

1. I call this lesson "prophecy, punishments and prophets". It's a nice "P" theme. ☺
 - a) In this lesson, Ezekiel continues to prophesy about why Israel is being punished.
 - b) Ezekiel explains in great detail why the nation of Israel, collectively is deserving of punishment for worshipping idols.
 - c) This lesson also deals with false prophets. While Ezekiel was preaching God's plans, we learn of false prophets who were saying in effect, "everything is going to be ok".
 - d) Which leads to my first application of this lesson: How do you tell the difference between a true prophet of God and a false prophet?
 - i) The first answer is to watch what each says and see what comes true.
 - ii) The second answer is to compare their prophecies against the entire Word of God and see if what they say is in line with God's nature as taught through the book.
 - iii) Chapter 13 specifically deals with the punishment of false prophets. An application of that chapter is "Don't mess with giving prophecy unless one is positive it is from God and not one's own imagination!"
 - e) One thing I've noticed from these Ezekiel lessons is that God is explaining the necessity of His judgment in groups. God is explaining different "groups" and their collective guilt.
 - i) For example, God explained in the last lesson how the leading priests were standing with their backs to the Temple and worshiping the sun. (Ezekiel 8:16).
 - ii) We also discussed the "high court" which is the 70 leading citizens of Jerusalem worshiping false Gods. (Ezekiel 8:11). We also had women in the outer court of the temple worshipping a local false god. (Ezekiel 8:14).
 - iii) In this lesson (Chapter 11) we discuss the civic leaders of Jerusalem and their guilt.
 - a) We also discuss the "false prophets" and their guilt in Chapter 13.
 - iv) My point is God does not miss any categories in this set of judgments.
 - f) As I like to ask, "What does any of this have to do with you and me?"
 - i) The application is God judges our behavior. If we have committed our lives to serving Him we can suffer consequences in this lifetime for disobedience.
 - ii) Does this mean that all suffering is God ordained punishment? The answer is no and we have no way of knowing the "heavenly" reasons for our suffering.
 - a) The only thing we can do is trust that God is still there during the tough moments of our lives and focus on Him to help us through such times.
 - b) Can we be punished like Israel? No in the sense all believers are not united in a single land anymore. Can God "judge us" in this life somehow? Yes.
 - g) One final thing: Chapter 11 also has a verse about "hope". The point is despite the sins of Israel and despite their planned punishment, the message is that God is not through with Israel as single nation and God still has a plan for that nation.
 - i) The same applies to Christians. If we have committed our lives to God, we can't lose our salvation by "sinning too much". We can be punished in this lifetime for being a bad witness, but that's it.
2. Chapter 11, Verse 1: Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. There at the entrance to the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. ² The LORD said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city. ³ They say, 'Will it not soon be time to build houses? This city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat.'⁴ Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man."
 - a) Remember that Chapter 11 is finishing a four-chapter vision God gave Ezekiel.
 - b) Let's review: Ezekiel is living in Babylon through the whole book. Ezekiel was spiritually transported (beamed?) to Jerusalem, and specifically to where the Temple was located.

- i) Ezekiel saw the leaders of Israel committing idolatry in the Temple. Ezekiel asked for this vision as he wondered why this punishment was necessary. God answered that question by showing just how bad things had gotten in Israel.
- ii) As to the Temple itself, it is confusing unless one has a little bit of knowledge what this Temple looked like. It was a covered building within an uncovered but fenced area. This entire compound is considered the "Temple" location.
- iii) In the previous three chapters, God "spiritually speaking" took Ezekiel to show him idolatry practices in both the indoor and outdoor areas of the Temple.
- iv) In the previous three chapters, God showed Ezekiel different groups that were committing sins. This including women in the outdoor area praying to a local false god named Tammuz. It included seventy leaders (probably religious leaders) committing idolatry. There were another 25 religious leaders in the covered area of the Temple praying to the sun (a popular Egyptian god).
- v) All of this is review and leads us to Chapter 11.
- c) Here in Chapter 25, we have another 25 men. As best scholars can tell, this is not the same 25 men that were mentioned a few chapters back. Most scholars believe this group represents the civil leadership of Israel.
 - i) Ezekiel has already seen earlier how the religious leaders were sinning in the Temple area and how the leading women were sinning. The one group not accounted for is the civil leaders, as based on Chapter 11, they were no better.
- d) There are two men given by name in these verses. They are Jaazaniah and Pelatiah. There is no cross reference to these men anywhere else in the bible. Most likely they are some key civic leaders appointed by the king of Judah.
 - i) Their specific false teaching statement is listed in Verses 3-4: These men were saying, "Will it not soon be time to build houses? This city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat." Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man."
