

## Ezekiel Chapters 21-22 - John Karmelich

### Title Preaching the "It's Too Late" Blues

I'm the first to admit, it's tough to get through the first half of Ezekiel. When God laid it on me that I'm to teach Ezekiel again, I thought, it'll be fun to teach about the future, (after Jesus does return, also how Ezekiel's predictions have literally come true in the last 100 years). The hard part is getting past all this condemnation text before Ezekiel "switches gears". The fascinating thing about this section is Ezekiel's not saying, "repent or else"! The speech here is, "It's too late, deal with it!" I suspect most of us had to deal with a "it's too late" moment! I love Bible pondering, so I'm wondering what does God want us to learn from this? It's more than just "don't be like them"! It's a reminder that He interferes in our affairs! God can come down hard at times and He desires we use our life as a witness for Him. With that said, realize these chapters tell a tough and true story we can all learn from.

As I read these chapters over and over again, a couple of things hit me: The first is the reminder God is aware of all things. Ezekiel in effect is taking dictation from God and describing exact ways the leader of the Babylonians will attack and destroy Jerusalem and that nation. He's preaching to those Israelites already taken captive by that empire. They must accept God's dishing out all this punishment! In effect, this is like the second generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt. God in effect told the generation that came out of Egypt, "You've blown it so badly, I'll work with your children, as you'll all die here in the wilderness!" The point being is there's a too late with God. Yes, Christians can't lose our salvation, but as I preach a lot, God can and does make it obvious to us we can blow it bad enough where it is too late for God to use us! That is how to read these chapters, not as the horrible things the Israelites living in that land were doing, but as a warning that God has standards, He expects us to live by and failure to do could cost us our lives or as a witness for Him! If God could treat Israelites that way, He can do the same for Christians!

Now that I've scared everyone half to death, time for the details: As usual, the text's not all bad news. It has hints of the future promises when Jesus comes, and I'll get to that in this lesson. Since I got all that out of my system, let me begin: Again, remember Ezekiel is in the Babylonian Empire (Iraq). God told him to preach to his fellow Israelites there in that land with him. Ezekiel was told to face Jerusalem, as he started to preach about its complete destruction and death to all there, despite innocence or guilt. It's the "It's Too Late Blues" he's preaching! Reminds me of an old joke about God announcing He's going to destroy the world, then the New York Times headline wrote, "God to destroy the world, women and minorities to be hurt the most!" In effect, Chapters 21 and 22 focus on why this will happen! Ezekiel's told to moan and sigh. He's to do all he can to draw attention to himself so Israelites who are in earshot will pay attention to his message! God gets into specifics about how the Israelites will be killed. He is telling how the Babylonian soldiers ordered to go through Jerusalem to kill all the Israel residents there at that time. Realize the Babylonians tried to make peace with the Israelites "under their thumb". It was in effect a non-stop rebellion by the Israelites as they tried to make treaties with other nations to protect them against those God called as His instruments of judgment!

Again, the lesson to us isn't about ancient history, but the danger of not living as God desires. The rest of the lesson will give examples of what He deplores. First, we'll get more evidence that God knows all things as Ezekiel describes details of how the attack will occur. He was told to draw a road map with a fork in the road between turning toward what we call Jordan versus turning towards Jerusalem. What I love is Ezekiel even describes the methods the Babylonian king used to decide which place to attack. It included "casting lots" (picture arrows with each city on an arrow and the winner was picked!). One of

the methods used was he consulted a sacrificed animal's liver! I got no idea how that works and I have no desire to find out! The point is God knows all things, including how a king and his army decided to attack Jerusalem. Obviously, God's in control of all things and used that method to lead the king where God wanted him to go!

By Chapter 22, it's time for the reasons for the judgment. The main issues are murder and worshipping other deities. I always like to say "God likes to be number 1 on a list of 1" in that to avoid idolatry it's a matter of making Him a part of every aspect of our lives! Meanwhile God's on a role for the judgement He's about to bring down. It included ignoring the Sabbath, worshipping other gods, killing their babies to honor the false gods, mistreatment of widows and orphans (think less fortunate). Then God gets into lewd acts, sex with father's wives, son's wives, and women during their menstrual cycle. Think about it in terms of not caring who one offends other than satisfying their own ego! Before you think, God will never do that to Christians, remember God killed a Christian couple for lying to the church! (See Acts Chapter 5.) My point is God called us to be a witness for Him and He's not to be messed with!

God compares the Israelites to a worthless aspect melted off metal to make the good stuff pure! This is a good comparison as God is preserving some Israelites (those already in Iraq), with the point being He is not to be messed with! By Verse 23, God turns on Israelites leaders saying in effect they are horrible examples of what He expects of those He called to be a witness for Him! By Verse 30 God declares He looked for someone among their leaders who'd lead them back to Him, but He found none. Jeremiah is in Jerusalem at that time, but God is talking about Israel's political and spiritual leaders who hit a point of no return! God literally had no choice but to end Israel's existence. Of course, God made a promise that the land would belong to Israel forever. Of course, another descendant of David (Jesus) will return to rule the world from there!

Bottom line, this is tough sledding, but it's a great warning to us that there is a "Too Late" that God can use us as a witness for Him. I am very aware a lot of this is repetitious at this point in the book. I know Ezekiel will change subjects after a few more chapters to focus on His punishment for other "bad guys" in the neighborhood as well as His plans for Israel for the future. Grateful for everyone putting up with me as we go through this tough section. Remember the lesson to us is all about how we act as a witness for Him! It won't affect our salvation status, but it is a reminder God's never to be messed with! I have now beaten that point to death and that's enough for one 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!