

(Through the Bible) Ezekiel 11-15

by Chuck Smith

God's judgment is coming upon Jerusalem because of their rebellion and failure to walk in his statutes, but he promises to give them a new heart and a new spirit and to regather them as his people.

Duration: 1:18:17

Scripture: Psalm 115:4-8, Isaiah 6:9, Isaiah 29:13, Jeremiah 5:21, Jeremiah 38:17-18, Ezekiel 12:2, Zechariah 11:12-13

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that society today is not like the Victorian age or a puritan society. He warns against forsaking God's commandments and living like the people around us, as it will lead to destruction. The preacher shares a powerful example of a man falling dead while he was prophesying, illustrating that God will find ways to communicate His message to us. The sermon also references a prophecy of a coming famine and the desolation of the land due to the violence of the people. The preacher draws parallels to the nation of Israel and their failure to bear fruit, highlighting the importance of bringing forth fruit unto God. The sermon concludes with the preacher using dramatic actions to capture the attention of the people, as God seeks to communicate with them.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Ezekiel, chapter 11. Now, Ezekiel is in Babylon during the time of these prophecies. But the Spirit of God transports him back to Jerusalem.

And there he sees things that are transpiring in Jerusalem. Now, as a background, there are some Jewish zealots who are still in Jerusalem, who have rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and they are thinking that they are going to be successful in their rebellion. There are false prophets in Jerusalem that are encouraging the people in their rebellion, telling them that they are going to push Nebuchadnezzar right out of the picture.

Jeremiah is in Jerusalem, saying to the people, don't listen to the false prophets, they are prophesying to you lies in the name of the Lord. You'd be much better off to surrender to the Babylonians, because if you try to resist, you will be slain by the sword and the pestilence and the famine. So, surrender to Nebuchadnezzar.

But Jeremiah is accused of treason and is imprisoned by Zedekiah the king. But they have sent messengers, the false prophets, to those in Babylon, saying, hang loose. It won't be long, we'll defeat the

Babylonians and you're going to be allowed to come back to Jerusalem.

You'll be allowed to dwell in Jerusalem, so don't build houses, just hang loose. Deliverance is coming soon. But Ezekiel is there in Babylon, saying, settle down, build houses.

It's going to be a long time before there is any return back to Jerusalem. So, just realize that those that are in Jerusalem are going to be destroyed, and the false prophets with them. So, you have a confusing situation, in that you have false prophets that are encouraging a soon victory over the Babylonian army, you have the true prophets of God, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, that are speaking God's truth and saying, no, we are not going to conquer over Babylon, that God is judging the nation Israel for their sins, because they've turned against God, and it's going to be a long period of judgment, you're going to be in Babylon, as Jeremiah said, for 70 years, so make the best of it.

Settle down, make the best of it there, because you're not coming back in a hurry. Now, Ezekiel is in Babylon, but there in Babylon, occasionally he gets carried by the Spirit back to Jerusalem, where he beholds the things that are happening in Jerusalem, and he relates them to the people there in Babylon. And so, in chapter 11, we have another one of these instances, where the Spirit lifted me up and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looks eastward.

And behold, at the door of the gate there were 25 men, among whom I saw Jazaniah, the son of Ezra. Now, this is not the Jazaniah among the 25 men that he had seen earlier in a vision. That was the son of Shalom, I think it was.

But this is a different Jazaniah, probably a popular name, I don't know why. And Pelletiah, the son of Benaiah. And they were the princes of the people.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and they are giving wicked counsel to the city. They are saying to them, look, it isn't near. Let us build houses.

This city is the cauldron and we be the flesh. The destruction isn't near. The city is like a cauldron in which we are protected from the fire.

Babylon's fires may burn, but they won't burn us, because the city is the cauldron and we are like the flesh. It's going to be a long time before the heat will ever get to us. So just go ahead and build your houses and settle down, because we are protected by this city from Babylon.

Therefore, prophesy against them. Prophesy, O son of man. And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak.

Thus saith the Lord. Thus have ye said, O house of Israel, for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. Notice that.

God says, I know the things that are coming into your mind, everything. That's sort of a heavy thought, isn't it? I, the Lord, He said, do search the hearts. God knows every thought that comes into your mind.

Nothing is hid from Him with whom we have to deal. Actually, the Bible says, all things are naked and open before Him. I know everything that comes into your minds.

You have multiplied your slain in the city, and you have filled the streets thereof with slain. That is by their false counsel. They have encouraged the people to rebel, but all it's going to do is multiply the number of

people that will be killed.

As Jeremiah was saying to them, Surrender and you can save your lives. They will be merciful to you if you surrender. You know, they'll take you to Babylon, give you a nice place to live and all.

But surrender to them, don't resist. But these men, by their false prophecies, encouraging them to resist, were only multiplying the number of people that were to be killed. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, your slain, whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the cauldron, but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.

So the people that have already died, they're the only ones that are going to be protected from the cauldron. I mean, from the fire of Babylon. They are the flesh.

They're the ones that will be protected, but you are going to be carried away captive. You're going to be led out of this city. You have feared the sword and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God.