 - a) The idea of their statement is that it is not time to build houses "now", but will be soon. They are saying now is a time for all of Jerusalem to prepare for war against the Babylonians. In other words, they are saying it is not time for "business as usual" due to the enemy at the city walls.
 - ii) So what does God have against this advice? Jeremiah was preaching in Israel at this time. God was speaking through Jeremiah to "give up" the Babylonians as opposed to try to fight them. That is why God is condemning this bad advice.
 - iii) The last verse is God telling Ezekiel to prophesy against these two men. Apparently their advice was well known, even to those Jews living in Babylon.
- e) OK, its time for our next application of this lesson.
 - i) How does someone tell a true prophet of God from a false one? Does a false prophet come into our church wearing a shirt saying, "Hi, my name is Joe and I am a false prophet". ☹ No. We have to judge them by what they say.
 - ii) God pointed out these two men (Jaazaniah and Pelatiah) teach what is false simply based on the words come out of their mouths.
 - iii) The way false prophecies come out today is when people teach things that fly against the word of God. Personally, I find most false prophecies come when one takes a bible verse or bible principal out of context, or emphasizes it far more than other bible principals.
 - a) For example, a false prophecy may be to believe we can get whatever we want just by asking God for it long and hard enough. It is taking the principal of "living by faith" out of context. Our job is not to get God to do our will, but our job is just to do God's will. We can ask God for anything, but it is God's right to say yes or no and we must accept that decision.
- f) OK, meanwhile, the Israelites are still in big trouble. ☹

3. Verse 5: Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say: "This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, O house of Israel, but I know what is going through your mind. ⁶ You have killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead.
 - a) Apparently, these 25 leaders were doing more than just giving bad advice. These leaders have either killing or were plotting to kill Israelites. Why would they do that? They were taking advantage of the panic and were robbing and killing innocent people.
 - b) The underlying lesson is to be aware of bad leaders, especially during rough times as they can be plotting to make matters even worse. This is not a condemnation of any current leader of any country, but just a warning of what can happen.
 - c) Remember God is punishing the Israelites for turning their back on Him as a group. When one turns away from God, the bad news is people go from "bad to worse" and part of that "bad stuff" is thinking how I can rob others to make myself better off!
4. Verse 7: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The bodies you have thrown there are the meat and this city is the pot, but I will drive you out of it. ⁸ You fear the sword, and the sword is what I will bring against you, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁹ I will drive you out of the city and hand you over to foreigners and inflict punishment on you. ¹⁰ You will fall by the sword, and I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. ¹¹ This city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat in it; I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. ¹² And you will know that I am the LORD, for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you."
 - a) Remember these leaders in Jerusalem feared the Babylonians that are currently organized in a siege against around the city. Remember that Jerusalem had walls around it and a siege is in the works. A siege is when a foreign army would surround a city, and then "starve it out". That is what is going on here.
 - b) Verse 11 says, "This city will not be a pot for you". The idea is the leaders thought they were safe inside the walls of Jerusalem and they would survive this siege by just waiting it out and yes, taking advantage (robbing and killing) of others.
 - i) God is saying in effect to the Israelites, "even though you think you are safe here", I will drive you out of the city to be killed by the Babylonian army.
 - c) If all of this sounds cruel on God's part, remember the Israelites have been ignoring God's commands for obedience for centuries. God has "had enough" and it's punishment time!
 - d) Remember this is all a vision by Ezekiel. A question is, was Ezekiel literally speaking to them, or was it God just announcing this punishment?
 - i) I believe Ezekiel was to preach the truth to the Israelites living in Babylon about what was going to happen. When it happened exactly as Ezekiel said it would, then those who survive this should accept Ezekiel as a prophet.
 - e) So what is the application of all of this? For starters, it is best to learn from what God teaches us through by punishing others than to be personal examples of God's wrath!
 - i) The other point is that there is punishment for disobedience to God. In the New Testament, we are all saved by God's grace, but there are examples of punishment inflicted upon believers for failing to be a good witness to God. The classic example is the death of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. They lied to the church about how much money they were donating. (See Acts, Chapter 5, Verses 1-4.) For all I know, these two are in heaven. The point is God can "take away" our living witness for Him if we fail to be obedient to what God asks us to do.
5. Verse 13: Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell facedown and cried out in a loud voice, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?"
 - a) If you recall, there were 25 men named in the start of this chapter. There were two leaders given by name. One of them was Pelatiah. Apparently, as Ezekiel was prophesying, this man fell down dead.

- b) Remember that all of this is a vision by Ezekiel. Did Ezekiel see this man die as he was giving this speech? My personal view is while these 25 "leaders" were giving false predictions and plotting evil, God then somehow killed Pelatiah as a sign to Israel to not mess with the God of the bible. Again, we have no biblical cross-reference to this guy, so we can only take the text at face value here in this chapter.
