

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## EZEKIEL 33-35

There is always a turning point. In everything from a presidential race to a pennant chase there is always a decisive moment that dramatically alters the outcome.

Tonight, we come to the turning point in Ezekiel.

God initiates a new emphasis. The prophecies take on a new tone. The prophetic tide begins to turn.

For 24 chapters Ezekiel has broadcast the demise of Jerusalem. And he hasn't offered much hope. He didn't say "*if God judges*" - it's been "*when God judges.*"

His call to repentance was not to avoid judgment, but to soften the blow. If they had obeyed God, the lessons they were destined to learn would've been less painful.

Ezekiel 1-24 were judgments on the Jews and Judah

Whereas, chapters 25-32 were the calamity that God would bring on Judah's surrounding neighbors.

But a turning point occurs in Chapter 33.

Ezekiel is living in Babylon. Jerusalem has fallen, the Temple burned, and the Jews have been deported.

The people who were once the apple of God's eye are now slaves in a foreign land. Is there a future for God's people? Is there a hope? The answer was "*Yes!*"

It was Jeremiah who spoke for God, (29:11), "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you... thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*"

*And* Ezekiel joins in Jeremiah's encouragement.

God will return His people to their land. He'll bless them again. Israel's brightest days are still ahead.

God has a future for the Jews and Israel. As we'll see over the next few weeks, what Ezekiel spoke of 2500 years ago is coming true before our eyes today.

Ezekiel 33, "Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying..." This is the recommissioning of Ezekiel. God is going to renew His call on Ezekiel's life. Often God does this - we lose our focus and need to recalibrate.

It's like this congregation I know at a CC in Stone Mountain, GA. This church loves Jesus, and serves Him wholeheartedly, but they just can't clap on beat.

They've got lousy rhythm. The worship leaders have to keep the people in sync and help them stay on beat.

And this is what the Spirit of God has to do with us. He renews His callings, and repeats His promises. He claps for us, and gets back in rhythm with His will.

And this is what God does with Ezekiel...

"Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not

take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.”

Recall when God first called Ezekiel, he used this same analogy to get the young priest's attention and stress the seriousness of his mission. With these words God turned *Ezekiel the priest* into a prophet.

It was his job to trumpet *God's truth* and warn *God's people*. God made him a watchman on the wall.

Ancient cities were almost all surrounded by large stone walls to protect them against wild animals, and roaming bandits, and invading armies. The watchman was posted on top of the walls. He kept a look-out.

And this was Ezekiel's assignment. God called him to be a spiritual look-out. He warned the Jews of coming dangers. Once he'd done so, his job was done.

Ezekiel, as well as all God's spokesmen need to be reminded the difference between *our responsibility* and *the people's response*. Our job is to blow the trumpet. How the people reacted is up to them. It's out of our control. If Ezekiel was faithful, but if the people refused to take heed... *then their blood was on their own head.*

But if the watchman refuses to sound the alarm. If he doesn't want to upset anyone, or disrupt the people's normal routine, or he's afraid they won't like him, or they'll retaliate

against him - and he remains mute, then their blood will be on the watchman's hands.

And in a sense this applies to us all. Every Christian is a spiritual look-out, a watchman on the wall.

We have a vantage point others lack. We know God. We see life through God's eyes. And we have people within our walls - within the sphere of our influence.

There're times when it's our duty to sound the alarm. There's danger approaching we can't ignore. We can't just say, "*Well, I'll just let my actions do the talking.*"

Yes, we all should be an example, but there comes a time when we have to blow the trumpet - open our mouths and speak up. It's been said, "*Some Christians are like the Arctic River - frozen over at the mouth.*"

As God's watchman, Ezekiel needs to discern where *his responsibility ends, and the people's response begins*. God says to him, verse 7, "*So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.*" This is ominous chapter. Watchmen have heavy responsibility.

Who are the people within the walls of your life? Who's within the sphere of your responsibility?

It differs for each of us, but for all of us it has to include our kids, our family, our friends, maybe our neighbors and co-workers... For some of us God has sat us over a congregation, a community. Ezekiel had the responsibility of watching over an entire nation.

And the watchman is responsible to sound the alarm.

