

# (Through the Bible) Ezekiel 31-35

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith's sermon on Ezekiel 31-35 explores God's judgment on Egypt, emphasizing the dangers of pride and the importance of recognizing divine sovereignty.*

**Duration:** 1:24:26

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 3:17-19, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:32, Ezekiel 34:11-12, Ezekiel 34:16, Ezekiel 34:18-20

**Topics:** "Sound Doctrine", "Evangelism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of churches putting on entertaining programs to draw crowds instead of focusing on sound doctrine. He emphasizes that people with itching ears may enjoy the entertainment but will not truly follow God's word. The speaker then discusses how God commissions Ezekiel to speak His word to the captives in Babylon, comparing it to a watchman warning of an impending invasion. The responsibility of the watchman is to give the warning, but what the people do with it is up to them. The speaker concludes by highlighting that God has not commissioned believers to argue or force people into the kingdom of heaven, but rather to witness His truth, leaving the response to individuals.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn now to Ezekiel chapter 31. In chapters 29 and 30 of Ezekiel, he was prophesying concerning the judgment of God that was to come against the nation of Egypt, who was like a reed, when Israel sought to lean upon it, it broke and only injured Israel. They were of course warned about leaning upon Egypt, but the warnings were not heeded and thus Egypt became as a broken staff and did not really help Israel, except only temporarily when Pharaoh Hophri came against Babylon for a time and they stopped the siege against Jerusalem for a short period.

Now in chapter 31, he begins a prophecy against the Pharaoh himself and in this prophecy against the Pharaoh, he turns to more or less a parable in which he likens the Egyptian leader to a great cedar tree in Lebanon. Now Lebanon used to be famous for its huge cedar trees and of course you remember that the king of Tyre, Hiram, made a covenant with Solomon to provide the cedars, with David and with Solomon, to provide the cedars for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. And so in a parabolic way, the Lord speaks of the parable, of the parable really of the Pharaoh as a giant cedar in Lebanon.

Came to pass in the 11th year, the third month, this would be the 11th year of King Zedekiah or 586 BC. The word of the Lord came unto me saying, son of man, speak unto Pharaoh, the king of Egypt and to his multitude, who art thou like in greatness? Egypt of course was a great powerful empire in the ancient

world. It was one of the world empires or the world dominating or leading empires and always a force to be reckoned with.

Who are you like? And he likens them unto the Assyrians who were also a great world power. It was the Assyrians who conquered over the northern kingdom of Israel. And so they are like unto Assyria.

They are like a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches and the shadowing shroud of high stature, the top among the thick boughs. And the waters made him great. That would be the Nile river.

The deep set him on the high with the rivers running round about his plants and sent out her little rivers under the trees of the field, the tributaries and the delta area where the Nile spread out in the delta and that rich farmland. Therefore, his height was exalted above the trees of the field and his boughs were multiplied. His branches became long because of the multitude of waters when he shot forth.

And all of the fowls of heaven made their nest in his boughs. And under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young. And under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

So Egypt was one of the great nations and overshadowed the other nations. Notice the parable here, the birds lunch lodged in the branches. Uh, this is also said by Daniel of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom, but bringing it into the new Testament, we remember Jesus gave a kingdom parable.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed, which is a small little seed, but it was planted and it grew into a tree and the birds of the air came and lodged in it. Now in a parabolic way, birds are always thought of in an evil sense. You remember that when the seed was planted and it fell by the wayside, the birds of the air plucked it up so that it wasn't able to take root.

And they were likened unto the evil one who comes and plucks the word of God out of a person's heart so that it doesn't have any effect. So in that kingdom parable of the mustard seed that grew into a tree, first of all, that is abnormal. A mustard seed is not a tree seed.

It is a bush, but there was this abnormal growth. It grew into a tree and all of the birds came and lodged in it is a parable really of the Gentile church that would become a haven for every kind of bird that exists. And so we look at the Gentile church today and see all the weird birds lodging in its branches.

It's amazing the things that have been brought into the church, incorporated as a part of Christianity and the people who have taken on the name or the title of Christian. But of course, it certainly reminds us of what Jesus said. Not all who say, Lord, Lord, are going to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

So Jesus is referring to the fact that as the Gentile church grows, the abnormal type of growth, that it is not a healthy, solid growth, that it is become the haven for birds. Now here, the fowls of the heaven made their nest in the boughs. That is these other nations conquered by these other peoples, conquered by Egypt.

Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches, for his root was by the great waters and the cedars in the garden of God could not hide him. And the fir trees were not like his boughs and the chestnut trees were not like his branches, nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches so that all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God envied him, the great cedar.

A parable, of course, of Egypt, how it became such a great nation, the envy of other nations. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because thou has lifted up thyself in height and has shot his up his top among the thick boughs, his heart is lifted up in his height. And I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen, and he shall surely deal with him.

I have driven him out for his wickedness. So the feral judgment is pronounced upon him. And again, the reason for the judgment notice carefully is his pride because his heart was lifted up for his height, for his greatness, pride cometh before destruction, a haughty spirit before the fall.

