

## 033 Would Ezekiel Stand a Better Chance in the Church Today? Part 8

### Study 8

Ezekiel Chapters 17.

The King James Bible throughout.

We have studied up to now God calling and preparing His Prophet Ezekiel to warn His people the Children of Israel of His wrath and coming Judgment and the demise of the great city Jerusalem because of Israel's rebellion, wickedness and sin. God's heart was broken over His beloved people the Jews, He wanted to bring this nation to such a place of relationship with Jehovah God that they would be an example to the world and live as the Trinity intended before Adam and Eve gave the dominion of the earth to Satan.

Since that time they were a troublesome nation full of complaining, disbelief and disobedience. Our studies show them in Ezekiel's day, to be totally wicked and very far from God.

We have also noted that we in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century even with our knowledge of our Bibles, our experienced Leaders, Pastors and evangelists, our multiplex churches, our TV ministries, our Christian books, CD's, DVD's and magazines we could even be just as far from God as Israel was. The question then is, why are our churches just as full of people in pain, on walking sticks, in wheel chairs, deaf and hurting, dieing of cancer etc, as our hospitals are? We have to wake up to the fact that the world outside are not convinced the church has the answer even if the people inside believe it has. They see what we see but are not so forgiving, they tell us the truth.

Oh I know many will not agree with me and that's OK, I know that many are being saved and the Word taken to far off lands I am not denying that, but if the body of Christ, particularly in the western world was even something like the early church were in Acts, Jesus would not have to tell Oral Roberts "I cannot come back yet because of the state of My church" (see study 2, CD called 'Wake up call'), obviously the Lord is not pleased with us. As I have said before many are *in* church but few are *in* Christ. I am asking are we living and walking close enough to Jesus that all the ailments mentioned above can be dealt with next Sunday morning or more important if Jesus came back for His saints before you finished reading these pages would you still be here reading it when He had gone?

**Think about it!**

God didn't tell us about Ezekiel and his battle to get God's message across to Israel as just a history lesson. He gave this story to warn us today that loose living, Christian or not, has to be paid for. He had to do the same in Noah's day and the Bible says, "*as the days of Noah were so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be*" Mathew 24:37.

I hope you understand my heart *please!*

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[Hi, Bob Here. I feel I need to emphasize that my brother Bill is mostly speaking to the Western Church in these studies in Ezekiel. We know of the suffering and persecution that so many saints in China and other communistic and Islamic countries have to endure because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. Many are thrown out of their families, their jobs, their communities while others are imprisoned, tortured and killed because they have made Jesus Lord of their lives. They live lives of holiness and Christ likeness the likes of which, we in the west can only imagine because we live lives of such Christian ease. When the communists took over China early in the last century, after all the Christian and western missionaries were deported from China, there were around 750,000 Chinese Christians left in the country. The western missionaries and organizations didn't have much faith in those Chinese Christians and were in despair that the church in China would just die. Since the late 1980's as China has opened up more again to the west, the mission organizations were totally amazed at what had happened in those "dark and silent" days of Chinese isolation. Those believers truly believed and lived daily on the edge of death or torture. They spread the gospel everywhere and it is now reckoned there are over 35 Million Born Again Christians in China. The church in China now constitutes the second largest evangelical community in the world - all without our western style Christianity - without Bibles or Bible colleges or western preachers, just their 'Love for the Lord even unto Death' life style and the release of the power of the Holy Spirit. It was and is very similar in the former Soviet Union and believe it or not, in many Islamic countries.

So Bill's challenge to us in the west is that what Ezekiel had in his day, 'would he have a better chance in the (western) church today' in comparison to those wonderful saints I've mentioned above.]

Chapter 17, Verse 3.

*Thus says the Lord God; a great eagle with great wings, long winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours came unto Lebanon and took the highest branch of the cedar  
4. He cropped off the top of his young twigs and carried it into a land of traffic.  
5. He took also of the seed of the land and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters and set it as a willow tree.*

The great eagle is reckoned to be the finest of the bird species a magnificent bird indeed and in this context the eagle represents Nebuchadnezzar; he came from Babylon and took the highest branch of the cedar. We read in 2. Kings 24 that Nebuchadnezzar came down from Babylon to Jerusalem and took the new King of Judah Jehoiachin being that highest branch, he was about 18 years old when he became king and had only reigned about three months. He was a bad king as was his father and his reign was a very short one. King Nebuchadnezzar took the cream of the city, the educated people the princes and took them back to Babylon. He made a chap called Mattaniah king over Jerusalem but changed his name to Zedekiah it was this man who Ezekiel showed Israel in a mime that would escape from Jerusalem but be caught and killed...and so it was! (See study 6)