Realize, this chapter can create a terrible bondage in a believer's life if he or she doesn't compare Scripture with Scripture. We understand that the watchman's efforts alone can't cause a sinner to repent or to draw him to the Savior. It takes the work of the Holy Spirit.

Unless God instructs me specifically to do so, the best approach is not going around blasting my trumpet, screaming at people, telling them they're going to hell.

Last year at the Masters, there was a man standing at the entry gate with a megaphone in hand, screaming at people to repent or go to hell. I'm sure 99% of the crowd viewed him as a nuisance. Even I couldn't help but think this guy was doing more harm than good.

Some folks read this passage and witness just to get the burden off their back - relieve their responsibility - rather than be strategic in their reaching of others.

*The better approach is to be led by the Holy Spirit.*

Rather than just barge into a person's life we should be sensitive to God's Spirit and His timing. It's said, "The person who doesn't use tact, will lose contact."

But there does remain a responsibility to speak and warn. If you know God, you're privy to info the people within your walls might lack. You're a look-out. And if you don't speak out, their blood will be on your hands.

You can't just dismiss this as a quaint OT idea that no longer applies to NT believers. In Acts 20:26 Paul drew on this concept when he said to the Ephesian elders, "I am innocent of the blood of all men."

Not all people will respond positively, but we as God's watchmen, should faithfully sound the alarm.

Verse 10, "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' Notice Ezekiel's expression, "*pine away*" it means "to waste away." Sin eats away what's good - our sanity, virtue, dignity, self-worth.

Sin wears a person down. It has a deteriorating and demoralizing effect. Sin is like a cancer to the soul. Ultimately, it diminishes a person's enjoyment of life.

In verse 11 we heard from a brokenhearted God.

"Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"

Why should God's people "*pine away*" in their sin? God was ready and willing to forgive them. He takes no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked. God is not some vindictive God who gets His jollies by watching folks fry in hell. He loves

people, even sinners, and pleads for them to turn from their evil and follow Him.

2 Peter 3:9 echoes Ezekiel, and once again reveals God's heart, "The Lord is... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Verse 12, "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.'"

In other words, **yesterday's experience doesn't count toward tomorrow's evaluation.** Say you walked the aisle when you were 10 years old and prayed the sinner's prayer. But for the last 25 years you've ignored God, and lived in rebellion. Don't expect what you did in the past to count toward the future.

Likewise, you may've spent the last 50 years raising hell and bucking God, but tonight, if you confess your sin and sincerely repent, God will forgive you fully!

Yesterday's experiences are important in that they create a momentum. We build from grace to grace.

But God evaluates all of us on *our current condition*.

What I did yesterday is of no value if it doesn't translate into faith today... And the years I spent in rebellion - though the years were wasted - it still doesn't mean I can't turn around

my destiny today! It's the current attitude of our heart that matters to God!

In 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul spoke of the Christian life as a race. **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."** As in any race, the main point is to finish. You can't win if you don't finish.

And this is true of the Christian life. You can get off to a quick start. Run well for three-quarters of the race, but if you tire, and give up, and drop out - you've failed.

This is true spiritually. Faith is a race that has to cross the finish line. As Paul said, ***"I kept the faith."***

Once my dad and I were playing golf, when we were joined by another golfer about my dad's age. They were talking when he asked dad, ***"What do your sons do for a living?"*** Dad answered, ***"They're both pastors."***

The man was ecstatic, ***"Wow, I bet you're proud."***

My dad replied, ***"So far."***

That's Ezekiel's message ***"what you are is only what you are so far."*** You're righteous if you're walking in faith today. You're wicked if you're living with your back to God today. Yesterday and tomorrow don't count. What matters is are we current with God today.

God continues in verse 13, ***"When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die."***



Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.” Notice, restitution is part of genuine repentance. When a wicked man turns from his sin he doesn’t just *mouth a prayer* or *shed a tear*... he pays back what was stolen, and changes the way he lives. *He does something!*

This is why we know the evil tax collector, Zacchaeus was converted. After his dinner with Jesus he paid back the money he had defrauded, *fourfold*.

Verse 17, “Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ But it is their way which is not fair! When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways.” Apparently, there were Jews in Babylon who were blaming God for their captivity, as if the fall of Jerusalem was somehow God’s fault - *as if God had fallen asleep at the helm*.

