

Bible Challenge 2018

Week 30-31: July 22-August 4

Outline

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Ezekiel 6-9: God's Judgment against an Idolatrous People
Ezekiel 10: The Ark of the Covenant Leaves the Temple
Ezekiel 11: Judgment and Redemption
Ezekiel 12: Judah's Captivity foretold
Ezekiel 13-16: God's Condemnation of the Wicked
Ezekiel 17: Two Eagles and a Vine
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Ezekiel 23: The Parable of Two Prostitutes
Ezekiel 24: The Siege of Jerusalem and the Death of Ezekiel's Wife
Ezekiel 25-32: Prophecies Against Israel's Enemies
Ezekiel 33: Ezekiel the Watchman and Jerusalem Struck Down
Ezekiel 34: Judgment Against False Shepherds
Ezekiel 35-36: Prophecies against the High Places of Pagan Sacrifice and a Promise of Redemption
Ezekiel 37: The Valley of Dry Bones Revived
Ezekiel 38-39: Prophecies against Gog and Magog
Ezekiel 40-48: The New Temple and the New Jerusalem Foretold

About 600 miles away from Jeremiah and Jerusalem stood Ezekiel. Prior to the fall of the great city of Jerusalem, the Babylonian army had successively conquered region after region of Judah, which led them to the city gates. All the while, Jeremiah's words to the people were essentially, "Surrender and you will be spared." Ezekiel is one of those whom surrendered and was taken to Babylon in exile prior to the fall of the city. And while in Babylon, God raises up Ezekiel to be his mouthpiece amongst the people to help them understand what is taking place back home and what plans God ultimately has for them. In this capacity, Ezekiel functions both as newsman and commentator as well as one who exhorts the people to righteous hope.

Ezekiel's Prophetic Calling

Ezekiel likely has one of the strangest initial calls of all of the prophets. He encounters a group of four living creatures (same language that John uses in Revelation 4:6) — later referred to as Cherubim (see Ezekiel 10 — remember, cherubim are not cute little babies with wings, but vicious and frightful angels in the service of God). When I was younger, this made me think more of a UFO sighting than anything else.

What is more significant than the cherubim, though, is that he sees the Lord Jesus before he takes on flesh — one he calls the "Glory of the Lord," not unlike the call of Isaiah. The formal call to Prophetic ministry included the eating of a scroll (again, think of John's call in Revelation) and he is set up as a watchman over Israel to foretell what is yet to come.

The Siege Foretold, Judgment, and the Departure of the Ark

Ultimately, God is making it clear that the reason for this exile and the destruction of Jerusalem is that they have fallen into idolatry. This fall, then, brings an end to the wickedness of the people, which means there is a good side to the equation. Interestingly enough, the second time the Temple fell (70 AD), the same reasons can be cited...the people were idolatrous and instead of worshipping the one true God through faith in Jesus Christ, the people had made a god of their own creation (lists of rules and man-made commandments). How sad fallen man is.

In chapter 10 we see a picture of the Ark of the Covenant and the Glory Cloud of God leaving the Temple and going into heaven. What is important to note is that you never see an account of the Glory of God re-entering the Temple ever again (even after it is reconstructed)...that is, not until Jesus himself enters the Temple during his earthly ministry. It is a reminder that Haggai's prophesy of a greater glory to the Temple speaks of Christ, not of the one rebuilt during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah or added to by Herod.

Captivity, Condemnation, and a Parable

What follows are several chapters regarding the coming captivity of the people of Jerusalem as well as condemnation on those

who pursue sin. As a whole, the language is harsh, but it may even be best summed up by 16:51 where God declares that "Samaria has not committed half your sins!" In fact, in the same verse, he also says that the Judeans make the Samaritans look righteous. As wicked as Samaria was known to be, this was a devastating condemnation.

Yet, when God disciplines his own people, he always extends a sprig of hope to them. And thus, in verse 60 there is a promise of a new covenant that will be an everlasting covenant with his people. This, of course, is fulfilled in Christ.

