

# Ezekiel chapter 3:8-chapter 6 • Judgment against Idolatry

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Open your Bibles to Ezekiel, we'll get into some scripture tonight. Ezekiel, and join me in chapter 3, we got through about half of that chapter last time and then we ended. And so we're going to pick it up in verse 8, Ezekiel 3:8. This is a challenging book to read, actually, I should have probably started off by saying it's a challenging book to study even more so I think, just to read.

Just to read through it is very challenging and it's one of those kinds of books where if somebody kind of just says, "I'm just going to, I'm going to read through Ezekiel," and you start reading through it and you kind of go, "yeah, that's a toughie" because there's a lot of symbolism, there's a lot of heavenly imagery. I mean, this rivals the book of Revelation from the standpoint of the imagery that Ezekiel sees when he has taken in the Spirit and sees all kinds of incredible visions. And also there, and we're going to start to see this tonight, that God asked Ezekiel to do some really weird things.

I mean, really weird things and you're going to see some of that. In fact, I've had people write me letters after reading the book of Ezekiel, and they'll say, "Pastor Paul, did I read this correctly? Did God really want Ezekiel to walk around naked?" And so I go, "we have to kind of talk it through and talk about what it means and so forth."

But anyway, we're not going to get into quite that part tonight. But we're starting here in Ezekiel chapter 3, verse 8 and I want you to notice what the Lord says. This is God now speaking to Ezekiel related to the ministry that He's giving him to speak to the Jews who are in exile.

I guess I should make that point for those of you that might not have joined us for last week's study, Ezekiel is the prophet, essentially to the exiles. The nation of Babylon has taken many of the Jews captive by this time, but they have not yet destroyed the city of Jerusalem. The Babylonians actually invaded Jerusalem 3 separate times and each time they invaded Jerusalem, they took captives with them into exile.

The final time, they basically took pretty much everybody, but in these first few times, they invaded Jerusalem, they took people including Daniel and Ezekiel. And so Ezekiel is there, he's been there since he's..., for a few years now. He's a young man, maybe we're talking mid to late 20s, so a pretty young man.

And he is speaking now, he's being told by the Lord, he's going to speak to the Jews in exile, but those people, he's already been told are not going to listen. He said, "they're going to reject you." That might be kind of a fearful thing to kind of think about if you've got a message and people are only going to look at you in the face and say, "you're an idiot and I don't believe anything you're saying and I reject everything that you've just communicated."

Look what the Lord says in verse 8. He says, "*Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.*" (ESV)

Now this is an interesting statement, not only telling you that God is going to match Ezekiel to the stubbornness, He says, "as stubborn as they are, you're going to be just as stubborn for the truth." But it's an interesting statement about God Himself in the sense that, when He calls us into an area of ministry, He equips you for that area of ministry.

And Ezekiel needed to be equipped because of the incredible stubbornness of these people. And so God said, "I'm going to equip you in this way, I'm going to make you just as stubborn, just as strong and so you're not to be afraid of these people." Verse 10, He says, "*Moreover, he said to me, 'Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. <sup>11</sup> And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' (that's how he was to begin his messages) whether they hear (He says) or refuse to hear.*" It doesn't matter, even if they say, "we're not going to listen to you, you still tell them, "*Thus says the Lord God.*"

<sup>12</sup> *Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me (now listen to this) the voice of a great earthquake: ...*" Now that's interesting language and He says it's "*the voice of an earthquake.*" First of all, that doesn't make sense. We're going to find out a little bit more because he's going to explain what this sound or where it comes from, but it's a voice and that means it's speaking. And here's what the voice said, we're still in the middle of verse 12, "*...Blessed be the glory of the Lord from its place!*" That's what this voice spoke, but it was the voice of an earthquake.

Verse 13, he tells us, *“It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, and the sound of a great earthquake.”* Because remember something, the living creatures are obviously alive, but then we found out something else about the wheels, they're alive, they're living, they had eyes, do you remember all around them? So it's kind of been ..., so it shouldn't surprise us, I suppose. I mean, again, we're looking at heavenly things here for which we really have no frame of reference, but they are alive and they speak.

And then it says in verse 14, *“The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, ...”* And we can only assume that what Ezekiel means by that is that the vision ended, okay. <sup>14</sup> *...and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the Lord being strong upon me.”* And the reason that there was bitterness in Ezekiel's heart at this time was because of the message he was given to convey to the people of the exiles, it literally was affecting his emotions.

