NOTES ON EZEKIEL CHAPTER SIX

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1. Introduction
2. Review
   1. The “hammer blows” of judgement (sword, famine, pestilence) that Elaine mentioned in chapters 4 & 5 are continued in chapter 6 (and in 7).
   2. Chapter 6 (and 7) continues w/ the description of the terrors that will come upon Jerusalem and upon Judah.
   3. Note the “*threes*”:
      1. Three judgements: *sword*, *famine*, *pestilence*
      2. Three locks of hair
      3. Israel to become a *reproach*, a *reviling*, a *warning*
      4. Judgement coming as *anger*, as *wrath*, as *raging rebukes*
   4. Israel that was to be a light to the nations (Is 42.6; 49.6) now becomes a lesson to the nations about what happens when God’s rules are disobeyed.
   5. Note Lev 26 and Dt 28.15 - 68 for God’s judgement for not keeping the covenant.

CHAPTER 6

1. Verse 1: The word of the Lord to Ezekiel …
2. Verse 2: Turn towards the mountains …
   1. Ezekiel is in Babylonia and is turning “toward,” or “to” (Heb. *ʾel*) the mountains of Israel
      1. “Mountains of Israel” used only in Ezekiel
      2. Most striking feature of Israel is the central, mountainous spine
      3. Mountains and valleys describe all of Israel (Dt. 11.11)
      4. Externally Yahweh was known as the “god of the mountains” [Heb. *harim*] (1 Kgs 20.28).
   2. Ezekiel is to turn towards Israel and say *against* the mountains …
      1. Not necessarily *against* them
         1. Although the word [Heb. ‘el] can mean “against,” it’s the normal word for “to,” “towards,” “unto.” [Example: Vs. 1— “The word of the Lord came *to* [‘el] me …”
         2. “to,” “towards,” “unto”: ASV, RSV, WEB, [Young’s Literal Translation: “concerning”]
         3. “against”: just about every other version
      2. BUT the mountains are not the guilty party—it’s the people who worship on them (Cf.7.17).
      3. Mountains and hills seen as a blessing in good times (Ps 72.3)
      4. But also serve as a witness against the ungodly activities taking place (Mic 6.1, 2)

EXCURSUS 1: The Septuagint (LXX) rendering of “against the mountains”

1. LXX uses *επί (epi)*, which can mean “on” or “against”
2. “On” makes no sense, so we go w/ “against.” To wit: “Turn your face *against* [*επί*]the mountains of Israel and prophesy *against* [*επί]* them….
3. That is to say, what is seen on the mountains is bad—turn against that. Your devotion should be against what is happening on the mountains.
4. Look at Mt 16.18 where Jesus talks about building his church
5. He and the disciples are at Caesarea Philippi
6. Lots of temples there built into the Mt. Hermon massif
7. After some discussion, Jesus states, “And on [*επί*] this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
8. Suggestion: As in the case of Ezekiel who prophesied *against* [*επί*] the false temples, so Jesus is building his church *against* [*επί*] the false world order represented by the temples at Caesarea Philippi
9. Verse 3: Prophecy to/against the “high places” …
   1. High places (*bamot*): a term for a worship site that generally was on a high hill
   2. But the word was used generically for a worship site that can be anywhere, including in a valley (2 Kgs 23.10).
   3. What happened at these sites? (From D. Stuart):
      1. Bowing & kissing (1 K 19.18)
      2. Eat and relax (Am 2.8),
      3. Ritual sex to bring fertility (Hos 4.14)
   4. God himself refers to Israel as “My mountains.” (Is 14.25; 65.9; Ezek 38.11.)
      1. Hence why idolatry on the mountains is so offensive.
      2. No wonder God will bring “the sword” on all these items. (The “sword theme” picks up from 5.7)
10. Verse 4: Prophecy against the other religious institutions …
    1. *Altars* will become desolate
    2. *Incense altars* (or chapels [Cf. Block I, pp. 225 – 26]) will be smashed
    3. Slain fall in front of the *idols*

EXCURSUS 2: The word “idols” [Heb. *gillûlîm*]

1. Thought to have been derived from the Heb. root *galal,* “round”,for the idols had a round shape to them.
2. But it appears to derive from a root word meaning “excrement” (Cf. Ezekiel’s term for “human excrement” [*bĕgelĕlēy hāʾādām*].
3. In short, Ezek refers to the idols as “crapgods,” but with a less refined word for “crap,” if you catch my drift….
4. This expression used 38x in Ezek and only 9x elsewhere.

