

Monday, 3/15 – *Ezekiel 8:1-18*

Two verses in chapter 9 summarize today's reading, verses 9-10. In these verses, the people of Israel make two false assertions: God doesn't care, and God doesn't see. Yet in chapter 8 we see the exact opposite is true. In fact, Ezekiel is allowed to observe that God knows exactly what is done in the dark; and furthermore, that He intensely cares. God had not forsaken His people; rather He is active, present and by His own words, "I have been broken over [My people's] whoring heart" (v. 6:9). Notice the drama of Ezekiel digging in the Temple wall (v. 8); opening up a hole that reveals a hidden entrance (remember Ezekiel was a priest who knew the chambers in the Temple – but not this one); peering into the room behind the entrance Ezekiel sees an unimaginable abomination; the seventy elders of Israel are united in secret idolatry. What does this reveal to us about God? What does this reveal to us about the human heart? By way of contrast, however, notice the two abominations in verses 14-16. These two instances of idolatry are not hidden and secretive. No, rather, they are open and brazen. God's response to both is the same. *God forbid that our hearts will ever become so hard and cold as to tolerate hidden sin in our lives or that we will ever flaunt a disobedient heart.*

Tuesday, 3/16 – *Ezekiel 9:1-11*

In chapter 9 God's judgment is about to fall. Israel's abominable practices were unveiled in the Temple in chapter 8. Now the six death angels are on the scene to execute God's decreed judgment (vs. 1-2); and the LORD says, "begin at My sanctuary" (v. 6). But before the executioners are allowed to proceed, an angelic scribe is summoned to "pass through the city . . . and put a mark on the foreheads" of those who sigh and lament over Israel's grievous sins (v. 4). God's protective mark is placed on those who truly belong to Him. In Exodus 12:12-13, God's people were marked by applying the blood of the passover lamb. In Revelation 7, at the end of the age during the Great Tribulation, again God's people are marked by Him, thus demonstrating God's care and protection. When a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior, they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who marks (or seals) them as belonging to God (2 Cor. 1:21f; Eph. 1:13f). Paul has the Spirit's *marking* in mind when he says in 2 Timothy 2:19, "God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his,'" and all who are thus sealed are to depart from iniquity. *Live as belonging to God!*

Wednesday, 3/17 – *Ezekiel 10:1-22*

The LORD says to Ezekiel in 8:6, "do you see what they are doing . . . to drive Me far from My sanctuary?" Chapter 10 chronicles God's presence slowly leaving the place of His dwelling. In verse 4, the LORD's glory (the Shekinah Glory) exits the Holy of Holies and lingers at the entrance into the Holy place. From the entrance into the Temple proper, the glory of God moves to the East gate of the Temple precinct that faces the Kidron Valley (vs. 18-19). Finally, the glory of God leaves the City and ascends to rest upon the Mount of Olives, outside of the City and away from the place of His dwelling (v. 11:23). The Shekinah glory has departed from God's people because of their persistent and unrepentant sin. Contrast the way the glory of God descended upon the Temple in 1 Kings 8:6,10-11; and the way it departs in chapter 10 of Ezekiel. Is the slowness of God's departure a further indication of the great grief God felt over the unfaithfulness of His people and the separation that it brought? (cf. 6:9). Our God is merciful, gracious and slow to anger (Ex. 34:6). The God of the Old Testament is not a harsh, vindictive judge but a God who is truly long-suffering, patient, loving and loyal to His covenant. *These are patterns of behavior that God wants each of us to model.*

Thursday, 3/18 – *Ezekiel 11:1-13*

In today's reading, God's indictment falls upon the princes of the people; that is, the leadership of the nation – twenty-five in general and two individuals in particular (vs. 1-4). This axiom is true: as leadership goes, so go the people. These leaders are singled out for special emphasis because God holds leaders to a higher level of accountability and a heightened severity of judgment. Any kind of spiritual leadership is serious business to God. It is the source of great blessing but it is also the place of sobering responsibility. It is easy to lose sight of the privilege and importance God places on our spiritual leadership, also of our need to always pursue doing it better. *Avoid growing lax!*

Friday, 3/19 – *Ezekiel 11:14-25*

God's judgment will not remove His love and loyalty from Israel. Although the Temple will be destroyed; the Holy City will be burned; and the nation of Israel exiled from the land. God will not abandon His people or His covenant. This chapter is a needed reminder that with God restoration hope still lives; *it always does.*