

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel

Message 51

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Lot, Ammon & Moab Artist Unknown.

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Ezekiel

Message Fifty-One

THE LORD TAKES EZEKIEL'S WIFE

August 28, 2016

Daniel E. Woodhead

Ezekiel 24:15-27

¹⁵Also the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ¹⁶Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. ¹⁷Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. ¹⁸So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

¹⁹And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? ²⁰Then I said unto them, The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ²¹Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left behind shall fall by the sword. ²²And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. ²³And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away in your iniquities, and moan one toward another. ²⁴Thus shall Ezekiel be unto you a sign; according to all that he hath done shall ye do: when this cometh, then shall ye know that I am the Lord Jehovah. ²⁵And thou, son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart, their sons and their daughters, ²⁶that in that day he that escapeth shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? ²⁷In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him that is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: so shalt thou be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

EZEKIEL IS GIVEN GRIEF

Ezekiel 24:15--16

¹⁵Also the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ¹⁶Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down (ASV, 1901).

God approaches Ezekiel and forewarns him that something that he greatly values will be taken from him instantaneously when it occurs. Further God says that Ezekiel must neither *mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down*. He is clearly given this command to provide another image to those around him regarding the destruction of Jerusalem which is reflecting God's attitude toward these events. Ezekiel is given an incident in his private

life which is made to portray one of wider, prophetic significance. That is, the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians and God's thoughts and emotion regarding these events. It seems that God has wept and been pained over the Jews leaving His comfort, care, and prosperity for sin and degradation. He still has emotional pain over the need to bring stern judgment upon Jerusalem but it is not as open and graphic as it was earlier. That this will happen suddenly to Ezekiel is representative of the speed with which the Babylonians will prevail in the attack on Jerusalem. Ezekiel was to stifle his anguish over the loss he was about to realize. He had to remain quiet and not have any outward displays of emotion.

One can also view this from the realization of the differences of the present experience of this world and a failure of the Jews to embrace the eternality of the soul and its eminent departure to the celestial realm with the Creator. By connecting with God here in time and space and following Him our awareness of the eternality of our souls and our eventual destination is strengthened and our familiarity with this truth is appreciated and continually recognized. This dampens the pain of our experiences here knowing that we all leave here and go to Him. We do not stay here as this experience is only temporary. So Ezekiel is to dampen his grief as an example of the short term pain here and the long term well-being and fulfillment of entering into eternity where there is perfection and not corrupted with the ravages of sin. The Jews who sinned against God greatly and led many away from Him will see this and sense that there is more to life than the here and now. They will get a sense from Ezekiel's action stifling his grief that they are missing something. They will question him, intrigued with this as they have been for all the acting he has done to convey God's prophecies. What they have been doing is relinquishing eternity for sinful pleasure.

EZEKIEL OBEYS GOD AS HIS WIFE DIES

Ezekiel 24:17-18a

¹⁷Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men ^{18a}So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; (ASV, 1901).

God continues with His instruction to refrain from the customary mourning for the dead. Normally they would remove their headress (*headtire*) and put ashes upon their head, They would also take off their shoes and walk barefoot (II Samuel 15:30), cover their lips and beard (Micah 3:7; Leviticus 13:45), as well as eat certain foods designated for mourning. He was commanded to not follow any of these practices displaying his grief. Then he delivered the Word of the Lord in the morning as he had done before. In the evening his wife was taken from him but he faithfully obeyed the Lord's commandments to abstain from outwardly mourning her. Death dissolved his marriage and he lost the *desire of thine eyes*, his beloved wife. This represented the dissolution of the relationship between Jehovah and Jerusalem which was now completely severed. Now instead of a painful wailing cry, the prophet's pain should be a stifled to be silent. A similar message was also given to Jeremiah,

Jeremiah 16:4–9

⁴They shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung upon the face of the ground; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the heavens, and for the beasts of the earth.

⁵For thus saith Jehovah, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament, neither bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith Jehovah, even lovingkindness and tender mercies. ⁶Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them; ⁷neither shall men break bread for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. ⁸And thou shalt not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and to drink. ⁹For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride (ASV, 1901).

THE PEOPLE ASK EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 24:18b-22

^{18b} and I did in the morning as I was commanded ¹⁹And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? ²⁰Then I said unto them, The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ²¹Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left behind shall fall by the sword. ²²And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men (ASV, 1901).