And it says in verse 15, *“And I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, ...”* You remember, “Tel” is a Hebrew word that means “hill” and “Tel-abib” simply means the hill of corn. And so he says, (I came to them at this area) <sup>15</sup> *... who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling.* (and look at this) *And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.”*

And no doubt Ezekiel is overwhelmed because of the sin and the rebellion of the people. And the message, of course, of the Lord's judgment that he's been given to convey. Verse 16, *“And at the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>17</sup> “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. ...””* And then He describes the responsibility of a watchman.

<sup>17</sup> *“...Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.””* Now, I want you to stop for just a moment. You guys probably know a watchman or a sentry, those were really important things back in biblical times because that was your early warning system. They would literally put watchmen or sentries on a city wall and they would be there as soldiers to keep an eye out for any approaching enemies, and they would give out a command to get ready if in fact an enemy was approaching. And so, a watchman is a very important person, the sort of an individual who recognizes danger from afar and warns people about that danger.

Now think about that definition as we kind of go on here, He says here in the latter part of verse 17, again, *“...Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.”*

So that describes the kind of a watchman that Ezekiel was called to be to the house of Israel there living in exile.

But as He goes on to speak of the role of the watchman, He's going to tell Ezekiel that this position actually carries a pretty heavy responsibility along with it. And I want you to see here what he says in verse 18, in your Bible. He says, *“If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, (in other words about that impending judgment) nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.”* Now again, that's a pretty sobering thing for Ezekiel to hear. He says, “I've made you a watchman, but let me tell you something here, Zeke (Ezekiel), this thing is going to carry a little bit of responsibility with it from the standpoint that if I tell you to warn somebody and you don't warn them and they die, that's on you, that's on you.” Now, I want to pause here for just a moment and I want to be careful to tell you that when we talk about death here, we're talking about physical death, okay?

I want you to notice in the verses that we just read there, or in verse 18, He talks about the man's blood being on his head and He talks about saving his life. He's not speaking here of an eternal destiny. You guys got to remember in the Old Testament, the mosaic covenant was a physical covenant. It had physical promises and the results of their disobedience many times had purely physical consequences. We don't know what the eternal consequences are necessarily, but these, this is talking about physical death, okay? And we know many people in the Bible who were physically put to death because of their sin, we know of several, okay?

He goes on in verse 19 to say, *“But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.”* In other words, that won't be on you if you faithfully deliver the message that I give you to convey to that person. No guilt will be charged against you Ezekiel because you were faithful, you gave the message, and again, a very sobering kind of responsibility that's given to Ezekiel.

And as sobering as it is Christians, I want you to stop for just a moment and I want to encourage you to be careful not to apply what you're hearing here in a sort of a New Testament vein where you consider it a command by God to cram the gospel down every person's throat that you meet. And the reason I bring it up is because some people have. Some people have and actually quoted this passage from Ezekiel to say that “I got to share the gospel with everybody or their blood is on me.”

We're going to be seeing in a few verses here that Ezekiel is going to be told to be quiet, to be silent for a period of time and then to speak up when the opportunity is right to do so and there is a model in that as well.

We as New Testament believers need to be led by the Holy Spirit in our evangelism, especially in our evangelism. I mean in our life, obviously, but in our evangelism, in the sense that we need to wait for the Holy Spirit to say, "speak now or hold your tongue."

That is, to some people that's like, they can't figure, why would God say, "hold my tongue?" Why would God ever say, "hold my tongue?" Well, Jesus told you that in the parable of the sower, sometimes people go out and sow seed, and guess what, it falls on hard ground and it does nothing, it does nothing. It just sits there on top of the ground and the enemy comes and steals it away.

So you see, there's such a thing as reckless sowing of the seed that doesn't do any good, and we need to be Spirit led. If you're on an airplane and you're sitting there by somebody who's a complete stranger, pray, "Lord, is this somebody you want me to share the word with?" Because God knows when the soil of that person's heart is ready to hear.

And God knows when that person is not ready to hear, it's not going to do anything, it is not going to do a thing. But only God knows that and we need to be led by the Spirit. And the reason people get frustrated when I talk about being led by the Spirit is because we don't like having to wait for God to tell us to do things because we don't like having to admit, "I don't really know how to be led by the Spirit."

I get that question all the time. I mean, at least once a week, somebody writes and says, "pastor Paul, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit, because I have no clue." And one of the reasons we don't know what it means to be led by the Spirit is because we are so accustomed to being led by our flesh.

Because the world of course, that's all they've got and it's impacted us as believers. We're told to follow our feelings, to follow our own sense of right and wrong and our own understanding of situations, and we're just, we're out of practice. We're just completely out of practice.

