

Life-Study of Ezekiel Review – Section 2

The Degradation of God's People

The second section of Ezekiel reveals the **judgment of God by fire**. In this section we see that God judges His people and the heathen nations by Himself as a consuming fire.

Israel was **God's elect**, His chosen people, and **God's vine**. God's vine is for the accomplishing of God's economy. This vine is a combination of the Divine Being with many human beings. As we abide in Him, the divine life flows forth in fruit-bearing, and grapes are produced. Eventually, these grapes become wine to cheer both God and man. Israel was also **God's bride**, His counterpart, for His satisfaction. God does not want to be alone but wants to have a bride. The house of Israel was also **God's flock** and were chosen by God to be a **precious and peculiar treasure**.

The Condition of the People of Israel

Unfortunately, the actual condition of Israel was very poor. The people of Israel were God's elect, but they became **rebels** against God. They were God's vine, but they became **briars and thorns**. Moreover, although the people of Israel were God's bride, they became a **harlot**. God's flock became **scorpions** with no producing, only stinging. Finally, God's precious treasure, had become **dross**, the waste material that remains after gold and silver have been refined. This picture of Israel can be applied to the situation of today's Christianity.

The Reasons for Israel's Degradation

How could such a wonderful people's situation become so poor? The first reason was their **idolatry**. All those who have idols within them and yet seek God in an outward way cannot find God. Anything within us that is a substitute for God is an idol. If we realize this, we will see that the cause of the degradation of Israel and of the church is exactly the same.

Idols bring people into **association with the world**. Through idols, the people of Israel were brought into contact and association with the world, that is, with the heathen nations. After the people of Israel became associated with the nations, they began to walk after the manners and customs of the nations. We need to realize that the three causes of the fall and degradation of Israel are also the main causes of the fall and degradation of today's Christianity. We are a holy people, and for this reason we must be different from the worldly people.

God's Judgment Upon His People

God's judgment upon His people was based on the **righteousness of God**, the **holiness of God**, and the **glory of God**. God's glory is versus idols. In a vision Ezekiel was brought to Jerusalem and entered the temple. Because of the idols in the temple, the glory of God withdrew step by step, leaving the temple, the city, and the people.

God's holiness is God's separation and sanctification, and this is versus dross. God's holiness cannot tolerate any kind of dross. **Not only does our hatred need to be burned, but even our love needs to be burned**. Likewise, both our **pride and humility need to be burned** by God. God's righteousness was versus Israel's injustice and oppression.

God judged His people by four terrible things: the sword, famine, pestilence or disease, and wild, noisome beasts. In today's Christianity there is much fighting and very little peace. If there is fighting or dissenting among us, that is a sign of God's judgment. Due to the fighting among Christians, there is the shortage of food. When there is fighting, instead of spiritual food, there will be famine. Because of the shortage of spiritual food, there is pestilence among Christians today. Furthermore, among Christians today there are many roaring, devouring, and ravaging

beasts. God's judgment resulted in the loss of the good land, the glory of the Lord departing, and the temple being destroyed and the city being burned.

Although everything seemed to be lost due to God's judgment, God showed forth His mercy. First, in His mercy God **established watchmen** such as Ezekiel to warn the people. Then, He sent His angel to **mark out His seekers**. Only the marked-out ones would remain alive. According to His great mercy, God **preserved a remnant**. God also said that even in the captivity He would be a **sanctuary to His people for a little while**. We praise the Lord that in His mercy He promised those in the captivity that one day He would **bring them back to the land**.

In chapter 17 the house of David is likened to a cedar tree. On top of this cedar tree there was one **tender twig**, one tender branch, which was cropped and planted on the top of the mountain, becoming a high cedar. This tender twig is Christ. Although the house of David was "cropped" because of their corruption and thus became desolate and lowly, one day they will be revived in Christ. Christ is also the **scepter of Judah**. This refers to the power and authority of the Son of God. Finally, Christ will become the **horn** to deliver the people of Israel from all oppression and bondage. The final result of God's judgment upon the Israelites was to cause them to turn to Christ and to gain Christ so that Christ would be everything to them.

God's Judgment Upon the Nations

Seven nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyrus, Zidon, and Egypt) divided into three groups represent all the nations in God's judgment. The first group, Ammon and Moab, were brothers who were born of Lot by his daughters. Ammon offended God by being happy when the sanctuary of God was profaned, when the good land was made desolate, and when the house of Judah was being carried away. **Ammonites** hate Christ, the grace of God in Christ, and they hate the church. The **Moabites** signify the kind of persons who like to bring the church into an association with the world and make the church the same as the nations.

Edom and Philistia, the second pair, are also close to Israel. **Edom** was full of hatred toward Israel, continually seeking revenge and vengeance; this is the way we are in our old man. The **Philistines** typify you and me not as the old man but as the natural man. These cause the most damage to the church life.

Tyrus and Zidon are the third pair. **Tyrus** typifies those who are seeking worldly wealth, those who desire to make a great deal of money and to be rich. They do not care for the Lord's interest but care only for their wealth, riches, and business. **Zidon** was a pricking brier and a grieving thorn to the house of Israel. This means that the deceitfulness of riches and the anxiety of the age become thorns which choke the growth of life. Finally, **Egypt** is a nation that depends not on God but on its own resources. This reveals that God will also judge those people who care only for earthly happiness and enjoyment but who do not need God.

Our old man and our natural man surely need to be dealt with by God. By God's grace we need to deal thoroughly with the old man and with the natural man, not allowing them to carry out a destructive work in the church. When God judged these nations, all the nations knew that He was the Lord, and that God's purpose was carried out and fulfilled.

(Life-Study of Ezekiel – Messages 13 to 15)