

Message #9

Ezekiel 6:1-14

In April of 2016, the Israeli Defense Forces discovered an Hamas-built “terror tunnel” that extended from the Gaza Strip into Israel. The tunnel was 98 feet deep. Tunnels like this run anywhere from 500 yards to nearly two miles. The purpose of these tunnels is to get assassins into Israel so they can kill Jews.

Now one question we have is why in the world would God permit that? Why would God permit non-Jews to sneak into Jewish land and kill Jews? One answer to that question is found right here in this text.

BECAUSE OF ISRAEL’S IDOLATRY GOD WILL SET HIS FACE AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE AND THEIR PROMISED LAND AND CAUSE HORRIBLE JUDGMENTS.

God permits bad things to happen to His people because they refuse to turn to Him and turn from their idolatrous ways. This is not difficult to figure out. He allows forces who should not be in Israel’s land to come into Israel’s land and do destructive things because she refuses to respond to God and His Word.

God does the same today in the lives of His people. If they refuse to turn away from sin, He will make their existence miserable.

Now you would think that when God warns His people that if you don’t turn to Me, I will permit some very negative and chastising things to come against you, that His people would immediately say we need to get back on track with our relationship with God. But they don’t.

In the previous chapters, God gave four judgment signs to Israel through Ezekiel:

- 1) The sign of the brick (4:1-3);
- 2) The sign of Ezekiel’s lying on his sides (4:4-8);
- 3) The sign of the unclean food (4:9-14);
- 4) The sign of Ezekiel’s shaved head and divided hair (5:1-4).

Now at this point God approaches this from another angle. There are basically three themes that Ezekiel develops in this chapter to show Israel why He would permit this:

THEME #1 – God will destroy His own people for their idolatry. **6:1-7**

Verse 1 says, “And the word of the LORD came to me saying...” Now God gives a direct revelatory message to Ezekiel that He wants him to communicate. **The specific message is that because of His own people’s idolatry, God is going to sovereignly orchestrate a ferocious judgment on His people and their land.**

Notice **verse 2** begins with “Son of man.” Ezekiel is a man, but he is on a Divine mission. This message is a sacred message to be presented to His people. Ezekiel is a man sanctioned by God to receive and communicate this message.

Now the message God gives to Ezekiel in **verse 2** is that he is to “set your face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.”

Now the phrase “set your face toward” something means to turn your face an attention toward some object with “hostile intentions.” When God uses this phrase, it is not good. This phrase is used throughout the first 38 chapters in Ezekiel some 14 times (Ezek. 4:3, 7; 6:2; 13:17; 14:8; 15:7, 7; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2). It is often used when uttering some prophetic oracle against Israel.

Now the specific target of the prophesy was to be against “the Mountains of Israel.” Now this phrase “mountains of Israel” only occurs in Ezekiel (6:2-3; 19:9; 33:28; 34:13-14; 35:12; 36:1, 4, 8; 37:22; 38:8; 39:2, 4, 17). The mountains of Israel run the entire length of the Promised Land from north to south. They represent the totality of the land. The mountains and high places of Israel were used as places of idolatrous worship. So the entire land was idolatrous and would be judged. This land was the sacred Promised Land, but because it had become a land of idolatry, God would judge it.

There is nothing so depressing than to see something or someone that once reflected the glory of God a pathetic disaster because of the judgment of God.

The mountains of Israel are specifically referred to by Jesus Christ and in the book of Revelation. There is coming a day when mountains will dramatically be used for prophetic judgment purposes once again. We know from Deuteronomy 11:11 that mountains and hills dominate the Promised Land. **So when Ezekiel is told by God to set his face against the mountains, then this will be some kind of special judgment against Israel’s Promised Land, specifically a judgment that involves the mountains.**

Verse 3 starts off with God telling Ezekiel to say to the mountains that they need to listen to the Word of God. Now obviously this is a nice way of saying that the people who live in the land of Israel need to listen to the Word of God. This is the reason why God has to send His judgment against His own people. They will not listen to the Word of God. This is the whole problem.

Now what God says to people living in the mountains of Israel, the hills of Israel, the ravines of Israel and the valleys is that God was going to bring a severe judgment against the people living in those areas. In other words, God is warning that He will bring a judgment against everyone living in the land. That is how corrupt it had become.

God had told Moses that if His people did not obey Him and His Word that He would turn His face against His own people and do precisely what Ezekiel is told here (Lev. 26:14-17; 30-33).

Learn a very important lesson here; God does not ever forget about one single word of any prophetic thing He promises.

In **verses 3-6** God says He would allow some military to sweep into the land and destroy everything. He would destroy their “high places” (v. 4); their “altars” (v. 5); their “dwellings” or houses (v. 6) and their cities (v. 6). **God is saying I am going to wipe out everything.**

Now a “high place” was usually some place of worship of some false deity that was located up on top of some hill or mountain. The Canaanites were known to build their false temples in these locations, thinking it made them closer to God.

What God wanted Israel to do when they got into the land was to destroy these places, but instead she worshipped at these places. Most of these high places were dedicated to false gods and idols (I Kings 11:7-10).

Prior to the temple being built, God seemed to permit His people to worship in some high place dedicated to Him as a temporary place of worship (I Kings 3:2). For example, Samuel worshipped God at a high place (I Sam. 9:12-14) and so did Solomon. Solomon did not anger God for worshipping Him at a high place, but because he sacrificed and burned incense there, which was something the priests were supposed to do, he did anger God (I Kings 3:3).