I will bring you out of the midst thereof and deliver you into the hands of strangers and will execute judgments among you. Ye shall fall by the sword. I will judge you in the border of Israel and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Interesting prophecy. I shall judge you in the border of Israel. Now, when the Babylonian army came against Jerusalem and conquered it, the king Nebuchadnezzar remained in the city of Riblah, which is in the border of Israel.

And they brought them to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah, where he judged them. Zedekiah, you remember, was captured and brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah and there Nebuchadnezzar killed his sons right before his eyes and then put his eyes out and he took him captive onto Babylon. And so a very fascinating prophecy of Ezekiel, who is over in Babylon, really not knowing what's going on except by the Spirit of God, as he is taken back and sees these things and he predicts the fact that they will be judged in the borders of Israel, which indeed they were.

And this city shall not be your cauldron. It will not be a protection to you. It's not going to save you from the Babylonian fire.

Neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof. But I will judge you in the border of Israel. Again, repeated.

And thus they were. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, for ye have not walked in My statutes. God's indictment against them now.

You've not walked in My statutes. Neither have you executed My judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen round about you. So their failure was to not walk in the ways of the Lord, but to follow the patterns of the heathen society around them.

Or to succumb to the mores. Now there is strong pressure upon us as Christians to forsake the statutes of God and to walk according to the popular mores of our society. There's tremendous pressure in our society today to accept things that God has condemned.

And this pressure of the society is such that if you dare to condemn those things that God has condemned, then you're looked upon as some kind of a religious nut. A prude. A backwards individual.

Don't you realize that times have changed? We're not living back in the Victorian age any longer. This isn't a Puritan society. And this tremendous pressure to do what? Exactly what the children of Israel did that brought their destruction.

Forsake the commandments, the statutes, the judgments of God and start living like the people around you. But we dare not. For as sure as God did judge the nation Israel, so will he judge us if we do the same things.

Now it came to pass when I was prophesying that this fellow Pelitia, the son of Benaiah, died. So while he was there prophesying to them, this guy fell over dead. That's powerful preaching.

Then I fell on my face. Now it wasn't something that Ezekiel was expecting because it shocked him. I fell on my face and I cried with a loud voice and said, Oh Lord God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel? Are you going to wipe them all out, Lord? And again the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers, the men of your own family, and all of the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord.

Unto us is this land given for a possession. They're saying that this land is ours. We're not going to be defeated.

We're not going to fall. Therefore say thus, saith the Lord God, Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. God said, I will watch over them in the lands where they've been driven.

I will be to them a little sanctuary there. God will preserve his people, even though they've been driven throughout the world. Now, that of course again is another amazing prophecy.

Because though the Jews have been hated, scorned, discriminated against, perhaps more fiercely than any other nationality. Yet, in spite of two thousand years without a homeland, they have continued to exist as a race of people. Nothing short of a divine miracle.

There has been no other national ethnic group in the history of man that has been able to remain as a national identity for more than five generations without a homeland. If they don't have a nation that they can say, that's our homeland. They have lost their national ethnic identity in five generations.

That is why you never meet an Ammonite, a Hittite, a Perizzite, or any of these other people that were once great and powerful nations. Because without a national homeland, they've lost their national ethnic identity. And yet the Jew remain because God made them a little sanctuary.

God was watching over to preserve them, and they remained an ethnic group, a national identity for more than two thousand years after having been driven from their homeland. In the first captivity of Nebuchadnezzar. Of course, they went back for a period of time.

But then since 70 A.D. they've been driven out of the land and still to the present day, whether they be in China, whether they be in Germany, whether they be in Russia, whether they be in Yemen, or Africa, or the United States, the Jew has been able to maintain his national identity because God has made them a sanctuary. And you can only explain it by that fact. Because no other nation, no other ethnic group has been able to maintain a identity.

So, the Lord promises to be a little sanctuary in all of the lands where they've been scattered. Therefore, say, Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather you from the people and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. Now, this is not referring to the regathering after the Babylonian captivity, but is more of a reference to the present regathering.

And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all of the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. Now, that has not yet been fulfilled.

God is gathering them back in the land, but this new spirit that God has promised has not yet been fulfilled. It will take place when God defeats Russia's invasion of Israel. And we'll get to that as we move on in Ezekiel 39.

The last verse of 39, God declares that in the day in which He is sanctified before the nations of the earth, He will again put His spirit upon the nation of Israel. So, this prophecy is relating to chapter 39 and to a day that is yet future when God manifests Himself unto these people in such a dramatic way, and He puts His spirit upon them again. I will give them one heart, I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them a heart of flesh.

Now, Paul the Apostle tells us in the New Testament that blindness has happened to Israel in part until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. God's spirit in the present time is working primarily among the Gentile nations. Among you who have been called of God.

Actually, among all men. Not that the Jews are excluded because the Gospel is open to all men, but there seems to be a national blindness on these people in regards to Jesus Christ. And it is interesting, I have talked to some of them who are extremely knowledgeable of the Scriptures.