 - c) This leads back to my last application regarding the couple that was killed in the New Testament. God can, at any time, take away our witness as he did here to this leader in the City of Jerusalem.
 - i) Does this mean anytime I sin, I can be struck dead? If that were true, no Christian would live very long. ☺ Is there a specific sin I can point to that would cause our death? No. The point is even as believers, we are to fear God's wrath and punishment and it is a motivation to keep us on our toes.
 - d) Verse 13 is Ezekiel wondering about a question: He understood that the land of Israel was a gift to the Jewish people. Ezekiel was wondering if this is the "end" of Israel as a nation. God spends most of the rest of this chapter answering that question.
 - i) God's "problem" is that He promises the land would be theirs. At the same time God demands obedience and can kick them out periods of time for disobedience.
 - ii) What about modern Israel? Could God kick them out again? It is a possibility. My personal view is God won't do that again, based on a prediction made in Isaiah 11, Verse 11. We're going to spend of a lot of time in later chapters dealing with the restoration of Israel, so for now, I'll drop that issue.
6. Verse 14: The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁵ "Son of man, your brothers--your brothers who are your blood relatives and the whole house of Israel--are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.' ¹⁶ "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.'
- a) These verses are God saying in effect He is not done with the Israelites as a nation. Verse 16 makes the key point that even though they will be scattered, yet for a little while (the 70 years of captivity as predicted in Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10), God is promising that He will be a "sanctuary to them". In other words, God will still be with the remnant of Israel.
 - b) What Ezekiel and the Israelites were worried about (rightfully so) was that God could only protect the country "if" they were united in the land of Israel. They worried that if they were no longer living in the land God would no longer protect them. Somehow, the Israelites associated the Promised Land as a requirement for God's protection.
 - i) God is answering that question by saying in effect, "I still have plans for Israel as a single nation and I will protect the "remnant" when they are in foreign lands.
 - c) What does that mean for you and me? It means God is with us wherever we go and we don't have to be confined to any particular piece of real estate. As long as we are trusting in God for our salvation, it doesn't matter where "here" is.
7. Verse 17: "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.'
- a) Here in my opinion, is the most important verse in the chapter and the most important verse in this lesson. It is memorization time. ☺
 - b) It is God saying in effect, "I will bring you back to this land from wherever you have been scattered and give you back the land of Israel".
 - i) Remember the nation of Israel has been collectively disobedient to God for many generations. God has had enough of their idolatry practices so that He is now saying in effect, "I've had enough of this, you guys are out of here".

- ii) Despite that anger over idolatry, God is saying, "I'm not done with Israel as a nation". Despite all of this horrible punishment described so far in Ezekiel, God still has future plans for the Israelites as a single nation.
 - iii) The lesson for us is, "God doesn't give up on us, even after we have given up on Him!" If we are one of "His", we can't lose that privilege. We may be punished for some disobedience, but one cannot be "unborn again" once one is "born again".
 - iv) God is telling Ezekiel that He still has future plans for Israel as a single nation despite all of this punishment. That is the point of this verse.
- 8. Verse 18: "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. ¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."
- a) These next three verses have a "double prophecy" fulfillment. There is a view in both Judaism and Christianity that prophets often speak in "double visions". This means that there is a short-term fulfillment of the prophecy that helps validate the speaker as a prophet of God as well as a long-term fulfillment that happens a long time later.
- b) The short-term fulfillment has to do with the 70-year captivity as predicted by Jeremiah.
 - i) After 70 years, only some Israelites choose to return. Many Jewish people got comfortable in the Babylonian empire and didn't want to return.
 - ii) After 70 years, those that did return were loyal to God. Those who returned engaged in the removal of physical idols from the land. Did Israel still have problems after this 70-year period? Yes, but they were never again guilty of corporately (i.e., collectively) turning from God to idols.
 - iii) However, even after 70 years, they never had self-rule again until 1946. When they returned, they were under the domain of the Persians, then the Greeks and then the Romans and one day (post Jesus) the Romans kicked them out of the land where the Israelites were scattered for many centuries until the 20th Century!
- c) As I have been implying, "modern Israel" is the long-term fulfillment of this prophecy.
 - i) Verse 19 says, "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them".
 - a) The "new heart" that is stated in Verse 19, refers a day when the Jewish people recognize their failure to see Jesus as the Messiah and they become collectively obedient to God.
 - b) How does Israel "change" to accept Jesus? Most suspect they will realize they failed to recognize Him as the Messiah. One "clue" is the story of Joseph in that when the brothers came to Joseph the second time Joseph revealed to them who he was and he forgave them of their sins. There are other predictions in the prophets that also imply this change. (Genesis 43).
