



**Class 5: Ezekiel Chapters 6 and 7 –
Imminent Doom**

PURPOSE: To learn the plans of God’s judgment upon Israel, and what it tells us about His wrath and mercy. To apply these truths to our lives.

OUTLINE

A. Judgment Upon The High Places Of Idolatry – Chapter 6:1-7

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says ... I will destroy your high places. Your altars will be demolished and your incense altars will be smashed, and I will slay your people in front of your idols.” – 6:3

B. Promise Of A Remnant – Chapter 6:8-10

“But I will spare some ... Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember Me ...” – 6:8-9

C. That They Will Know I Am The Lord – Chapter 11-14

“And they will know that I am the Lord ...” – 6:10, 13, 14; 7:4, 27

D. The End Has Come – Chapter 7:1-13

“The end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. The end is now upon you and I will unleash my anger against you.” – 7:2-3, 6. “The time has come, the day has arrived.” – 7:12

E. The Survivors’ Response – Chapter 7:14-23

“They will put on sackcloth and be clothed with terror.” – 7:18

“The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with despair, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble.” – 7:27

COMMENTARY – God’s Wrath

1. Holiness and evil are mutually and absolutely antagonistic; by the very nature of holiness and evil, there can be no compromise between them.

God’s wrath is His “holy reaction to evil” (John Stott), a vehement repulsion and destruction of all that is antagonistic to Him and abhorrent to His nature.

Sin is a direct provocation and personal confrontation with God; the sinner is disobeying God and rebelling against Him. The sinner is usurping God’s authority and is even trying to be like Him (Genesis 3:4-5). God must respond to the sinner’s defiance, and His response is judgment and wrath.

2. God’s wrath is a responsive attribute. He is never wrathful or angry for no reason; His wrath is only stirred into action when provoked by wickedness or sin. In a sense, God’s wrath is a defense; evil is “an attack on God” (T. F. Torrance), and God must necessarily respond. Evil men bring God’s wrath upon themselves by antagonizing and opposing Him (Jeremiah 4:18 and 32:26-35, Ezekiel 14:23).

- God’s wrath responds to disobedience – Ephesians 5:6.
- God’s anger responds to rebellion and hardness of heart – Hebrews 3:7-11.
- Jesus’ anger responds to stubborn hearts – Mark 3:5.
- God’s wrath responds to the sins of our worldly nature – Colossians 3:5-6.

3. God does not take pleasure in His anger; in fact, it grieves Him to punish even the wicked.

“For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.” – Lamentations 3:33

“As surely as I live,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.’” – Ezekiel 33:11 (also 18: 23, 32)

“He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” – 2 Peter 3:9

4. God’s Integrity

God is a God of law and order. His written law is an expression of His perfect moral character and sovereign will (Romans 7:12), which theologians call “the law of His divine Being.”

To maintain His integrity and be true to His word, God must maintain discipline and order in the universe. If God’s righteousness and judgment fail, then God fails; and if God fails, then even His love and grace fail.

5. Mankind’s Integrity

Not only is the execution of God’s wrath necessary to honor His integrity, it is necessary to honor the integrity of mankind. God has endowed each person with moral responsibility and a free will to exercise that responsibility. God respects the moral decision of each person. To fail to punish the sins of men is to fail to honor the very characteristic which makes people higher than the animals – the authority and privilege of being morally responsible.

“G. K. Chesterton once remarked that hell is a monument to human freedom, and, we might add, human dignity. Hell is God’s tribute to the freedom He gave each of us to choose whom we would serve; it is a recognition that our decisions have a significance that extends far down into the reaches of foreverness.” – James W. Sire

6. God’s Warnings

God’s wrath is never out of control, but is always exercised justly (Romans 3:5-6), and after much patience (Romans 9:22). It is never petty, irrational or unwarranted; furthermore, it is always preceded by warnings.

Leviticus 26:14-33 is a good example of God’s warnings. Here God is warning the Israelites about the consequences of rebellion and disobedience. He describes the successive steps He will take if they persist in their sin. First He will set His face against them (v. 16-17). If that doesn’t work, He will punish them for their sins (v. 18-20). If they still refuse to listen, He will multiply their afflictions (v. 21-22). Next, He tells them that their hostility to Him will be matched by His hostility, and He “will bring the sword” against them (v. 23-26). (Note that God here is making the point that sin and holiness cannot co-exist – they are inherently hostile to one another.) Finally, if in spite of all this they persist in their sin, God will become angry. He will ruin their cities, lay waste to the land, and scatter the people, effectively destroying the very nation He had created for Himself (v. 27-33). The points to see are: (1) God first warns the people very clearly against sin; (2) His punishment is a response to provocation; (3) it is always measured and controlled; (4) He is brought to anger only as a last resort, which (5) forces Him to take drastic measures because He cannot allow sin and rebellion against Him to continue indefinitely.

7. God has already poured out His wrath upon Jesus, who was innocent and did not deserve to be punished. God does not punish anyone more than He has already punished His divine Son whom He loves (Mark 15:34). No one feels the pain and grief of God’s wrath more than God Himself (Genesis 6:6).

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.”

– 2 Corinthians 5:21

“It is important to note that God does not deal with evil impersonally ... Rather does He penetrate ... personally into its ultimate stronghold in evil, sin and death, and absorbs its attack upon Himself in order to vanquish it from within through His own holy love. That is what He does in Jesus Christ in identifying Himself with His human creatures, ... making Himself one with them in their desperate godlessness and inextricable misery, even in their lostness and damnation, and takes it all upon Himself in order to overcome evil and destroy it from within ... It is that self-abnegating compassionate act of God’s transcendent love in delivering up His beloved Son for us all, and in suffering His death, that His fathomless passion is revealed, the pain of which is as infinite as His love. ... What Christ felt, did and suffered in himself in his body and soul for our forgiveness was felt, done and suffered by God in his innermost Being for our sake. ... [T]he fearful pain of the Cross and self-sacrifice of the Son goes back to the pain in the heart of the Father that infinitely exceeds all that we could ever conceive.” – Thomas F. Torrance

APPLICATION

Heed God’s warnings. Hebrews 10:30-31; 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Cor. 5:10.