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Verse 4

*He (Nebuchadnezzar) cropped off the top of his young twigs and carried it into the land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants.*

Verse 5

*He took also of the seed of the land and planted it in a fruitful field: he placed it by great waters and set it as a willow tree.*

2 Kings 24; 14:16 tells us that some 10,000 captives were taken and all the mighty men of valour including all the craftsmen and smiths, only the poorest remained. Nebuchadnezzar set Zedekiah on the throne over Judah and his reign was intended to be a prosperous one referred to as being planted by great waters and set as a willow tree. The root Hebrew word for willow is “to overflow” as the willow thrives on water. The Babylonian king placed the new king on a major traffic route by road and by river and he prospered for several years. The Lord approved of this alliance because He had a bigger plan for Jerusalem. He wanted to give king Nebuchadnezzar an opportunity to mix with His people and for them to be a testament to God.

Verse 6

*And it grew and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him; so it became a vine and brought forth branches and shot forth sprigs.*

Under the kingship of Zedekiah the kingdom was to prosper but not to become powerful and its roots were under him meaning Zedekiah made allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar to whom Judah owed its peace and very existence as a separate state. His sons and other princes also enjoyed prosperity under this alliance at least for a time.

Verse 7

*There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and behold this vine did bend her roots toward him that he shot forth her branches towards him that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.*

This other great eagle was the Pharaoh Hophra the king of Egypt. And the vine, speaking of Judah did bend her roots towards Egypt. The word bend indicates a designed effort and not a natural growth towards the Pharaoh. This illustrates still the longing of the Jewish heart of Israel towards Egypt. In this move it was Zedekiah’s intention to throw off his dependence on Babylon and breaking the covenant the king of Babylon made with the king of Judah thus disobeying the word of the Prophet of the Lord even after having a goodly measure of prosperity and the vine bearing much fruit.

Jeremiah 37, 6: 7: 8.

*Then came the Word of the Lord unto the Prophet Jeremiah saying;  
Thus says the Lord the God of Israel, thus shall you say to the king of Judah that sent you unto me to enquire of me; behold Pharaoh’s army which is come forth to help you shall return to Egypt into their own land.*

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Zedekiah, the king of Judah was not content with what God had given him. He had security, lands, water in abundance, fields and vines all as the provision of God through Nebuchadnezzar, but being full of pride ingratitude and ambition he was not satisfied he wanted more so he went outside of God's provision to get it. He brought the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar upon Judah by "bending Judah's roots towards Egypt" and Pharaoh Hophra in seeking a friendship and an alliance with him instead. This was not in the plan of God and although a great army was sent out from Egypt to support Zedekiah it was sent back and the Chaldeans came against Jerusalem instead.

The covenant made with Nebuchadnezzar was sworn in God's name and so it was His covenant therefore He must avenge the violation of His covenant on the perjurer. Man is expected to keep his oaths even to his own detriment. Ps. 15:4.

Almost from the time the Children of Israel left Egypt they had a longing to go back, time and again they said to Moses "we would not have staved in Egypt" "was there not water and food in Egypt" and so on, and here they are again reaching out to that land of slavery.

It is accepted that Egypt is a type of the world and we can see that some Christians today often look back to where God has brought them from with some longing and desire to taste the things the world offers and backslide bringing open shame upon the Lord and what He did on the cross.

Back in Genesis 16 we read the account of Abrahams interfering with God's plan. God's promise was that He would multiply Abraham's seed as the sand on the seashore or the stars in the heavens. But approaching 100 years old and Sarah still without child they both began to question God. Tired of waiting they no longer believed God's promise and set their hopes on an Egyptian slave girl. The path of unbelief is full of degradation but hope in God springs eternal.

As Williams puts it:

"Galatians declares that Sarah and Hagar represent the principles of Law and Grace; Hagar represents Salvation by works and Sarah Salvation by faith and these two principles are directly opposed to each other. Ishmael was born out of mans planning and energy, Isaac was born as a result of God's planning and energy".

In the birth of Ishmael, which was the birth of the Arab nations, God had nothing to do with it and as a result we have had multiplied unrest in the Middle East between two half brothers ever since.

Zedekiah did the same thing in bending the nation's roots towards Egypt against God's planning for Israel, with disastrous results. When will we learn that to follow after God with all our hearts is the best thing for us? We cannot rely on our own understanding.