 - ii) So how do you know this applies to Israel today and not say, "five hundred years from now? No one knows the exact day of Jesus return. I do believe, based on Isaiah 11:11, that when God gathered Israel the "second time" (which began in 1946), they, collectively the nation would know He is God. The implication is God would not break up the nation again. As to the length of time Israel exists as a nation until the return of Jesus, we can watch, but no one knows the date.
- d) Finishing up this section, Verse 21 is a reminder to those whose heart has completely turned against God, that eternal punishment waits. This means that one is not automatically saved because they were born a Jew in that time or "declare" they are Christian. Again, I don't believe one can lose their salvation if they are "born-again", but if one truly turns their hearts to God, then one's lifestyle will follow that belief. To those who have never turned to God in the first place, well, eternal punishment awaits them.

9. Verse 22: Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. ²³ The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. ²⁴ The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me, ²⁵ and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.
 - a) In these verses we mercifully finish this four-chapter vision. ☺
 - b) We get a final reference to the cherubim that "went where God went" and a final reference to the Spirit of God that carried Ezekiel from Babylon to Jerusalem.
 - c) Verse 23 talks a little more about "how" God left the Temple. If you recall from Chapter 10, God left the Temple area "in stages" as if to show God's regret of His necessity to leave.
 - i) The last step of "God leaving" was He paused "above the mountain east of it".
 - a) Directly to the east of the Temple Mount is the Mount of Olives. This is the spot where Jesus was crucified. It is a subtle hint that God will return in His presence to Israel at the same spot where God left.
 - b) Does this mean God had no involvement in the Nation of Israel between Ezekiel's time and the time of Jesus? No. It is just a subtle connection between God's presence physically leaving and coming back to the Nation of Israel as a whole group.
 - ii) How do religious Jews interpret this "leaving" method? It ties to their view that the Messiah will come across the "Mount of Olives" to enter through the East gate.
 - d) The verse ends with Ezekiel announcing the vision to the Jewish exiles living with Him. In other words, Ezekiel didn't keep this vision to himself, but shared it with others.
 - e) Everybody take a deep breath, pause for a second and then we'll begin the next chapter. There are 48 chapters in Ezekiel and I want to keep a good pace going.
10. Chapter 12, Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.
 - a) Here in Chapter 12, we have new instructions from God to Ezekiel.
 - b) God's point is that the Israelites have the ability to comprehend how He has been working in their midst, but due to their rebellion, they have turned their collective backs on Him. In other words, the Israelites have no excuse, as they should have known better.
 - c) One can find similar passages in the New Testament as well. Here is an example:
 - i) Jesus said, ""To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."" (Matthew 11:16-17). The point is the Israelites failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
 - ii) The point is, like here in Ezekiel, people have no excuse. It is not that people don't comprehend God's message, it is that their heart (not their head) won't accept it.
11. Verse 3: "Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they watch, set out and go from where you are to another place. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. ⁴ During the daytime, while they watch, bring out your belongings packed for exile. Then in the evening, while they are watching, go out like those who go into exile. ⁵ While they watch, dig through the wall and take your belongings out through it. ⁶ Put them on your shoulder as they are watching and carry them out at dusk. Cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel."
 - a) God's next set of instructions for Ezekiel was to act out "as if he was moving".
 - b) Remember that Ezekiel was a strange visual spectacle among the Jewish exiles. The Jews living around Ezekiel probably thought he was some "nut case" who wouldn't work for a living, but instead was acting out this strange vision of Jerusalem's destruction.
 - c) God is telling Ezekiel to act as if he was moving. He is to pack his belongings as if he is trying to escape Jerusalem under siege. He is told to demonstrate digging through a wall.

- d) Here is the interesting part of this prediction. This is exactly what the King of Judah did. The king knew the Babylonian army had surrounded Jerusalem and was guarding the gates. Therefore, the king, along with some leading men, made a hole in the wall that surrounded Jerusalem and tried to escape through that hole. The king was caught and we'll discuss that in a moment. (Source: 2nd Kings 25:4, which says, the king escaped via a "doorway" he made "between two walls".)
 - i) My point here is that if you have any doubts about how literal is this prediction, study how King Zedekiah of Judah literally followed Ezekiel's prediction.
 - e) The demonstration said Ezekiel is to cover his face as to not see the land. Remember this demonstration is all in front of a model of Jerusalem that Ezekiel had made. The idea is God is showing the Jews in exile that the Jews still living in Jerusalem should abandon any thought of winning and prepare for exile.