And you wonder when they know the Scriptures so well, why is it that they do not see that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah? You wonder how they can just explain away those prophecies. Daniel chapter 9, Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Zechariah chapters 11 through 12 and on. You wonder how can they not see the truth that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah.

And there can only be one explanation, and that is what Paul gave us, that there is a blindness that has happened to these people. A couple of years ago when we were in Israel and I was speaking at a congress in which the Christians from all over the world were seeking to demonstrate to Israel our support of them as a people, I received a letter from one of the rabbis in Jerusalem. And the letter was a rebuke for my being there at that congress showing support for the nation of Israel.

He said, you have no right being here, for Israel has no right to be existing as a nation. This same rabbi had sent a letter to King Hussein in Jordan and asked the Jordanian king to annex Measherim into Jordan because they wanted nothing to do with the modern state of Israel. They said, Israel has no right being a state.

And you as a minister have no right being here, supporting the nation of Israel. Well, I had been witnessing to these guides for quite some time, and they do know the Scripture quite well, and I showed them the letter and I said, look what one of your rabbis sent me. And they read the letter and they were horrified because they appreciate the fact that I love Israel and have been supporting Israel.

And they said, ah, don't pay any attention to that, Chuck. They're a bunch of religious nuts. They're radicals, you know.

They don't know what they're talking about. They're just religious radicals. Don't pay any attention to that.

I said, but they're rabbis. Ah, it doesn't make any difference. They're nuts.

You know, just don't pay any attention to them. And I said, have you ever stopped to think that those rabbis that rejected Jesus from being the Messiah were perhaps just like them, some religious fanatics, and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, but these religious fanatics rejected Him, and here you are 2,000 years later in spite of all of the evidence still following the religious nuts of those days. They didn't have any answer.

But surely anyone looking at the evidence of prophecy and of the life of Jesus Christ must conclude that if Jesus wasn't the Messiah, there never will be a Messiah. It would be impossible for any man to come along today and prove that He was of the lineage of David. No one has His genealogy and can trace it back to David any longer.

So, God is going to change their hearts though. This stony heart is going to be turned to a heart of flesh. You know, one thing about the Jewish people is that they are a very... they're dynamic people.

They're very alive. They love to sing. They love to show their feelings in dancing and in singing.

And quite often, over there, the bus drivers and the guides, they'll get together and they'll sit at a table and they'll start singing their Jewish, typically Jewish songs, and they really get into it. I mean, it's the, you know, Hiya! and the whole thing, you know, and the dancing and they get up and they start dancing around and singing. They really get into it.

And it's a lot of fun because they are such a dynamic people. They're exciting to be around. Oh, I can hardly wait till they get turned on to Jesus Christ.

With all of that excitement and all of that expression that they have, when they really discover the true Messiah. What a glorious day when the heart of stone is replaced. God does a heart transplant and He puts in a heart of flesh.

That they may walk in My statutes. You see, this is the thing they had failed to do and that's why the judgment was coming. That they will keep My ordinances and do them that they shall be My people and I will be their God.

But as for them whose heart walks after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God. Now at this point, these cherubims representing the glory of God and the presence of God that was once there in the temple, but was lifted from the temple out to the porch, from the porch to the east gate. Now He watches as the Spirit of God is removed even from the east gate of the temple to the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem.

Then did the cherubims lift up their wings and the wheels beside them and the glory of the God of Israel was over them, above them. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city, the Mount of Olives. And afterwards the Spirit took me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God back into Chaldea, back to Babylon, to them of the

captivity.

So the vision that I had seen went up from me. Then I spoke to them of the captivity, all of the things that the Lord had shown me. So He was taken by the Spirit, went through these interesting experiences, and then brought back and shared with these people that were around Him there the vision that God did give to Him.

Now, it is interesting, the glory of the Lord, the last place there on the Mount to the east of Jerusalem, it was on this same mountain that Jesus ascended into glory. It was on this same mountain that Jesus came in His entry to Jerusalem as the King, as the Messiah, fulfilling the prophecy of Zachariah, Behold, rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, but He is lowly, sitting on the colt, the foal of an ass. And it is upon this same mount that Jesus will return.

As Zachariah said, And He shall set His foot in that day on the Mount of Olives, and it will split in the middle and all. And right there, where He saw the glory of the Lord departing from the mountain there on the east, there is where the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ will come. And again, as He comes into Jerusalem, the glory of God's presence once more returning to the land.

And that beautiful restoration of God and the glorious Kingdom of God when it comes. Chapter 12, The word of the Lord also came unto me, saying, Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and they do not see. They have ears to hear, and they do not hear, for they are a rebellious house.

Now you remember Isaiah said the same thing. Having eyes to see, they see not. Ears to hear, they hear not.

Lest at any time they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and be saved. Jeremiah accused them of the same thing. You don't see, you don't hear.

David said, They that are worshiping the idols have become likened to the idols, which cannot see, which cannot move, which cannot hear. And so Jesus said, Well saith Isaiah the prophet concerning this generation, having eyes to see, they will not see. Ears to hear, they will not hear.