But God is assuring Ezekiel that what’s happened to the Jews is the direct result of their own behavior.

One of the chief evidences of true repentance is the willingness to accept the consequences of our sin.

Real repentance is when we stop casting blame, and realize we are where we are because of our own sin.

It's an arrogant man who gets warned and warned of punishment, and ignores it - then when it occurs has the nerve to whine, and accuse God of being unfair.

Yet these were the Jews Ezekiel had to address.

Remember in Chapter 24, Ezekiel was called on as God's representative to make the ultimate sacrifice.

God was heartbroken over the fall of Jerusalem, and the death of His spiritual wife, Judah, so to illustrate God's grief He took Ezekiel's wife. She died the exact same day the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began.

And there was more. On that same day God made Ezekiel mute. God's spokesman was unable to speak.

For 23 months Ezekiel was silent in regards to the destiny of the Jews... *This was all God's judgment on Jerusalem. An invading army lays siege. Citizens are starving. And the Prophet of God remains silent...* It was a dark, painful 23 months for the Jewish people.

But in verse 21 Ezekiel tells us what happened at the end of those 23 months. **“And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been captured!”** One of the men of Jerusalem had escaped the invading army, and had traveled

the 900 miles to Babylon to report to Ezekiel all that had happened.

“Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped.

And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.” God opened Ezekiel’s mouth again.

The Prophet will speak once more, but this time he’s given a different message. Jerusalem’s judgment is now history. The captivity of the Jews is a done deal. So now Ezekiel begins to speak of their restoration. This is the theme of the remaining chapters in Ezekiel.

“Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Son of man, they who inhabit those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was only one, and he inherited the land. But we are many; the land has been given to us as a possession.’” Remember there were false prophets who despite the warnings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the contrary, predicted God would deliver Jerusalem. Now in the wake of the city’s destruction you would think they would admit their lies.

Instead they try to spin the truth, and offer another interpretation of the events that had transpired...

*Initially, God gave the land to one man, Abraham. But Abraham’s family had grown to a population of millions. God wanted a smaller group to possess the land, so the destruction of Jerusalem was God’s way of thinning out the ranks, not a show of His disapproval.*

In verse 25 Ezekiel responds to their spin! “Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “You eat meat with blood, you lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood. Should you then possess the land?

You rely on your sword, you commit abominations, and you defile one another’s wives. Should you then possess the land?’” It was their sin that disqualified the Jews from possessing the land. Sin was the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish captivity.

“Say thus to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “As I live, surely those who are in the ruins shall fall by the sword, and the one who is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and caves shall die of the pestilence.”

Even the Jews who had managed to escape and remain in the land will eventually die as well! God isn’t culling out a select few to take over the holy city.

“For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through.

Then they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.”

Verse 30, “As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ So they come to you as people do,

they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. And when this comes to pass - surely it will come - then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

As we've seen Ezekiel was colorful character. He's the stuntman of the Bible! God gave him bizarre skits to act out. These spiritual skits or living parables were visual aides to illustrate God's lessons for His people.

Remember some of Ezekiel's theatrics...

He laid on his side for 430 days... He dug a hole in the wall of his house, and kept moving in and out... He built a model of the city, took toy soldiers, and acted out a battle... At one point, he pounded his fist and stamped his feet... Ezekiel's whole life was a sign!

Apparently, Pastor Ezekiel never had a problem getting people to church. His sermons were exciting. The Jews never knew what Ezekiel would do next.

It would also seem he was a moving speaker. God calls him *“a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice.”* People loved to listen to Ezekiel's sermons.

Yet here was the problem. People listened, but they didn't obey. Ezekiel was entertaining, eloquent. But that didn't mean folks were applying what they heard...

And it wasn't Ezekiel's fault. He was a gifted communicator, but the effectiveness of the preacher doesn't guarantee the obedience of the congregation.

Hey, every pastor needs to be an effective spokesman, **but people can applaud, yet not apply.**

It's possible to come to CC every week. You're entertained by the music - captivated by the pastor's incredible jokes. You love the style of teaching. Oh, we tell it like it is at CC! *Yet never apply what you hear!*

If the weeks go passed and we remain unchanged our lives are no better than when we started. As James 1 tells us, **"be doers of the Word, and not hearers only."**

Chapter 34, **"And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?'"** In this chapter Ezekiel speaks to the shepherds of Israel - or leaders - especially spiritual leaders - the priests and prophets of God's people.