 - f) One commentator I read asked, "I wonder what Ezekiel's wife thought of all of this". We'll read latter Ezekiel is married. I wonder if she "wrote him off" through all of this! ☺
12. Verse 7: So I did as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my things packed for exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands. I took my belongings out at dusk, carrying them on my shoulders while they watched. ⁸ In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: ⁹ "Son of man, did not that rebellious house of Israel ask you, 'What are you doing?' ¹⁰ "Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and the whole house of Israel who are there.' ¹¹ Say to them, 'I am a sign to you.' "As I have done, so it will be done to them. They will go into exile as captives.
- a) Here we have Ezekiel explaining to the Jewish exiles what these signs mean. Ezekiel is describing how he would repeat this ritual every day as a sign to these exiles.
 - i) Notice how the King of Judah (Zedekiah) is called the "prince" in Verse 9. That is because his uncle, named Jehoiachin was really the king, but was placed in exile by the Babylonian Emperor, who put Zedekiah on the throne in his place.
 - ii) This also ties back to 2nd Kings 25, which describes Zedekiah trying to escape.
 - b) Ezekiel's vision took place before the siege of Jerusalem had started. Ezekiel was part of a group of 10,000 that took place in what we call "the second siege". Ezekiel is explaining that there was going to be a "third great siege" where Jerusalem would be destroyed.
 - c) So why tell the Jews already in captivity what is going to happen? Part of it is that false prophets were predicting their own captivity would end soon. The other part is to teach the Israelites of God's "complete judgment" coming soon. Ezekiel also is demonstrating that some will survive and the purpose is for God to clean the "Land" of idolatry.
 - d) If you know the history of Israel, they did come back to the land, but never again suffered from collective idolatry like this time period.
13. Verse 12: "The prince among them will put his things on his shoulder at dusk and leave, and a hole will be dug in the wall for him to go through. He will cover his face so that he cannot see the land. ¹³ I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die. ¹⁴ I will scatter to the winds all those around him--his staff and all his troops--and I will pursue them with drawn sword.
- a) The main idea is this "prince" (King Zedekiah) will die in his effort to escape. In 2nd Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52:7, it says the Babylonians caught the king as he was trying to escape. They killed Zedekiah's sons right in front of him. Then the Babylonians blinded the king and took him to Babylon as a prisoner for the rest of his life.
 - i) Compare that fact to the literal prediction made about the king in Verse 13 above!
 - b) The point of this prediction is that the escape was is a waste of effort, as Zedekiah died as he tries to escape. Again, it shows how literal was Ezekiel's prediction.
 - c) How do we know this was written prior to that event? In Ezekiel Chapter 8, he gives a date of his visions. Ezekiel Chapter 20 gives another date.

- i) The events of this chapter take place between those two dates. Historically we know when the king was caught and it was a latter date than the Chapter 20 date.
 - d) Imagine the Israelites watching Ezekiel's demonstration about the destruction of Jerusalem. A question they might ask is, "What will happen to our king and leaders?" God is saying the leader of the city will die and his staff support and troop support will also die. In other words, if the Israelites were hoping the leaders of Jerusalem would save their city, the answer is no and they will die trying to escape the city. The text and history shows the leaders will try to escape through a hole in the city wall and be caught.
 - e) Let me add some more verses, and then I'll give some modern applications.
14. Verse 15: "They will know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. ¹⁶ But I will spare a few of them from the sword, famine and plague, so that in the nations where they go they may acknowledge all their detestable practices. Then they will know that I am the LORD."
- a) We are now back to the often used phrase in Ezekiel of, "Then they will know that I am the LORD". The point is once Jerusalem is destroyed and those Israelites that survive will be scattered around the area, then and only then will the Israelites realize that "God is in charge whether they (or us) acknowledge His existence or not."
 - b) The main point is God is going to judging the Israelites for their collective sin of idolatry. Most will die (remember Ezekiel's hair being divided into three groups) but the survivals will realize that God did this and the Nation of Israel deserved this punishment. The sad point is that it is going to take "all of this" for the Israelites to realize God is in charge.
 - c) The lesson for us is to not let it get "this bad" before we turn back to God. Notice over the past few lessons that God worked in stages with the Nation of Israel trying to get them to repent. I find God works in our life in stages too. He will often give us some sort of sign to accomplish something. If we fail, another sign will come. God doesn't give up on us, but will often make things worse and worse just to get our attention.
 - d) Does this mean God is going to destroy our town to get our attention? A point of this lesson is He can, but doesn't work that way today as believers are rarely all gathered in one place. God made it clear to Abraham that He would not destroy a place if there were 10 "righteous" people in that town. I suspect that number would go down to even "one" righteous person if one were there! (Source Genesis 18:32).
