

The End

Murray 2016

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Bible Text: Ezekiel 7:6
Preached on: Sunday, July 3, 2016

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Let's read again in Ezekiel 7. Ezekiel 7 and we'll read together verse 6.

6 An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.

We often say that all things come to an end, even good things, but we rarely think of the end that all things shall come to. The Bible, though, teaches us to think often about the end of all things. We have various messages in the Bible and we're told the end will come, we're told the end is coming, we're told the end is near, and here in this chapter, the end is come, and that's really the key word in this passage of Scripture, end. Notice how often it appears. It appears in verse 2 twice, "An end, the end is come." It appears also in verse 3, "Now is the end come." And again in verse 6, "An end is come, the end is come." Five times in just six verses this phrase appears, "the end."

Now, what we'd like to do this evening is fast forward to the end and consider what that looks like in order that we may be readied and prepared for it. But before we do that, let's just look at this passage in particular. Ezekiel prophesied to the southern part of Israel often called Judah. About 100 years before he started preaching, about 700 BC, 700 years before Christ, God sent prophets to the northern part of Israel which was full of idolatry and said, "If you don't repent, you're going to be carried away into exile." They didn't listen. They didn't repent and they were carried away by Assyria. Then God sent prophets to the southern part of Israel that was remaining, Judah, to warn them, "Unless you learn the lesson of the north, unless you look at what happened to them and change your ways, you too are going into captivity." That was the message of Isaiah and Micah to Judah and they didn't listen.

So about 600 BC, about 100 years after the north had been taken away by Assyria, 600 BC, Babylon started carrying away Israel or Judah into captivity, and they started with the king and the kind of elite of Israeli society, and amongst that group was Ezekiel. He was probably born into a wealthy or a well-connected family, and he was amongst the first Israelites taken away into Babylon and there he sent messages back to Judah from God warning them, "Look, unless you repent, you're coming here too." And at the same time as he's preaching from Babylon into Judah, Jeremiah is in Judah on the ground with the same message, it's like stereo, in order to clarify and confirm unmistakably that unless

there was rapid and widespread repentance of idolatry, they were finished. In fact here Ezekiel really says, "You're not going to repent and here's what it's going to look like. Here is what your end will look like." It's no longer the end will come or the end is coming or the end is near, the end has come.

This declaration of the end of Judah, it was divine. It wasn't a man-made message. It wasn't something like human speculation. We often hear, don't we, of various charlatans who arise in the religious world and say, "We know when the end is coming," and they're fools and they're proved foolish. This is not such. This is a man sent by God. You look at verse 1, "the word of the LORD came to me. Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord." It's a divine message. It's a divine warning.

And it's a message that affects the whole of the land, the whole nation. You notice it says in verse 2, "An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land." It's covering the whole part of this territory. Not one inch of it is going to escape. And there is a strong emphasis on justice here. This is such a fair and equitable sentence that God is pronouncing on his people. You'll notice a word or a phrase that occurs again and again, you see it in verse 3, "I will judge thee according to thy ways and will recompense." Verse 4, "I will recompense." You see it also in verse 8, "I will recompense," and that simply means payback. Payback. God's not judging for nothing, he's judging for something and he's judging equitably. He's paying back as promised, as threatened, as was appropriate. This is a just sentence.

And it's also an urgent message. I think as you read these words, maybe read them a few times, you get the sense of this prophet of being in a state almost of agitation and deep concern. Even the repetition of this, "the end, the end, the end is come," it's saying, "I'm totally preoccupied with this message. It's an urgent message. You must pay attention. This isn't something that you can just ignore and let it pass. This is something of pressing, immediate and urgent importance."

And it's unexpected. You read Jeremiah, you hear the response of the people to the stereophonic message of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and it was laughter. And no matter how many times Ezekiel or Jeremiah promised the end is coming, they said, "Peace. Peace. No worries. No hassle. Don't need to pay attention to that. All will be well. We've got the temple. We're the people of God. Everything will be fine." And it's really the pattern, isn't it? You look at Noah's time. Noah warned of an end, people laughed. There was a warning to Sodom and Gomorrah, they laughed. They laughed here the first fall of Judah. You'll notice also in the New Testament when Jerusalem was threatened again, people didn't take it to heart. People think, "This is never going to happen. It's always going to be the same. The sun rises, the sun sets. The seasons come, the seasons go. Years end, years begin. It's all going to continue just as it is." Therefore this is going to come upon them completely unexpected.

