

Ezekiel Chapters 8-10 - John Karmelich

Title "Dealing with life when things are really bad!"

Most of us have had moments in life where the bottom has fallen out and we must deal with really hard things. In Ezekiel's case, we're seeing life so bad, that God announcing He's no longer going to protect the nation of Israel and allow it to be destroyed. Yes, a remnant will be saved and the fact it exists now is proof of that fact! Let me pause for a moment to remind us that if we trust in Jesus for our salvation, then we NEVER have to worry about the ultimate "death blow"! We all must deal at times with horrid people and/or situations where we don't see a good solution! We know God's in the "miracle business" but that's no guarantee He'll help us in every situation where we ask for His help! My last lesson stated how God uses "a carrot and a stick" method with those He calls to be His witness to the world! (Yes, it is you and me). I stated in the last lesson, there is ALWAYS a too late to be a witness for God! That is His "stick", as we'll see here! Lessons on God's "carrot motivation" come later in the book!

I can just hear some of you saying, "I'm saved, why should I care about those people!" Remember why we're saved, to be a witness to the world around us, even when we see God applying His "stick"! That isn't just a warning to believers, but to non-believers as well. You may say, "What about the one who's whole attitude about God is indifference and they're living comfortably? Jesus talks about their fate for eternity and it's not good to put it mildly! (Luke 12:20). I assume my readers believe in eternity in the presence of Jesus, or else you wouldn't be here in the first place! My point is this section will deal with the fate of those called by God but turn their backs on Him! God calls Ezekeil (and us) to be a witness to all people. That's so if those we witness to chose to ignore us, they can't argue ignorance before God when it's time for judgment. But John, what about the naïve or those who die as children? That's God's problem as our job AS believers is to be a good witness for Him! OK then, let's study this text and see the things God wants to teach us about dealing with really hard situations!

With all of that out of my system, realize these three chapters read like one big nightmare! When I get a nightmare now, my first thought is, "It's only a dream and at least I know I slept!" With Ezekiel, he's literally grabbed by God, (think Star Trek Transporter, where he is literally moved from where he lived in the Babylon Empire to the Jerusalem temple area)! Scholars debate how literal it was! If God wants me to see something, as I always say, "He's God and I'm not, and whatever method He desires to use to get my attention, I'm sure it'll work." Bottom line, these three chapters are a series of visions Ezekeil is seeing that focuses on the complete destruction of the land of Israel, that occurred a few years after this vision (and prove to the Israelites living then in the Babylonian Empire that he was a prophet!)

OK then, time for details: Chapter 8 opens with a vision (that runs for all three chapters). It's roughly a year after the first "weird one" of Chapter 1 and has some similar well, strange things! The key's not to obsess on the strange stuff, but realize God is using Ezekiel to preach on deadly consequences that will happen when one turns from God! Chapter 8 opens with Ezekiel being moved from where he lived (in Iraq today) to Jerusalem! Remember it is a vision! He saw what appears to be a man on fire (to keep it simple)! He also saw the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Remember Ezekiel was trained as a priest, so he would know what it'd look like! There's an emphasis on the "north" as whenever Israel was attacked it was always from that direction! To keep it simple, he saw idolatry committed by Israel's leaders! It is so specific, Ezekiel is told to dig through the wall to see inside the temple! One of the repeating things in these chapters we see God saying in effect here is, "You think that's bad, you ain't seen nothing yet!" One thing Ezekiel sees is a bunch of Israel's religious leaders with their back to God's presence (the ark

of the covenant, the most holy symbol of His presence). They are praying to the other gods in that area. Those leaders are so convinced God abandoned them, that they turn to other false gods for help!

God is reminding the Israelites Ezekiel is speaking to, that God knows all things. (A scary thought for all those moments when I've sinned!) The text gives such details to what Israel's religious leaders do in these verses the text even uses the phrase translated, "Branch to the nose" which most likely refers to a smell given to what they're doing. Bottom line "God's angry" and a lot of people are about to die due to that anger! That leads to the question, does a perfect God get angry? My view is God is always perfect in His love for us, perfectly angry at sin at the same time! It also shows that He can get to a point when in effect all other options have failed, that God will do what is necessary to teach people that when one commits their lives to Him, there is suffering for a failure to trust in Him! Does that mean He can wipe us out when He feels like it? Remember in Acts 5, a husband-and-wife believing couple died for lying to the face of the Apostles and were struck dead! Obviously, God doesn't do that often or else no one's available to make a difference for Him, but that option for God is ALWAYS on the table so to speak!

Meanwhile Ezekiel is still watching all of this horror and reacting to it! In Chapter 9, we're introduced to six men who obviously are angels. They are told to kill everyone in Israel, regardless of age, except those who were "marked" meaning the marked will be eternally saved! First, I should remind us we're not to mess with angels. In 2nd Kings 19:35 one angel killed 185,000 one evening. In this case, realize the Babylonian army will do the killing so the six "men" are representatives of what is to come! All we need to realize is God in His dramatic way, is showing Ezekiel how he plans to wipe Israel out after He will spare those (probably eternally), for not turning from God! OK John, all of this is ancient history! Why should we care? What makes us think that if God will be any easier on Christians who turn from Him than Israelites who were? As I said last time, most of us veteran Christians saw ministries that did die due to their leaders turning from God to sin! They may not lose salvation, but we can easily lose an ability to be a witness for God and that's the underlying point! So, does this mean I have to stand on the street corner with a sandwich-billboard saying repent or else? While some are called to specific things I wouldn't want to do, all we must do is be open to what God wants us to do to be a witness for Him!

Anyway Chapter 9 is short, and the key point is the angels did as commanded. They marked those who are not destined for destruction and everyone else regardless of age died! We're warming up with what Ezekeil saw in these three chapters. God says in effect, "If you think that's bad, wait till you see what is next!" We see some of the same "weird stuff" from Chapter 1. Chapter 10 mentions creatures we got in Chapter 1. It's some sort of "fancy wheel" angels with lots of eyes. The point is they can move quickly in all directions and see everything. All of that symbolizes that God's aware of all things and can move where He wants when He wants. Instead of just saying God can do "this or that" we get strange visuals to represent it! The creatures have a total of four faces similar to what was described in Chapter 1. As I stated in that lesson the faces tie to Jesus in what He is and accomplished. The main idea of Chapter 10 is that it shows God "leaving" the temple. Obviously, God is everywhere. The symbolic idea is that for the time being He's not going to be a protective force to the nation of Israel. Obviously, He cares about His people and He wouldn't be talking to Ezekiel if He didn't care about saving them despite their sins!

Bottom line, Ezekiel sees a three chapter "nightmare" that involved most Israelites living there dying in God's anger at them and His presence leaving the Temple area. In effect God's saying I'm allowing this destruction to occur and I'm not going to do a thing to stop it! We know Israel as an entity has suffered other times in history. The same way millions of Christians have been murdered in the last 2,000 years, due to the fact they were Christians and nothing else. I'm not saying every Israelite back then died for a lack of trust in God. Just saying He can and does "apply the stick" at times, and we must realize there's

consequences in this life for failing to be a good witness for Him. With that said, I think that is enough of explaining legitimate fear for one lesson. Thanks for reading everyone!

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!