

October 6

Scriptures: Read Ezekiel 10, 11 & 12

Key Verse: "... I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart... and give them a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 11:19)

Overview

In chapter ten, Ezekiel continues to describe his vision of Jerusalem in which he saw heavenly beings which accompanied the glory of the Lord as he had seen fourteen months earlier at the River Chebar (1:1). We learn here that they were cherubim (10:8, 20-21). Also in chapter ten, we read again about the man clothed with linen, whom we understand to be the Son. Once again, He was asked by the Father to execute judgment. In the first instance, He made a judgment of all those who were righteous. Now He is to bring judgment upon the wicked by taking the burning coals and scattering them over the apostate city that was ordained for punishment (10:2). The coals were symbolic of the actual fire that was to destroy Jerusalem when God would use the Babylonians to accomplish His purpose. As Ezekiel saw in the vision, there was nothing to prevent this from happening, for the Lord had removed His protective hedge from around Jerusalem when, with sorrow and hesitancy, His presence (glory) left the Temple by the east gate and moved over the Mount of Olives after leaving the city (10:19; 11:23). From this same mount, which overlooks the whole city, the Lord Jesus wept because of their rejection of Him (Luke 19:37-44).

In chapter eleven, the same vision gives us a picture of the false confidence of the leaders of Jerusalem who deceived the people into believing they were secure within the strongly fortified city, just as valuable meat is safe within the protective caldron (11:3). These city officials encouraged the revolt against Babylon and supported an alliance with Egypt. In their attitude, we can see the opposition that Jeremiah faced in Jerusalem, for he had warned all the people that only if they submit to Babylon, would they live. The proud inhabitants of Jerusalem not only thought they were invincible but also morally superior to Ezekiel and the others who went with him and before him into exile. In actual fact, the opposite was true. Those of Judah who had previously gone into exile, such as Daniel in the first deportation and Ezekiel in the second, were the "good figs" (Jer. 24) whom the Lord had preserved by having them removed from the "caldron" of Jerusalem. In God's plan, the contents that remained in the caldron were soon to be dumped out as refuse and carried away by the enemy. The righteous and innocent who had been slain were the precious meat of the caldron, not the wicked inhabitants (11:7,11).

The comforting and beautiful promise of restoration found in chapter 11 (vv. 15-20) came in response to Ezekiel's concern for the remnant of Israel (11:13). The promise is directed toward those already in exile and those of the Northern Kingdom of Israel who had long before been taken captive by the Assyrians. From these people, the Lord would preserve a righteous remnant. They would be those who, while living in the heathen land, would come to abhor idolatry (11:18). This was a tell-tale sign of the righteous (cf. 9:4). Those who returned from The Exile never again had a problem with idol worship. In this regard, their chastisement in the captivity had served its purpose.

The Lord gave the faithful remnant some wonderful and gracious promises: they would be a unified body of believers; they would be His people and He would be their God; and instead of a heart of stone, which is obstinate and rebellious against God, the Lord would give them a heart of flesh — one which is sensitive and responsive to the touch of God and is obedient to His will (11:19-20). This prophecy must look beyond the return from the seventy-year captivity, for it most certainly describes the redemption and regeneration provided through the Lord Jesus Christ to those few who would believe in Him, and this extension of God's grace is still available today.

In chapter twelve, we read of the two symbolic signs (packing for captivity and trembling) that Ezekiel used to make the spiritually blind and deaf people with him in Babylon try to understand the soon-coming anxiety, fear, and capture of the people of Jerusalem. These same signs showed those in the exile that their hope for a soon return to Jerusalem was in vain. Under the pressure of the elders and city officials, the king of Jerusalem, Zedekiah, would soon rebel against their Suzerain Nebuchadnezzar. The people, both in The Exile and in the land of Judah, were counting on his successful revolt. Ezekiel, however, clearly foretold of the attempted escape, defeat, capture, humiliation, and blinding of Zedekiah, whom Ezekiel here refers to as "the prince", since King Jehoiachin was still alive in Babylon (12:12-14; for fulfillment see Jer. 52:7-11; 2 Kings 25:4-7).

In His divine punishment, the Lord promised to spare a few inhabitants of Jerusalem. The reason for this was not only for the people of Israel to know that He is the Lord who fulfills His words of prophecy (12:25, 28), but also that they might give testimony to the Gentiles as to why the calamity came upon them (12:16). The nations were not to think that the God of Israel was too weak to protect His people, but they were to know that He Himself brought it upon His people because of His wrath for their breaking the covenant and sinning against Him by practising idolatry.

Prayer

Oh Lord, You are King of kings and Lord of lords, and You are a jealous God. Help us never to allow anything to interfere with our relationship with You.