It is extremely difficult for men to handle a position of power or authority. I think one of the hardest things in the world is to be in a position of ruling over other men, because there is always that danger of pride coming in and looking at your position and saying, look what I have done. You remember, and we'll get to it.

You remember trustfully for about four years ago when we were in Daniel, and we'll be getting there pretty soon again. When Nebuchadnezzar was looking over Babylon, no doubt walking through the hanging gardens, one of the wonders, seven wonders of the ancient world and walking through this beautiful garden and this fabulous city that he had built walls, 300 feet high, 80 feet thick. And he said, is not this the great Babylon that I have built? And a voice came from heaven saying, hey, the watchers have been watching you and your heart has been lifted up with pride.

Nebuchadnezzar came to Daniel and said, you know, told him of this experience of hearing this voice saying that the watchers have been watching and saw his pride and God was going to bring him into judgment. And Daniel says, hey, walk carefully, be careful. And about a year later, again, old Nebuchadnezzar was boasting in his greatness, the great Babylon that I have built.

And the voice came from heaven and said, that's it. You've had it. And he had a period of insanity where for seven seasons, he lived with the animals in the field.

He ate grass like the oxen, his hair grew like feathers and the dew of the heaven settled on him. And he lived like a wild man until he knew that the God in heaven is the one who sets upon the kingdoms, those whom he will. The pride was the thing that brought Nebuchadnezzar to this place of being broken until seven seasons had passed over him and then God restored.

And he made that tremendous proclamation, declaring his belief and faith in the God of heaven, who establishes upon the kingdoms, those whom he would now all the way along through history, from the beginning. Pride is a destroyer. It has destroyed so many.

Shakespeare has the statement in one of his plays, Cromwell flee from pride for by this sin did the angels fall. Satan said, I will exalt my throne. And here is the Pharaoh of Egypt being lifted up with pride.

And yet God says, I will destroy. I will deliver him to the hand of the mighty one of the heathen and he shall surely deal with him. And I have driven him out for his wickedness.

So God was to use Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty one of the heathen to destroy the Pharaoh. And of course, Jeremiah was making a similar prophecy. He was telling those in Jerusalem, now don't trust in the Pharaoh.

Don't lean upon Egypt for Egypt also will be destroyed by Babylon. Egypt will not be a real help. And of course, they wouldn't listen to Jeremiah.

And they finally, of course, went down to Egypt and there at Tapanes, he took and put these rocks down. And he said, above these rocks, he buried these rocks. He said, above these rocks, Nebuchadnezzar will build his throne and rule in Egypt.

And of course, it was fulfilled. The strangers, the terrible of the nations have cut him off and have left him upon the mountains and all the valleys. His branches are fallen.

His bowels are broken by the rivers of the land and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow and have left him. Upon his ruins shall all the fowls of heaven remain and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches to the end that none of all of the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height. Neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs.

Neither their trees stand up in their height. All that drink water for they are delivered unto death through the nether parts of the earth in the midst of the children of men with them that go down to the pit. Thus saith the Lord God in the day when he went down to hell, Sheol in the Hebrew, I caused a mourning.

I covered the deep for him. I restrained the floods thereof and the great waters were stayed. And I caused Lebanon to mourn for him and all of the trees of the field fainted for him.

And I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall. When I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit and all the trees of Eden, the choice and the best of Lebanon, all that did drink water shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. And they also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword and they that were his arm and that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.

To whom are thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? Yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden to the nether parts of the earth. Thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude saith the Lord.

So that destruction and being cast down to hell is predicted by God to be the destiny of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Now in chapter 32, because this is his sad destiny, he takes up this lamentation. A lamentation is a wailing or a crying for the Pharaoh.

You lament or you wail. And it came to pass in the twelfth year. So this was a year later from the previous prophecy.

Actually a year and six months later, eighteen months later, he came to pass in the twelfth year. In the twelfth month, the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a, a whale is a poor translation. You are really like a crocodile in the seas, and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and you trouble the waters with thy feet, and you foul their rivers, a crocodile or a dragon.

Thus saith the Lord God, I will therefore spread out my net. You're like a crocodile, you've muddied the waters, you've stirred things up, but I'm going to spread out a net over you with the company of many people, and they shall bring thee up in my net. And then will I leave thee upon the land, and I will cast thee

forth on the open field, and will cause all the fowls of heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beast of the earth with thee.

And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height, and I will also water with thy blood the land wherein you swim. Even the mountains and the rivers shall be full of thee. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven and make the stars thereof dark, and I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

Now, as we get into this part of the prophecy where God speaks of the day when he puts her out, the heavens being covered, the stars dark, the sun will be covered with a cloud, and the moon will not give her light, brings into mind the prophecy of Joel concerning the time of the great tribulation when the sun would be darkened, the moon would be turned to blood, and the stars would not shine. Jesus, of course, quoted this in Matthew 24 as, again, a part of the great tribulation of those days. And we find it recorded also in the book of Revelation and the cataclysmic judgments that take place in the sixth seal.

So it is possible that this prophecy against the Pharaoh is one of those prophecies with a dual fulfillment, that he was talking about what would happen when Nebuchadnezzar conquered him, but also the going out and the judgment against Egypt in the day of the great tribulation. So there is that real possibility of a dual aspect to the fulfillment of this particular prophecy. And it not only spoke of the condition of the Pharaoh then, but as history repeats itself, when the Lord judges the earth, these same conditions do take place in the time of the great tribulation.

