

22. Jesus in Lamentations and Ezekiel – Part 1

June 23, 2016

A. JESUS IN LAMENTATIONS

Not many people can capture the tragic scene in words, because their minds are too numb to articulate their thoughts into words. The weeping prophet Jeremiah was one of those few people who could. He was describing what he was seeing in Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah after the mighty Babylonian army just about ravaged the whole country.

Although the Bible never specifies the actual author, but many Bible scholars believe that it was written by Jeremiah due to the writing style that contains Jeremiah's style Hebrew phrases. Though, the majority of the Books in the Bible was named after the author or the recipients, for this Book, it bears its contents – Lamentations. In a way, it is "The Journal of Tears."

As we look for Jesus in this Journal of Tears, one thing stands out clearly in chapter 3 – God's faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:21-27 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" 25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. 26 It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord. 27 It is good for a man to bear The yoke in his youth.

In this chapter Jeremiah reminds us that we will never come fully clean with our life until we take full responsibility for how we live our life. We are living in the age that no one takes responsibility of their own sins and behaviors. From the politicians in Washington, D.C. to the thugs on the street, it is always someone else's fault, not theirs.

John Burroughs, a contemporary author of Mark Twain once said, "A man can fail many times, but he isn't a failure until he begins to blame somebody else." I think that someone didn't mention this quote to president Obama, because nothing ever is his fault, always someone else's, especially George W. Bush.

When consequences come, there is never any reason to blame the Lord. But there is plenty of reason for God to blame us. The road to healing and restoration begins with confession of our sins.

As Jeremiah stared at the destruction of his homeland, I am sure that he felt completely hopeless. But then he recalled the mercies and compassions of the Lord. Oh, how grateful we are for His mercies that are new every morning!

In v22 and 23, the author Jeremiah points out to all of us that though the Lord knows our sins, our shortcomings, and our proneness to wander from the God we love, He is more than willing to forgive us through His compassions and mercies because of His faithfulness. Just in case you are wondering where I am going with this, please turn to Revelation 19:

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

B. JESUS IN EZEKIEL

As many of you already know, the Book of Ezekiel is not a Book to casually read and comprehend. From chapter 1, we see four heavenly creatures with four faces of man, ox, lion, and eagle and flying around the Throne of God with four wings for each. If that is not confusing enough, it says, "a wheel in the middle of a wheel". If we are not careful, there could be glaze forming over our eyes.

But in reality, Ezekiel tells his readers about the Lord in this Book. He genuinely desires that people understand who God is. How do we need it in our day, too!

1) Jesus in the vision of God's glory

Ezekiel 1:4-10 Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5 Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. 6 Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. 8 The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. 9 Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward. 10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle.

The four living creatures described here have four faces: the face of a man, a lion on the right, an ox on the left, an eagle's face on the other side. Many notable biblical scholars tell us that these are the four characteristics of Jesus that were represented by the four Gospels of Jesus. The Book of Matthew describes Jesus as the Messiah – the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Mark as the Suffering Servant is depicted as the Ox; Luke as the Kinsman Redeemer in the form of a Human; and the Book of John points to Jesus as God depicted by the Eagle.

You may remember the trial arrangement of the ancient Israelis while they were traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land. They were told by the Lord to set up the camp in a certain formation. The main tribe on the east was Judah, the tribe of Reuben on the south, the tribe of Ephraim on the west, and the tribe of Dan on the north as it is mentioned in Numbers 2. These tribes' banners contained the heads of lion, ox, man, and eagle. And the aerial view of the camp arrangement shapes a cross.

Some might wonder, "How are you going to connect all these images to God?" Our infinitely wise God arranged all of these to show us what we see in the camp of Israel is a copy of the heavenly things. All the instructions in the OT point to one person: Jesus.

Hebrews 8:1-5 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed

when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

This also should remind us of what we learned in the Book of Revelation chapter 4: Revelation 4:7-8 *The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

2) Jesus in the title of "the Son of Man"

Ezekiel 2:1-4 And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." 2 Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. 3 And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. 4 For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.'