 - e) My point is God does things to get our attention. It is not usually direct dialogue, but events that happen that require us to change our behavior in some way or fashion. If we are ignoring God's point, He does not give up on us and usually "turns up the heat" to get us in the direction He wants for our lives.
 - f) Meanwhile, Ezekiel is still lecturing the Jewish people living in Babylon! ☺
15. Verse 17: The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸ "Son of man, tremble as you eat your food, and shudder in fear as you drink your water. ¹⁹ Say to the people of the land: `This is what the Sovereign LORD says about those living in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel: They will eat their food in anxiety and drink their water in despair, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence of all who live there. ²⁰ The inhabited towns will be laid waste and the land will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' "
- a) In the earlier verses, we had a prediction about the current king, named Zedekiah. The verses literally describe how the king (and his guards) die, trying to escape.
 - b) The next question would be, "Well, what about everyone else in Jerusalem?" That is what this paragraph is describing. Ezekiel was to demonstrate "eating food in anxiety and drinking water in despair". Again, the cross reference, describing the literal siege is in Jeremiah 52:6 and 2nd Kings 25:1-4. In Verse 3 of 2nd Kings 25, it says the siege lasted for roughly two years and then the people ran out of food.
 - c) Verse 19 also describes violence as people were killing each other to survive.
 - d) Verse 20 again repeats the line: "Then you will know that I am the LORD".

- e) Were the residents of Jerusalem blaming God for their starvation? They probably believed God let them down. At the same time, they refused to give up their idol worship based on the text of the last few chapters. The Jewish people wanted God's protection, but refused to honor Him alone as God. There is a big lesson for us in that fact!
16. Verse 21: The word of the LORD came to me: ²² "Son of man, what is this proverb you have in the land of Israel: 'The days go by and every vision comes to nothing'? ²³ Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to put an end to this proverb, and they will no longer quote it in Israel.' Say to them, 'The days are near when every vision will be fulfilled. ²⁴ For there will be no more false visions or flattering divinations among the people of Israel. ²⁵ But I the LORD will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay. For in your days, you rebellious house, I will fulfill whatever I say, declares the Sovereign LORD.' "
- a) One of the ways false prophets would make themselves popular would be to say things people want to hear as opposed to teaching God's truth. What the false prophets were saying here is in effect, "Ignore Ezekiel, he is talking about some day in the far distant future about Jerusalem being destroyed. It will never happen in our lifetime".
- b) The false proverb being taught was "The days go by and every vision comes to nothing?" (Verse 22). Ezekiel answers the false prophets with, "Just you watch everyone, God's planned destruction is not off in the future, but is going to happen now!"
- c) These verses also promise no more "false visions or flattering divinations".
- i) Does that mean there were no more false prophets after this? I would argue no. This is a double meaning: 1) Since the land of Israel would soon be empty, there would be no more false prophets in the land. 2) It also speaks of a future day when the Messiah will rule from Israel and there will be no false prophets.
17. Verse 26: The word of the LORD came to me: ²⁷ "Son of man, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies about the distant future.' ²⁸ "Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign LORD.' "
- a) I have to admit, when I think of "doom and gloom" predictions, I always picture a man wearing a "sandwich" board around his neck that says, "The end is near". Most of us who have lived a while, have seen something like this. We see that and think, "Well, the end will come one day, but it is not soon." I suspect that is what the Israelites thought of prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel as they preached the end is near.
- b) Ezekiel and Jeremiah were running around saying in effect, "No, this is it".
- c) OK, so how do we know when "this is it"? We don't know in the sense that no one knows the day and hour of Jesus return. On the other hand, we never know when our lives are going to end. If God is going to judge us based on our behavior here on earth, then "the end is always near" in that our lives are relatively short!
18. Chapter 13, Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of the LORD! ³ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!'
- a) The focus on Chapter 13 is specifically on false prophets. While Jeremiah was preaching in Israel (at the same time as Ezekiel was preaching in Babylon), there were also a bunch of false prophets claiming to be speaking for God. I bet they would be preaching as loud as the true prophets and even performing visual signs to perform their visions.
- b) In other words, the average Israelite would not know who to believe just by looking at false prophets and looking at true prophets. All through history, Satan has always been good at creating substitutes that look like the real thing.
- i) The lesson for us is we have to discern the message of those preaching and see if it matches to what we know what is the word of God.

- c) This leads us back to the false prophets spoken of here in Chapter 13.
 - i) Notice in Verse 2, the phrase, "Hear the word of the LORD". The point is the false prophets are making that claim, as well as the true prophets. God responds to their claims of "Speaking in His name" by saying in Verse 3 "(you) see nothing!"