But the most important thing to notice about this declaration of an end is it's a shadow. It's a shadow of a greater reality. When you read the Old and New Testament, you'll often find that the writers, the prophets, the Lord himself, and the apostles, they look back on

past judgments like the flood, like Sodom and Gomorrah, like the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of Israel, and they use these terrible horrific judgments as pictures of even worse, even greater, even a more awesome judgment. These are like shadows, like little pictures, like little foretastes, like little insights into something far greater. Just as it was in the days of Noah, just as it was in the days of Sodom, just as it was in the days of Jerusalem in Ezekiel and Jeremiah's time, so it shall be at the end of the age.

That's a constant pattern we find and, therefore, when we read of a judgment like this, we're not just reading historical details that belong just to the past, we're reading something prophetic about the future as well. We're reading about what will yet happen on a far greater scale, a far more divine scale, a far more worldwide scale, a far more just scale and, therefore, requires much greater urgency from us as we ponder it. This is what we want to do with this passage this evening, we want to look at this end as a picture, as a prophecy of the ultimate end.

Now of course, your end and my end could come before the end. There's no question about that but this evening our focus is on not so much our personal end by death but the end of all things because just as these people heard this prophet running through the streets shouting out, proclaiming and declaring to the people, "The end, the end is come," so at the very end of all things, a divine declaration will be made, "The end, the end is come."

Let's ponder these moments. Let's anticipate them. Let's fast forward, let's project ourselves into that time in order that we may be ready for it. I want to do this, first of all, by looking at the end in general terms, how it affects the world, maybe the big scale, and then we want to look at the end as it affects us more personally and individually.

I think, first of all, of what this means, the end is come, for things on a big scale. This means the day is coming when it will be said of the world, of the planets, of the stars, of the galaxies, of the universe, of every created thing that's ever been discovered or has not yet been discovered but is there, the end will be written over it. Over not just planet earth but planet Mars and planet Venus, over the sun and over the moon, over the constellations, over the black holes and over the star bursts, the end. It's as if we're given here a space view, a view of God looking down at his whole universe of all created things and there is a big banner wrapped around everything and it says, "T-h-e e-n-d. The end."

We're told a bit more about this in Psalm 102. We're told that God will take this world and fold it up like a garment and file it away. That's how easy it is for God to finish this world, to bring it all to a sudden and complete end. It's as easy as folding a t-shirt and putting it in the drawer. That's how quick, that's how comprehensive this world, this universe is coming to an end.

But time is coming to an end as well. It's not just physical things, it's the whole concept of time. There was a time here when this prophet ran through this city, you could've marked it on your sundial, as it were, on such and such a day, at such and such a time, the end came to Jerusalem and so it will be at the very end. God knows the exact time, the

exact year, the exact month, the exact day, the exact hour, the exact minute, the exact second. He's already got it planned. It's on his calendar. If you were to see God's calendar, you would be filing through it. We don't know how many pages are left. There may be one page left. There may be no pages left. There may be thousands of pages left. There may be millions. We do not know, but if we were able to get to the end of the calendar of time, we would notice there in the last box it says, the end. When text will talk no more. When the watch hands will move no further. When the digital numbers will be frozen and time is over.

The end is come. There will be no more diaries. No more planners. No more to-do lists. No more tomorrows because time is over. It's finished. The sands of time have run out and the end is come. Every time you look at your watch, every time that alarm clock buzzes in the morning, look at it, one day that will tick no longer. One day these batteries will cease to pulse. It's over.

The end. It's going to be the end of history. We read the story of this world and we see great nations and great empires rising and falling. We see Egypt rise and fall. Assyria rise and fall. Babylon rise and fall. Greece rise and fall. Rome rise and fall. Great Britain rise and fall. Russia rise and fall. America rise and beginning to fall.