However, once the Temple was built, worship was to be done there. Places of false worship were to be destroyed. **Most people do not realize the danger of false religion. The interfaith movement of today is one of the most devilish movements in existence. What most don't realize is that this kind of thing angers God.**

We are living in a delusional “la-la-land.” Here in the United States we don't really think that God would send some judgment because we tolerate all religions, including false religion. In fact, we promote the proliferation of all religious thought and dialogue as if it is some progressive form of our highly educated tolerance.

If you take a hard-line stand against a false religion like Islam, you will not please the people; in fact, one politician will call you “deplorable.” But in God's mind, what is deplorable is the toleration of false religion.

Years ago this country did recognize the dangers of false religion. This is why the Mormons were chased out of the Midwest and landed in Utah. Our country had spiritual wits and it recognized that it is dangerous to permit false religions to exist because those false religions pull people away from the one true God of the Bible and can bring the judgment of God.

But our country is not interested in obeying God any more than Israel was interested in obeying God.

So God says in **verses 4-7** that He would take four specific judgmental actions:

Judgmental Action #1 - God would smash the altars and lay dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of and around the smashed altars. **6:5**

God would sovereignly permit foreigners to come into the land to kill people and destroy their idols. When you see dead bodies lying around, you realize this is not a place of God's blessings.

Judgmental Action #2 - God would destroy houses and cities and make them desolate. **6:6a**

God would sovereignly permit foreign powers to come into their cities and homes and destroy them.

Judgmental Action #3 - God would blot out the idolatrous works of His people. **6:6b**

The Hebrew word "blot out" (machah) was the same term God used concerning the flood when He destroyed all living flesh as a punishment for evil (Gen. 6:7; 7:4, 23).

Judgmental Action #4 - God would slay many Jews and they would know He is Jehovah. **6:7**

When the property of God angers God to this level, it is over. People will be left saying God did it and nothing we could do could stop it.

THEME #2 – God will permit a remnant of His people to survive His destructive judgment.
6:8-10

As God is pronouncing these horrible judgments against His own people, He still demonstrates His amazing grace. He says in **verse 8** that He will permit a remnant of His people to escape judgment. This is pure grace. **God has always preserved Israel even when she did not deserve to be preserved.**

Now this message would have resonated with Ezekiel's audience because they were part of the remnant who were permitted to escape. What God wanted them to do was remember why He permitted all of this to happen. He wanted His own people to admit their evil sin that had caused this.

God wants His people to recognize their own depravity. He wants His people to recognize the hurt and anguish that they have caused Him because of their evil, abominable sin. God wants His people to realize that He does not permit horrible judgment to come against His people for no reason. He does not "inflict disaster" on His people for the fun of it. When He does this, it is exactly what His people deserve.

Verse 9 is powerful. We need to realize that when we sin we hurt God. The key to being right with God is that we "loathe" ourselves. We don't flaunt our sin; we loathe ourselves because of our sin. People right with God do not ever love their sin; they loathe it. They do not flaunt their sin; they hate it. That is the critical key to experiencing God's grace.

THEME #3 – God will track down all of His people for their evil abominations. **6:11-14**

Some people think they can move to some remote spot and get away with their sin. Some think they can move to the Bahamas and forget about God. Some think they can go to Las Vegas where what happens there stays there and live life their own way without a care in the world. Some think they can just retire to some safe area and enjoy the good life and don't have to even think about God, His Word or will. Well, God says to His people you can run but you cannot hide. God tracks His people down.

God says if you move away from Me, I will track you down. I'll come after you and I will send a series of negative things that will crush you.

Now God goes back to His theme of judgment He will send against His own people because of their evil abominations:

1) There will be the judgment of the sword. **6:11a**

2) There will be the judgment of famine. **6:11b**

3) There will be the judgment of plagues. **6:11c**

I just read this week that doctors are perplexed because it appears as though leprosy has now entered the United States and they cannot figure out how or why.

But God is very clear to point out He does this kind of thing as a judgment. He did to Israel.

Those who are living far away from the land will be targeted by God with a plague. **6:12a**

Those who are living in the land will be targeted by God with the sword. **6:12b**

Those who are living in the land and do not die by the sword will die by starving. **6:12c**

God says it doesn't matter where you are, when I send My judgment, it will track you down.

God says in **verse 13** that when He does this, the entire nation of Israel will know He did it.

God would make the Promised Land like the "wilderness toward Diblah." Most Hebrew manuscripts read "Diblah"; but there are a few that read "Riblah." In Hebrew there is a similarity between the Hebrew letter "d" and the Hebrew letter "r."

Riblah was a city located in Syria and there is no record of a city in Judah named Diblah.

However, what we conclude by the context is that it was obviously a place known by these people as a very desolate place that did not have much life in it.

There are many idols God's people have today. There is the idol of greed and money. There is the idol of fame and success. There is the idol of lust and sex. There is the idol of business and sports.

Ezekiel says to God's people, you are breaking the heart of God and if you don't come to the place where you "loathe" yourself because of your sin, God will cause horrible things to happen to His own people.

God is a jealous God and He will not share His glory with another.

God does not ever let His people get away with sin forever. He gives them time to face it and turn from it, but if they don't He will track them down. That is exactly what He says in Ezekiel 6.