

Monday, 3/22 – *Ezekiel 12:1-20*

In these verses, God instructs the prophet to act out a scene depicting inhabitants of the city secretly fleeing under the cover of darkness. The city is Jerusalem; and those fleeing are the king (i.e. “the prince in Jerusalem,” v. 10) and his personal guard. This prophetic enactment pictures the end of God's consuming judgment upon the city of Zion; a judgment that soon will fall upon the city. For the prophetic mime becomes an actual historic event in only five years. To better understand the drama in this passage, compare the historical account of Jerusalem's destruction recorded in 2 Kings 25:2-7. Although Ezekiel's prophecies concern Jerusalem and the land of Israel, his target audience is the exiled community. God wants His exiled people to clearly understand the character of their God. His word is trustworthy. What God promises, He will do: whether blessing or judgment (cf. Num. 23:19). Moreover, there must be no mistake, this judgment comes directly from the God of Israel; He is the Sovereign Lord of all the earth (cf. Psalm 103:19). What God is actively, painfully, teaching His people, is the same thing He desires to make known to all the earth. *He alone is the living and true God, ruler and lord of all (cf. vs. 15,16, 20).*

 Tuesday, 3/23 – *Ezekiel 12:21-28*

Today's passage is brief but it draws on another marvelous quality of God: His longsuffering. A proverbial saying commonly used by the rebellious house of Israel was that “God's threat of consequences for sin is vain because it has been so long in coming” (vs. 22, 27). God's response to their jab is that the time of His inaction has elapsed; His judgment “will no longer be delayed” (vs. 25, 28). Israel totally misunderstood the loving purpose of God in delaying His judgment. The apostle Paul clearly understood the LORD's motivation, for the apostle writes in Romans 2:4, “do you despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (KJV; see also 2 Peter 3:9). God's loving purpose in delaying His judgment on sinful behavior is to give individual's opportunity upon opportunity for repentance. Therefore, never view God's patience in not punishing sin – especially in your own life – as unconcern over disobedience, for sin always has consequences. But *God's longsuffering is His extraordinary kindness and mercy, who desires that all come to repentance.*

 Wednesday, 3/24 – *Ezekiel 13:1-23*

In Ezekiel's day there were very few who upheld the righteous and holy standards of God. Instead, many prophetic voices (both male, vs 8-16; and female, vs. 17-23) encouraged lives of unrestrained pleasure; they preached a tolerant attitude toward immorality; and they packaged their messages for popular acceptance. In so doing, they terribly misled the people by saying, “peace, when there is no peace” (v. 10; cf. Isaiah 32:17). In other words, “the religious establishment actually spoke against righteousness. . . they did not use the Word of God as their standard, [rather] the false prophets introduced another standard: their own thoughts” (RBP). Really, it is no different today; still the religious establishment turns people away from the truth by proclaiming the thoughts of men rather than the pure Word of God. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). May this reflect the deepest desires of your heart, to “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33).

 Thursday, 3/25 – *Ezekiel 14:1-23*

In today's reading, God's indictment falls upon the elders of the people, that is, their leadership. Notice the recurring phrase, “taking idols into their hearts” (vs. 3,4,7). In 1 Samuel 16:7, God says, “man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” God's foremost interest is always on the heart. When the elders sat before Ezekiel, what did God see that Ezekiel could not see? These leaders had been removed by God from the promised land because of their idolatry. But what still needed to be removed from them? Until their hearts were right before God there remained a separation between them and God (cf. vs. 5, 7). Restoration of their relationship with the LORD depended on repentance; God was waiting for their brokenness over their sin (v. 6). When we sin, this is the response that the Lord wants from us as well. Also, in today's passage, three familiar names appear: Noah, Daniel, and Job. How do they fit in? Not even these three spiritual giants, if they all lived in Judah at this time, could prevent God's judgment from falling. God's long-suffering had been exhausted, cf. Prov. 29:1.

 Friday, 3/26 – *Ezekiel 15:1-8*

Judah and Jerusalem had become a fruitless, useless vine, now destined for fiery destruction (cf. Isa 5:1).