Now, the Lord is saying you're in a rebellious house. The interesting thing is that as the Jews look back upon their fathers and upon their history, they always do it with extremely great pride. They really honor their fathers.

They honor the dead. They honor their heritage. And that's where Stephen got into trouble.

For as Stephen was standing before the Sanhedrin and he was rehearsing their history to them, telling them all that God had done, relating to them the illustrious history of their fathers, he finally said, Which of the prophets of God did not your fathers kill? You know, you'd say, Oh, our fathers, our fathers, so on. Hey, they killed every prophet God sent to them. And now you are even worse than they are because you've killed the one that they all prophesied concerning.

That was when they got so angry they began to gnash their teeth. They grabbed rocks and began to throw them at him and they stoned him to death. Paul the Apostle was right there holding their coats, encouraging them on.

Now, here is God saying to Ezekiel, Look, you're dwelling in the midst of a rebellious people. They have eyes, but they will not see, ears, but they will not hear, for they're rebellious. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare these stuff for removing.

Prepare your stuff for moving and move by day in their sight. And thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight that they will consider even though they are a rebellious house. Now, they're rebelling.

They're thinking that they're going to go back right away from this captivity. They've listened to the false prophets. But you just move your stuff from one place to another.

Just pack up your duds, pack your suitcases and just move around with your suitcases because maybe they will hear even though they are rebellious. Then you shall bring forth your stuff by day in their sight, the stuff as though you're moving, and you shall go forth even in their sight as they did go forth into captivity. Now, dig a hole through the wall in their sight and carry your stuff out by this hole in the wall that you dig.

And in their sight, bear your stuff on your shoulders and carry it forth in the twilight and cover your face so that you can't see the ground. For I have set you for a sign to the house of Israel. Now, this is going to be a little illustrated message, Ezekiel, that you're going to carry to the house of Israel.

Pack your suitcases, dig a hole in the wall and crawl out with your suitcase, carry them on your shoulder and just walk around from one place to another. Move out from your house. And so I did as I was commanded.

And I brought forth my stuff by day, the stuff for captivity. Even I dig through the wall with my hands and brought it forth in the twilight and I bear it on my shoulder in their sight. And in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, set in view? What are you doing? And that was, of course, the purpose to create the question.

Doing this, you know, he wasn't saying anything, covered his face and, you know, carrying his stuff around after having dug the hole through the wall. He said, what on the world are you doing? So you go and say to them, Thus saith Jehovah God, or the Lord God, Adonai, this burden concerning the prince in Jerusalem and the house of Israel that are among them. Say, I am your sign and like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them.

They shall remove and go into captivity. Now, what you see me do is what's happening to the princes back in Jerusalem. They are going to dig a hole in the wall and they're going to try to escape with their stuff.

And the prince that would be Zedekiah that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight and shall go forth and they shall dig through the wall to carry out their stuff and he shall cover his face that he not see the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him and he shall be taken in my snare and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans. Yet shall he not see it though he shall die there.

Now, an interesting prophecy concerning Zedekiah the king. He is going to in the evening twilight hours dig a hole through the wall and try to escape. But he's going to get caught in the snare, in the net.

And he is going to be brought to Babylon but he won't see it. We have the record of the Scriptures that Zedekiah one night tried to escape from Jerusalem from the siege of the Babylonian army and he got as far as the plains down near Jericho where the Chaldeans caught up with him and captured him and they

took him to Nebuchadnezzar that was at Riblah and Nebuchadnezzar there took his sons who tried to escape with him and he killed them in the eyes as Zedekiah was watching and then he put out Zedekiah's eyes and he was taken to Babylon and so as Ezekiel predicted so it happened. He came to Babylon but he never saw Babylon because his eyes were put out.

Again, God's amazing prophetic word as God speaks of events and those servants of God speak of events which it would be impossible to do with such accuracy unless they spoke as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Lord said, and I will scatter toward every wind. All of that are about Him to help Him and all of the bands, the armies and I will draw out a sword after them and they shall know that I am the Lord when I shall scatter them among the nations and disperse them in the countries.

But I will leave a few men of them from the sword and from the famine and from the pestilence that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whether they come and they shall know that I am the Lord. God again promised to leave a few of them but they're going to be slain, most of them. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, eat your bread with quaking and drink your water with trembling and with carefulness.

In other words, just drink a little, measure your swallows. Drink it with carefulness and shake as you eat your bread and drink your water, you know, like you're frightened. And say unto the people of the land, you know, these prophets must have been extremely colorful people.

But God is seeking to get the attention of the people. Now, they won't listen to God anymore. So, God has these prophets do these colorful things to draw the attention of the people.

Now, what's Ezekiel doing now? Look at the way he's drinking his water and eating his bread, you know. What's he got up his sleeve this time? And they become curious as they see these bizarre kind of actions. But all planned of God in order to get the attention so He can still speak.

Now, that to me is amazing. God still desires to give the message though they're not listening anymore. But He still wants them to receive the message.

Long after a person has closed his heart to God, closed his ear to God, God continues to speak in different ways. If you won't listen directly, then God will speak to you subtly through the things around your life. Circumstances, events and all.

