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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Ezekiel 33.

(2014)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Ezekiel 33.

Topics.

- Ezekiel speaks to Israel.
- God makes Ezekiel a watchman over Israel.
- Righteousness, injustice and wickedness.
- Everyone is accountable for their own sin.
- A survivor tells Ezekiel the city of Jerusalem has been destroyed.
- Talking godly talk, but not performing it.
- Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel: Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the LORD”. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God’s covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chapter 37) is a classic picture of God’s ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

NOTE: Ezekiel’s message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

Ezekiel Speaks to Israel.

Ezekiel 33:1-6 ----- ¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, speak to your people (Israel) and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, ³and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, ⁴then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. ⁵He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. ⁶But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.

Son of man: means mortal man.

If the people of a nation make a person their watchman and that watchman sees that the life of others is in danger and warns them, but they does not heed the warning then God will not hold the watchman guilty for any harm that befalls them because it is their own fault for not taking notice of the watchman’s warning.

But if the watchman sees that the life of others is in danger and does not warn them and they come to harm then God will hold that watchman guilty of any harm that came upon them.

God makes Ezekiel a Watchman Over Israel.

Ezekiel 33:7-11 ----- ⁷So you, son of man (Ezekiel) I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. ¹⁰"And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: 'Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?' ¹¹Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

God makes Ezekiel a watchman over Israel and tells him when He tells Ezekiel to warn Israel that God will destroy them if they do not turn from their wicked ways, and Ezekiel does not warn Israel, the LORD will still judge and destroy the wicked, but God will hold Ezekiel guilty for their death. But if Ezekiel does warn the wicked of Israel and they still do not turn from their wickedness then God will not hold Ezekiel guilty of any harm that may come to them or guilty for their death.

We will rot away because of our transgressions: (v10) at this time Israel has been in captivity to Babylon for twelve years. They appear to be thinking that there is no hope for them because their transgressions have been too great so God will leave them to rot in captivity so God tells Ezekiel to say that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, His desire is that the wicked will turn from their wickedness and live then the LORD pleads with Israel to turn from their wickedness before they die.

The following verses show that the LORD takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked or in the death of His enemies.

- Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Ezekiel 18:23).
- I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live. (Ezekiel 18:32).
- As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die (Ezekiel 33:11).
- Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles (Proverbs 24:17).

Even though the LORD has to judge those who are corrupt He has no pleasure in doing it. This is why we should never mock our enemies when troubles come to them or rejoice over their suffering when the LORD'S judgment falls upon them. God's remedy to everyone who sins is to repent and turn from all their wrong doing and do what is good and right instead of what is wrong and unjust. The LORD gave Ezekiel the following two truths: -

1. No matter how long a person has lived in sin, if they genuinely repent, turn to the LORD and do what is right they will inherit eternal life" (such is the grace and mercy of God)(Ezek. 18:21-23).
2. No matter how long a person has lived a righteous life, if they turn from the LORD and do what is corrupt they will be condemned (Ezek. 18:24). A simple example of this would be a man who has lived righteously for sixty-years of his life and then murders someone those sixty years of good living don't cancel out the sin and guilt of the one murder. He will still be judged as a murder.

NOTE: when a sinner finds God's love in Christ through honest repentance their life is transformed, everything changes, motivations, desires, perspectives, goals etc. God's Spirit touches every area of the human heart and mind when there is true repentance and sorrow toward God.

Righteousness, Injustice and Wickedness.

Ezekiel 33:12-13 ----- ¹²And you, son of man (Ezekiel), say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. ¹³Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die.

If a righteous person turns to injustice and wickedness their past righteousness with not save them, but if a wicked and unjust person turns to righteousness their past sin will not destroy them.

Everyone is Accountable for their Own Sin.

Ezekiel 33:14-16 ----- ¹⁴Again, though I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

A person who has acted against the LORD and His commandments and stolen from others will die eternally, but if they do what is just and right and restore what they have stolen when able they will live God will not hold their past sin against them.

The lesson for today: God is a God not only of love, but of Justice and therefore He cannot save and grant eternal life to those who are unjust and acting wickedly, but He has made a way of escape since it matters not how sinful a person has been in the past God's forgiveness is always available. God's heart longs to save and grant every sinner eternal life and pour His love out upon them.

