

Ezekiel – Study 9

Would Ezekiel have stood a better chance of success in our churches today?

Ezekiel 19.

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The King James Bible throughout

Having read these studies so far and checked out the verses which seem to be full of doom and gloom, page after page of Israel's disobedience, sinning, wickedness against the very God who birthed her, I expect you are wondering *is there a happy ending?*

I for one can understand your question. Perhaps we forget that although He is God He also has a heart for His people, not just Israel but all peoples and all nations. May I ask you as you have gone through these 8 studies have you felt, even a tinge of God's sadness, His heartache, His cry for a wayward, sinful people?

Before we move on we need to remind ourselves of why we are studying these chapters and why we are digging deeper into The Word of God to find out what God has to say rather than just reading it like a bedtime story.

Let me ask you another question: do you see the similarity between the behaviour of Israel and that of say the USA, the UK, France, Spain, Afghanistan, India, Australia, New Zealand or the nation from which you read this study right now. Do you agree with me that the whole world has fallen short of where God wants His creation to be? Is the Church of today measuring up to be the replica of, or the continuation of the early Church, is it the answer or has it become a part of the problem?

I was brought up in a denomination in Essex UK birthed in 1852 where people were *saved* almost every week, healings were also a weekly occurrence; you KNEW that when a person went down the front to the altar to be prayed for they would go back to their seat healed and I as a young lad witnessed that with my own eyes and in many cases knew the people involved. They suffered great persecution for their faith in God and many times the door of the chapel would open and stones and bricks were hurled in but never once causing damage.

There was a prayer meeting every morning before going to work at **5 am** and Sunday's meetings started at 6 am! This was a part of my Christian upbringing right up to the age of 14 when the family moved away to the South of England and joined a 'Modern' church.

To my shame I have become used to not seeing people saved every week, or 'coming to faith' as the modern church now calls it in spite of the phrase not being in the Bible at all. "Coming to faith" replaces God's words which He says we are not to do in Revelation.

In Acts 2.21 it says *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*, and Acts 4. 12. *There is no other name... whereby we must be saved*, Acts 16. 30 where a man asked Jesus directly; *what must I do to be saved?*

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Jesus did not correct him and say “no not saved but come to faith” even the heathen knew what word to use.

Some big ministries on TV apparently seem to be ashamed of the word SAVED in their altar calling.

I am still trying to get used to finding my way in my Bible that has been around since 1611 as the leader reads from some other version written a few of years ago and I sometimes find it very confusing! For instance in our study of Ezekiel’s wife being taken from him, the Bible says that God told Ezekiel He would take his wife from him *with a stroke*, but in a version written in 1964 I have it says: God would take his wife at a *single stroke* giving a completely different meaning. In Genesis 22 we read the story of Abraham offering Isaac as an offering to God under His testing. When Isaac asked “we have the fire and the wood but where is the lamb for the offering?” Abraham replied “God will *provide Himself a Lamb* for a burnt offering” Ask your fellow Christians how that reads in their modern versions you will be surprised how many different ways this very important prophecy is “translated”. Satan has even managed to diminish The Lamb of God as the sacrifice for sin so early in the Bible. One eminent preacher, well respected believes the modern translations of the Bible are influenced by Satan to weaken God’s word to bring confusion! I do not wish to upset readers who prefer the modern versions but please be careful what you read and how you read it. Why not compare what you read with the original so as not to loose the full meaning?

Amos 8 v11 says:

Behold the days come says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.

*And they shall wander from sea to sea and from north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord **and shall not find it!***

Our nations are in such a wicked sinful state, ignoring the calls to prayer and the Word of God but preferring to indulge in drink and drugs and sexual wickedness, murder and war that when our nations realise they need God to come to their aid just like the Children of Israel, God may not answer. The word of God may be sought and asked for but not found, nothing could be worse! No matter what, the prosperity of a nation is the knowledge of God’s word, deprived of that and the people are left aimless. A Nations Spiritual thirst and hunger can only be satisfied by the Word of God.

There is a frustration among many in church people who do not want to criticise or complain but know there must be more of God than what they see and feel in the modern church of today. I might add that due to my work and moving house, we as a family have joined or visited many churches in London and along the South coast and they are all much the same. I will also add that

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some Pastors and Leaders are not as the Priests and Leaders of Ezekiel's day and do want more of God and want to be led by God and take their congregations with them. I thank God that we have a good leader and some good teachers and Shepherds in the church to which we go. But sadly in the main there is a similarity with the text on the office wall of a well known international leader in the UK which reads:

There they go I am their Leader I must hurry!