All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. I will also vex the hearts of many people when I shall bring your destruction among the nations into the countries which you have not known. Yes, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee when I brandish my sword before them, and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life in the day of thy fall.

For thus saith the Lord God, the sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. And by the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, and the terrible of nations, all of them, and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. And I will destroy all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters, neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.

Then will I make their waters deep and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God, when I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full. Then I shall smite all of them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord. And again, in all of these prophecies, the Lord declares when they are fulfilled, then they shall know that I am the Lord.

One of the purposes of prophecy, speaking of things in advance, is to give proof that God indeed has spoken. Jesus said, I have told you these things before they come to pass, so that when they come to pass, you might believe. And so one of the strong apologetics of scripture is prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy.

And so over and over again, as the prophecies are made, the Lord said, and then shall ye know that I am the Lord. And of course, when we get into Ezekiel, our study next week, as it speaks of Russia's invasion with this massive army from all of her allies, including Libya and Ethiopia and all Iraq, Iran and all, when they are all defeated in Israel, he said, then shall the nations of the world know that I am God. I'll be

sanctified before the nations of the world.

I was talking with a very wealthy Jewish friend about the Bible and about the Lord. And I was asking him what it was going to take to make him a believer because his whole thing was where was God when my parents were gassed, you know, in Germany. For his parents were both of them killed by the Germans during the war.

And I said, but what will it take to make you a believer? I said, here, God said that he was going to make Israel a nation once again, and Israel is now a nation. Doesn't that say something to you? He said, no. He said, it's very obvious.

We have had that in our heart from the beginning. You know, one day it was going to be a nation again. We were going to take it again.

He said, we're tough people. I said, well, it says when Israel becomes a nation again, that they will become a troublesome stone to all of those that are around about them. And if any nation tries to come against them, that they are going to really be hurt.

And this was right after the 67 war. And I said, doesn't look what's happened to how Israel struck out against, uh, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria all at the same time. And, and defeated all three took the Sinai, took the West bank and the Golan Heights.

Doesn't that cause you to believe he said, no, I told you we were tough people. I said, well, the Bible says that Russia then will head an invasion against Israel and will come with all of her allies to destroy this new nation. And that Russia is going to be totally defeated.

He said, when that happens, I'll become a believer. I said, Paul, you might be just a little bit too late to escape the great tribulation that will follow, but we'll be getting into that more next week. As we move on in this exciting prophecy of Ezekiel, as he gets into these, uh, the regathering of the nation, Israel and the events of these last days.

Now, as we get into verse 17, we have a whole new prophecy. The lamentation against the Pharaoh is over with verse 16. This is the lamentation.

He's told to take up a lamentation for the Pharaoh. And this is the lamentation where with, they shall all lament her. They shall lament for her, even for Egypt and all of her multitude.

Now it came to pass also in the 12th year, in the 15th day of the month, this first prophecy came in the first day of the month. So 15 days later, he had another word from the Lord for Egypt saying, son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt and cast them down. Even her and the daughters of the famous nations unto the nether parts of the earth with them that go down to the pit, whom does thou pass in beauty go down and be thou laid with the uncircumcised.

They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword. She is delivered to the sword, draw her and all of her multitudes. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him.

They are gone down. They lie uncircumcised slain by the sword. Asher is already there and all of her company, his graves are about him.

All of the slain fallen by the sword. Egypt is going to fall and go into hell where Asher has already been slain. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit.

Her company is round about her grave. All of them slain fallen by the sword, which caused terror from the land of the living. Elam is there and all of her multitude and verse 25, they have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all of her multitude or graze around about.

And so Egypt is to be cast down with these other nations, Meshach and Tubal, those nations from the north along with Sidon. And then Edom is also there, verse 29, and her kings and princes. And then verse 30, the Sidonians and Pharaoh shall see them and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God.

For I have caused my terror in the land of the living and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh and all of the multitude saith the Lord God. Now, as we get into chapter 33, God now begins to instruct those captives who are in Babylon. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people and say unto them, when I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coast and set him for their watchman, if when he sees the sword come upon the land, he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whosoever hears the sound of the trumpet and takes not warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

He heard the sound of the trumpet. He did not take warning. His blood shall be upon him, but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

But if the watchman see the sword come and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned and the sword comes and takes away any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore, thou shalt hear the word of my mouth and warn them from me.

Now God is commissioning Ezekiel to speak his word to the captives, the people of God, there in the land of Babylon. And God is holding Ezekiel responsible for speaking the word of God to them. And God likens it unto a watchman that has been set up to warn the people of an impending invasion.

If the watchman sees the enemy coming and he blows the trumpet to warn the people, then he has fulfilled his obligation. His responsibility was complete when he blew the trumpet and gave warning. What the people do with the warning is not in the responsibility of the watchman.

He cannot help what the people do with the warning that he gave. His job was to give the warning. The people could respond however they wanted to the warning.