But God will get His message across one way or the other. Now, say to the people as you're eating and drinking your water and eating your bread this way, say to the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of the land of Israel, they shall eat their bread with carefulness. There's going to be a tremendous famine.

They'll drink their water with astonishment that her land may be desolate from all that is therein because of the violence of all of them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste and the land shall be desolate and ye shall know that I am the Lord. And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel saying? The days are prolonged and every vision faileth.

This is what they were going on saying. Ah, you know, not in our time. The days are prolonged.

Every vision fails. You know, you've heard that for a long time. What do you mean, you know, the Lord is coming? What do you mean? We're getting close to the end.

The days are prolonged. We're going to be here for another thousand years. Life is going to go on.

Man is going to continue. What do you mean, we're getting close to the end? That's what they were saying in Jerusalem at this time. Destruction was right on them.

It was days away, and yet the proverb was, ah, the days are prolonged, every vision fails. It's not going to happen in our lifetime. As Peter said, in the last days scoffers will come saying, where is the promise of His coming since our fathers have fallen asleep? Everything continues as they were from the beginning.

But Peter said, the day of the Lord will come, and God is saying to Ezekiel, this proverb that they're using, tell them therefore, thus saith the Lord God, I will make this proverb deceased. They'll no more use it as a proverb in Israel, but say unto them, the days are at hand and the fulfillment of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

For I am the Lord and I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass, and it shall be no more prolonged. For in your days, O rebellious house, not in the days of your grandchildren or great grandchildren or whatever, but in your days will I say the word and will perform it, saith the Lord God. Again, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say the vision that He sees is a long time off for many days to come.

Not going to happen for a long time. And He prophesies of the times that are way off. Therefore, say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, there shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.

And within a year it was. The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy and say unto them that the prophecy is out of their own hearts. Hear ye the word of the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord God, woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. They're following their own imaginations. They have really seen nothing from God.

They are proclaiming their own visions, their own ideas. O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither have you made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.

They have not helped Israel. They have not stood in these gaps. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, the Lord saith, and the Lord hath not sent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

So here were these false prophets going around. They had not really heard from the Lord, but they were saying, well, the Lord says. Oh, the Holy Spirit told me, or the Holy Spirit showed me, or God has shown to me.

And then they go around seeking for others to confirm their words. Now, the tragedy of the church is that there are false teachers and false prophets in the church today doing the same thing. Speaking in the name of the Lord when God hasn't spoken.

Saying, oh, the Lord says, or the Holy Spirit showed me. When they are talking out of their own spirits in their own hearts. Jesus warns about these men.

He said they are wolves in sheep's clothing. Beware of these false prophets. Paul warned over and over again against these false prophets that were going around deceiving the people speaking in the name of the Lord.

Peter warns against them in a very heavy indictment as does the little book of Jude. These men who speak in the name of the Lord have been the curse of the church from the beginning, but they've always existed clear back into this Old Testament period. There were those false prophets and God spoke out against them in Jeremiah.

God spoke out against them through Isaiah. And God is now speaking out against them here in Ezekiel. They've not really helped the people.

They've hurt the people. Have you not seen a vain vision? You've spoken a lying divination where as you say, the Lord saith it, albeit God says, I haven't spoken. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because you have spoken vanity and you've seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God.

That's heavy. God just doesn't like you speaking in His name your own ideas, your own thoughts. Well, the Lord showed me.

I had a fellow one day that was one of those the Lord told me kind, you know. And the Lord told him to go out, you know, into the desert. And he went out there and the Lord told him this.

The Lord told him that. The Lord told him this. And, you know, and he lost all his money and he lost all this.

And, you know, he got sunburned and dehydrated and everything else. And why would God do that to me? Why would God, you know? And it's obvious that the guy was nuts, you know, that God didn't speak to him. If God had told him to do all these things, then it wouldn't have, you know, messed up.

It would have ended in a calamity. And then he wants to blame God for all of the, you know, the misery that he went through. Well, the Lord told me this.

I said, well, if the Lord told you to do all those things, then why are you asking me why the Lord would do something? Ask Him if He tells you all that stuff. The Lord didn't tell you to come to me because I don't have any sympathy for you. But I get tired of, you know, how can you argue when a person says, well, the Lord told me to do it.

Well, then what can you say? You say, well, man, you're nuts. The Lord didn't tell you that. But, you know, you don't want to say that to a person.

But they don't leave you anywhere to go. We need to be careful about that. Thus saith the Lord, or the Lord said, or, you know, the Lord told me.

We've got to be careful about it. I think that we use that much too loosely. God doesn't like that.

Speaking in His name when He hasn't spoken. And God said, I'm against you. You that say the Lord saith when I haven't spoken.

And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity and divine lies. And they shall not be in the assembly of my people. Oh, boy, that is heavy duty.

When God's people are assembled together in that heavenly scene, these guys aren't going to be there. Neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel. Neither shall they enter into the land of Israel.

And ye shall know that I am the Lord God. Because even, because they have seduced My people, saying, peace, and there was no peace. And one built the wall, and lo, others came along and daubed it with untempered mortar.