 - ii) An underlying point is God is "extra tough" on those who claim they are speaking in His name, but are not. This principal is taught in the New Testament as well. James says that teachers will receive a stricter judgment (James 3:1). The point is if one is claiming to be speaking for God, one better make sure they have their facts right. Does that scare me? All the time. Does this mean God expects me to be perfect in every opinion? No, but it does mean I am to do my homework to best support my views as well as possible.
19. Verse 4: Your prophets, O Israel, are like jackals among ruins. ⁵ You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the LORD. ⁶ Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. They say, "The LORD declares," when the LORD has not sent them; yet they expect their words to be fulfilled. ⁷ Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, "The LORD declares," though I have not spoken?
- a) In this chapter, the council of false prophets is compared to "bad wall construction".
 - i) This is an illustration and not meant to be taken literally. It is not a call to literally build or tear down walls, but the point is their opinions will fall like a bad wall. God is saying Israel is falling apart like a bad wall for their collective disobedience and you false prophets are not helping matters!
 - b) Do I believe these false prophets have really seen some sort of vision(s)? Yes. It may be their imagination or it may be demonically inspired. With that said, how does one tell a true vision of God from a false one? Again, one compares it to scripture.
 - i) To use a simple example, if a voice in your head tells you to steal something, you know it is not the voice of God as it goes against the 10 commandments.
 - ii) If a voice in your head says that Jesus is coming back this week, know that this vision is not of God. Only God the Father knows the time frame of the "end" and no human is given that knowledge. (See Matthew 24:36 on that point.)
 - c) I know of people who have walked away from Christianity because they start focusing on prophecy over the word of God. Some of their predictions came true and some did not. When some of their predictions fail to happen, they walked away from God. In other words, the danger is to trust in miracles over what the Word of God says!
 - d) All of this leads back to these verses: The emphasis is on speaking using the term, "The Lord has spoken" when he has not spoken to these false teachers.
 - i) The lesson for us is that we should not believe everyone who claims they are speaking for God even if they use such language as "The Lord has spoken".
 - ii) The key is to hear what they say and compare it against God's spoken word.
20. Verse 8: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because of your false words and lying visions, I am against you, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁹ My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of my people or be listed in the records of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.
- a) These verses continue to argue that the false prophets are in "big, eternal trouble".
 - b) Verse 9 says, "(The false prophets will not be) listed in the records of the house of Israel".
 - i) In Jerusalem, there were detailed records of family genealogies. (We know that in 70 AD, when the second temple was destroyed, all those records were lost in a fire.) The point here is that the false prophet's names will not be listed among the family records. The idea is a sign of eternal condemnation.

- ii) The underlying point is that the Israelites are to have no dealings with such people and they are eternally damned for falsely speaking in God's name.
 - c) This leads back to how we should deal with false prophets. The danger is someone who is claiming to be a prophet of God, but then consistently speaks against the word of God. The point is such people are to be avoided.
 - i) It is one thing for a Christian preacher to lean too heavily on one point of scripture over another especially if one is teaching a certain point. It is quite another to actually deny or ignore what the bible teaches. That is the danger to be avoided.
21. Verse 10: " `Because they lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash, ¹¹ therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth. ¹² When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, "Where is the whitewash you covered it with?"
- a) Earlier in this chapter, there was a reference to "bad wall construction". God was comparing the advice and predictions of these false prophets to a badly built wall. That analogy continues in these three verses.
 - i) Imagine building a bad wall, and then covering it with paint so it looks good on the outside. When the first good rainstorm comes, it will still fall down.
 - b) Now let's review a little of the past few chapters:
 - i) Here is Ezekiel predicting the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel is saying the Babylonian army will succeed in conquering Jerusalem and most people will be killed. The sin of the Israelites was idolatry. The Babylonians were God's instruments to carry out His judgment. Further, Jeremiah was preaching a similar message to those living in Jerusalem at this time.
 - ii) Now here are these false prophets probably saying, "The Babylonians will lose. God will wipe them out or they will go home in defeat." In other words, these false prophets were (figuratively speaking) building a bad wall of advice.
 - c) God is telling these false prophets, "When this wall of bad advice collapses, what do you think will happen to you both immediately and eternally?" In other words, when the Babylonian army wins, people will see you false prophets were wrong.
22. Verse 13: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury. ¹⁴ I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you will be destroyed in it; and you will know that I am the LORD. ¹⁵ So I will spend my wrath against the wall and against those who covered it with whitewash. I will say to you, "The wall is gone and so are those who whitewashed it, ¹⁶ those prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her when there was no peace, declares the Sovereign LORD." '
- a) This paragraph is pretty easy to summarize. It is saying God is going to level Jerusalem and it is going to prove to the survivors how bad this false advice was. Further, God is saying these false prophets will be killed when Jerusalem is destroyed. Period!