This whole idea of just waiting on the Lord, listening for His voice, quieting your heart, those are like almost unheard of in the body of Christ. Again, because we live in this culture that is just so busy and moving and do, do do....

And we've got things going on and we just can't stand to sit still or we just go crazy. We need to learn to quiet our heart before the Lord and that is a key element to learning; to listen to the Spirit and then be led by the Spirit. "God, I want to hear your voice, if I'm sitting next to somebody on an airplane and you want me to share the gospel, I want to hear that, I want to hear your voice saying, 'Paul, now talk.' Bring up something, just anything, just get up, get this person talking because I've prepared this heart to receive your word or His word."

Verse 20, it says, "*Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, (in other words, he backslides, if you will) and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, (He says,) he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand.* <sup>21</sup> *But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.*"

So again, we want to just reiterate that life and death in this context is referring to physical life, physical death, not eternal life and death at this particular juncture and so forth.

Verse 22, "*And the hand of the Lord was upon me there. And he said to me, 'Arise, go out into the valley, and there I will speak with you.'*" <sup>23</sup> *So I arose and went out into the valley, and behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the Chebar canal, and I fell on my face.* <sup>24</sup> *But the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, 'Go, shut yourself within your house.'*"

Now this is where He's going to tell Ezekiel that there's going to be a season where He's going to ask him not to speak. He's going to ask him to hold his tongue because it's not yet time to give the message. So here's what He says in verse 25, "*And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people.*" <sup>26</sup> *And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house.* <sup>27</sup> *But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house."* So this is an interesting picture that God is giving us in the scripture of God literally depicting for the nation of Israel there in exile, that the word of God is not yet, the word of God is not going to be given to you. And so He literally binds the prophet and almost, and makes it so he cannot speak as a picture.

Remember, Ezekiel's life is really a nonstop picture of various things but in this case, it is a picture that God is withholding His word for a specific time. But of course, He's not going to remain silent forever and the word will come forth.

Chapter 4, now He's going to do a different picture altogether. Remember, Jerusalem has not yet been conquered by the Babylonians, in fact, they haven't even laid siege to it yet, but God now begins to speak of the fact that's going to happen.

Look at verse 1 in chapter 4, *“And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem.”* Remember, Jerusalem is built basically on stone, it's on Mount Zion and it had a foundation of stone all around it. And so He tells him to take a brick and carve, kind of like a little mini city in this brick. And then He says in verse 2, *“And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, (like little tent camps around it, like the enemy would do when they would lay siege to a city) and plant battering rams against it all around.”*

So he's literally to make this little model set with the city of Jerusalem and these tents around it, which are the enemy, and then build siegeworks, which are kind of like a lattice or a ladder that the enemy would build to scale the wall of a city. It would take them time, but they would do it.

And then He says in verse 3, and this is really interesting, *“And you, take an iron griddle, (and don't think of a griddle that you make like pancakes on, we're talking more like an iron grate that you put over a camp fire or something) and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign (and note that there, this is a sign) for the house of Israel.”*

So this iron grate, if you will, that Ezekiel was told to put between himself and this little model of the city of Jerusalem was to show that God had created a barrier between Himself and the city of Jerusalem and it was the Lord's way of showing His people that He was not going to step to rescue them. There was an iron gate between Him and the people and God is basically saying, “I'm not going to rescue you this time, this thing is going to go down, this city is going to go down and I will not save you from the coming invasion.”

Verse 4, now this gets really interesting, *“Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel (and He's talking specifically about the northern kingdom) upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment.”*

So now Ezekiel is being told by the Lord to act out a depiction of the punishment of Israel for a specific number of days. Look what it says in verse 5, check this out, *“For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel.”*

We don't know exactly what he was doing to depict bearing the punishment we're not really certain, but he was to lay on his left side for 390 days. Now, I don't think that means that he laid on his left side 24-7 for 390 days. I'm sure he would come out at some specified time of the day, perhaps when the people were in the marketplace or whatever, and he would then lie down and depict this scene and then he'd get up and go home. And I'm sure at the end of the day, I don't know this for certain, I'm guessing. And then he would come back the next day and do it again because it was this perpetual picture concerning the bearing of the punishment of the House of Israel. And then he used to do the same thing for Judah, albeit for a much shorter time.

Look at verse 6, in your Bible it says, *“And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year.”* Now you're probably wondering, what is the significance of the 390 days and the 40 days? We don't know, we're not really certain. I've read lots of interesting guesses, but they remain essentially that, we just simply don't know. But there was a longer period of time obviously for the northern kingdom of Israel, than for the southern that God was depicting the bearing of this punishment.