So they build a wall, and other guys come along, and they daub it with untempered mortar. And thus it has no strength. It's going to fall in the day of battle.

Notice what they're saying. And Jeremiah was rebuking them. They're saying, God said through Jeremiah, scarcely have you healed the hurt of My daughter Israel, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Oh, but they were making positive confessions. Weren't they? Oh, you don't want to say war and desolation. That's terrible.

That will happen to you if you say that. Make a positive confession. Oh, but God says that positive confession is a lie.

It's not going to do you any good to go around saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace, saith the Lord. And God really rebuked them for those positive confessions. Because God had not promised peace.

And it was hurting the people. They were denying the truth. They were trying to escape the truth.

And denying the truth. They were actually lying when they were saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. So they're building a wall that's not going to stand.

Because one guy will say it, and another guy will come along and confirm it. Oh, yes, saith the Lord. Show me the same thing, brother.

Oh, hallelujah. Untempered mortar. Say unto them that are daubing it with that untempered mortar, that it shall fall, there shall be an overflowing shower, and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, and a stormy wind shall tear it.

Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Where are those prophecies that you gave us? Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will even tear it with a stormy wind in my fury, and there shall be an overflowing shower in my anger, and great hailstones, fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall and shall be consumed in the midst thereof, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. That phrase over and over and over and over again sixty-two times in this book.

And ye shall know when I bring my judgments, when I bring my word, when my word comes to pass. And that, of course, is the purpose of prophecy. Is when the prophecy comes to pass that ye shall know that He is the Lord.

That it is God who has spoken. And that God can speak of things before they happen. And sixty-two times God spoke, and spoke of when it was fulfilled, ye will know that I am the Lord.

And thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with the untempered mortar, and I will say unto you, the wall is no more, neither are they who daubed it. To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God. Likewise, thou son of man, talking to Ezekiel, set your face against these daughters of your people, which are prophesying out of their own heart, and prophesy against them.

Now, there were these gals there in Jerusalem also who took the title of a prophetess, and they were prophesying out of their own hearts. And thus saith the Lord God, woe unto the women that are sewing pillows to all the armholes, and making kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls. Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? Now, it sounds like that they are in some kind of witchcraft, a cultish kind of practice in the sewing of these pillows onto the armholes and putting these little bonnets on every... that is, for every size of head, every stature.

So, for every size head, they were making little bonnets that they could wear. Will you pollute me among my people for a handful of barley? In other words, they were divining for anything. You know, give me a handful of barley, and give me a wheat, and I'll tell you your fortune.

You know, cross my palm of the dollar, dearie, and I'll tell you what's going to come, you know. And so, God is speaking out against them, who pollute me among the people for a handful of barley or a piece of bread to slay the souls that should die and to save the souls alive that should not live by your lying to my people that hear your lies. Now, they were slaying the souls by telling them, hey, things are going to be alright.

You know, you've got a bright future. There's going to be a handsome man, you know, that's going to come into your life, and you're going to be, you know, live happily ever after. And these people were not listening to the Word of God and the warnings of God because of the comfort that they were receiving.

Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold, I'm against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly. And I will tear them from your arms and will let the souls go, even the souls that hunt and make them fly. It seems like they were probably into setting up curses, you know, against people, going into these little incantations, putting pins in the dolls and this kind of thing in trying to create a fear in the minds of the people, oh, they put a hex on me.

Your kerchiefs also will I tear and deliver my people out of your hand and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad. And of course, the righteous people, when they see this kind of junk, it hurts.

You think, oh God, you know, how long are you going to let them go? Whom I have not made sad and you've strengthened the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life. You're comforting those that are dying in their wickedness. And because of the comfort you're giving, they're not repenting.

They're not turning away from it. It's much like many of those ministers today who stand in the pulpits and say, there's no hell. You don't have to worry.

You know, every day and in every way the world is getting better and better and better. We're on the verge of the glorious millennium. You know, the glorious age is about to be ushered in.

And people are attracted. And it's interesting to me that in this religious science and spiritism and so forth, that most of the practitioners are women. You ever notice that? In this theosophy, religious science, and all of these, you know, metaphysical type of things, most of them teaching and all are women.

And so the Lord really has a word against them here. Therefore, ye shall see no more vanity nor divine divinations, for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto Me, and they sat before Me.

And the word of the Lord came unto Me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and they put a stumbling block of their iniquity before their face. And should I be inquired at all by them? Why should I talk to them? Why should I deal with them? These guys that are sitting here in front of you, they've got idols that they have set up in their hearts. Idolatry begins in the heart.

There's where you first turn against God. There's where you really turn to God. Believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead.

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Out of the heart proceeds the evil speakings, the murders, the adulteries, the fornications, the lies, the heart. And here were these men coming to inquire of God, to hear the word of the Lord from the prophet.

And God says to Ezekiel, Hey, these guys that are sitting here, Ezekiel, why should I speak to them? Why should I be inquired of by them? Because they all have their little idols all set up in their hearts. Now, usually they would set up an idol on an altar, on a table, or someplace in their home. That's bad enough.