EXCURSUS 3: Altars:

1. Associated w/ Samuel in connection w/ the inauguration of Saul as king of Israel (1 Sam 9.11 – 25; 10.5
2. 1 Sam 7 [Samuel offers burn offering in face of the Philistine onslaught].
3. Solomon's dream and sacrifices at the high place (*bamah*) of Gibeon (1 Kgs 3.4; 2 Chr 1.3, 13)
4. Elijah repairs the Lord’s altar on Carmel (1 Kgs 18.30)
5. Not forbidden before construction of the temple, but later sacrifices were to be centered “at the place God chose to put his name”; i.e., Jerusalem.
6. Verse 5: The penalty …
   1. Vss. 4b – 5: Three-fold judgement:
      1. Cut down the worshippers in front of the idols;
      2. Lay the corpses in front of the idols;
      3. Scatter the bones. (Emphasized in vs. 13 as occurring everywhere false worship occurred.)
   2. Ultimate desecration
      1. Scattering bones: 2 Kgs 23.20; Jer 8.1, 2; Ps 53.5
      2. Predicted for covenant disobedience: Lev 26.30; Dt 28.26
7. Verse 6: Total annihilation of everything
8. Verse 7: The “recognition formula”
   1. “They will know that I am the Lord….”
   2. Appears four times in this chapter: vss. 7, 10, 13, 14
   3. Note Ex 14.4, 18: The Egyptians will know Yahweh is the Lord after their army drowns in the sea
9. Verse 8: The Lord leaves a remnant (but cf. vs. 12) …
10. Verse 9: The goal of punishment—repentance …
    1. Those that flee and remain alive will repent of making the Lord *grieve* (lit. “*be broken*”).
    2. Renewal in three phases:
       1. Remember Yahweh
       2. Survivors will loathe themselves
       3. Will realize that Yahweh did not threaten them in vain
    3. The renewal is outside the land of Israel. (Ironic, isn't it?)
11. Verse 10: “You will know I am the Lord.” The warnings have not been in vain!
12. Verse 11: Actions of emotion… “Clap hands,” “stamp feet”
    1. Expressions of anguish: Cf. Balak Num 24.10; Ezek 21.14, 17; 25.6
    2. Expressions of rejoicing: Ps 47.1; 98.8; Is 55.12
    3. Ezek 21.14, 17—Lord strikes hands together in anger
    4. In this case, the striking of the hands and the stamping of the feet has to do w/ the threefold judgement—*sword*, *famine*, *plague*—as a result of the “evil abominations of the house of Israel.”
13. Verse 12: Not all of the “remnant” will survive (follow-up from vs. 8) …
    1. He who is *far off* will die by the *plague*
    2. He who is *near* will fall by the *sword*
    3. He who *remains* [in the city] and is besieged will die by the *famine*.
14. Verse 13: Extension of discussion of the destruction from vs. 5
    1. Besides idols and altars, places of false worship included …
       1. Every high hill
       2. On all the tops of the mountains
       3. Under every green tree and
       4. Under every leafy oak
    2. “Where they offered soothing aroma to all their idols”
15. Verse 14: God’s long reach …
    1. “Stretch out my hand against”—bring judgement (14.9, 13; 16.27; 25.7; 35.3)
    2. Geographical extent of divine wrath [Heb. *mimmidbar diblātâ*]
       1. Either “from [the] desert to Diblah,” or
       2. “From the desert that is towards [i.e., direction of] Diblah”
    3. But “Diblah” is unknown, so probably a misreading of “R” [Heb. ר ] for “D” [Heb. ד ]
    4. In either case, judgement is on the extent of the land.

And this sets us up for chapter 7 next time …

LESSONS:

1. How does this apply to a pluralistic society?
   1. Not our job to judge outsiders: “For what business of mine is it to judge outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges” (1 Cor 5.12 – 13).
   2. Note Paul did not condemn the Athenians, but told them about God’s judgement on people for opposing God’s natural revelation (Act 17)
   3. Note Daniel’s relationship to Nebuchadnezzar and refusal to have the false religious leaders killed.
   4. Jeremiah tells the people to pray for Babylonia, for as it prospered, the Jews would prosper (Jer 29.7) [But eventually all nations will be judged for disobeying God’s laws.]
2. How does this apply to the church?
   1. Falsehood totally condemned w/ some harsh language
      1. Gal 1.8; 5.12: Let them be anathema; let them mutilate themselves
      2. Phil 3.2: circumcisers called “dogs.”
      3. Rev 22.15: “Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”
   2. Note the difference between Gal and Phil. Galatians were sincere, but wrong. Some Philippians were happy w/ Paul’s trouble, but he praised the Lord that the true gospel was preached. In short, the saying “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you're sincere” is not a biblical concept!