

Ezekiel Chapters 5-7 - John Karmelich

Title "The bad news about being a witness for Jesus!"

The obvious good news about being a Christian is our guarantee of salvation. The bad news: God will hold us accountable to be a witness for Him! Failure to do so, are these chapters in a nutshell. The rest is details of what can and will happen to believers who fail to live as He desires. I can hear a lot of you saying, "We're not the ancient nation of Israel!" We've made lots of mistakes, and God hasn't punished us the way He punished Israel (as a nation) many times in history! So why is this relevant?

In short, God holds us accountable as a witness for Him and the really bad news is we can be hit with a "It's now too late to be used by Him"! I'm not talking about losing our salvation! It's the danger of God deciding we can no longer be a witness for Him. In effect, God uses a "carrot and a stick" method for a motivation method for those of us who've dedicated our lives to Him. Unfortunately, we're now in that section of the book that focuses on the "stick". (The "carrot" comes later in the book). For those of you who don't know the reference, it's about horse or mule motivation promising a carrot for cooperation!

Obviously, I think of God as being perfect. That means He is always perfect in His love for those of us who call themselves His people! It also means He's always perfectly angry at sin and can't tolerate any sin whatsoever! Even with that understood, there are moments in the bible where God says in effect, "I have had it up to here! It's time to experience My wrath, just to show I'm not to be messed with!" That doesn't mean a loss of salvation, it's about no longer allowed to be used by God! For those of us who've been Christians awhile, we've seen some people "fall from grace" and lose a ministry they took a while to build up! The lesson to each of us is about the danger of turning from God as a believer. Now that I got all of that out of my system (and yes it scares me as well) let's talk about these three chapters:

To begin, remember that God called Ezekiel to preach to Israelites who were also in exile with him. It is a time in Israel's history when they were conquered by the Babylonians (think Iraq). At this moment many Israelites have already been taken captive and relocated in that empire. Jerusalem still stood and false prophets were saying, "Don't panic, God won't leave us here! Babylon will soon be overthrown!" The problem with the Israelites wasn't that they don't believe God existed, they just, "failed to put their money where their mouth is" so to speak. God told Ezekiel his fellow Israelites in exile won't listen to him, but he still needs to preach about God's judgment coming as well, the pain of not submitting a life to God is much more painful than ignoring Him. Ezekiel was to use "stage drama" to make his point as we'll see in these chapters!

He starts Chapter 5 with a public demonstration. He completely shaves his head and his beard. Then he strikes a third of that hair (he measures it out) with the sword. Another part is scattered in the wind. It is a matter of demonstrating that their nation (those left in Israel) will be killed by a sword, or they'll be scattered to die by other means or literally die of starvation while Jerusalem is surrounded by the army set to destroy them! OK why would God be that cruel to allow that to His people? God wants to show that the danger of ignoring Him well has horrible consequences! For Christians, we may be saved, but the issue of being used by Him again, is a separate issue! If God was willing to punish His people that hard, what makes us think He'd be any less tough on us if we, like them turned to idolatry and in effect turned our back on God? That's the flavor of these three chapters and I'm just warming up!

Remember Ezekiel had to suffer hard for this message. God told him in effect He'd make Ezekeil to be as "tough headed" as they are! Despite the rough treatment, he'll be able to preach the message. Yes, it

is meant for future generations to grasp that God isn't to be messed with, and Ezekiel suffered for what he was told to preach, but it's always worth the cost in this life to be a witness for God!

It may help to remember God placed the nation of Israel literally on a land bridge between 3 continents as a witness for Him. Just as He has called Christians over the world to be a witness for Him. We tend to think all I need to do is accept Jesus then go about our lives! To quote John MacArthur, "the price to become a Christian is nothing but the "annual dues" cost us everything!" Grant it most of us don't have to do something as dramatic as what Ezekiel had to do, but we're called to be His witnesses, so that is a call to live as He desires. It's NEVER about how many people we save! It's ALWAYS about doing the things God calls us to do! So, what are we called to do? In short, it's to use our lives as a living witness for Him. For specifics, I always say, tell God I want to be used by You. It's amazing how He'll answer that prayer always on His timing. Meanwhile I left Ezekiel doing tough things God called him to do!

The last part of Chapter 5 was God telling Ezekiel in effect, "just that" using his life for God's glory! It got so serious about the fact the Israelites not listening, in other words people want to do whatever they want to do and ignore God! God told Ezekiel in effect pretend like you're preaching to Israel (the land) and say, "This place will be a wasteland, other than a few survivors! The Israelites will have their dead bodies scattered all over the land"! If I had to say stand on a chair to tell those around me repent or die, that'd be a tough gig! Later in the book we'll read how Ezekiel got the news of Israel's destruction. It's the proof he was sent from God and accepted to this day as a prophet of God!

So, if you think his job was hard so far, (remember he had to lay on one side for 390 days and then turn on his other side for 40 days) in effect that was a "warm up" exercise! In Chapter 6 he had to stomp his feet, clap his hands and tell the Israelites because they ignored God a long time, it means it is now "too late"! Obviously, it's not the end of the nation as they are still around today!

Here's a thought if God said this is "it" for Israel, why did He allow them to suffer similar things when the Romans destroyed Israel in 70AD, let alone the Holocaust? As far as "70AD", Jesus made it clear it was punishment for not knowing the time of His visitation! (Luke 19:44). As far as the Holocaust, I don't have a great answer, other than it allowed Israel to become a nation again! All that is a reminder they are still God's chosen people. Romans 9-11 covers that issue. In short, God has set Israel aside as an entity He's working through till He's finished with "the church" then God's turning his focus back on the nation of Israel (as a separate entity) again! I'm getting into all of this because these chapters tell us God's destroying the nation of Israel and it'll never happen like this again! The way God destroyed that nation's identity then is different from how it happened other times in history!

In Chapter 7, Ezekiel gets "poetic". I should state those who don't know, bible poems don't rhyme like it does in English. It is about thoughts connecting. The text has a rhythm to it, in the original Hebrew! Chapter 7 is one big poem, in effect saying, how bad Israel has fallen. Remember this is prophetic as it didn't happen until less than a decade after he wrote this part of the book. Later Ezekiel will describe a prophetic vision of their future even to us! My point is if we can trust his accuracy with what happened a decade after it was written, then we can also trust the latter chapters that get into events future to us!

As far as Chapter 7, it's pretty straightforward talking about the disaster that fell on Israel roughly 2600 years ago! The issue is not ancient history for us, it's the reminder to Christians that we're called to use our lives as a witness for Him and yes there are consequences for ignoring that. In short, there is for us a "too late". I got no idea what too late is, but I (along with most of us long term believers) have seen a handful of ministries die when the individuals running them turn from God. Do bad things occur in the world? Of course! So why doesn't God deal with them? I'm not God. I just know that He's called you

(and me) to use our lives for His glory, and the consequences are laid out in these chapters for us! Yes, these chapters are tough sledding, but it's necessary to grasp God's a God of justice even for those of us called to use our lives for His glory! Grant it, God kills some by making them ineffective! All this is a message to remind us God's not to be messed with! OK, time to exhale and 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!