It was then their responsibility how they responded. And so God said, now I have set you like a watchman. If you don't warn them, then you are responsible and I will hold you responsible for them.

But if you warn them, then they are responsible for themselves. In our Christian witnessing, I think that it is important that we realize that we are much like a watchman. God has set us to give a warning unto people.

Now what they do with it is their business. God has not commissioned us really to argue people into the kingdom of heaven or to pressure or to force people into the kingdom of heaven. God has commissioned us to witness his truth.

And what people do with that witness is their business. And I realize that there's nothing I can do beyond witnessing for the Lord. It is interesting to me how that there are some people that when you witness to them, it's like they've been waiting for you all their lives.

And they're just ready to accept that they are so eager really that they don't always even give you the chance to finish your witness. And there are others that you give the same witness to. And it's like it's falling on deaf ears.

It's like they don't even hear you. It's like they haven't even heard anything you said. And it doesn't seem to penetrate at all.

It has no effect upon them. Now this causes me to realize that the Holy Spirit is the one that has to do the work of conviction and the drawing of these people to Jesus Christ. My responsibility is as a watchman just to blow the trumpet, to declare the Lord is coming soon.

Now what you do with that is your own business. And so God said to Ezekiel, now look, you're like a watchman, Ezekiel. Your responsibility is to give the people my word.

That's all. What they do with it after that is their responsibility. But I'm going to hold you responsible to warn them, to give them my word.

So when I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you will surely die. If you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.

Uh, the Lord gave him much the same kind of a commission back at the beginning of the book in the third chapter of Ezekiel. Therefore thou son of man speak unto the house of Israel. Thus ye speak saying, if our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how should we thus then live the question? Very important question.

If our transgressions and our sins be upon us and they are destroying us, how should we then live saying to them as I live, sayeth the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways. For why will ye die? Oh, house of Israel.

And so here we see the heart of God and we understand now a bit of the truth of God and not the perversion that has been fostered by Satan through the ages that God is cruel and harsh and almost relishes judging. Not so God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, any wicked, but God cries unto them to turn. I often hear the complaint.

How can a God of love send a man to hell? Well, the complaint itself is wrong because the Bible does not teach that God actually sends men to hell that they go there by their own choice against everything that God has done to keep them from hell. Now God has given to us free choice. I can choose what I want.

God doesn't force me to serve him. He doesn't force me to love him. He gives me that choice and he respects the choice that I make.

But God does everything short of violating my choice to bring me into his kingdom. But if I refuse every innovation of God towards me, every invitation of the spirit, if I do despite to the spirit of grace, trample

underfoot the son of God, account the blood of his covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing. If I say, ah, the blood of Jesus Christ means nothing to me.

If I am stubborn, rebellious, and I hang in there, I can make it into hell, but it's the hardest trip in the world. Not easy to go to hell. You've got to fight against God every step.

And finally you have to step over Jesus Christ who actually sort of lays himself out in your path to stop you from your madness. But the madness of man, God says, turn ye, turn ye, for why would ye die, O house of Israel? The path that they have taken is a path of destruction. They are pining away in their transgressions and sins.

And God is crying to them to turn. Therefore, thou son of man, say to the children of thy people, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression. As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness.

Neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I shall say to the righteous that he shall surely live, if he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, all of his righteousnesses shall not be remembered. But for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

Again, when I say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die if he turns from his sin and does that which is lawful and right. If the wicked restores the pledge and gives again that which was robbed, he'd be walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity. He shall surely live.

He shall not die. And none of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him. He hath done that which is lawful and right.

He shall surely live in that glorious. God will never mention any of your past iniquities again as you turn to Jesus Christ. Of course, this is written in the pre-grace age.

This is written under the old law of the covenant. But what is true under this, as far as God not remembering our sins again is true under grace, the grace of God, whereby we have that forgiveness of sins. Yet the children of thy people say the way of the Lord is an equal.

God isn't fair. How many times we've heard this complaint against God? God isn't fair. This is the underlying complaint, really, whenever a person says, how can a God of love, you know that they are challenging the fairness of God, no matter what they say after that.

There is that subtle challenge of the fairness of God. And how many times the fairness of God has been challenged by man. And here the children of Israel are challenged.

The way of the Lord is an equal. God says, you tell them their way is an equal. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

But if the wicked turns from his wickedness and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet you say the way of the Lord is an equal. Oh, ye house of Israel, I will judge every one of you after your ways.

Now, at this point, it came to pass in the 12th month of our captivity, in the 10th month and the fifth day of the month. So we're coming into a whole interesting aspect here now. That one that had escaped out of

Jerusalem came unto me saying, the city is smitten.

And so the news finally arrived. It was a year earlier that Jerusalem fell, but one of the persons who had escaped finally comes to Ezekiel, bringing him the news that Jerusalem was smitten. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening before he that was escaped came and had opened my mouth until he came to me in the morning and my mouth was open and I was no more dumb.

Now the Lord, you remember, told Ezekiel that he was going to be dumb until they got word of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. So the Lord opened his mouth and he was no more dumb. Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak saying, Abraham was one and he inherited the land, but we are many and the land is given us for an inheritance.