Everyone is Accountable for their Own Sin continued: -

Ezekiel 33:17-20 ----- ¹⁷Yet your people say, 'The way of the LORD is not just,' when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. ¹⁹And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them. ²⁰Yet you say, 'The way of the LORD is not just.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways."

This is amazing the people of Israel are saying, God's way is not just they believe that all their years of righteousness or good deeds should cover their wickedness and the unjust way they treat others. The LORD responds to this wickedness by saying each person will be: -

1. Accountable and judged for their own wickedness.
2. Rewarded according to their own righteousness.

A Survivor tells Ezekiel the City of Jerusalem has been Destroyed.

Ezekiel 33:21-33 ----- ²¹In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city (Jerusalem) has been struck down." ²²Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning, so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute. ²³The word of the LORD came to me: ²⁴"Son of man, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, 'Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to

possess.' ²⁵Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: You eat flesh with the blood and lift up your eyes to your idols and shed blood; shall you then possess the land? ²⁶You rely on the sword, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife; shall you then possess the land? ²⁷Say this to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence. ²⁸And I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and her proud might shall come to an end, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that none will pass through. ²⁹*Then they will know that I am the LORD*, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed. ³⁰"As for you, son of man (Ezekiel), your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, 'Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' ³¹And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. ³²And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. ³³When this comes—and come it will!—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

This is the twelfth year of Ezekiel's and those with him captivity in Babylon (v21).

NOTE: God told Ezekiel Jerusalem would be destroyed in chapter 29.

A survivor from the destruction of Jerusalem came to Ezekiel and told him the city has been destroyed. The night before the survivor came it appears the LORD struck Ezekiel mute and then in the morning gave him a voice to speak and told him to say to those in captivity with him and to the inhabitants who have survived the destruction of Jerusalem and who are dwelling in the waste land of Israel to keep saying, "Abraham was only one man, yet God gave him possession of the land; but we are many, surely God must give possession of the land."

The LORD begins to answer Israel's words, "Abraham was only one man, yet God gave him possession of the land; but we are many, surely God must give possession of the land," by pointing out to the survivors in Jerusalem and in the waste lands all the following things that they were doing that is an offence to His heart and contrary to the covenant.

The Israelite survivors of the destruction were: -

- Eating flesh with the blood and worshipping idols.
- Killing innocent people.
- Trusting in their weapons of war to save them.
- Committing gross abominations.
- Sexually defiling each-others wife.
- Going to listen to Ezekiel, but not doing what the LORD requires (this is in the years prior to Ezekiel being taken into captivity).
- Talking about God and godly things, but acting greedily setting their hearts on gain.

Israel is so blind to their gross sin that even while committing all these offences which are totally contrary to the nature of God and the covenant they had with the LORD, the people's attitude is one of wondering why God hasn't given them the land especially since He gave it to Abraham. God appears to be stunned at Israel's attitude and says to them, "Shall you then possess the land?" meaning there is no way you will possess the land while you are so grossly corrupt. God gave Abraham the land to inherit because he was a righteous man, contrasted to Israel who are grossly wicked and have set their hearts diamond hard against the word of the LORD.

Talking godly talk, but not performing it: Ezekiel is like a beautiful musician who sings songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, the people love to listen and talk the talk of God and about the things of God, but they will not do what the LORD requires and because of this the LORD tells Ezekiel when God brings war, wild animals and pestilence on the land of Israel and makes it a waste (and He will) then they will know that Ezekiel was God's prophet amongst them.

NOTICE: the words "and come it will!" (v33) the LORD is encouraging Ezekiel by emphasising the fact that God will do what He has said and when that happens Ezekiel will be vindicated for all the doom he has spoken to the people of Israel, because they will then know he was a true prophet of God.

Then they will know that I am the LORD: (v29) when all the words of the LORD come to pass Israel will know that the only true God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the LORD their God contrasted to the multitudes of idols and gods they had been worshipping prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. It is interesting to notice that after Israel's seventy years in exile to Babylon they never again turned to idols or other gods.

End.