I am also so very pleased that an established Christian friend gave me a book to read and this is the first paragraph in the book:

“Many Christians are unaware that there is a deep end. They have become so used to living in the shallows that they think this is the norm. Perhaps this is not all they expected when they first found themselves in the pond, but they are generally content to paddle until they get to the big pond in the sky. Occasionally they hear rumours that there is a deep end, they meet the odd person who claims to have come from the deep end, one or two of their fellow shallow-enders have even left them and said they are off to the deep, or every now and again they wonder, ”So how do I get to this deep end?””

This is from the book MORE by Simon Ponsonby...you must read it.

Billy Graham wrote:

Everywhere I go I find that God's people lack something. They are hungry for something. Their Christian experience is not all that they expected and they often have recurring defeat in their lives. Christians today are hungry for Spiritual fulfilment. The most desperate need of the nation today is that men and women who profess Jesus be filled with the Holy Spirit.

With Billy Graham's global itinerary I am sure it gave him a better insight into the Spiritual condition of the church perhaps better than any other Christian leader in the twenty first century. There is another important point: If many Christians of today are not living in the victory of what Christ gave us at the cross and has for His church through the Holy Spirit, what is the hope for new born again believers against the works of Satan?

I also thank God with all my heart that my frustration is not a new thing, it was felt by none other than Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones who once thundered to his congregation who felt there was little more to be had in the Christian Life:

“Got it all? I simply ask in the name of God, why then are you as you are? If you have got it all why are you so unlike the New Testament Christians? Got it all? Got it all at your conversion? Well where is it I ask?”

In a previous study I have asked the question if we have all that God has for His church, if the church lacks nothing, if the Holy Spirit is with us why are our

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churches as full of sick people as our hospital are? If we have what the early Christians had why do we not do what they did?

I am being realistic about what is happening to our churches and have seen the downward decent of the Spiritual condition of our nation and of many of our churches since I gave my heart and life to Jesus 64 years ago.

Of course we can agree together on this subject, ring our hands and carry on as we are. Or we can get together with some other like minded Christians and PRAY. But with prayer there must also be repentance, forgiveness and a determination to seek God's face for a major change in our lives starting with mine, yours, your friends, your leaders and our Pastors.

Undoubtedly the problem is ours. When you think of the beginning of the new Church in Peter's day when being so filled with the Holy Spirit people were healed with the shadow of Peter walking by, or he stood to speak and three thousand of the crowd were saved in one day.

In my young days people of the town knew of our belief in Jesus and although we didn't have gospel TV programmes, PA systems or even musical instruments in the church somehow they knew where to come when they needed healing for their sick children and families.

Johann Blumhardt of Germany was used of God in his small village of Mottlingen when signs and wonders sent shock waves throughout the country. This was birthed by his feeling as I have written about here when on his knees he cried to God:

"I long for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, another Pentecost. That must come if things are to change in Christianity, for it simply cannot continue in such a wretched state. The gifts and powers of the early Christian time – Oh how I long for their return. And I believe the Saviour is just waiting for us to ask for them... When I look at what we have I cannot help sighing... Oh Lord Jesus is that the promised Spirit for which you hung on the tree? Where is the Spirit that penetrates nation after nation as swiftly as at the time of the apostles and places them at Jesus' feet"?

What a prayer, what a heart for the things of God!

Blumhardt with Billy Graham and along with Martin Lloyd-Jones recognised that the church is asleep, lukewarm, blind and poor not only failing herself, but her Master and the lost world around them. Are we not the Laodicea Church of Revelation chapter 3? Not hot not cold but lukewarm, tepid, saying we are rich and increased with goods, having need of nothing. Having large churches, a TV ministry, books written in our name, but in God's eyes He says we are wretched blind and naked.

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I believe Satan, in his last days knows he has to weaken our belief, make us doubt our faith in Jesus, and bring confusion to the church. Satan is also leading the church into apathy; with a large “do not disturb” sign over the door! It is at this time the church must rise up and take hold of the cross once more and take back that which Satan is plundering.

Not everyone will agree with these three men of God, or the writings of this study. Not everyone will compare our generation with the wayward Children of Israel or Ezekiel’s message from God to His beloved people Israel. You may not agree that God will not withhold His wrath forever. Then this study is clearly not for you.

My prayer is that those who share the frustration expressed here will do something about it. Find some others and pray, wait on God and ask Him to give you a heart like Blumhardt, Billy Graham and Dr Lloyd-Jones and others who know that the next revival could come through you or me.

There is a danger that we all identify with these words but dismiss being the answer to your nations sin problem because we feel inadequate, unschooled for such a task, fearful if it will work and all the things going through your mind at this moment. But God is looking down and His cry today is the same as it was in Ezekiel 22 v 30:

*I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before Me for the land that I should not destroy it **BUT I FOUND NONE.***

The next verse is even more frightening it says:

Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads says the Lord God.

