Ezekiel 33:17-33

17 Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. 18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die therein. 19 And when the wicked turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22 Now the hand of Jehovah had been upon me in the evening, before he that was escaped came; and he had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

23 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 24 Son of man, they that inhabit those waste places in the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. 25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes unto your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbor’s wife: and shall ye possess the land? 27 Thus shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As I live, surely they that are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured; and they that are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. 28 And I will make the land a desolation and an astonishment; and the pride of her power shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, so that none shall pass through. 29 Then shall they know that I am Jehovah, when I have made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

30 And as for thee, son of man, the children of thy people talk of thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah. 31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain. 32 And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33 And when this cometh to pass, (behold, it cometh,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them (ASV, 1901).
GOD’S JUSTICE IS IMPARTIAL

Ezekiel 33:17-20

17 Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. 18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die therein. 19 And when the wicked turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways (ASV, 1901).

A persons judgment by God will be determined based on his or her conduct at the time of judgment. No man can presume on past deeds to grant him license for present evil. Here God is telling Ezekiel to contrast the wicked and his ways with the outwardly righteous. The Law presented as the standard of righteousness is the Mosaic Law given by God at Sinai. The Law had no defects at all. It was man’s inability to keep it that was the weakness. Many though did not try and did not want to please God at all. They pretended to follow it or blamed Him for the calamities that had overtaken them such as the Babylonian invasion.

The Law was always intended to be a tutor to the Jews so they would learn the standard of righteousness that God conveyed. They were not given the power to be able to keep it. When the Jews will experience a national regeneration this power will be given to them. Many complained that God’s moral dealings were equitable and charged Him with unfairness. They only saw the outside of a man and not his inward soul. Actually the people accused in this section of Scripture were being accused and judged for their own sins. Men are dealt with by the Divine Judge, on an individual basis, not even as they themselves have been in times past, but exactly as they are. There is no more perfect rule of equity. The Jews will be able to keep the perfect Law of God in the Messianic Kingdom when the New Covenant is inaugurated.

The New Covenant is first announced in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31: 31

31 Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more (ASV, 1901).

The New Covenant is announced with the declaration that it is it be a Jewish Covenant. It is to be made with both Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom).
It is distinctly different than the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is the only one of the five Jewish Covenants that is conditional. Israel broke the covenant. God did not. The Mosaic covenant showed the standard of righteousness that the Law demanded. It never gave the Jews the power to keep God’s Laws. They will be given this power in the New Covenant. Through their national regeneration at the end of the Tribulation they will be given the power to keep the New Covenant. Every Jew in the Messianic Kingdom will know the Lord. There will be no Jewish unbelievers in the kingdom. Some Gentiles will not believe but not any Jews will be unbelievers.

Jeremiah 24:7

7 And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart (ASV, 1901)

Ezekiel 11: 19-20

9 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; 20 that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God (ASV, 1901).

Jerusalem’s Fall is Announced

Ezekiel 33:21-22

21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22 Now the hand of Jehovah had been upon me in the evening, before he that was escaped came; and he had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb (ASV, 1901).

Now that Ezekiel’s mouth had been opened by God and ended the imposed silence, his prophecies were now vindicated about the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The next day a refugee from Jerusalem came to him on January 9, 585 B.C. and announced that the city is smitten. By God’s revelation he already knew of the fall of Jerusalem but this confirmation and God’s opening his mouth to speak enabled him to tell the Jews in Babylon about the sins that brought them to this point. God wanted to again bless them but they needed to go through the painful correction and punishment they deserved for turning so far away from God in their wickedness.

The Remnant in Jerusalem Complain

Ezekiel 33:23-26

23 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 24 Son of man, they that inhabit those waste places in the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for
inheritance. 25Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes unto your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbor’s wife: and shall ye possess the land (ASV, 1901)?

The people who were left in Jerusalem after the Babylonian invasion were complaining about what had happened to them and God is telling Ezekiel. They were exerting their own confidence in the retention of the land through the Abrahamic Covenant and their successive generational endowment of it. In it the promises of the land guaranteed them the rights to it. The major difference in their comparison of themselves to Abraham is one of righteousness. Abraham was righteous and they were wicked.

God now begins to cite the various sins they committed and asks the rhetorical question of “and shall ye possess the land?” In other word they have violated His Law by eating the blood of animals as the pagans do, engaging in idolatry, shedding blood and engaging in adultery with their neighbor’s wives. This was all clearly forbidden in the Mosaic Law. God gave them title to the land through the Abrahamic and Land Covenants. Occupancy was dependent upon their behavior. It did not matter if there was more of them then the one man Abraham. The right to possess the land depended on spiritual obedience to the Law not on numbers. Sinfulness would eject them from the land.

Leviticus 26:27-33

27And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; 28then I will walk contrary unto you in wrath; and I also will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. 30And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your sun-images, and cast your dead bodies upon the bodies of your idols; and my soul shall abhor you. 31And I will make your cities a waste, and will bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors. 32And I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies that dwell therein shall be astonished at it. 33And you will I scatter among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you: and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste (ASV, 1901).

GOD KEEPS HIS LAW BY EJECTING ISRAEL FROM THE LAND

Ezekiel 33:27-29

27Thus shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As I live, surely they that are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured; and they that are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. 28And I will make the land a desolation and an astonishment; and the pride of her power shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, so that none shall pass through. 29Then shall they know that I am Jehovah, when I have made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed (ASV, 1901).
In response to the sinful remnant in Jerusalem God says that they will experience additional punishment for their sins. Even though the Babylonian invasion was essentially over there was more coming through God’s chastening judgment. The Babylonians placed Gedaliah as the governor over Jerusalem. When the Jews assassinated him the Babylonians retaliated. As they thought that their swords (armaments and military prowess v.26) would preserve them God declares that they shall fall by the sword among many other means. Those who fled out of the city would be eaten by wild beasts such as lions which were not eradicated from Israel until the 1800’s A.D. ¹ Those who fled to strongholds and caves would die of plagues and Judah would be desolate. God would keep travelers from coming through Jerusalem to trade which would add to the problems by removing economic prosperity. This was all intended for them to fully realize exactly who was doing all this to them and for what reason. God wants obedience.

THE PEOPLE CLAIM TO FOLLOW GOD BUT DO NOT

Ezekiel 33:30-33

30 And as for thee, son of man, the children of thy people talk of thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah. 31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain. 32 And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33 And when this cometh to pass, (behold, it cometh,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them (ASV, 1901).

God now turns to the exiles in Babylon with Ezekiel. The people were saying about Ezekiel behind his back about how he brought forth the Word of God. They come before him and pretend to hear God’s Word but God says they do not follow God’s commands. Their primary interest is their own personal gain. They delighted to hear the words and spoke in a lovingly manner about how much they meant to them. But after words they went out from Ezekiel’s presence and did not follow what they had falsely professed to love to hear. One might say, because a lie is in their mouth, they were hearers of the words, but not doers. This is the sad condition of greater Christianity today. What the Prophet had announced was coming to pass and when it came they would find out that a Prophet had been among them.

This is still the condition today. Professing Christians listen to the Word of God if they even get a clear communication of it. In their hearts they remain indifferent. Their hearts and consciences do not seem to be affected. But just as the Jews in exile in Babylon weak Christians will find out “that a prophet hath been among them and that the Word they rejected and refused to obey will condemn them.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE ISRAELI SHEPHERD DID NOT FEED THE SHEEP

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