

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 11:1-25

Topic

The Lord shares His desire to give believers the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

Title

“Total Exchange Of The Heart”

- “The Zionists want to become a state. But there is no place for such a state in the Arab world.”
- “There are 30 million Arabs on one side and about 600,000 Jews on the other. Why don’t you face up to the realities?”
- “To support a Jewish state in Palestine would be to antagonize the Arab world and create serious difficulties for the United States in its relations with the Arabs.”

Those strong anti-Israel statehood comments were uttered by, respectively, Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett, Defense Secretary James Forrestal, and Loy Henderson, Director of the State Department’s Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs.

I’d be surprised if you recognized the names. They served President Harry S. Truman in the late 1940s.

The advice of his closest advisors was to *not* recognize the statehood of Israel.

The president went against the advice of his advisors. On May 14, 1948, *just 11 minutes after they declared independence*, Truman made the United States the first country to recognize the modern state of Israel.

"I had faith in Israel before it was established, I have faith in it now," said Truman. "I believe it has a glorious future before it - not just another sovereign nation, but as an embodiment of the great ideals of our civilization."

The 6th century Jerusalem Jews in our chapter followed the bad advice of advisors.

Adopting a well-known Jewish adage, they assured the citizens "This *city is* the caldron, and we *are* the meat."

The LORD responded, "These *are* the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in this city..." Their bad advice would get thousands of Jews killed.

As we explore what was happening in 6th century Jerusalem & Judah we will consider the effect that advice from advisors can have on us - for better or for worse.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Proceed With Caution When You Receive Advice From Advisors**, and **#2 Proceed With Comfort When You Receive Advice From Your Counselor**.

#1 - Proceed With Caution When You Receive Advice From Advisors (v1-12)

Twenty-five elders were giving terrible, horrible, no good, very bad advice to the citizens in Jerusalem.

King Nebuchadnezzar had twice invaded Judah, carrying off Jews to be exiled in Babylon. God's prophet in Jerusalem, Jeremiah, was insisting that they submit to Babylon. The elders refused to consider it. They argued that God would never allow Jerusalem to be defeated & the Temple destroyed. He would... It was.

Ezekiel had been taken captive and brought to Babylon in the second of the three invasions. He was the major prophet to the Jews exiled there. We're in the middle of a vision the LORD gave him.

Ezk 11:1 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the East Gate of the LORD's house **[We've seen before that quite often God's prophets were physically**

transported from one geographical location to another by the Holy Spirit; it was expected, even] which faces eastward; and there at the door of the gate were twenty-five men **[These guys are a second group of twenty-five, not the priests we saw previously]** among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

Ezk 11:2 And He said to me: "Son of man, these *are* the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in this city,

Ezk 11:3 who say, '*The time is not near to build houses; this city is the caldron, and we are the meat.*'

Both Jeremiah & Ezekiel were predicting a long captivity. In fact it would last 70yrs. These advisors brushed it off, giving a false hope that "*The time is not near to build houses*" in Babylon.

'Caldron & meat' was an adage employed when you wanted to emphasize that no matter the circumstances, you'd get through it safely. It's a little like "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

The "caldron" was Jerusalem. The "meat" was the Jews. As long as you were in the city, you'd feel the heat but remain protected.

Ezk 11:4 Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man!"

Ezk 11:5 Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me, "Speak! **[You may recall that Ezekiel was a voluntary mute for quite a while. He spoke only when the LORD gave him permission]** 'Thus says the LORD: "Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind.

Ezk 11:6 You have multiplied your slain in this city, and you have filled its streets with the slain."

The advice of these men would result in multitudes being "slain in" Jerusalem.

Bad advice can be lethal.

We can substitute the word "counsel" for advice. Bad counsel can cause a great deal of spiritual harm. I've told the sad story of a Christian woman I visited in the Mental Health ward of San Bernardino Community Hospital. She was going through a financial hardship. She approached her church leaders. They told her she was in sin for asking. If she had faith, she would not be in the spot she was in. She attempted suicide.

Ezk 11:7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Your slain whom you have laid in its midst, they *are* the meat, and this *city is* the caldron; but I shall bring you out of the midst of it.

The LORD borrowed their illustration but gave it a different twist. Jerusalem was the "caldron," alright, but not to keep them safe. Quite the opposite: Many in the city would die horrible deaths, as if they were dead meat boiling in the caldron.

Ezk 11:8 You have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you," says the Lord GOD.

Ezk 11:9 "And I will bring you out of its midst, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and execute judgments on you.

Ezk 11:10 You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Ezk 11:11 This *city* shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the meat in its midst. I will judge you at the border of Israel.

The leaders insisted everything would be OK. But when the going got tough, they got going by trying to leave Judah. They killed by the sword.

Ezk 11:12 And you shall know that I *am* the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which *are* all around you." ' "

God's desire is that the Jews "know that [He] is the LORD." Never forget when reading the Bible a bedrock principle that God is not willing that any should perish, but all come to eternal life. The LORD's discipline would prove His love for the Jews, and preserve them to complete their abandoned mission of being a blessing to every nation, tribe, people, and tongue on earth.

Believers should find the "customs of the Gentiles" *appalling* rather than *appealing*. Why don't we?

Obviously there is the pull of sin upon our unredeemed physical bodies. A root cause we need to explore more-and-more is the fact that *most believers do not enjoy their relationship with Jesus*.

- Believers who are legalists do not enjoy Jesus. A legalist believes that their good works and obedience to God affects their salvation. Legalism focuses on God's laws more than relationship with God. It keeps external laws without a truly

submitted heart. And legalism adds human rules to divine laws and treats them as divine.