But it's even worse to set up an idol in your heart. Because then you begin to deceive yourself. You say, well, I don't have, I'm not guilty of idolatry.

I don't have any idols. I don't have any little shrines in my home. But you've got it right here in your heart.

That's worse. Therefore, speak unto them and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that sets up his idols in his heart and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and comes to the prophet, I, the Lord, will answer him that comes according to the multitude of his idols, that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart because they are all estranged from me through their idols. I'll answer them.

They've all become a stranger to me because of their idols, idolatry, worshiping an idol, a principle, an ideal, a philosophy, having a master passion governing your life other than God. Always estranges a person from God. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Repent.

Turn, change. Don't just be sorry. Repent.

Have a change of action and turn yourselves from your idols and turn away your faces from all of your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel or of the stranger that sojourns in Israel which separates himself from me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me, I, the Lord, will answer him by myself and I will set my face against that man and will make him a sign and a proverb and I will cut him off

out of the midst of my people and ye shall know that I am the Lord. God says I'm going to be fierce in my judgment of that person.

I'll cut him off. Come to inquire of me with idols in your heart? Hey, that's dangerous business. Ananias and Sapphira sought to do so.

They came to God but they had idols in their hearts. Mammon was sitting there. A desire.

Oh, there were other idols too. His desire to be acknowledged and recognized by the church as generous givers. Oh my, isn't that marvelous? They sold their property and turning all the money in.

Ooh, great. Fantastic. But they weren't.

They were only pretending to do so. They were holding back part of the profit for themselves. Now, there's nothing wrong with that.

They didn't have to sell their house. They didn't have to bring anything in. God didn't require that.

But they were making a pretense. It was a hoax. It was a sham.

They were coming before God. But there were idols in their hearts. Why have you conspired in your heart, Peter said, to do this evil and to sin against God and to lie to the Holy Ghost? You haven't lied unto man.

You've lied unto God. Of course, they fell over dead. They were carried out.

God said, hey, I'll wipe them out from among My people. Be thankful God isn't so severe today as He was in the early church. We wouldn't have a church the size that we do.

God's heavy hand. And if the prophet be deceived when he has spoken a thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet and will stretch out My hand upon him and will destroy him from the midst of the people of Israel. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity.

The punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him. That the house of Israel may go no more astray from Me nor be polluted any more with all their transgressions. But that they may be My people and I may be their God, saith the Lord God.

Oh, how He longed to be their God and for them to be His people and that they walk before Him in holiness and in righteousness, not polluted by their transgressions. Now the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the land sins against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out My hand upon it and I will break the staff of the bread thereof and will send famine upon it and will cut off man and beast from it. Now these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it.

They should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. In other words, God says, when I bring judgment upon the land, even though there are righteous men in it, those righteous men will only deliver themselves. They can't deliver anybody else by their righteousness.

They'll only deliver themselves. Now it is interesting the three men that God spoke of. Noah, whom God delivered when He brought His judgment upon the earth.

Daniel. Now Daniel was at this time alive and one of the counselors to Nebuchadnezzar. Already he was a very young man at this point, probably in his early twenties.

But yet he had already developed a tremendous reputation as a spiritual giant and as a spiritual leader, a spiritual man. And of course that was evidenced when first he was brought into captivity in Babylon. And he purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meats and requested that he be allowed a vegetarian diet.

He didn't want the meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols. The meat that wasn't killed according to the kosher laws. And he said, just let us eat vegetables.

And the guard says, hey, you know, if you guys just eating vegetables, you begin to look skinny and sick, you know, then you'll have my head, man. Daniel said, well, give us 10 days and take a look after 10 days. And if we look skinny and malnourished, then we'll eat your meat.

The guy said, fair enough. And after 10 days, so Daniel and his buddies were healthier, ruddier looking and all than the others. They were eating this polluted meat of the king.

So they were able to go on. Then he had begun to be known for his interpreting of the king's dreams and all. And so Daniel already was coming into prominence in the minds of the people.

And though he was a young man, still he is named with Noah, Daniel and Job. Righteous men, examples of righteous men. Now, if I can, if I cause noisome beast to pass through the land and they spoil it so that it is desolate, that no man may pass through it because of the beast.

Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters. They shall only be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. These men, if they were dwelling there, they could only deliver themselves.

They can't even deliver their families. Every man must have his own personal relationship with God. God has no grandchildren, only sons.

You cannot have a relationship with God through your mother, through your father, through your family. You've got to have your own personal relationship with God. And these men, as righteous as they were, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, for he was righteous in all of his generation.

And yet he could only deliver himself and his sons who came into the ark with him. Now, this of course to me is a God that says, if I'm bringing these terrible things upon the land, the noisome beast and the famines and so forth, the righteous can only deliver themselves. In other words, the righteous will be delivered, even as we will be delivered before God brings his judgment upon this earth.

