

TURNING THE WORD TO SWORD & LIFE TO DEATH

THE SWORD OF THE LORD

- \diamond The sword of the Lord is coming (21:1-7)
- ♦ The sword is prepared for impartial justice (21:8-17)
- ♦ The sword against Jerusalem (21:18-23)
- ♦ Zedekiah's fall is prophesied (21:25-27)

SIN IS IN THE LAND:

- ♦ The Sins of Jerusalem and Israel (22:1-31)
- ♦ Defiled and sentenced (22:1-16)
- Jerusalem will be refined as in a smelting furnace (22:17-22)
- ♦ Destruction comes because the whole land is corrupt (22:23-31)

TWISTED SISTERS

- ♦ A Parable of two Immoral Sisters (23:1-49)
- ♦ Their wickedness began in Egypt (23:1-4)
- The harlotry of Samaria and her just punishment (23:5-10)
- The harlotry of Jerusalem (23:11-21)
- The punishment of Jerusalem (23:22-35)
- A further indictment of the sins of the two sisters (23:36-49)

THE BOILING POT

♦ Fire burn, and caldron bubble (24:1-14)



DEATH OF EZEKIEL'S WIFE

♦ O my love! my wife! Death, hath stolen the honey of thy breath!

JEFFERSONVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Fall 2016 Adult Bible Study

Ezekiel

By Elder Betsi Moise

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EZEKIEL: GOD IS STRONG

The Jews were so deep in their own ignorance, in fact, that a person outside the law, a person widely seen as wrong, dirty or untrustworthy seems to be the only person who is aware of the creeping societal death of the Jewish people. An outlaw [fugitive], a person abandoned by society for their crimes, a person unwelcome in communities, a person disgraced, perhaps is the only observer who can see through the rationalizations of the shortcomings of a society well enough to recognize the weak underpinnings and rotted supports. This native guide to the rough terrain of moral bankruptcy is only able to tell the Jews where they are, not how to get back, and thus Ezekiel's mouth is opened. The native guide to the far rougher terrain of repentance.

How can this lesson help to inform our understanding of our current times? Who is the outlaw, welcoming us to the downfall of our society? What do we extoll that we ought to despise? Are we sleeping next to a corpse? Do not fail to follow Jesus the Lamb, the fulfillment of the prophesies. We may not require Ezekiel to save our souls any longer, but we are expected, as Christians, to learn from past errors, and stray not from our salvation.

While the outlaw does open Ezekiel's mouth, it is important to note that he does not lead. He is only the voice of reason insofar as he's able to pinpoint and communicate where Israel went wrong. He is, however, incapable of showing the Jews a better way. That job is for Ezekiel.

While we need to keep out eyes and ears open, we are listening for the too-familiar rationalizations and excuses for our sin, not for the wisdom to see our own sin. God's voice is silent to those who do not listen.

Nathaniel Moise on the Narrow Road of Repentance



The Punishment for Sin is Death

The human race displays exceptional capacity for self-ignorance. Many of us can live our entire lives without understanding our own faults and shortcomings, and the most deluded even come to assert that they have none. Regardless of our own self-knowledge, we all are flawed in some way. In the short-term being willfully ignorant to those flaws can often put us at a disadvantage in our daily lives. In the long-tern, however, it becomes insidious, indeed. It is entirely possible for a flaw or fault to be rationalized, and seen as strength.

We see this today in our electoral debacle as individuals with different faults rationalize their own shortcomings by declaring them advantages, and call to task their opponents who, in turn, do the same. Once a fault becomes an asset in the societal psyche, people, en masse" can strive to emulate less-than-ideal behaviors. This, as it happens, is the root of all the problems that Ezekiel was called to combat as a prophet of God. The Jews had become blind to their faults, and began praising their shortcomings.

Ezekiel paid a high price to show the Jews the error of their ways, too. A spouse is a treasure, a blessing, a duty and a decision. A spouse is often the only companion through hardships a person can have. Ezekiel lost a psychic limb, an inseparable part of himself. The two had become one, and to lose your significant other is to be left as only half of the sacred one you made. But, as with much of Ezekiel's life as a prophet, it proved to be an object lesson for his countrymen. While Ezekiel suffered in silence for his loss, the Jews were yet unaware that their spouse had died. In a macabre sense, they were sharing the bridal bed with a corpse, and God, through Ezekiel, prophesied that it would take the desecration of the remains to wake the people to their own suffering.

NOTES:

Questions:

- ♦ Who or what is the "sword of the Lord" in this context? (21:1-7)
- Why is Nebuchadnezzar's advance toward Jerusalem perceived as a "false divination" by the lying prophets in Jerusalem? (21:18-24)
- ♦ What is "dross"? (22:13-22)

How had the house of Israel become "dross"? (22:23-29)
What was it that God could not find among them? (22:30-31)

- ♦ Who do these two sisters represent? (23:14) What do their figurative names signify?
- When would Ezekiel be released from the command to remain silent except when he had a word from the Lord? (24:25-27)

Reflection:

Reflect on the meditation that accompanies this reflection and consider the high price of following Christ Jesus. In what ways are you challenged in your walk with the Lord?

Biblical References:

Ezekiel	See and Compare
21:1-7	Hebrews 4:12
22:1-6	Matthew 23:37-39:
22:17-22	Psalm 12:6 ; 1 Peter 1:7
22:23-31	2 Timothy 3:1-5
23:5-35	Matthew 23:1-36
24:15-18	Galatians 3:10-14