If God sought for a man to stand in the gap, pray and intercede for Israel then unable to find anyone was then compelled because of sin, to pour out His wrath upon them, where are the ‘ones’ whom He can rely on today?

There is no doubt that we need another outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Not the kind of outpouring we hear about and see on TV, where men and women are involved in shouting and jumping up and down exciting and meaningful as that may be, but a Holy Spirit outpouring upon men and women who are kneeling at the altar in silence, no singing, no music, no organising on our part just waiting on Him to do a work in our lives, yes even with tongues of fire upon our heads and whose hearts reflect the heart of Jesus repenting at the state of their own sin and shortcomings as well as our nations. Some wise man said:

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It only takes a sermon to make a preacher, but it takes an altar to make a man of God.

Maybe that's where we all must get to; the altar of God on bended knees, humble of heart, broken in spirit and wait for His outpouring of the Holy Spirit like the disciples of old in the upper room to full us or refill us so we rise again men and women of God. We then can take back that which Satan has stolen in the name and power of the Holy Spirit not in the name of any ministry, church or person.

My prayer is that the reader will feel the heart of God not only for Israel in Ezekiel's day but today when millions seem determined to get to hell as fast as they can and enjoy the trip on the way!

Right from the beginning of these studies we read of Israel's rebellion, sinning and wickedness towards their God. We also read of God's patience, calling and longing for a change of heart from the people He loved...but to no avail. We have looked at some 18 chapters with much the same theme, now we will look at certain chapters that may help us make God and His Son Jesus the centre of our lives and avoid the wrath of God upon our souls. We will now get back to our studies in Ezekiel but I do hope you will seriously read the opening paragraphs of these pages again with an open heart and ask God to help you with me get out of the shallow water and into the deep. God bless you reader but things cannot go on as they are... *can they? Israel thought so!*

Chapter 24. verse 15.

This is the 37th prophecy given to Ezekiel and one morning Ezekiel woke up and God said to him

“Son of man behold I am going to take away from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke, yet neither shall you mourn nor weep neither shall your tears run down”

It is very obvious that Ezekiel and his wife were very close and he loved his wife dearly. This affection was also seen by Israel.

Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of your head upon you, and put on your shoes upon your feet and cover not your lips, and eat not the bread of men.

In other words treat the day as any other, go about your witnessing as though nothing had happened. As a son of Aaron he was permitted to take off his turban as a sign of grief, Look up Leviticus 10 verse 6; 13 verse 45. The

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removal of the turban indicated a loss in the family and others would support by way of kind words and food. Ezekiel was to show no sign of mourning at all but obeyed the Lord. The next morning he conducted a service as usual and verse 18 says “at evening his wife died” being warned of God he no doubt was by her side holding her hand lovingly until the deadly stroke came and took her from him.

Verse 19 says the people asked:

Will you not tell us what these things are to us that you so do?

There were certain signs in the apparel of High Priests and Priests that gave the nation an indication as to the reason for such dress. For instance because the High Priest had the anointing oil on his head he was not to take his turban or headdress off at all. The Priests however had a headdress of twined linen embroidered with bright colours and worn as a badge of office and ornament. Priests could take off the turban in the case of a death in the family which could be seen by all that the priest was in mourning and their dress was exchanged for ordinary, plain attire and they threw dust and ashes over their heads and clothes, they also went about barefoot, shaved their moustache off and were fed by sympathisers.

Ezekiel was to dress as though nothing had happened. He was told by God not to cry, not to morn, to keep on his turban, to shave his moustache off, to put his shoes on and not to accept food from anyone he was even to hold his usual service in the court yard the morning of his wife’s death and the next morning the day after her death.

This strange course of events led the people to ask what was going on. Sinners and rebellious as they were they still knew the law and recognised the signs that were shown to them.

Verse 21

Then I answered them, The Word of the Lord came unto me saying: Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Behold I will profane my sanctuary, the Excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes and that which your soul pities and your sons and your daughters whom you have left shall fall by the sword.

And you will do as I have done, not cover your lips, nor eat bread, and your tires shall be upon your head.

God wanted a home of His own on earth. He told David that his son Solomon would be the builder of the Temple of the Lord and being a rich man built a Temple that was the envy of the world. Great cedars from Lebanon were crafted into giant pillars overlaid with gold and images of trees, birds, vines, pomegranates, fig trees all kinds of fruits all carved by the finest craftsmen into the gold. When the great eastern doors were open the early morning sun

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shone through bringing the golden walls and pillars alive like fire. Above all the Glory of The Lord God Jehovah dwelt there, His presence was Israel's assurance that God was with them and they were His people. This Temple was their pride, and joy, no other nation had a temple like this even God called it the Excellency of their strength.

What next?