And it says in verse 7, *“And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, ...”* Now that is significant, he was not to have a sleeve on his arm or a coat, he was to bare his arm, which is a picture again of the arm of the Lord, the strength of the Lord, ready to strike the city.

The arm of the Lord is bared, if you will, ready to strike and He says, *“...and you shall prophesy (end of verse 7) against the city. <sup>8</sup>And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.”* So, now he has to depict the fact that the people, when the city is put under siege by the Babylonians, they're not going to be able to leave the city. They can't come, they can't go, they got to stay there until their food runs out or something, or they give up, which they didn't do, they didn't surrender. But God is depicting now that they're going to be hemmed in, and so He says, *“I'm literally going to bind you while you lie there with your face toward the city as a depiction of the fact that the people won't be able to move, they're going to be completely hemmed in.”*



Verse 9, *“And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer, and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. <sup>10</sup> And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from day to day you shall eat it. <sup>11</sup> And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; from day to day you shall drink. <sup>12</sup> And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung.” <sup>13</sup> And the Lord said, “Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them.”*

So it's all a picture, notice what he's doing, he's rationing out food and water. And again, that's a picture of what's going to happen during the siege. They're going to start rationing food, they're going to start rationing water and the bread they do make, they're going to run out of fuel. So, they're going to literally use human excrement as fuel to burn in order to bake their bread, which in the Jewish understanding would render that bread unclean, okay? But God is telling them, they're going to do that in the land where I send them and during the siege because that's just the way things are going to be.

So then he, and now you'll notice Ezekiel, he doesn't, he finally puts his foot down, he goes, “all right, you just went too far.” Verse 14, *“Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never defiled myself. From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth.” <sup>15</sup> Then he said to me, “See, I assign to you cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread.””*

So Ezekiel was like, “I won't do it, I won't do it, I'm not going to eat bread made with human dung for fuel, sorry, you just crossed the line.” But you know what? He said it in a respectful way because he was basically saying, “God, I've never, ever put anything in my mouth that was considered unclean” and God responded to his heart and desire to want to be pleasing to the Lord.

And He's like “all right, fine, we'll do cow dung instead” which I don't know if that's better, is that better? Yeah, I'm kind of thinking to myself, eh, I mean, dung is dung, right? And so it is kind of all rotten.

But anyway, verse 16, we end the chapter, a couple of verses here. It says, *“Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight (and that simply means that they will have to ration it out) and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure (again, rationed out) and in dismay.”*

*<sup>17</sup> I will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment. ”” Wow.*

Chapter 5. Now in chapter 5, this is a difficult chapter to read from the standpoint that it's kind of, it's kind of negative, it's kind of dark because God is going to spell out the depth of the punishment that is coming to the people of Judah during the Babylonian siege.

*“<sup>1</sup> And you, O son of man, take a sharp sword. (in fact, He says,) Use it as a barber's razor and pass it over your head and your beard. (in other words, cut off all your hair and your beard and) Then take balances for weighing and divide the hair. <sup>2</sup> A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. And a third part you shall take and strike with the sword all around the city. And a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them.*

*<sup>3</sup> And you shall take from these a small number and bind them in the skirts of your robe. <sup>4</sup> And of these (in other words, that few, those few strands that are kept in your robe) again you shall take some and cast them into the midst of the fire and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will come out into all the house of Israel.”*

Now this is a picture that is taken from Ezekiel's hair now, so he is literally using his hair as a picture to what God is going to do to the people of Jerusalem, and we're going to see the explanation God's going to give it here as we read on.

*“<sup>5</sup> “Thus says the Lord God: This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. <sup>6</sup> And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes.*

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in my statutes or obeyed my rules, and have not even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you, <sup>8</sup> therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. <sup>9</sup> And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. <sup>10</sup> Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers. And I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds. ””*

Verse 10 is pretty graphic and gross, but that's what happens during a siege. They run out of food and people eventually die of starvation and so they resort to cannibalism with these dead bodies and it's horrific. But it actually happened because God said it would happen and we actually read elsewhere that it did happen.

Verse 11 says, *“Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw. My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.”*

And here's where He begins to describe what all the hair, the third of the hair means. *“<sup>12</sup> A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in your midst; a third part shall fall by the sword all around you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds and will unsheathe the sword after them.”* In other words, a third of the people are going to escape, but God's sword will follow them.