The parable that is found in chapter 17 illustrates and reinforces what the previous chapters have recorded with a promise that the people will be taken out of the land, yet protected where God places them. Yet, notice something, the return of the Jews to the promised land is not the fulfillment of the promise given in chapter 17, the church is (see Mark 4:30-32).

Judgment and two Prostitutes and a Death

Again, we find the language of judgment regarding the sins of the people — with emphasis on Israel's rebellion. 20:7-8 sums up the idea when God says, "And I said to them, 'Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.'" Yet in verse 8, we are told that the people would not do it. Finally, in chapter 23, we once again have a parable before us and that of two wicked sisters, one more corrupt than the other. We should already see the connections between this parable and the statement before that the southern kingdom had become even worse than the northern kingdom. Remembering that Hosea was writing about 150 years prior to Ezekiel, the connections between these harlots and Israel as God's wife is one that the people were sure to see.

What follows though is of great sadness. Ezekiel is told that his wife was going to die and he was forbidden to mourn her death. This is meant as a sign that though God was bringing judgment on the people, he would not regret his work. While indeed, God is a loving God, he is also righteous and he will punish the sins of those who disobey him. This language ought also to bring to mind the language of Isaiah 53:10 where it speaks of God "delighting" to crush his Son — the most horrific act in all history, yet an act of unparalleled redemptive power that redeemed all of God's elect from the power of sin.

Judgments and False Shepherds

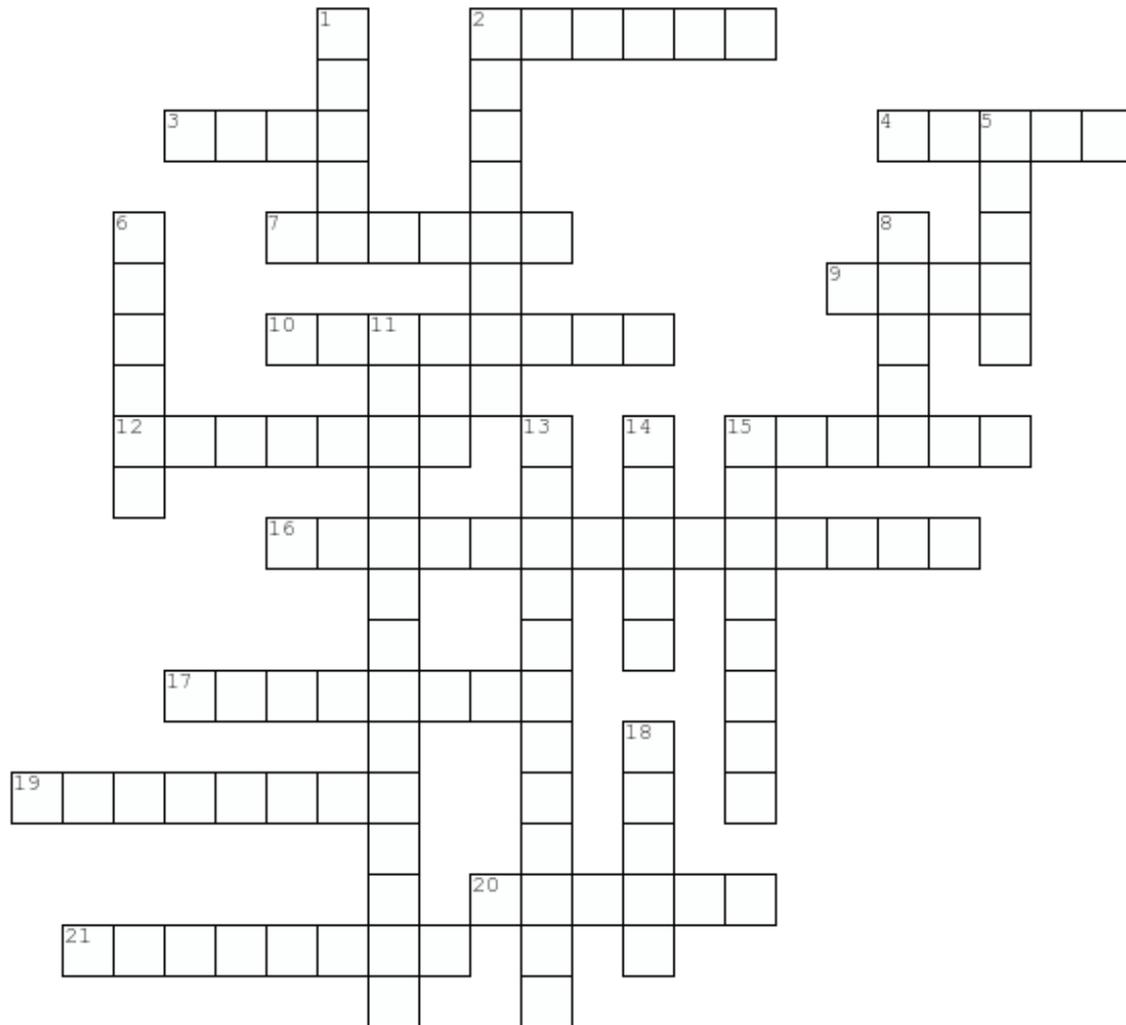
More judgments are pronounced against the sins of the people and one of the targets of that judgment becomes the shepherds that God raised up to oversee the spiritual life of his people. Of these prophecies, perhaps one of the most distinct is that against the "King of Tyre." At this point of history, Tyre was ruled by a counsel of merchant-princes, not so much a king. Many speculate, though, that the king of Tyre — the one pulling the strings — was the devil himself. Assuming that this is the case, it tells us some important information about Satan and his fall. It is from this passage in chapter 28, then, that we hear that Satan had been a guardian cherub in the Garden of Eden, that he became proud of his own beauty, and as a result of his pride, he was thrown down from heaven. There are some who would argue otherwise, but the language of this chapter leads to some pretty compelling arguments in favor of this reading.