So the Lord is saying to Ezekiel, though Nebuchadnezzar has conquered Jerusalem and has set up Gedoliah as a governor, yet the hearts of the people are still rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. They're saying, look, Abraham was only one man and God gave him the land and we are many, so we can take the land still. And so even at the time of Gedoliah there, they were not really totally subdued.

The people were still rebellious in their hearts. And so God is speaking to Ezekiel concerning the attitude that the people had who were back there in the land. Of course, Jeremiah was with them.

Jeremiah kept telling them to just surrender to Babylon. Things would go well. And if they dared to resist, then they would be destroyed out of the land.

They did not listen to Jeremiah either. Wherefore, say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, you eat with the blood. Now these are the indictments against these people who say, oh, the land is ours.

You know, Abraham was only one. God gave him the land and we are many. So the land is ours.

And God says, look, just tell them that they eat with the blood. That is, they were not killing the food as God required in the law, thoroughly bleeding the animals, but they were strangling the animals or killing them in ways by which the blood remained in the animal. And they were eating with the blood.

They were lifting up their eyes towards idols. They were shedding blood. And God says, shall you possess the land? You know, here you're committing all of these evil things against my law.

And you think I'm going to let you possess the land. For you stand upon your sword, you work abomination, and you defile everyone as neighbor's wife. And shall you possess the land? I said, you're incredible.

I can't believe you. Say thou thus unto them, thus saith the Lord God, as I live, surely they that are in the waste shall fall by the sword and him that is in the open field, what I give to the beast to be devoured and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate and the pomp of her strength shall cease and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate and none pass through.

Then shall they know that I am the Lord when I have laid the land most desolate because of all of their abominations, which they have committed. Also thou son of man, the children of the people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses and speak to one another. Everyone to his

brother saying, come, I pray you.

And let's hear the word that comes from the Lord. Now he's here because they're still talking about you and in their houses. I say, hey, let's go down and see what the word of the Lord is from the prophet.

Let's get on this, you know, Ezekiel, see what God has to say. And they come unto thee as the people cometh and they sit before thee as though they were my people and they hear thy words, but they won't do them for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart is going after their covetousness. Now the people are all talking about you.

Ezekiel is saying, hey, let's go down to the prophet and hear the word of the Lord. And they come and they sit there before you just like they were my people. And they hear the words that you're saying, but they're not going to do them.

Now in James, we, we read that a man who is a hearer of the word and not a doer is a man who is deceiving himself, a lot of deception going on because so often a person thinks, well, I, I studied the word of God, or I listened to the word of God, or I hear the word of God, or I know the word of God. That's not what cuts it. Are you doing the doers of the word and not here's only.

So God's indictment against these people because they're coming and they're, they were listening to the prophet, but they, they weren't, they were so filled with their own covetousness. They weren't doers of the word and lo thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice. They just enjoy hearing you talk.

You can play well on an instrument. So they were going for entertainment for, they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass law, it will come, you know, God says, and it was boy, when God says it like that, you know, Hey, it is no stopping.

Then shall they know that a prophet has been among them. When all these things that you told them happens, then, you know, they'll know right now they're just listening and you're an entertainment to them. It's interesting how that so many people do go to the house of the Lord for entertainment.

You know, it's their place of entertainment. It's a good socially accepted place of, of good entertainment, you know, and so many churches are catering to these people who are looking for entertainment. I heard the story of a Baptist pastor who came to his, and it could be any church, came to his assistants and said, fellows, the board is going to meet tonight and determine our salaries for the next year.

And we're having a difficult time making our budget as it is. So it looks like it's going to be really slim as far as any pay raises this next year. And I think it's very important that we, all of us just spend the day together praying because if we don't get pay raises, it's going to be a hard, tough year, you know, and, and they're going to be really taking a look at the budget tonight and things really look very bad for any pay hike.

So let's just gather together and let's just pray that God will somehow work a miracle so that we can all get a raise in pay this next year. And so they decided in order that their prayers really be very spiritual, they would pray in Gregorian chants. And so the assistant pastor began, Oh Lord, you know that it's hard to live on \$15,000 a year.

I pray thee Lord that you'll help the board to be gracious and maybe give me a raise. And the pastor then offered his prayer and he said, yes, Lord, things are tough. And \$22,000 a year is hard to live on when I have all of these expenses that I'm not reimbursed for.

And so Lord, please work and grant me a raise in pay. And then the music director, the one in charge of the entertaining programs for the church said, Lord, you know that \$50,000 a year is a little hard to get by on, but there's no business like show business, like show business. But it's sort of a sad indictment against those churches that have found it necessary to put on an entertaining program for people in order to draw the crowds, people with itching ears who will not endure sound doctrine.

And yet such is the case in so many places where people go for entertainment. And so they were coming to the prophet for entertainment, had a good voice, could play instrument well. And they sit before you and they do hear your words, but they're not going to do them.

You're unto them like a lovely song, but when this comes and it will come, they will know that there was a prophet among them. Now in chapter 34, God speaks out against those faithless shepherds of Israel. Those men that were the spiritual leaders, those men to whom the people looked for spiritual guidance who had left the real concept of the ministry.