Chapter 17, Verse 22,

*Thus says the Lord God I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs and bear fruit and be a goodly cedar and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish I the Lord have spoken and have done it.*

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These verses refer to the Kingdom of God being established and the restoration of the Kingdom of David under the Lordship of the Messiah referred to as the highest branch and it will be set in the highest mountain of Israel. At the moment the mountains of Israel are not the highest so this refers to the highest in Israel at the 2<sup>nd</sup> advent of Christ. The Mount of Olives will be split in two resulting in “a very great valley” (v4) through which Israel will escape the Antichrist and a great physical upheaval to the surface of the land of Israel will take place according to Zech. 14; 1-5. The Dead Sea will be healed and become fresh water full of fish. Ezek. 47. The deserts will blossom as a rose and many other wonderful changes will take place Isa.35.

All this will be because the highest branch, the restoration of Israel and of David through the Messiah who will come and restore all things and rule over the kingdom of David and the house of Jacob forever.

*Isaiah 9; 6-7. For unto us a child is born unto us a child is given and the government shall be upon His shoulder and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The prince of Peace.*

*Hosea 3; 4-5 The Children of Israel shall abide many days without a King and without a Prince and without a Sacrifice and without an Image and without an Ephod and without Teraphim. Afterward shall the Children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their king and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.*

*Revelation 11; 15 The seventh Angel sounded and there were great voices in Heaven saying The Kingdom of this world are become the Kingdom's of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever.*

Hosea's wife Gomer, a prostitute left Hosea “for many days” and had now come back to him even in her deplorable condition to be his wife again. She called him Ishi, which means “My Husband”, and she would never play the harlot any more. What a wonderful type of the condition of Israel. God Himself called them harlots and they had rejected their God for the heathen's gods but just like Gomer, Israel will return to their God in the last days to reign with Him never to roam anymore, Praise God.

The tender one who will plant it upon a high mountain is Christ of the root of Jesse Isa 11; 1 and Isa; 53. It is the Messiah's Kingdom that will be in the height of Israel, and all the other trees of the field (the Nations of the world) shall know that He, Jesus Christ the Messiah is KING.

Verse 24 reveals God's plan for the end of the end times and says that God has brought down the high tree and the Green tree, meaning mans selfish and proud dominion which has replaced the true and pure dominion that the Trinity gave man in the Garden and it will be replaced by the “Low tree” and the “dry tree” which refers to Israel which will be made to flourish and prosper under God becoming the most powerful nation in the world in the coming Kingdom Age.

Much of the world even the Christian world, sometimes scratch their heads and question the policies and ways of the nation of Israel, but they are under enormous pressure to give away land in exchange for peace, and this pressure often comes from their ‘friends’ the USA. The Christian world knows that all the land right up to and passed Hazor and Dan in the North over the mountains to the East now Jordon, and down to the Gulf of Aqaba in the South The Lord gave to His people the Jews.

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Bit-by-Bit that land has been given away and has shrunk, smaller and smaller until it is only a few miles wide and only a little longer. But thank God it will not be long before that ALL the land will be restored to the Jews and right in the middle will be the new Temple from which the Lord will rule the world from His throne and He will remember His covenant with Israel and will establish an Everlasting Covenant with them and the Jews will rule with Him. Wow won't that upset a few people!

Chapter 18; Verse 1.

*The word of the Lord came unto me again saying, what mean you that you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge?*

The miseries and suffering of the people in Jerusalem, the war with king Nebuchadnezzar and the disappointment with Egypt was, so they thought due to the sins of their fathers. They considered themselves to be righteous and blamed their fathers and God for the trouble they were in. Yes the fathers had sinned and were a rebellious race, they were very far from God as we have seen over the passed 8 studies, not only had the fathers given a very bad example so had the priests in the Temple. Sin was catching from the Temple downward but God was not letting the offspring get away from judgment by passing the blame on their fathers or the Pastors.

Verse 3

*As I live said the Lord God you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are Mine as the soul of the father so also the soul of the son is Mine: **the soul that sins it shall die.***

We must remember these words of the Father God Jehovah;  
**The souls that sins it shall die.**

So wicked and perverse were the Children of Israel at this time, so deep in sin and rebellion towards their God they could not think straight, they were not willing to listen to the man of God in their midst, not willing to repent and get right with their Maker so they blamed their parents and the Pastors of the day for their sin. But God would not have any part of this excuse. God went to great lengths to tell them the difference between the righteous and the sinner. He also told them that ALL souls are His, the soul of the fathers and the souls of the sons. That being so He has the right to make the rules by which men, fathers and son should live.

