

NOTES ON EZEKIEL CHAPTER SEVEN, VSS. 14 – 27

17 January 2021

P. Phillips

1. Verses 14 – 15: The trumpet sounds, but no one is able to go to battle. Why? (vs. 15):
  - a) The sword is outside
  - b) Plague and famine inside
  - c) Lam 1.20: “Outside, the sword bereaves; inside, there is only death.”
2. Verse 16: But some will escape to the mountains
  - a) They will remember their iniquity [for that was the reason for the destruction] (Cf. Jer 2.17, 19):

<sup>17</sup> Have you not brought this on yourselves  
by forsaking the Lord your God  
when he led you in the way?  
<sup>19</sup> Your wickedness will punish you;  
your backsliding will rebuke you.  
Consider then and realize  
how evil and bitter it is for you  
when you forsake the Lord your God  
and *have no awe of me,*”  
declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty

- b) They will moan like doves [that live] in the valley
  - i) *FOR, BECAUSE, OVER* their iniquity, implying repentance? (NIV, ESV, NASB)
  - ii) *IN* their iniquity, implying they are sorry for their punishment, but still sinful (ASV, ERV, JPS Tanakh 1917)
  - iii) Depends upon the preposition כ (bet)
- c) The sound of “mourning doves” used as a symbol of moaning over grief:
  - i) Is 38.14: “*I moan like a dove*; My eyes look wistfully to the heights; Lord, I am oppressed, be my security”.
  - ii) Is 59.11: “All of us growl like bears, and *moan sadly like doves*; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.”
  - iii) Babylonian Penitential Psalms 2.11:
    - iv) My heart hath taken wing, and hath flown away like a bird of the heavens.  
I moan like a dove, night and day.  
I am made desolate, and I weep bitterly.  
With grief and woe my soul is distressed.  
What have I done, O my god and my goddess?

- d) Mountains used for safety. Note Jesus's words: "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains." (Cf. Mt 24.15; Mk 13.14; Lk 21.21)
3. Verse 17: At the same time ...
- a) Their hands will hang limp
  - b) Their knees will be like water.
    - i) Reminiscent of Josh 7.5 after defeat at Ai: "At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water."
    - ii) May mean "weak-kneed"
    - iii) LXX has "knees defiled by moisture"
      - (1) Urine release
      - (2) "Wet their pants"
4. Verse 18: Signs of mourning and shame ...
- a) (Cf. Ezek 27.31 for lament against Tyre. This exemplifies lamentation over destruction.)
  - b) Wearing sackcloth (Grief; ex. Jacob when he thought he lost Joseph: Gen 37.34)
  - c) Shaving one's beard (Humiliation; ex. 2 Sam 10.4, 5)
  - d) Shaving one's head (Grief; ex. Job 1.20; Mic 1.16)
5. Verse 19: Precious metals (gold, silver) will not save on "that day" (Cf. Zeph 1.18)
- a) Gold and silver will be an "unclean thing" (Heb. *niddah*; also at end of vs. 20).
    - i) *Niddah* appears 29 times in the OT (half of them in the legal material in Lev and in Num. five times in Ezek.
    - ii) Includes impurity, filthiness, set apart as unclean for ceremonial purposes, such as menstruation (Lev 12.2, 5; chap 15 [lots of occurrences];
    - iii) The land of Canaan was *niddah* because of abominations before the Israelites conquered it (Cf. Ezra 9.11) and it is becoming this way again.
    - iv) The temple was *niddah* before being cleaned and sanctified during Hezekiah's reform (2 Chr 29.5)
    - v) Jeremiah calls Jerusalem *niddah* in Lam 1.17
  - b) What good is gold and silver if there is nothing to buy because of the famine? Can one eat gold and silver? ("They cannot satisfy their appetite [Lit. *soul*] nor can they fill their stomachs [or *bellies*] ...")
  - c) Uselessness of wealth in times of God's judgement:
    - i) Mt 6.19 – 24: "Store treasures in heaven ...", "God or mammon ..."
    - ii) Lk 6.24-25: Woe to the rich, to the well-fed, to those that laugh now
    - iii) 1 Tim 6.6-10, 17-19: "Godliness w/ contentment is great gain." Dangers for those that want to get rich; do not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth ... but in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.
    - iv) James 5.1-6: "Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days."