The Lord said to his disciples, the heathen or the Gentiles do love to exercise lordship over each other, but it shall not be so among you or whosoever would be chief among you. Let him become the servant of all. You remember how when Jesus took a towel and washed his disciples feet and then he said unto them, you see what I have done.

Now, if I be being your Lord am a servant, then you also should be servants. And Christ taught the servanthood of the ministry. And that's actually what the word minister means, a servant.

And God intends that those who are the ministers are really the servants to the body of Christ, not Lords over the body of Christ. But the servants to the body of Christ. But it is easy to get an attitude of lordship or superiority and start abusing your position and seek to exercise lordship over the people rather than to continue in that attitude of servant.

Now, whenever you do turn and get this lording attitude and you begin to look at the, you begin to get greedy, really for gain, for fancy homes and cars and things of this nature, then you begin to misuse that position that God has placed you in. So the word of the Lord came into me saying, son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say unto them, thus sayeth the Lord God unto the shepherds, woe be to the shepherds of Israel. Now, whenever God says, woe, look out because you're in trouble.

Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves. Should they not be feeding the flock of God? Men who are using the ministry for their own gain rather than using the place of a minister to bring gain to the people. It is sad, but it is true that there are many men in the ministry today who are only fulfilling a psychological need in their own lives.

They're not really called of God and do not really have the true aspect of the ministry at heart. Woe unto those shepherds who use the ministry as a means of just feeding themselves, enriching themselves. Should you not be feeding the flock? You eat the fat, you clothe yourself with wool, you kill them that are fed, but you feed not the flock.

Jesus said to Peter, feed my flock. Peter later writing to the elders in the church said, feed the flock of God, which is among you. The most important need in the church today is that the people be fed, feed the flock of God, the commission of Jesus unto Peter.

Now the shepherds are further indicted by God because they, the diseased, have you not strengthened? Neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost, but with force and with cruelty you've ruled over them. They were lording over the flock of God. They weren't caring for those that were weak or sick or broken or lost, but they had misused the position.

And as the result, the sheep have been scattered because there is no shepherd. And they became a prey to all of the beast of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill.

Yea, my flock was scattered upon the face of the earth and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. As I live, saith the Lord God.

Oh, and again, when God begins to speak like this, you know that it's powerful. As I live, more or less swearing by himself, because he can swear by no higher. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey and my flock became meat to every beast of the field because there was no shepherd and neither did my shepherd search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not my flock.

Therefore, oh ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God. Behold, I am against the shepherds and I will require my flock at their hand and cause them to cease from feeding the flock.

Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth that they may not be meat for them. The whole religious system, the priesthood and all was to be abolished. It's interesting.

It has been abolished and abolished because they were feeding themselves rather than the flock of God. Of course, in their history, we find how it happened. The sons of Eli, you remember these evil boys, how that when people would bring their offerings to the Lord, they'd take their meat hooks in and grab the best part of the meat.

Anybody had objected, beat them up, causing people to resent their worship of God by the greedy attitude of these men who were supposed to be God's representatives. Priests standing before God for the people and yet so misrepresenting God when they were standing before the people for God. And so God speaks about putting away this whole corrupted system.

They're not going to feed off my flock anymore. My flock won't be meat to them any longer. For thus saith the Lord God.

Behold, I, even I will both search my sheep and I will seek them out as the shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered. So will I seek out my sheep and will deliver them out of all of the places that they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. Here God says, I will take up the job of the shepherd.

I'll seek out these sheep that are lost and scattered. Aren't you glad that the Lord is our shepherd and that he has sought us out, scattered and bruised. He found us and he drew us into his fold and he put his arms around us and said, hey, I love you.

You're my sheep. You're my people. Jesus said, I am the good shepherd.

I lay down my life for the sheep. The sheep know the shepherd's voice and they do follow him. And you have heard the call of the Lord.

You're part of his flock. You following Jesus Christ. It's beautiful.

I will bring them out from the people. I will gather them from the countries. I will bring them into their own land.

And of course, this is a prophecy concerning the nation Israel, but it does have also personal application as far as that relationship of God to his people, Christ to his church. But this basically is a prophecy of Israel, the prophecy of the scattering of Israel. The scattering of Israel was precipitated by their crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which was the result of the conspiracy of the spiritual leaders of that day.

Those spiritual leaders had rejected Jesus as the Messiah and they had conspired to put him to death because all of the common people were hearing him gladly. And they said, what are we going to do? If all of the people turn to him, then we're going to lose our jobs. We're going to lose all of this loot that we've been making off the people.

The Romans may even come and take away our position. We've got to put him to death. And the high priest said, don't you realize it's expedient that one man should die for the whole nation? How little did he know what he was saying? Now, because of these shepherds, false shepherds, who were guilty of greed, who scattered the flock, Jesus speaks of his gathering together that flock.

And this we get into, of course, the prophecy and we see it being fulfilled today as God is drawing the Jews back into the land and is preparing to do a work among them there. I will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries. I will bring them into their own land and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers.

And in all the inhabited places of the country, I will feed them in good, in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel. So their fold B and there. So they lie in a good fold and in a fat pasture and they shall feed upon the mountains of Israel.