So Ezekiel the obedient servant of the Lord did exactly as was commanded of him. He shared the prophecy with them that he received the next morning after his wife had suddenly died. The people were very intrigued with his response to the death of his wife whom he greatly loved. As the Lord had planned this gave Ezekiel an opportunity to provide them with a lesson that God wanted to impart. God explains through Ezekiel that even though it is the Babylonians coming in to Jerusalem to seize it and destroy the Temple it is actually God who is doing it through them. They are not acting independently. Nebuchadnezzar is a mere tool in the hand of God to carry out His will. The people had an arrogant pride which manifested itself in a sense of the Temple itself being a level of protection that would save them. They worshipped the Temple itself as the *desire of your eyes*, as well as believing that it gave them a supernatural power to persevere any situation. They did this with the Ark of the Covenant too and other objects ordained by God. They assumed it was the object that held the special power when all the time it is God. What they would experience would be the death of the children they loved and the destruction of the Temple that they relied upon. God wanted them to realize that it is Him they should

be focusing in on and not the objects on the earth. They left Him and the spiritual reality of the celestial realm for the here and now. This is crass materialism. The Temple and their dear possessions would now be taken from them. The false prophets had instilled in the people a reliance on their promises that the exiles from the 605 B.C. captivity and the 597 B.C. captivity would soon return to Jerusalem. This added to their love for the Temple and gave them a memory of returning to it while they were exiled in Babylon. Psalm 137 displays the fervor with which they remembered Jerusalem, not God but the city and Temple.

Psalm 137:1-9

¹By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept, When we remembered Zion. ²Upon the willows in the midst thereof We hanged up our harps. ³For there they that led us captive required of us songs, And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. ⁴How shall we sing Jehovah's song In a foreign land? ⁵If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her skill. ⁶Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I remember thee not; If I prefer not Jerusalem Above my chief joy. ⁷Remember, O Jehovah, against the children of Edom The day of Jerusalem; Who said, Raze it, raze it, Even to the foundation thereof. ⁸O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed, Happy shall he be, that rewarded thee As thou hast served us. ⁹Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones Against the rock (ASV, 1901).

NO MOURNING FOR THE POPULATION GOING INTO EXILE

Ezekiel 24:23-24

²³And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away in your iniquities, and moan one toward another. ²⁴Thus shall Ezekiel be unto you a sign; according to all that he hath done shall ye do: when this cometh, then shall ye know that I am the Lord Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

God is instructing the Jews already in Babylon to not perform the normal mourning practices because there will be nobody to comfort them. All of the remaining citizens of Jerusalem will be mourning too. There will be no comforters there either. When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians everyone was in intense grief because everyone was affected. The tragedy was so large that any public expression of grief seemed insignificant. They would simply waste (*pine*) away because of their sins while groaning among themselves. This punishment was prophesied when God gave them His Law on Sinai.

Leviticus 26:39-40

³⁹And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. ⁴⁰And they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that, because they walked contrary unto me (ASV, 1901).

The catastrophe would send all the exiles into a state of shock and would force them to acknowledge their Lord: *When this cometh, then shall ye know that I am the Lord Jehovah.*

EZEKIEL NO LONGER SILENT

Ezekiel 24:25-27

²⁵And thou, son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart, their sons and their daughters, ²⁶that in that day he that escapeth shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? ²⁷In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him that is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: so shalt thou be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

The Lord lifted the restriction on Ezekiel's speech. He no longer had to be silent. God gave two signs in the prophecy. The first sign of his silence was after his wife's death. That was followed by the second sign which was the restoration of his speech. The first sign represents judgment and death. The second sign points to salvation and life. The siege of Jerusalem lasted about two and a half years which is the length of time the Lord stopped him from speaking. A fugitive (*he that escapeth*) came to Babylon and reported to the exiles what had happened. In his coming Ezekiel's speech was opened. Until the news came Ezekiel was silent concerning the frightening reality of the prophecies he had been given by God. The people will now believe what Ezekiel had been saying about God's warnings. The Jews in Babylon will now accept the truth that came through him from God and not the false prophets. He did continue to prophecy about the destruction of the surrounding Gentile nations (expressed in chapter twenty-five and beyond). Ezekiel had indeed spoken but the people did not listen. For all intents and purposes, he may as well have been dumb before the Lord commanded him to be so. Because they did not listen to him for all the prophecies the Lord had given him. Now they will listen to his subsequent messages. God may delay his judgments for He is longsuffering, but they always come. His time of grace runs out and He will deal with sin usually very drastically. We do not escape God's judgments by ignoring his messenger. Nothing in this world is permanent. The things and people held dearest here on earth will some day be taken away. If we are to come through our times of grief with faith, we must have spiritual resources before the tragedy comes. The penalties for violating God's Laws are deserved by a guilty nation.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE PROPHECY AGAINST AMMON

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