
Day 231 - August 19

Judah After Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE) *Ezekiel's Denunciations of Judah*

Readings: *Ezekiel 19:1-14; 20:1-49; 21:1-32; 22:1-31*

Reflections:

- Ezekiel 19 outlines a lament (song of mourning) for the princes (kings) of Israel. The song uses the image of a vine again which is a common way to depict the spiritual health of a leader or people of Israel. The message is simple: if you are proud and rebellious, watch out! God will bring you down. No amount of previous success or prosperity will enable you to survive such judgment.
- Ezekiel 20 recounts an event where the elders of Israel appear to want to seek what God would say to them and they come and sit before Ezekiel. He basically walks them through the meta-narrative thus far. What do we discover? It is all bad news. More evidence that the story of the Old Testament is the story of what doesn't work! Towards the end of the recounting of Israel's story so far, God promises that one day Israel will one day be restored in the land of their captivity. What we will see is that in some partial way this prophecy comes true but ultimately, it is only fully fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah and the revelation of a spiritual kingdom that is formed by all those who live by faith.
- From the end of Ezekiel 20 to the end of Ezekiel 22, the entire passage is just one long prophetic bad news message. The most bloody and severe judgments are pronounced against the people for their persistent rebellion and rejection of God. Zedekiah as well as the entire nation, south and north are warned of impending doom. What is amazing is that year after year these warnings are given to the nation but no one seems to turn back or take it seriously. I suppose it is similar to someone who is living an incredibly unhealthy lifestyle – smoking, drinking to excess, seriously overweight, and completely avoiding any form of exercise – going to the doctor over and over and completely ignoring the doctor's warning. We ask, "Why would someone do this?" It is because it is just too comfortable to keep doing what you have always been doing. When your whole life is fixated on your own personal comfort, why would you do the hard work of changing? We see here in Israel, the nation is just the same. They prefer the comfort and pleasure of their idolatry and sexual addictions and refuse to submit to God's leadership.
- The end of this section indicates how bad it is: "I looked for a man (or a woman) among them who would build up the wall (restore the boundaries) and stand before me in the gap

on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. So I will pour out my wrath..." We are reminded of Abram interceding for Sodom as well as Moses interceding for the Israelites. Even one truly humble leader who will intercede on behalf of an evil nation has the power to extend grace. But when such a person can not be found, the nation is found entirely hopeless.

- What is interesting is that Ezekiel was a prophet to bring the message of destruction along with a number of other prophets. But apparently these prophets were not moved by God to intercede in this way. This reminds us that we must be fully obedient to God. If he calls us to warn and wait in silence but does not call us to intercede, then he may want to see someone else in leadership step up to truly own the sin of the people. It reminds us that we must only do what God calls us to do.