And I will feed my flock. Remember that beautiful prophecy concerning Jesus. He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

He shall gather the young in his arms and so forth and carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young. Beautiful prophecy. I will feed my flock.

I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away and I will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick, but I will destroy the fat and the strong and I will feed them with judgment. And as for you, oh my flock, saith the Lord God, behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goes.

Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures and to have drunk of the deep waters, but you have to foul up the residue with your feet. And as for my flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God unto them, behold, I, even I will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle because you have thrust with the side and with the shoulder and you've pushed all the disease with your horns till you have scattered them abroad.

The way that the rich oppressed the poor, of course, the religious leaders have become the wealthy and they pushed and scattered the flock, but I will set up one shepherd over them and he shall feed them. Even my servant, David, he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. And I, the Lord will be their God and my servant, David, a prince among them.

I, the Lord, have spoken it. Now, this, of course, is not a reference to King David being resurrected and becoming king again. But even as Jesus promised to David that there should never cease one from him ruling over the people, that prophecy to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So it is a reference to that righteous branch that shall come out of David, even Jesus. And in Jeremiah 23, you have Jeremiah giving the same prophecy in Jerusalem to the inhabitants there. And he speaks about how the righteous branch out of David shall come and reign as king over them as he indicts the false shepherds there and speaks of the glorious true shepherd that shall come.

In Isaiah, we read for unto us, a child is born unto us, a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace. And of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end upon the throne of David to order it and to establish it in righteousness and in judgment from henceforth, even forever for the zeal of the Lord of all shall perform this. So Christ, as Paul said in Romans one of the seed of David, according to the flesh, but declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit will come and sit upon the throne of David.

And as David, again, shepherding over the people or ruling over the people with the shepherd's heart. Now people wonder how could God say, well, David was a man after my own heart when David committed adultery with Bathsheba and David was a very violent man in many situations and he had Uriah put to death. And yet God says that David was a man after my own heart.

How can that be? And that was because David had the heart of a shepherd. And when David ruled the people, he ruled them with the shepherd's heart. And that's what God desires that those who rule have the heart of a shepherd where their concern and their care is for the sheep, not for themselves, but they're thinking of the sheep.

And David had the shepherd's heart and he ruled with the heart of the shepherd. Saul was lifted up in pride when God put him upon the throne. And that's why Saul was brought down and his family did not follow in the throne.

But David, a man after God's own heart. And so the prophecy concerning Christ and his coming and shepherding, and I will make them, with them a covenant of peace and will cause the evil beast to cease out of the land. The kingdom age, the beast will be tame.

The lion will lie down with the lamb and a little child would lead them. I've always thought what a tremendous pet a lion could make. Wouldn't that be exciting for a kid to have a lion for a pet man to jump on his back, hold the mane and just take off the kingdom age when God restores, then there'll be peace.

The covenant of peace among the animal kingdom, among men, beautiful kingdom age, the evil beast will cease out of the land and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and they'll sleep in the woods. There'll be no fear. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing.

And I will cause the shower to come down in his season. And there shall be showers of blessing. Now we sing that in the church, but actually we're only borrowing from what God is declaring is going to happen when Israel's restored and the tree of the field shall yield her fruit and the earth shall yield her increase and they shall be safe in their land.

And they shall know that I am the Lord. When I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them out of the hand of those that serve themselves of them. And so as God brings his people back again, they will know that he is the Lord when he establishes his reign and they shall no more be a prey to the heathen.

Look, look at how the Jews have been persecuted among the nations, wherever they have gone. They've been a persecuted people. They've been a curse and a byword antisemitism.

And it is rising again throughout the world. You read of bombings of Jewish synagogues in Europe. There's again, rising in Germany, strong sentiment against the Jews.

And even here in the United States, we're beginning to see more and more antisemitism. The unfortunate things that are happening up in the Hollywood area, even against the Jewish community. But there'll be no more a prey to the heathen.

Neither shall the beast of the land devour them. The animals will be all docile, but they shall dwell safely and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown.

That plant of renown, of course, is none other than Jesus Christ. And they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land. Neither bear the shame of the heathen anymore.

They won't be cursed or bear that shame among the heathen. We were talking with our Jewish guide who grew up in Argentina and we were seeking to witness to him about Christianity. And he said, do you want to know what my first impression of Christians were? And we said, sure.

He said, well, every day going home from school, I would have to run as fast as I could, or else those boys who said they were Christians would beat me up and call me a Jesus killer. And he said they would throw rocks at me and they would beat me up every chance they got calling me a Jesus killer. And he said that was my first impression of Christians.

And no wonder it's hard to witness to them if that's what has been represented by Christianity to them. And it is indeed sad and tragic that much of the antisemitism has had its origins in the church. But we as Christians owe a great debt to Israel, to the Jews.

After all, they gave us our Messiah. Thus shall they know that I, the Lord, their God, am with them and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. And ye are my flock, the flock of my pasture.

And you are men, ye the flock, the flock of my pasture are men. And I am your God, saith the Lord God. Now in chapter 35, he makes a prophecy against Mount Seir.