- Believers who are trying hard to live the Christian life in their own energy, rather than the enabling of the Holy Spirit, are not enjoying the Lord. My constant example of this is the plethora of self-help, how to live the Christian life books & programs. *Promise Keepers, The Purpose Driven Life, The Prayer of Jabez*, to name a few.

The first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, **and to enjoy Him forever.**"

Enjoying God is a command, not an optional extra: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Even in the worst of times.

After the one ring had been cast into the fires of Mount Doom Frodo & Sam found themselves on a boulder that was floating on hot lava. Frodo said to Sam, "I'm glad to be with you, Samwise Gamgee, here at the end of all things." It was tender and moving and loving and victorious.

"I'm glad to be with You, Jesus, here in my distress...or desertion... or diagnosis... In my disease... In the death or deaths of my loved ones. After all, nothing can separate me from Your love. In my human grief I suffer but not as those who have not the hope of Heaven. Contrary to how I may feel, You can never leave me or forsake me."

#2 - Proceed With Comfort When You Receive Advice From Your Counselor (v13-25)

Jesus said that, after His departure, "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

"Helper" can be translated "Counselor," or "Comforter," or "Advocate." He is *with* you, and He is *in* you. We talk about Him coming upon you, filling you, and that's OK as long as we remember that He is God, a Person, *not* a force or a power. He doesn't come & go.

Ezk 11:13 Now it happened, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried with a loud voice, and said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Will You make a complete end of the remnant of Israel?"

Fausett's Bible Dictionary offers this explanation of Pelatiah's sudden death: "Like Ananias, [he was] stricken dead [as] an earnest of the destruction of the rest."

Ezekiel responded to Pelatiah's death by having a moment in which his faith wavered. Would there always be a remnant?

Of course there would! Israel must exist or God's program of redeeming the human race and His creation would fail.

Ezk 11:14 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezk 11:15 "Son of man, your brethren, your relatives, your countrymen, and all the house of Israel in its entirety, *are* those about whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Get far away from the LORD; this land has been given to us as a possession.'

Ezk 11:16 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone."'

The 25 & others in Jerusalem, because they were not taken into captivity, felt themselves superior to the 'suckers & losers' who had been taken. But God would exit the Temple, no longer making His presence known there. Meanwhile He would be what He calls "a little Sanctuary" for those He scattered all over the world. In other words, the exiles would enjoy a presence of God at least preserving them that those in Jerusalem would not.

Ezk 11:17 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."'

Ezk 11:18 And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there.

This prophecy was partially fulfilled after the 70yr Babylonian captivity. Ezra, then Nehemiah, return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, the walls, and the city.

The ultimate fulfillment is currently underway. Jews are back in their land and have been returning since 1948. They have a name for it - "Aliyah." The word "aliyah" is Hebrew for *ascent* or *rise*. Jerusalem is built on a hill, to get there you must ascend & rise.

New immigrants to Israel are called *olim*. Nearly 30,000 *olim* have 'made aliyah' **since the current conflict began.**

Ezk 11:19 Then I will give them one heart **[The NT writers refer to this as being baptized into the Body of Jesus, being made one with every person who shares God the Holy Spirit's indwelling]** and I will put a new spirit within them **[the "new spirit" is God the Holy Spirit]** and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh. **[Normally the word "flesh" indicates our unredeemed physical body with its propensity to sin. Here it simply refers to life. We are alive and functioning on some level even though born with a stone heart - a heart dead to God. When saved, God gives you a heart appropriate to your new life].**

Ezk 11:20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

This is a promise of the literal, future one-thousand year Kingdom of God on Earth. At its start, **all** mortal Israelites who survive the Tribulation will be saved. (As well, all Gentile believers who survive). The Lord will give them, as promised, the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

When the 1st century Jews said "No" to Jesus, God hit 'pause' on establishing the one-thousand year Kingdom on earth. We live in the pause. When a person believes God and is saved, he or she is an early recipient of the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary, "The inauguration of the New Covenant, which includes this permanent indwelling¹, began with the death of Christ², but the ultimate fulfillment awaits the national regathering of Israel. The church today is participating in the spiritual (not the physical) benefits of the covenant through its association with Jesus."

Ezk 11:21 *But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads,"* says the Lord GOD.

You are born with a fatal heart disease, Stony Heart. The only remedy is to call upon the Lord to be saved. If you, in the end, stand before God unsaved, you are asking Him to let you enter Heaven on the basis of your "deeds." "Recompense" means *punish*. If you do not have Jesus as your Savior, your deeds are insufficient, and you must be punished. Jesus took upon Himself the punishment you deserve.

¹ Jeremiah 31:31-34

² Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-13; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:14-16; Hebrews 12:24

Ezk 11:22 So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them.

Ezk 11:23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.

A major theme in this vision was the departure from the Temple the glory of the LORD, Shekinah - the cloud that manifested His presence among His people. He left ahead of the Temple's destruction.

Ezk 11:24 Then the Spirit took me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to those in captivity. And the vision that I had seen went up from me.

Ezk 11:25 So I spoke to those in captivity of all the things the LORD had shown me.

Ezekiel returned to "Chaldea" (Babylon), and shared what the LORD had shown him with his fellow exiles. They were his mission.

Darrell Mansfield was a pioneer of Christian rock. His song, *Bible Study*, is fascinating. A teenager is talking to his friends and at one point he says, "Now the house is empty and my folks are gone."

What do they decide to do? "Hey! Let's have a Bible Study!"

When you are in love, where do you want to be? You want to be with the person you love. You're sick over being parted.

This **does not** mean you can never go anywhere or do anything that isn't overtly Christian. It **does** mean that wherever you go, whatever you do, you can experience the love, joy, hope, and peace of God.

"Jesus, I'm glad you are here with me"