EXAMPLE: The chaos during the destruction of America in *War of the Worlds*.

6. Verse 20a, b: The temple profaned:
  - a) “The beauty of his ornaments” into pride—probably refers to the temple items
    - i) Normally, the word for ornaments refers to personal jewelry
    - ii) But there is good evidence—as pointed out by the rabbis (Rashi, Kimchi) that this refers to idols in the temple covered w/ gold and silver, esp. in light of 16.17: “You also took your beautiful jewelry, made of my gold and my silver I had given to you, and made for yourself male images and engaged in prostitution with them.”
  - b) Using the items of the temple for idols will make the temple itself an abomination—*niddah*: (Cf. Is 30.22: “Then you will desecrate your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, “Away with you!”)
  - c) Ezekiel’s connection between wealth and idolatry is not new (Cf. LESSONS below)
7. Verse 20c: “Therefore” is a turning point: Ezekiel now focusses on God’s reaction to the abominations. FIRST, we see the reaction in the first part of vs. 20 in that the gold and the silver will become abhorrent to the people that used the metals for idols
8. Verses 21, 22: SECOND: The gold and silver in the temple will be carried away by the invaders *at God’s behest*
  - a) The Babylonians carried away the gold and the silver in the temple (2 Chr 36.18; Jer 52.18-19)
  - b) Note how king Belshazzar used utensils of the temple profanely, and that resulted in his death (Dan 5.3, 4).
9. Verse 23: THIRD: A chain for the bloody crimes and for the violence: i.e., exile and captivity for the inhabitants
  - a) How does this verse read?
    - i) The Hebrew reads: “Make the chain, for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence.”
    - ii) The LXX reads: “And they shall work uncleanness: because the land is full of strange nations, and the city is full of iniquity.”
    - iii) Can be explained by the change of two words: הַבְּתוֹק (*habbattoq*, “disorder, slaughter”) instead of הַרְתוֹק (*harattoq*, “the chain”) (NET) i.e., the easy exchange between ב (b) ר (r).
    - iv) Parallel verses lead me to accept the MT as more authentic than the LXX (but I would not split a church over it)
  - b) Jer 22.17: “But your eyes and your heart are intent only upon your own dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood.”
  - c) Mic 3.10: “Who [i.e., the leaders] build Zion w/ bloodshed and Jerusalem w/ violent injustice.”
  - d) “Make the chain ...” probably refers to chains being used to take captives from Jerusalem.
  - e) Jer 40.1:

The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had released him at Ramah. *He had found Jeremiah bound in chains among all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah who were being carried into exile to Babylon.*

10. Verse 24: FOURTH: “The worst of the nations ...”: The Babylonians this time.

- a) Scope of destruction by the enemy:
  - i) They will inhabit the living spaces of Judah
  - ii) Holy sites (i.e., idolatrous places) will be profaned (à la as discussed in chap. 6)
  - iii) “Pride of the *strong ones* [or *mighty*] will cease”: The association between “strong ones” and idolatry suggests that idolatry in some way supported the power structure of the day
- b) Part of the covenant stipulation if Israel disobeyed the Lord (Dt. 28.49, 50)
- c) But aren't they worse than Judah? (cf. Habakkuk’s question, 1.13)
- d) The Lord’s answer (Hab 2.4: “The just shall live by faith.”)