Let us look at this ruling by God a little closer and as we do remember although we are studying the Old Testament this applies to us today, and before you tell me we are living in the new Testament and are under Grace and we have a new covenant etc etc. Please read 2 Timothy 3.16 and in case you don't I will type it out for you:

***ALL** scripture is given by inspiration of GOD and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

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Verse 5 to 9

*If a man be just and do that which is lawful and right and has not eaten upon the mountains neither has lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel neither has defiled his neighbour's wife nor come near to a menstruous women. And has not oppressed any but has restored to the debtor his pledge, has spoiled none by violence has given bread to the hungry and covered the naked with a garment. He who has not given forth upon usury neither has taken any increase, who has withdrawn his hand from iniquity, has executed true judgment between man and man, has walked in my statutes and kept My judgments, to deal truly, he is just, **he shall surely live** says the Lord.*

God gave Moses The Law by which men and women were to live and here God was reminding Israel that they were not keeping it. See Leviticus 18 for most of what He says here.

*Has not eaten upon the mountains*, It was on the mountains and high places that men made idols of other gods and worshipped them there. God's law was that He was to be worshipped in His Holy Temple and nowhere else.

*Not Eaten* refers to the feasts that were connected with sacrifices and burnt offerings see Exodus 32:6

*Not lifted up his eyes to the idols of Israel*, Idols and images of false gods were places around the city and towns to remind the people to glance and look with lust in their eyes as they passed by. (See study 4) Satan made sure that this became a superstition, which became lust of the eyes similar to harlots whose eye went to and fro eagerly after their prey. God said the idols of Israel, not the heathen, not merely those of the Gentiles but those of Israel!

*Not defiled his neighbour's wife*- had not committed adultery.

*Nor come near a menstruous woman*, this was a common practice believe it or not, but also resulted in leprosy and other dreadful diseases.

*To restore the debtors pledge*, if a man gave his coat as collateral it was to be returned before sunset. Exodus 22: v 26.

This and more was the law set out in Exodus and Leviticus by God and Israel was to live by these laws, but now through false teaching and bad example from the Leaders in the Temple they were so far from Him that He had to send His Prophet Ezekiel to preach Righteousness to them and the consequences of not living God's way of life.

He clears up some false teaching about father's sins being passed to sons in verse 10. There was now so much sin in Israel that God's law through Moses was forgotten, missed read, and wrongly preached leading Israel to question God and His law. They argued that sin had been passed down from father to son and also that a wayward and wicked son would pass on that wickedness to his righteous son. There are 16 attributes of a righteous man (or son) in the early verses of Chapter 18 by which he will live. There are 12 sins of the wicked from verse 10 by which he will die in his iniquity. From verse 14 there are twelve righteous attributes of a son of a wicked father by which he will live. How about writing them out?

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This is what Ezekiel preached to Israel and still they argued in verse 19:

*Why does not a son bear the iniquity of the father?*

Israel found it difficult to reconcile this revelation with the Law of Moses which said God would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation Exodus 20:5 and Deut 5: 9 They failed to get the full message of the complete truth which said **of them that hate Me**. If the children hated God as did their fathers then sins would be passed on to the children not because they were their father's children but because they sinned in their own right as their fathers sinned. That is what God was telling Israel, a son will be answerable for his own sins and a father will be answerable for his own sins, and God said for the second time in this chapter **the soul that sinneth it shall die**. These people read the Law of Moses and read only what they wanted to accept. Don't we do the same? We know what the Bible says but only believe what suits us and our family circumstances. We apply our opinion, what's fashionable at the time; believe what this 'man of God' says and what was on God TV so it must be true. We forget that God sent HIS Word for us to live by not another's interpretation. I think we have reminded ourselves before -Study to show yourself approved of God.

Verse 21

*But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed and keep all my statutes and do that which is lawful and right **he shall surely live he shall not die**. All his transgressions that he has committed they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.*

*V 24 But when the righteous turn away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does shall he live? All his righteousness he has done shall not be mentioned: (or taken into account) in his trespass that he had trespassed and in his sin that he has sinned in them shall he die.*

Israel still thought the ways of God unfair! They said God's ways were unequal. They were saying how could a righteous man who had lived a good and honest life if he should return to a wicked sinful life why should he not have eternal life in heaven? Why would he not be rewarded for the righteousness he had done, why should he die because of one sin?

God did not agree with this thinking and told Israel that sin is sin and it is sin that will damn the soul.

He said that His ways were equal but He would judge the sin of the person whether righteous or wicked. The sole responsibility of life or death is with the individual, not with God. He said the ways of man are unequal because man expects justice when injustice has been done and expects righteousness when sin has been committed.

Today we need to keep short accounts with God to insure our eternal hope, there is only one way of escape and that is through genuine repentance and turning from sin and staying in the grace of God continually.

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There is a great danger that what Israel believed has crept into the church of today. I know a whole movement and other Pastors and Leaders that side with Israel's beliefs; and pass on those beliefs to their congregations. My concern is that they will never know if they are correct in their thinking until 2 seconds after they take their last breath then they *will* know but then it may well be too late to change their minds.

Please read these chapters over again.