us Christians accept it as future truth, but it's nice to know there are references to God's eternal destiny for Israel despite all the ways they turned from Him! Of course, Jewish people can be saved today the same way we can. All I'm saying is Chapter 11 throws us some hope of good things in the middle of all this bad news talk!

Chapter 11 ends with the "weird stuff" again. We get a strange vision similar to what Ezekiel saw back when the book opened. Ezekiel got "Star trek beamed" back to where he lived in the Babylon Empire! I'm always endlessly impressed by subtle details in the bible. I can't go into detail about those here as I

am giving a two-page summary. I'll just say before leaving Ezekiel saw the hills just east of Jerusalem and He saw the glory of God leaving the temple. That same spot's where Jesus departed from when He was taken into heaven and will be the same spot He'll return to. OK enough trivia, Chapter 12:

We now find Ezekiel back in Babylon, doing "street theatre" to dramatize what'll happen in Jerusalem! God's telling Ezekiel in effect, "You know that strange vision I showed you? Now you must show your fellow exiles what's going to happen and act it out! I heard a good comment on this, "I wonder what his wife thought of all this. First God told Ezekiel to lay on his side every day for 390 days. Then he had to repeat it on his other side for another 40. Now he must pack luggage and pretend like he's trying to dig through a wall!" Just saying his wife must have seriously considered divorce at that point! Of course, it doesn't mean we have to do likewise. It just means we must obey how we believe God's guiding us, so we can use our lives to make a difference for Him. (Using the gifts He's given us!)

By the middle of Chapter 12, he dramatically shows how the government leaders will be captured, just as I explained earlier! God also makes it clear again He will spare some Israelites, so as we realize it is not the total end of that nation. If you ever encounter bible doubters, one of my favorite things to point out is in world history, no nation has ever been conquered, scattered and became a nation again, except for Israel who's done it twice in history!

Meanwhile God also wanted Ezekiel to eat nervously to further demonstrate what is about to happen to the Israelites in Jerusalem. One reason this is such a big deal, is to show both the consequences to turn from God as well as the way He keeps His eternal promise to preserve them as a nation! As I point out at times, if we can't trust His eternal promises to Israel (entity), how can we ever trust His promises for us Christians? These chapters remind us God knows all things, we're all accountable to Him, we can be punished as believers but still have our eternal destiny set!

The final part of Chapter 12 is God saying in effect, "This isn't something that will occur many years to come but will happen now!" Those leaders were killed as Ezekiel did his theater act! But John, it's now been 2,000 years since Jesus left, can we trust His promises? To quote Peter, "With God, a 1,000 years is like a day and a day is like 1,000 years!" (2nd Peter 3:8). I like stating, from Adam till Abraham was about 2,000 years. From Abraham to Jesus was about 2,000 years! Now it's been another 2,000 years! All I'm saying is God's timing is God's timing. We must accept that.

OK then, Chapter 13 while I'm on a role! Short version's while Ezekiel is preaching bad news, he takes his shots at false prophets in Jerusalem preaching the opposite of what Ezekiel is told to preach. Recall that Jesus was once asked how do we recognize false prophets? Jesus said, "by their fruit", meaning the things they preach are contrary to God's word (See Matthew 7:15). As my father taught me, (a banker) that the best way to recognize fake money is to spend a lot of time dealing with the real thing! I believe the same is true with knowing God's Word well, it makes it easier to spot what's false with "God"!

Just to make sure Ezekiel's audience knows what he's talking about he gets specific in what words they use to preach false things about what God's going to do! Remember to be a prophet of God one has to be 100% perfect in one's predictions! I'm sure the false prophets had their "grains of truth" mixed with their messages. The lesson for us is when someone claims they are speaking for God, question what is being said (me included)!

Bottom line, Ezekiel gave his fellow Israelites "Moses" as in explaining how God's laws apply to those laws apply to their lives whether they want to accept it or not! For us, Christians who trust in Jesus for all our sins, that's great for the issue of salvation. The related issue is being saved means we are called

to be a witness for Him whether we like it not! In other words, it's His world, His rules and we have to accept it whether we like it or not! On that tough note I'll call it a lesson!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!