Ezekiel is called "son of man" 93 times in this Book, a title that the Lord also gave to Daniel. "Son of man" is also a Messianic title which the Lord Jesus applied to Himself at least 82 times when He was ministering on earth. But in the case of Daniel and Ezekiel, the title "son of man" emphasized their humanity and mortality.

For this title, a question arises, "If Jesus was the Son of God, why did He call Himself the "Son of Man"? The phrase "Son of Man" is a reference to Jesus' humanity, it is not a denial of His deity. By becoming a man, Jesus did not stop being God. The incarnation of Christ did not involve the subtraction of deity, rather the addition of humanity. Jesus clearly claimed to be God on many occasions. But in addition to being divine, He was also human – being thirsty, hungry, weeping, and sleeping. He had two natures – divine and human, not mingled, but contained individually and distinctively in one person. Not possible? That's why He is God, we are not.

3) Jesus in the departing of His glory

Ezekiel 10:18-19 Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. 19 And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

At this point, the Shekinah glory that had been on the throne moved from the throne to the threshold of the temple, and to the east gate of the temple. I don't believe that the rebellious people knew what was going on and they could care less about it. Once again, the Lord was making 'Ichabod' which means "The glory of God has departed from Israel" over Jerusalem and Judah. The original word appeared at 1 Samuel 4 when the Ark of Covenant was taken by the Philistines at the battle.

I wonder when 'Ichabod' happened in America. I know that we don't have the same privilege like Israel, but the Lord certainly extended His grace and goodness toward America at the beginning, because her people honored Him. Just as Great Britain went down the drain from the "empire on which the sun never sets" to a puny island that no longer has any world-wide influences because she turned her back on God. Now the born-again believers in England is about 10% or less.

4) Jesus in the Vine

Ezekiel 15:1-8 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, how is the wood of a vine better than that of a branch on any of the trees in the forest? 3 Is wood ever taken from it to make anything useful? Do they make pegs from it to hang things on? 4 And after it is thrown on the fire as fuel and the fire burns both ends and chars the middle, is it then useful for anything? 5 If it was not useful for anything when it was whole, how much less can it be made into something useful when the fire has burned it and it is charred? 6 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As I have given the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest as fuel for the fire, so will I treat the people living in Jerusalem. 7 I will set my face against them. Although they have come out of the fire, the fire will yet consume them. And when I set my face against them, you will know that I am the LORD. 8 I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful, declares the Sovereign LORD."

All of us are familiar with the vine images in Scripture:

i. Jesus compared Himself to a vine and His disciples to branches in the vine, because we wholly depend on Him for life and fruitfulness. Away from Him, without Him, we can do nothing.

Those of us who are branches in Jesus Christ, the true vine, need to take this lesson to heart. If we fail to abide in Christ, we lose our spiritual power, wither, and fail to bear fruit for His glory. The fruitless branch is tossed aside and eventually burned.

John 15:5-6 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

ii. 'The vine of the earth' is a symbol of corrupt ungodly Gentile population during the Great Tribulation. Their future is anything but good.

Revelation 14:19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

iii. But most often, the image of the vine applied to the nation of Israel.

During the reign of king David and the early years of Solomon, Israel was useful and fruitful, and a witness to the Gentile nations as a blessing of God. But ever since Solomon introduced idolatry to his kingdom through his many pagan wives, the nation turned from a fruitful vine to worthless wild grapes.

Some people, especially theologians who like to insist that they are right and everyone else is wrong, would argue that this is the key verse to prove a believer can backslide and lose one's salvation or not. Obviously they miss the whole point of Jesus' parable. This is His warning for us to take heed, not to split a hair.

4) Jesus in the everlasting covenant

Ezekiel 16:60 Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

In spite of the Israelites' unfaithfulness, the Lord is faithful. There will come a time when God's people Israel will remember their sins and recognize God's goodness and grace on their behalf. Their mouths will be shut because of the conviction and they will be saved. How can a holy God forgive the sins of rebels, Jews or Gentiles? Because of the atonement that He made on the cross when He gave His Son Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Romans 5:20b But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more