In pre-fall Jerusalem, and among the Jews in exile, false prophets were a plague. There were men who claimed to speak for God who only spouted their own ideas, and wishful thinking, and excuses. They were looking out for themselves. Using God for selfish gain.

A true shepherd feeds the flock, not himself.

Remember, after His resurrection when Jesus renewed Peter's calling, He told him three times, **"Feed My lambs.**

Tend (*nurture*) My sheep. Feed My sheep.” If any pastor truly loves Jesus He will feed His flock.

Yet Ezekiel speaks of the shepherds of Israel, “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.”

They look out for themselves, not God’s people.

“The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.” Rather than *tender*, these leaders were *tyrannical*. They were more about ruling over others than coming alongside them and offering them help.

Recall Luke 4. Early in Jesus’ ministry he returned to His hometown of Nazareth, and there was great speculation over His intentions. *Who was this Jesus?*

And that day in the synagogue, the Lord revealed His intentions. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” *In other words, that the time for this is now, not later!*

And this is still Jesus’ intentions - *to bring good news, healing, deliverance, open eyes, and liberty.*

In fact, anyone who aspires to be a shepherd (or pastor) in God’s flock needs to share these intentions.

Yet the false shepherds of Ezekiel's day had the opposite intention. They ignored the weak, the broken, the outcast, the lost... Rather than serve and show compassion, they ruled God's flock cruelly and forcibly.

Verse 5, "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered." When God's people lack a shepherd who feeds the flock, they're inevitably scattered, and fall become prey to evil men.

This is what happened to the Jews of Ezekiel's day.

"My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them." "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: "As I live," says the Lord God, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"- therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord!" God is going to judge the shepherds...

"Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." Notice, the personal pronouns. Twice God calls the flock, "My



*flock.*” When you mistreat God’s people, the Lord takes it personally.

Verse 11, “For thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.

As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.” At that moment God was looking down from heaven on the people of Israel and Judah - His once unified flock. He saw them as sheep that were scattered over the hills.

And here, God is promising to come Himself and gather up His people and return them to the sheepfold.

Rather than rely on the shepherds of Israel He’ll do it Himself... *And when did this happen?* How about when Jesus came to Earth. In John 10 He called Himself “the Good Shepherd.” And in so doing, Jesus was claiming to be the fulfillment of this prophecy in Ezekiel 34.

Verse 13, “And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God.”

Shepherds say it’s impossible to force a sheep to lie down. Sheep recline only when they’re content and at peace. In fact,

to lie down a sheep has to be free of four irritations... **fear** of predators, **friction** with other sheep, **famine** (they need plenty of food), and **flies**...

And Jesus frees us from the same irritations: **fear, friction, famine, flies**... When you know Jesus, stuff don't *bug you* as much. Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

Verse 16, "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment." 'And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, **between rams and goats.**" Realize the problem was not just with the shepherds. God's flock was also at fault. Some of His flock had gotten fat. They were over-indulgent. God is going to weed out *the righteous* from *the self-righteous*.

Remember Jeremiah 5:31 the scathing indictment Jeremiah made, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so." The people and prophets were partners in crime. The prophets were supported by people who liked what they were hearing even though it was false.

And this happens today. Some false preachers are propped up by congregations who like their message.

Verse 18, "Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture - and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they

drink what you have fouled with your feet.” ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: “Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.” The Good Shepherd will judge the sheep. Like their teachers some of the sheep were only out for themselves. That’s why they left nothing in the pasture for the other sheep, and foul the waters that the other sheep were suppose to drink.

It’s sad when “*so-called Christians*” only care about themselves. In some churches too much butting, and trampling, and pushing go on. The weaker sheep get left with trampled grass and with muddy water. A few are served, rather than the whole flock prospering.

This is why Paul tells the Corinthians (12) to make sure the weaker members receive the greater honor.

Verse 23, “I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them - My servant David.

He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.” Realize, this whole passage deals with Israel’s restoration, but that involved more than just regathering scattered sheep.