So it will continue as long as the earth continues. History will continue to write out the story of various nations until the nations are no more and another superpower or superpowers take their place. Again, we don't know how many more pages of this history are still to be written but there is a day coming when history will be over. There will be no more history to be written because there are no more events to happen. There will be no more flags and there will be no more anthems and there will be no more Fourth of July. History will be over.

The end is come. Think also of the great movements, the great political movements. There will be written over the Republican party and the Democratic party and the Tea Party and Black Lives Matter and the Tea Part and every other movement, the end has come. There will be written over all the philosophies that fill our universities and colleges, the end. It will be written over all the various false religions and cults: Islam, Hinduism, Romanism, atheism, secularism, the end is come. There will be no more administrations. No more politics. No more monarchies. No more votes. No more referendums. No more elections.

The end is come. Think of all the commerce, all the buying and the selling whether it be on the New York Stock Exchange or Craig's List and everything in between. Money will be no more. Buying and selling will be no more. Making money, losing money, investing money will be no more. All these places filled with shoppers, the end. All the banks and the stockbrokers and the investment bankers, the end. Local banks, international banks, the end. Our businesses, our places of work, our occupations, our callings, the end is come.

Think of all the media, all the newspapers, the end is come. There will be no more headlines because there will be no more news. There will be no more Twitter. There will be no more Facebook. There will be no more Instagram. There will be no more Snapchat. The end is come. There will be no more social networking or real people networking, the end is come. No more television. No more worldwide web. The end is come. All the things that seem so big, so massive, so permanent, and so important, the end will be written over them all.

The end is come. All the speeches. All the articles. All the lessons. All the departments of this and that. All our seminaries. All our universities. All our colleges. All our schools. All our churches. The end is come.

Project yourself forward. Feel the weight, the solemnity of such a moment in time and use that to shrink what seems so important now, so much a priority in the present. What will it all look like when we see the end written over it all? All the things that we read about and talk about and listen to and discuss. Really? Maybe we should write over it already, the end. At least for me, the end. The end of this. The end of that. The end of my obsession with this. The end of my obsession with that. The end of my concern with this world and all its institutions and all its movement and all its ups and downs. Really? Should it really take such a big place in my heart and in my mind and my conversation and in my concerns and anxieties when at the end it's going to be ended and over?

But think of it on a more personal level. I want to speak especially here to unbelievers, to those who are nowhere near ready for this end. You know, for believers, this shouldn't be a fear. When the last trumpet sounds, when we hear the divine declaration from heaven, "The end," there shouldn't be the slightest tremor of fear in a believer and I don't believe there will be. This will be the moment of victory. This will be the moment of promotion. This will be the moment of heavenly glory. This will be the moment we've longed for and hoped for. This is the moment of the vindication of God's glory and God's people. I don't believe he'll allow his people one split second of fear when that declaration is made. Indeed, when that declaration is made, for the believer it's the end of everything that's awful. It's the end of sin. It's the end of temptation. It's the end of indwelling sin and corruption. It's the end of the devil's whispers and lures. It's the end of persecution and mockery and misrepresentation. It's the end of pain and sorrow and death and bereavement. It's the end of loss.

It's the beginning of everything good. There is nothing to fear here for the believer. Indeed when the believer hears that great cry, "The end!" the response should be, "Hallelujah! The end has come!" What a cry, what a crescendo will go up from every corner of the earth from God's people living and raised out of the grave when they hear that great trumpet and they see these archangels coming as a mighty retinue with the God of glory. When they hear that, the end, oh, what a sound. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

But for the unbeliever, it's very different. It's very different. For the unbeliever, this is the end of church. But somebody said, "Yes." Does somebody here say, "That sounds good to me. No more church." Does that not reveal where your true heart is? Because on that

day when you hear the end being declared, do you know what the first thing you'll think of? How can I get to church? How can I hear the Gospel again? Can I have one more opportunity to believe in Jesus? One more opportunity to believe in Jesus and repent of my sins? The end is declared to church, though. You can come to Ball Avenue and hammer on the doors and there will be no one here. God's people will have gone to be with their Savior. There will be no ministers left. There will be no elders left. There will be no deacons left. There will be no godly parents left. There will be no one here to offer you Christ. There will be no one here to point you to the Savior. There will be no one here to tell you what it means to believe and repent. There will be no more overtures of the Gospel. Nothing. Silence. There will be no praises. There will be no word of God. The end is come. The church is over. You'll long for another Sabbath day, the day you used to dread, the day you used to use in here for planning Monday to Saturday and you'll be saying, "Oh, for another Sabbath!" But the end is come.