*“<sup>13</sup> Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. (and that means, “I will satisfy my justice”) And they shall know that I am the Lord—that I have spoken in my jealousy—when I spend my fury upon them. <sup>14</sup> Moreover, I will make you a desolation and an object of reproach among the nations all around you and in the sight of all who pass by. <sup>15</sup> You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations all around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with furious rebukes—I am the Lord; I have spoken— <sup>16</sup> when I send against you the deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your supply of bread. <sup>17</sup> I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of your children. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the Lord; I have spoken.””*

That's a hard chapter, isn't it? That's a difficult chapter to read and were we not to really, truly understand the depth of how long God bore with the nation of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, we might read these verses completely disconnected from the history of Israel and think, “wow, that's really harsh God, you're just really a mean God.” That's just blindness talking. God is a God of justice and He warned them of all these things ahead of time. A good parent does that before he brings discipline upon his children or a mom. You don't just tell your kids, “don't do that,” you explain the consequences, you explain why we don't do, I don't want you to do that.

You explain and then you explain, and I'm talking about a child who can obviously have these things explained to them, they have the cognizant ability to grasp it. You explain the thing, you say, "this is what's going to happen." And God was so clear and He waited 100s of years for the people to repent and finally His wrath was poured out.

Chapter 6 is quite short and we're not going to, there's not a whole lot of comment, we're just going to read through it and so, you'll kind of see what it's saying. <sup>1</sup>*The word of the Lord came to me: (chapter 6)* <sup>2</sup> *"Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,"*

Now, before we read the prophecy, let me just explain, why wouldn't the world, would God want Ezekiel to prophesy toward the mountains or to the mountains, or speak to the mountains? Well, because in pagan ideas of worship, they would worship it..., they were so superstitious, they believed that the gods were in the heavens and so the higher you were geographically, the closer you were to God. So they would do all of their worship practices and pagan idolatries and stuff on hills and mountaintops, that's why in the Bible you hear about the "high places."

You read about it through Samuel and Kings and there were times that even the Jews worshiped on the high places. Sometimes they even worshiped YAHWEH on the high places, and they're really, and God didn't necessarily forbid it, but then they changed to pagan idolatry and they did full-fledged paganism practices on the high places. So that's why Ezekiel is being told to speak to the mountains, speak to the hills, all right.

Here we go and say, <sup>3</sup> *and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.* <sup>4</sup> *Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols.* <sup>5</sup> *And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars.* <sup>6</sup> *Wherever you dwell, the cities shall be waste and the high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down, and your works wiped out.* <sup>7</sup> *And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the Lord.*

<sup>8</sup> *"Yet I will leave some of you alive. When you have among the nations some who escape the sword, and when you are scattered through the countries, <sup>9</sup> then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has*

*departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations. <sup>10</sup> And they shall know that I am the Lord. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them. ””*

Can I pause just for a moment and just emphasize what God says in verse 9? When I read that, I was kind of, it hits me every time I read it. God says how He was broken over their whoring heart. You know the New King James says, “I was crushed by their adulterous heart.” And this is kind of a remarkable statement because, I mean, let's face it, when we sin, how often do you think about what that does to God? I don't, I mean, it just doesn't enter my mind.

When you sin, we're sorry for our sin from the standpoint of, “yeah, I shouldn't have done that.” And when we fall into sin for a period of time and backslide and then come out of it, we're like, we're disgusted with ourselves but how many of us are stopping to think how much we hurt the heart of the Lord?

Now, that's a completely different sort of a perspective, isn't it? And yet God here says very clearly, again, from the New King James, “I was crushed, I was crushed by their adulterous heart.” In other words, the Lord is kind of expressing the depth of his own grief related to the idolatry of His people.

He's kind of like depicting Himself as a husband whose wife went astray and who continues to go astray, even though He calls her back over and over again, she just refuses and continues every chance she gets to be unfaithful and He's just, He's expressing just His own grief.

Verse 11, *“Thus says the Lord God: “Clap your hands and stamp your foot and say, Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, for they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. <sup>12</sup> He who is far off shall die of pestilence, and he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who is left and is preserved shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am (YAHWEH) the Lord, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols. <sup>14</sup> And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then they will know that I am the Lord. ””*

We're going to stop there, let's pray.

Lord, these are sobering passages but we know, Lord, that even in wrath, you are a faithful God and you express your loving kindness, even in wrath. Lord, help us to learn what we need to learn tonight. You gave us the book of Ezekiel because it's an important member of the entire biblical canon and there are things here that you want us to see, understand about your righteousness and your purity and disobedience and the consequences of it. Help us to learn and to grow and to take the book of Ezekiel and to understand it from a whole Bible perspective.

Thank you for giving us opportunity tonight to study the Word and we pray, Lord God, that you would continue to nourish our soul and spirit with Your Word. In Jesus name we pray, amen.