And any man who says otherwise is denying the righteous principles of God. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and I say, sword, go through the land so that I cut off man and beast from it. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

Or if I send a pestilence into the land and pour out my fury upon it in blood to cut it off from man and beast, though Noah and Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. For thus saith the Lord God, how much more when I send my four sword judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, famine, noisome beast, and the pestilence to cut it off from man and beast, yet behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth both sons and daughters. Behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way

and their doings, and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

And they shall comfort you when you see their ways and their doings, and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done to it, saith the Lord God. Now soon these captives will be coming from Jerusalem, that remnant that will escape. And when they tell you the things that happened, and when you see these people, you'll know that what I did was righteous in my judgment.

When you hear of the abominations and things that are going on, you'll know that I was righteous when I brought my judgment against Jerusalem. Now in chapter 15, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree? Now you remember God said concerning the nation Israel in Isaiah chapter 5 that God had planted a pleasant vineyard in the nation of Israel. He put a hedge around it, built walls around it, fenced it in, built a wine press therein.

And he came at the time of harvest that he might partake of the fruit from his vine. But behold, it had wild grapes. What shall I do? I'll let the wall go into deterioration.

I'll let the weeds grow in. I'll let the vine just go to pots and I won't watch over it. I won't come to it anymore.

The vine failed to bring forth fruit. And thus saith the Lord concerning the nation of Israel, you've been my vine. What else could I have done for you but what I've already done? And yet you haven't brought forth fruit.

It of course brings to mind Jesus in John's Gospel chapter 15. I am the true vine. My Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that bringeth forth fruit and all. You're the branches. And the whole idea and the purpose of God for you is that you might bring forth fruit unto God.

There is only one purpose. There's only one value, one thing that a vine is good for and that's to bring forth fruit. And he's pointing that out here and that's the whole jest of chapter 15.

The vine has one purpose only to bring forth fruit. And if it doesn't bring forth fruit, it's worthless for anything else. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Can you build you a bookcase out of the wood from a grapevine? No way.

The wood is not good for working. You can't make anything out of vines. Actually, the vine begins to rot almost immediately and it becomes very weak and you can't put any weight on anything else.

Neither can you use it for pigs. It has no value. You can't even use it for a pin to hang something on because it'll just rot and fall.

It just sort of becomes hollow inside just like a piece of paper. It just falls. It has no value for wood at all.

Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel. But the fire devours both ends. It makes punkish kind of fuel.

It doesn't even burn good. There's only one thing that a vine is good for and that's to bring forth fruit. Now, you are God's vineyard is what the Lord is saying.

And there's only one thing that God is desiring from you and that is that you bring forth fruit. Herein is my Father glorified. Jesus said that you bear much fruit.

God wants your life to be fruitful for Him that you might bring forth those fruits of righteousness from your life unto the Lord. Behold, when the vine is whole, it wasn't good for any work. How much less for work when the fire has devoured it and it is burned.

Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, as the vine tree among the trees of the forest which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They haven't brought forth fruit. They're good for nothing.

And thus I'll just let them burn like a punk. And I will set my face against them and they shall go out from one fire and another fire shall devour them and ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have set my face against them and I will make the land desolate because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God." And so, as God through Isaiah speaks of the failure of the people as a vineyard, as a vine to bring forth fruit and thus the desolation was coming, so the prophet Ezekiel takes up the same figure and again, the idea that their failure to bring forth fruit, they're worthless for anything else, no sense of keeping them around, destroy them. They have no value.

Destroy them. You remember Jesus gave the parable of the tree that failed to bring forth any fruit and the master said, destroy it. Why encumbereth it the ground? The servant said, oh Lord, give me another year.

You know, I'll plant around and fertilize it and all and see what will happen. But the question of Jesus, hey, if you're not bringing forth any fruit, why encumbereth you the ground? What value are you? What good for you being around if you're not bringing forth fruit? God desires that you bring forth fruit for His glory. Therefore, look at your life.

Are you bringing forth fruit unto righteousness for God? Now, Paul tells us in Galatians 5.20, but the fruit of the Spirit is love. God is looking for fruit from your life. He's looking for love.

Love for Him, which is manifested in our love one for another. How much fruit is God finding in your life? God comes to His garden desiring to partake of the fruit, enjoy the fruit of it. There is nothing but wild grapes.

They're sour. They're no good. They're no value.

I wonder how many times God comes just to have a time of fellowship with us, just to experience our love for Him and just to have a time of just the expression of loving relationship. And here we are all soured out, bummed out at God because, you know, things aren't going like I wanted them to go. And I'm all sour and bitter against God.

How tragic that when God is coming to just receive love and friendship and fellowship with us that He finds us in these sour, bitter attitudes. God wants your life to be fruitful, to bring forth fruit for His glory. And really, that's the only value that you have.

The vine has no other purpose. It's good for nothing else but to bring forth fruit. Now, Jesus said, I'm the vine, you're the branches.

And the idea is bring forth fruit. May your life be fruitful for God. Shall we pray? Father, help us that we might be so filled with Thy Spirit and with Thy love that any time You come to Your garden You may take Your fill of the fruit as we express to You our love, our worship, our appreciation for all that You are and for all the goodness that You have bestowed upon us.

Lord, help us to be more expressive of our love and of our thanksgiving in all things unto Thee. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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