Mount Seir was the area inhabited by the Edomites. And the Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. But the Edomites, you remember how Esau, when Jacob stole the father's birthright by disguising himself as his brother Esau, and went in and took the venison into his father, took the goat meat that his mother had prepared to taste like venison, and took it in and fed his dad and got the blessing.

And when Esau came in with the venison and said, here, dad, eat and bless me, he said, oh, you know, what is going on? And he said, I've already given the blessing. And Esau said, oh, I'm going to kill that brother of mine. And he vowed really to kill Jacob.

And there was bad blood between them. And Jacob, of course, fled for his life and spent 17 years with his uncle for fear of his brother Esau. This antagonism continued down through the years.

So you remember when the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt, coming through the wilderness, they desired to pass through the land of Edom to make a more direct route to the land that God had promised. But the Edomites came out with their army and refused to allow them to enter into the land. Now, the Edomites dwelt in the area of south from Moab.

And in that area where their capital was the rock city of Petra. And that was at one time one of the centers of commerce from the east. And it was, of course, a fabulously beautiful city carved out of the rock.

This rock city of Petra was the capital of Edom. And it was never really a powerful nation, but they were constantly, they were related to the Jews. But yet there was this great antagonism so that every time it would seem that someone would attack Judah from the north, the Edomites would take advantage of it and attack them from the south.

Whenever their troops were occupied elsewhere, they would take advantage and they would attack. And they were a constant thorn because they had to constantly keep a garrison down in the south to protect them from these Edomites who really looked for every opportunity to attack. Now, when Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed, the Edomites also came in to get what loot they could.

And of course, they rejoiced greatly over the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. And because of this, God pronounces a judgment to come against the Edomites. Now, the last of the Edomites was Herod.

That is recorded in history. Herod, who was from Idumea, he was an Edomite. And since that time, they have been lost historically.

The area has become very desolate. You go down to the area of Petra now and you find it's just an extremely desolate area, pretty much uninhabited. So, in the light of that, this prophecy against Mount Seir or the area of Edom is quite interesting.

The word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of Man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it and say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee. Now, God's not against the mountains. But of course, in saying that, He's against the people who inhabit that mountain.

You know, God wouldn't say, Oh, San Gorgonio, I'm against you. God has nothing against the mountains themselves. But if the inhabitants of God said, Oh, San Francisco, I'm against you.

He wouldn't be talking about San Francisco. But those people that live in San Francisco who have turned their backs upon God and are living such an unsavory kind of existence. So, I will stretch out my hand against you and I will make you desolate.

I will lay thy city's waste and you shall be desolate and you shall know that I am the Lord. Mount Seir is one of the most desolate places today. Because you have had a perpetual hatred and you have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamities.

And that's always when they would strike, when they were in trouble. And at the time that their iniquity had an end. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood and blood shall pursue thee since thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.

Thus will I make Mount Seir most desolate and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth. And I will fill his mountains with the slain men by the hills and by the valleys and all of thy rivers and they shall fall that are slain with a sword. And I will make thee a perpetual desolations and thy city shall not return.

And ye shall know that I am the Lord. The land has remained perpetually desolate because thou has said these two nations and these two countries shall be mine and we will possess it. Whereas the Lord was there.

Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I even will do according to your anger and according to your envy, which you have used out of the hatred against them. And I will make myself known among them when I have judged thee and thou shalt know that I am the Lord and that I have heard all of your blasphemies, which thou has spoken against the mountains of Israel saying they are laid desolate. They are given to us to consume.

Thus, with your mouth, you have boasted against me and you've multiplied your words against me. And I heard them. Thus saith the Lord God, when the whole earth rejoices, I will make thee desolate.

The time when the whole earth is rejoicing, that will remain a desolate area. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate. So will I do unto thee.

Thou shalt be desolate, O Mount Seir and all of Idumea, even all of it. And they shall know that I am the Lord. So, uh, the prophecy against Mount Seir.

Now, as we move into the next lesson, it is a prophecy concerning the mountains of Israel. And you'll find a vivid contrast as you get into chapter 36 between Mount Seir, which is to be desolate perpetually and the prophecies that are made concerning the mountains of Israel, which were desolate for so many centuries. And the exciting thing when you go over to Israel today is to see Isaiah.

I mean, see Ezekiel 36 fulfilled before your very eyes. These prophecies that God made concerning the mountains of Israel. You see the fulfillment of those prophecies when you're over there.

Chapter 37, God deals with the regathering of the nation of Israel back into the land. Chapter 38, the invasion by the allied forces of Russia. When Israel has become a nation again, chapter 39, the destruction of those invading forces.

So you've got some fascinating reading as the prophecies that we get into now. Chapter 36, you can go over and see much of it already fulfilled as with chapter 37, chapter 38 is down the road, not very far, but down the road just a little bit waiting really to happen most any time. So getting into some exciting areas next week ought to be a real blast.

May the Lord bless and guide your life this week when those decisions have to be made. May the Lord give you a very strong impression to lead you into his path of righteousness. And may you experience God's power working in your life in a very special way.

May the love of Christ just fill your heart and overflow that lives around you might be touched because of what the Lord has done for you. May you be his witnesses, a testimony to others by the love of Christ that shines forth from you.

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