 - b) The underlying point is God is extra tough on those who claim they are speaking in His name but are not. If anyone reading this lesson is thinking they would like to be a prophet of God, consider the consequence of being wrong.
 - c) By the way, a bible teacher is technically different from a professional "prophet". A bible teacher is one who says, "The bible is saying this or that will happen one day". A false prophet is one relying on visions as opposed to what God is saying to people.
 - d) What about people who get visions today? I do believe some people have a gift for seeing things that happen in the future. The danger is trusting in those visions especially if they are contradictory to what God's word says!

23. Verse 17: "Now, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination. Prophesy against them¹⁸ and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the women who sew magic charms on all their wrists and make veils of various lengths for their heads in order to ensnare people. Will you ensnare the lives of my people but preserve your own?'¹⁹ You have profaned me among my people for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread. By lying to my people, who listen to lies, you have killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live.
- a) God is not through with false prophets yet. Here, God is specifically picking on a group of women who dress up in "prophet gear" and ask to get paid in bread for their service of predicting the future when God has never spoken to them!
 - b) In most communities in the world today, there are people who claim they have magical powers to predict the future. They too, dress up in special "garb". For a fee, they will tell you things of the future. Sometimes such people are complete scam artists, but I'm also convinced some of them have demonic powers. If demons have the power to watch our lives, then they could share that knowledge with such false prophets. Such advice could be a mixture of truth combined with bad advice that goes against God. The point? It is wrong for Christians to even associate with such people.
 - c) Getting back to the verses, God is saying that because of these people, or because of their bad advice, they have "Killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live". In other words, some people who were still loyal to God were killed because of their bad advice and some lived that should have been killed".
 - i) Does this mean God wants us to kill those who give bad advice? No. It simply means we are not to listen to such people and as best as possible, keep them out of our Christian assemblies unless they are willing to change their ways! My "exception clause" would be if such people were causing the harm of innocent people, then at the least, they should be in jail.
24. Verse 20: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against your magic charms with which you ensnare people like birds and I will tear them from your arms; I will set free the people that you ensnare like birds.²¹ I will tear off your veils and save my people from your hands, and they will no longer fall prey to your power. Then you will know that I am the LORD.²² Because you disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no grief, and because you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save their lives,²³ therefore you will no longer see false visions or practice divination. I will save my people from your hands. And then you will know that I am the LORD.' "
- a) Let's step back and remember what Ezekiel is doing: He is preaching out loud to Jewish people living in Babylon. Yes, he is describing judgment in Jerusalem, but I believe the advice is to the Jews in Babylon as well, as well as all people who fear God. The true message is such false people should not be allowed in our assemblies and know that God has eternal punishment planned for such people!
 - b) Notice Verse 23 says, "I will save my people from your hands". In other words, God will protect us from such false prophets. Are you worried whether or not a certain person is a false prophet? Have confidence God will take care of that.
 - i) Jesus said you could tell what kind of tree one is staring at by the fruit on its branches. Jesus point is that you can tell true prophets (and teachers) by what they say or don't say. (See Matthew 7:17-20, or Luke 6:43-44 on this point.)
25. To sum up the whole chapter, God is teaching us that we are to be on the look out for false prophets. Further, God will expose those who are trying to harm His people. What does that mean today? It means such false teaches rarely if ever keep their ministries in tact for a long time, as God has no tolerance for such false teachers.

- a) This lesson gives some strong contrasts between true prophets of God and what they preach versus false prophets and what they teach.
 - i) Both true and false prophets may declare, "I am speaking in God's name."
 - ii) Both true and false prophets may use visual demonstrations to make a point.
 - iii) In other words, those who preach what is false bear a strong physical resemblance to those who preach what is true. The only way to tell the difference is to listen to what both are saying and compare it to what God teaches us.
 - iv) A fruit tree is obvious as to what type of tree it is, once you examine it closely. The same can be said of a false preacher, teacher or prophet. One should not judge a messenger by how they dress or what they do, but by the words they preach.
- 26. OK, another heavy message has come and gone. ☺ I agree that this is tough stuff. Let's face it, teaching on the love of Jesus is much easier than teaching on God's punishment and justice. Unfortunately, some people need to hear "the dark stuff" to get them in the right direction. God's justice is just as much a reality as His grace. Both need to be taught and preached. Hopefully, such messages will drive us to His grace and get us to live for Him.
- 27. Let's pray: Father, give us the wisdom to discern between what is true and what is false about this world. There are times in our lives when we struggle in our faith. Give us the wisdom to stay on the right course and go in the right direction. Help us to stay close to You, and at the same time be witnesses to a dying world, that God's justice will come one day, to those who will not turn to Him, with their lives. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.