These prayers at family worship that used to bore you, you used to find so tedious, so repetitive. Your poor father, your poor mother stuttering and stumbling over words as they sought the throne of grace for your soul. You used to despise them, maybe, have contempt for them, and now you say, "Oh, to hear my dad praying for me again! Oh, to have a godly mother beside me to counsel me and it's over!" The end, the end is come.

It's the end of family. It's the end of family and all that family means with love and relationships. Oh, there may be, may it not be, but there may be members of your family in hell with you, but they won't feel like family anymore. There are no bonds, there are no relationships in hell. There is no love in hell. There are only individuals at war with one another.

You think of that rich man, remember from the rich man and Lazarus, who went to hell, and one of his prayers was, "Send Lazarus. Send someone to my brothers and tell them not to come to this awful place." And you think, "That's an awful good prayer to come from hell. That's very kind of him, isn't it, not to want his family to come to hell?" Until you think, but there can be nothing good in hell. There can be no good prayer in hell. There's nothing good there. Why was that man praying for a missionary or an evangelist to be sent to his brothers so that they didn't come there? It was so they wouldn't come and torment him there because he knew his role in bringing them to hell. All the parties he threw for them. All the drink he supplied to them. All the sins he led them into. When they are brought to hell with him, it's only going to add to his misery. That was his motive.

There's no goodness in hell. There's no good prayers. There are no good motives, no good desires. Oh sure, there can be family with us but they'll be enemies. You often hear people saying, "Oh, hell will be great. At least my friends will be there." There will be no friends in hell. By definition, hell is a place of hatred and enmity and anger and malice and ill will. It's not just every man for himself and every woman for herself, it's everyone against everyone else.

There will be no laughter. Well, there will be mocking laughter. There will be malicious laughter as people look at the sufferings of others. You hear, don't you, in these terrible reports of these terrorist atrocities how these wicked and evil men laugh at people as they are killed, taking pleasure in their pain. That's what you get in hell. That's what your friends will be doing in hell. Think of that the next time you laugh at a dirty joke. Think of that the next time you laugh at someone godly. Maybe the next laugh you'll hear is a laugh of a devil in hell laughing at your pain, laughing at your eternal sorrow. That's the only laughter you'll find there.

There will be no social networking. There will be no texting. There will be no tweeting. There will be no snapchatting. There is no Facebook. It's a place of hatred, of hating one another. It's a place of torment.

It's the end of family. It's the end of friendship. It's the end of health of body and mind. Whatever pains we have in our body can be multiplied infinitely, of whatever pains we have in our minds. You think depression is bad here, what do you think it's going to be like there? You see the agonies of those with bipolar and schizophrenia here, what do you think you're going to be like yourself in hell when all restraints are removed? When the end of health and strength has come? When the end of mental sanity has come? Use every day of health and strength of body and soul to seek the Lord while you have it before the end comes.

It's going to be the end of peace and quiet. There will be no peace in hell. Remember the Lord said through the prophet, there is no rest for the wicked. You won't find a quiet corner. You won't find a quiet moment. You'll never have a day off. You'll never have a walk in the park. You'll never enjoy a day like this again. It's the end of all calm and all peace and all tranquility and the beginning of all torment within and without.