The key that we need to be clear about, with respect to the condemnation of the shepherds is found in 34:15, where God says that "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep..." Jesus fulfills this in John 10 when he proclaims that he is the Good Shepherd — the specific one of whom Ezekiel spoke.

Judgment and Redemption

There are two additional cycles of judgment and illustration — the first leads to the Valley of Dry Bones and the second speaks of the new Temple in the New Jerusalem. There is much that can be spoken of with respect to these chapters, but one should see the fulfillment of the dry bones in the establishment of the church at the first coming of our Lord and the new Temple in context to the second-coming and the recreation.

Weeks 30&31: Ezekiel



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Across

2. As part of his calling, Ezekiel had to eat this.
3. As in the book of Judges, the people turned to this instead of the wood from a tree.
4. When Ezekiel sees his vision, who does he see seated over the expanse?
7. Ezekiel was by this canal in Babylon when he received his calling.
9. Ezekiel was called to cut this off to signify the remnant after the destruction of the city.
10. Ezekiel is called to be a _____ over Israel.
12. This mans wife dies as a symbol of what God is doing to Jerusalem.
15. The prophecies of much of Ezekiel are fulfilled in Christ's establishment of this institution.
16. This is recorded as leaving the Temple in judgment (4 words).
17. The younger sister representing Jerusalem, who was worse than her sister before her.
19. As with Jeremiah, God promises through Ezekiel that there was coming one to establish the new _____.
20. Ezekiel closes with the vision of a new one of these.
21. Jerusalem's main crime was this.

Down

1. God promises his people that in redemption the he will give them a 'heart of _____'.
2. In addition to idolatry, the Jews were profaning God's _____ as well.
5. God promises that he will raise this against Jerusalem.
6. Two of these are spoken of as plucking up and replanting a vine representing Israel.
8. This is seen as coming out of the temple; a clear fulfillment found in John 7:37-38.
11. This is the name of the new city that Ezekiel sees in his vision (4 words).
13. Jesus said, 'I am the _____' in fulfillment of Ezekiel 34, also declaring himself to be God.
14. This angel was likely a guardian cherub in the Garden; tempting them to sin.
15. What kind of fierce angels did Ezekiel encounter?
18. 'Cast away the detestable things and the idols of _____.'