

October 7

Scriptures: Read Ezekiel 13, 14 & 15

Key Verse: "...Thus says the Lord God: 'Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations'." (Ezekiel 14:6)

Overview

The entire contents of chapter 13 is a denunciation of false prophets and prophetesses. Ezekiel was to boldly confront, rebuke, warn, and pronounce judgment upon them. They had been leading the people astray and deceiving them by proclaiming to speak the word of the Lord when their words actually came from their own imaginations, or from the father of lies, Satan. Mention is made that the false prophetesses, using superstition and cultic methods of divination (similar to voodoo), would entrap the souls of those who consulted them (13:18-20). This same entrapment still happens today, but the all-powerful Lord is just as willing and able as He has always been to deliver those whose lives are caught in the devil's counterfeit cultic traps (13:21-23).

The true prophet, in sharp contrast, was to lead the people closer to God. As well as being a watchman in giving words of warning, he was to actively withstand the attacks of the enemy at the points of moral decay in the society, like the mighty soldier who would bravely go to the breached part of the wall and defend it against the enemy (13:5). As well as being on the defensive, the true prophet's duty was also to be on the offensive in helping to build a strong moral society (like a strong wall) that could survive the judgment of the Lord.

The false prophets were building a weak wall that had, with the whitewash of deceit, a facade of strength, but it was actually full of decay. It symbolized a corrupt, decadent society that would crumble under God's judgment. They lied in contradicting the words of the true prophets, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in saying that there would be peace. They and the false prophetesses concerned themselves with trying to please the crowd by saying whatever the people wanted to hear, rather than pleasing God and speaking the truth; therefore, although they had prestige, influence, popularity, and prosperity, they would lose their own souls (cf. Mark 8:36). The specific judgments upon them were that they would not be found among the people of God, nor would their names appear in the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5; 20:15); they would not inherit the land—the heavenly Jerusalem (13:9)—and the immediate judgment was that the feeble, decaying, whitewashed wall that they had built would collapse upon them and kill them (13:14). A life of disobedience to God surely leads to destruction.

In chapter 14, the elders of Israel came to Ezekiel to inquire of the Lord. Ezekiel's message, enforced by the dramatic signs (ch. 12), may have caused them to think seriously about the possibility of Jerusalem's fall. From the context of the chapter, it appears that they came to inquire as to whether God would destroy the city even if there were righteous people living in it (cf. Gen. 18:23-32). Before graciously giving an answer to Ezekiel (14:13-23), the Lord made it clear that these elders had no right to expect an answer from Him, for God, who saw their hearts, knew they were neither committed to Him, the truth, nor the cause of the righteous. They did not openly practise idolatry, but they were still idolatrous in their hearts, for they did not look to God in faith, nor did they put Him first in their lives. They had not removed those things from their

lives which tempted them and caused them to fall into sin; thus, they alienated themselves from God. The same is true today in our so-called “Christian” society. Yet the Lord offers His wonderful mercy and grace to all who sincerely repent and turn from the abominations of sin (14:6,11).

After rebuking the elders for their hypocrisy, the Lord again spoke to Ezekiel. He stressed the fact that when He deems it necessary to vindicate His holiness because of the wickedness of the society, each one must be held personally accountable for his sin at the time of judgment. The righteousness of Noah could not save the world from the flood. The righteousness of Job could not save his children from dying. Daniel’s righteousness could not stop the exile nor could his present position of influence in the Babylonian court prevent the destruction of Jerusalem. It is only through the righteousness of Christ, imputed to our account, that we can also be called righteous and therefore be spared from the wrath of God.

As the parable in chapter 15 teaches, the fiery wrath of God was justly to burn the useless vine, which symbolizes the wicked city of Jerusalem. They had failed to fulfill their purpose as God’s chosen people. They did not bring glory to God nor did they lead others to know the Lord, for they were worthless and unfruitful (cf. Deut. 32:32; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Hos. 10:1-2). The chastisement of God had previously charred the vine, but now it must be totally burned; such is the end of those who persist in unfaithfulness and disobedience to God. The fruit of righteousness can come only by abiding in the Lord Jesus, who is “the true vine” (John 15:1-8).

Prayer

It is only as we abide in “You, oh Lord, that we can show forth the fruit of the Spirit— love, joy, peace, longsuffering, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. Help us to stay rooted in You and thereby obtain nourishment for our spiritual growth and maturity.