Vss. 25 – 27: Three-fold alarm: *No peace, disaster, paralysis*

11. Verse 25: Don’t even try negotiating a peace treaty—it won't work! Unconditional surrender is the only option!

12. Verse 26: Rumors and disasters ...

- a) “Rumor added to rumor”: Like modern-day Twitter.... Conspiracy theories abound in difficult times. (But remember Hanlon’s Razor: “Don’t try to explain by conspiracy what can be easily explained by stupidity.”)
- b) “disaster upon disaster”: Emphasis that judgement is really coming—there is no escape!
- c) Prophet, Priest, and Elder (political leaders) will have nothing to say in terms of encouragement.

13. Verse 27: Complementary to vss. 1 – 4

- a) King and prince (one or two individuals? Is this a parallelism:
  - The king will mourn,
  - The prince will be clothed in horror.
- i) Generally, Ezekiel’s use of “prince” [Heb. *nasi*] in conjunction w/ “people” means the king (45.16, 22; 46.2 – 3, 8 – 9; [Cf. Block, I., p. 269]), but that would be repetitive here.
- ii) Suggestion: *nasi* is collective for “middle managers” of the power structure
- b) People are shaking w/ fear (“trembling hands”)
- c) Judgement is “measure for measure” as we have seen many times before.
- d) CONCLUSION: “And you will know that I am the Lord.”

LESSONS:

- A. From vs. 20: The association between wealth and idolatry [greed included] is not new.
  - 1. Job afraid of this (31.24 – 28) and says in his “apologia”:

“If I have put my confidence in gold,  
 or said to pure gold ‘You are my security!’  
 If I have rejoiced because of the extent of my wealth,  
 or because of the great wealth my hand had gained;  
 If I looked at the sun when it was shining,  
 and the moon advancing as a precious thing,  
 so that my heart was secretly enticed,  
 and my hand threw them a kiss from my mouth,  
 then this also would be iniquity to be judged,  
 for I would have been false to God above.

2. But why do people make idols in the first place?
  - a. Lack of awe and wonder of God brought on by the business of the present, quest for riches and for power
  - b. Lack of appreciation for what God has bestowed upon us. Remember 1 Tim 6.17 – 19: God has given us all things *richly to enjoy*. Instead of enjoying, we wish for more and make an idol of our desires.
- B. The people had no one to blame but themselves. They could not “pass the buck” (but they tried: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and our teeth are set on edge” (Jer 31.29 – 30; Ezek 18.2). But ‘passing the buck’ goes all the way back to Eden” (Stuart).
- C. God’s punishment comes *slowly*, but it comes *surely* (D. G. Watt in *A Homiletical Commentary*, p. 76).
  1. Getting away w/ breaking God’s laws without punishment brings the feeling that God is oblivious or irrelevant when it comes to lawlessness. But his judgement will come ultimately.
  2. Eventually, he undermines all our security based upon anything else other than upon our trust in God himself.
- D. Heinrich Heine is said to have stated, “It is God’s job to forgive...”, BUT:
  1. Rom 1: Sin eventually catches up w/ people and at times God gives people over to their own desires for worshiping the creation (idolatry) instead of the Creator.
  2. Rom 2.4: But God’s longsuffering is to give time for sinful people to repent. (Cf. 2 Pet 3.3 – 4)
  3. Rom 2.5: But the longer we wait, the more we store up wrath for ourselves.
  4. Rom 6.23: “Wages of sin is death...”
  5. Heb 9.27: Appointed *once* to die and then judgement
  6. 2 Cor 5.10: Even we as Christians will stand before the judgement seat of God.
  7. Jude 14 – 15: God will come w/ his holy ones “to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

8. God uses wicked, powerful nations for his purpose without moral stain on himself. Calvin on Ezek 7.21:

“...We gather that God so works by them [the wicked] that he is pure from all alliance with their [the wicked] faults, because he so exercises his judgments by means of them, that he appears without blame with regard to them; but they are condemned deservedly, because either their own avarice or ambition, or other lusts destroy them.”