It's the end of beauty, the end of seeing anything pretty or handsome or lovely, attractive. It's the end of protection, the shielding of you. It's the end of sinless pleasures. Yes, there are many good things in this world that we can enjoy that are sinless, many sinless pleasures, the problem is we tend to make idols of them and we take good things and we turn them into bad things, and we give too much time, we give too much money, we give too much thought and affection to them, and we take these creature gifts of God and we make them into gods. And the end of these things will come as well, whether it's a hobby or a possession or a car or a home or a cottage or a possession, or whatever. The end will come to it all. Think of that as you go through your life and God gives you good things, sinless pleasures to enjoy, put the end over it all. Remember all these things will come to an end and that will keep it in its right place.

It's also the end of sin as a pleasure. You often hear people say, maybe ministers say, "Sin has no pleasure in it." It's not true, is it? It does. It does. You can deny it. Sin has brought us pleasure at times. It's made us happy. It's made us feel good. In fact, even the Bible says that Moses chose the reproach of Christ rather than the pleasures of sin. Yes, sin has a pleasure in it.

Now, the Bible doesn't teach there is no pleasure in sin, it teaches that the pleasure is short and the pleasure is superficial and the pleasure is damaging. But you know what happens when the end comes for the unbeliever, it's the end of pleasure in sin. It's not the end of sin, it's the end of pleasure in sin. They will still be sinning. Sin will break out in your life as never before, but with not a second of pleasure in it. Not a moment of joy or happiness. It will be the end of all pleasure in sinless things and in sinful things.

The end is come. Why do I tell you these things? Why did Ezekiel tell these people these things before they happened? Why was Ezekiel running through the streets saying, "The end is come"? Why am I saying this here tonight? It's love. It's love. If you think further on in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 18, for example, Ezekiel quotes God in verse 23 of Ezekiel 18, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD?" In other words Ezekiel is saying God is looking down at this scene. He is seeing the end has come and he's seeing the unbelievers in this terrible state and condition, the end of all good and the beginning of all evil, and he's looking down at it and he's saying, "Have I any pleasure in this? Don't think of me," in other words, "as some kind of malicious deity that takes any kind of happiness in this," that he's looking down on it with a smile on his face. Not at all.

He says, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" Do you see what God is doing here? He's saying, "I'm telling you these things. I'm warning you of these things, of the end on a general scale, the end in an individual scale, because I want you to turn, because I want you to change, because I want you to have a better life and an infinitely better eternity." In fact, even at the end of the same chapter 18, it's as if he's saying, "In case you think that was a mistake what I just said, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

Again in Ezekiel 33, the same message comes again. You can read it for yourself. Why will you die? That's the Lord, he's coming and he's saying, "Because this is going to happen, I've sent a messenger to you to warn you and to call you and to plead with you to turn." And he is pleading. It's a beautiful picture. He's saying, "Why will you die?" It's as if the Lord takes the lapels of your soul and he pulls you to him and he says, "Why? Why are you doing this? Why don't you turn? Why are you keeping living like this? Don't you see what's going to happen? Don't you see the end is near, the end is coming? You're nowhere near ready. Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? Why will you die? Why, give me one good reason? Explain it to me. Tell me what you're gaining by this life. Telling me how you think things are going to turn out in the end. Tell me what's your thinking here? Why will you die? Why don't you take heed?"

I hope you can feel the Lord grabbing your soul tonight and trying to shake you out of your stupor and your complacency and he's pleading with you and he's saying, "Come on. Speak to me. Speak. Tell me why. Why persist in unbelief? Why persist in rejecting Christ? Why refuse to repent of your sins? Why continue these sinful habits? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?" And it's a question that he knows you cannot give a good answer to. You can't. Every answer you might give is just so ludicrous. Why?

Try to think about this. What will you think, what will you wish you had done a thousand years from now? What will you wish you had done a million years from now? And another million? What will you wish you had done a billion years from now? Ten billion? A trillion years? Because you know this: hell never ends. Hell never ends. It will never be said of hell: the end is come. Never. It's never ending and it's everlasting. Every day you'll long to hear, you might be here tonight and, "I don't want to hear this anymore. The end stuff, I don't want to hear it. It scares me. It upsets me. I want to get into Monday and Fourth of July and forget all this stuff." The year, the millennia may come when the two words you would love to hear will be, "the end," and you'll never hear them. You'll never hear them.

Why? Why? Why will you die?