God did bring back the Jews to their land, and Jesus did come as their Good Shepherd - *but the rest of Ezekiel describes blessings that have yet to be fulfilled.*

The rest of the book is eschatological. It speaks to the end times when Jesus returns to earth a second time to establish a physical, tangible, political kingdom.

And in that day, as we read in verse 23, there will be *“one shepherd over them.”* In God’s future kingdom His people will be ruled and fed by one shepherd. We’re told that prince or royal ruler, is God’s servant, David.

And there’re two ways to understand this reference.

First, it could be that in the future Kingdom King David will rule over the Earth on behalf of King Jesus.

But the second way to interpret this is to think of the name *“David”* as the title for the leader of the Davidic dynasty. Just as the terms *“Caesar”* and *“Pharaoh”* were names turned into titles, *“David”* might also be a dynastic title. It’s interesting, one of the Jewish Targums, which are rabbinical commentaries of the OT, actually interprets the word *“David”* as *“Messiah.”*

If that’s true the term *“David”* would mean *“the ideal David”* or the son of David, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Verse 25, *“I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.”* Israel will one day be a peaceful place.

*“I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing.”* *And that would make for a great song...* *“Showers of blessings, showers of*

blessings we need, mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead...”

“Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid. I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore.”

We'll talk new week about what has taken place in the land of Israel over the last one-hundred years. How the Jews have turned the wilderness into a garden!

Today, the land of Israel is *“a garden of renown.”*

“Thus they shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people,” says the Lord God.’ “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God,” says the Lord God.” A glorious future awaits His flock.

In the meantime God promises in Jeremiah 3:15, “I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” One day all pastors will yield to the Chief Shepherd - until then a pastor who wants to be a shepherd according to God's heart will faithfully feed God's Word to God's flock.

Chapter 35, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it...” “*Mount Seir*” was a synonym for Edom - who were descendants of Esau.

In Malachi 1:2-3 (a passage Paul quotes in Romans 9:13) God says, “Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated.” God hated Esau not in a literal sense. Malachi uses a figure of speech, a *hyperbole*. He exaggerates for emphasis. In comparison to God’s love for Jacob, His love for Esau looked like hate. It’s not that God disdained Esau, *He had a special affection for Jacob*.

But Edom became bitter over God’s choice. Rather than rejoice with His brother over His place in God’s family, Edom became jealous. Israel and Edom became perpetual enemies. When Babylon invaded Jerusalem, Edom rejoiced in his brother’s suffering.

Ezekiel is to say to Edom, “Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against you; I will stretch out My hand against you, and make you most desolate; I shall lay your cities waste, and you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

“Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end...” Edom had an “*ancient hatred*” - literally, a “perpetual or everlasting hatred.”

The Edomites were nursing an old grudge.

Verse 6, “Therefore, as I live,” says the Lord God, “I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you.” This is a play on words. “*Edom*” means “red” - the color of blood. And God is saying Edom’s name hints at his destiny. Red blood will be spilt.

“Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it the one who leaves and the one who returns.

And I will fill its mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those who are slain by the sword shall fall. I will make you perpetually desolate, and your cities shall be uninhabited; then you shall know that I am the Lord.

“Because you have said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess them,’ although the Lord was there...” Edom had boasted that they would take over Israel and Judah, even when they knew that God had chosen Jacob!

“Therefore, as I live,” says the Lord God, “I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, ‘They are desolate; they are given to us to consume.’ Thus with your mouth you have boasted against Me and multiplied your words against Me; I have heard them.” Don’t ever forget God hears everything we

say. From *the idle boast* to *the arrogant rant*, God reads all our posts.

“Thus says the Lord God: “The whole earth will rejoice when I make you desolate.” Edom’s sin was the failure to recognize God’s blessing on His brother.

Thus, Edom rejoiced when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. Edom laughed at what caused God grief.

Don’t ever kick a brother when he’s down. Because Edom did, the earth will rejoice at her desolation.

“As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom - all of it! Then they shall know that I am the Lord.”

After the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem the army of King Nebuchadnezzar turned southeast to Edom.

Just as God had predicted, Mount Seir came to a bloody end at the sword of the Babylonians. Proving the old adage, *what goes around comes around*.