

Monday, 3/8 – *Ezekiel 4:1-17*

In today's reading, notice in particular the threefold occurrence of the statement, "Son of man *you* shall bear their punishment" (vs. 4,5,6; "Son of Man" is also the title that Jesus most often takes upon Himself; see Lk.5:24; 6:5; 9:22; etc). "Son of man," God says to Ezekiel in verse three, My wrath for Israel's sin is about to be poured out upon a guilty and rebellious people, but instead it will be borne by you. Symbolically, Ezekiel, referred to as "son of man" by God, will bear the punishment of the house of Israel. This prophetic picture looks beyond God's coming judgment on the sin of Judah and Jerusalem to an even greater distant fulfillment. Here is another Old Testament hint of God's plan of redemption for all mankind. We on the other side of the cross can now see God's amazing mercy and unfathomable love in providing His sinless Son, Jesus, to bear God's wrath for a world of rebellious sinners – more specifically for us. May God's love for us, dramatized in this prophecy, affect us deeply this week and always. Hallelujah, what a Savior! What a salvation!

 Tuesday, 3/9 – *Ezekiel 5:1-17*

Shaving the head is a figure of great grief, disgrace, and humiliation (cf. Jer. 41:5). The inhabitants of Jerusalem are to be *burned* (within the city), *slain* (outside the city), and *scattered* (exiled and driven from the land). But a very small remnant in verse three receives special care and attention by God (v. 3; cf also Isaiah 3:9-11). It is noteworthy, however, that some of the righteous remnant will still experience death and suffering, but they are reminded that they are special to God (cf. Rev. 6:9,10; 13:15; etc). Again, in chapter 9 we see God's righteous remnant. In 9:4 they are marked by God for their broken spirit over the wickedness of the city and the sin of the nation. Rather than being desensitized and unmoved by sin all around them, God's righteous people "sigh and groan" over the sin of the land. These are marked by God for His special care. Such grief over sin ought to be the distinctive mark of God's people in every generation. Are we characterized by the same spirit of brokenness over sin? It ought to be the mark of all true believers.

 Wednesday, 3/10 – *Ezekiel 6:1-14*

In today's passage, note especially verse nine, "how I [that is, God] have been broken over their whoring heart." God is speaking of His own grief and hurt by the unfaithfulness of His people. Rarely do we contemplate how deeply God is grieved by our sin. I dare say that we take little note of, and give little thought to, the hurt that our sin brings upon the heart of God. This is an amazing thing to consider, the hurt God feels over our disobedience and unfaithfulness. The apostle Paul pursues this same thought in Ephesians 4:30 when he implores believers not to grieve the Spirit of God who resides within them (cf. also Is. 63:10). Before you act or speak, think about the impact that your actions will have on the heart of God. Then choose behavior that pleases Him. Let's make this a regular practice in our lives.

 Thursday, 3/11 – *Ezekiel 7:1-13*

The book of Ezekiel is closely tied to the book of Deuteronomy. The prophet Ezekiel is calling Israel back to the covenant stipulations that they agreed to at Mount Sinai; these covenant terms are reiterated in Deuteronomy. To help the people remember the covenant they made with God, Moses is to teach them a *song of witness* before they enter the land. This song is recorded in Deuteronomy 32. Begin today by carefully reading the daily passage in Ezekiel. Then try to summarize its main message in one statement. Compare your summary statement with the words of Deuteronomy 32:29. Did Israel follow God's wise counsel? What was the result for them not considering the end of their way? Commit yourself to always considering *the end of the way*.

 Friday, 3/12 – *Ezekiel 7:14-27*

Throughout the book of Ezekiel keep your eye and mind on the recurring phrase in verses 7:3,4,8, and 9, which is emphatically summarized in verse 27. This is an inescapable principle from God's Word. It is meant to be a holy deterrent to godless ways and a holy inspiration for righteous living. Connect this to the New Testament use of this biblical principle in Matthew 7:2, 2 Corinthians 5:10; and Revelation 20:13. The fruit of a righteous life is righteousness for which the Lord promises great reward.