

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 37

Ezekiel 24

INTRODUCTION: For 490 years the Israelites refused to obey the Sabbath. This and other sins caused the judgment of God to fall upon them. The nation had been divided into the North and the South. Famine, war, and pestilence had come to them. They were taken by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, into captivity for 70 years. They had not observed the Sabbath for 490 years, so God got all of their Sabbaths at the same time. Nebuchadnezzar, however, did not take all of the Jews into captivity. There were three divisions of Jewish people—the very rich, the very poor, and the craftsmen or the middle class. Nebuchadnezzar took the very rich because they could be of benefit to him. He took the middle class or the craftsmen into captivity because they could also be an asset; however, he left the very poor in the land of Palestine.

God did not want His people to be without a prophet, so He gave His people in captivity two prophets—Ezekiel and Daniel. He gave the poor people in the land one prophet—Jeremiah. There are those who believe that Daniel was given to the very rich and Ezekiel was given to the middle class or the craftsmen. Whether this be true or not, Ezekiel and Daniel were given to the people of God while they were in captivity.

The 24th chapter of Ezekiel shows the tragedy of Ezekiel's life. Let us notice it for the lesson this week.

- I. EZEKIEL'S CALL TO BE A WATCHMAN ON THE WALL. In Ezekiel 3:17-21 he received that commission. He was to be a watchman on the wall. The cities in the Middle East were protected by giant walls. There were gates in these walls. The broad, massive walls were used for protection against the enemy. Chariots could be driven on top of many of these walls. Guards would walk on top of these walls so they could look for miles to see an enemy that might be approaching. Their job was to warn the people of the approaching enemy. This was Ezekiel's job spiritually. He was to warn God's people of the approaching enemy.

God told him that he was to warn the people. If he saw their sins and warned them, and yet they died in their sins, their blood would not be required at his hands. If he saw their sins and did not warn them, their blood would be required at his hands.

Ezekiel went forth to proclaim the message. He warned the people and cried aloud concerning sin and the judgment of God.

- II. EZEKIEL'S PREPARATION.
 1. He was first charged to eat the roll. Ezekiel 2:8-10; 3:1-3. This is symbolic of the fact that the Christian who is going to do God's will must feast upon the Word of God.
 2. He was to go for seven days and sit with the people and feel their pain. Ezekiel 3:15. The Bible says he went by the river and sat for seven days where they sat; he cried with them, suffered with them, hungered with them, and was homesick with them. This is a vital part of anyone's preparation for service for God. We must know the people, feel with the people, suffer with them, and know their feelings.
 3. He was filled with the Spirit of God. Ezekiel 3:24.
 4. With this preparation Ezekiel became a watchman on the wall, warning the people of their sins. He was faithful to the task.
- III. THE DEATH OF HIS CHILD. Many Bible students agree that Ezekiel and his wife had a baby who died. In spite of this, Ezekiel remained faithful and loyal to his call. He did not turn back. He continued warning the people of their sins. He did not blame God. He continued to do God's will.

Let nothing keep us from doing the will of God. Regardless of the adversity, regardless of the persecution and criticism, let us stay in the will of God, never turning back.

IV. THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE. This brings us to Ezekiel 24. While Ezekiel stood on the street corner proclaiming the message, staying faithful to his calling, he had one great comfort—a wife who was the desire of his eyes! (Ezekiel 24:16.) However, he lost this source of comfort.

1. His wife died with a stroke. Ezekiel 24:16.
2. The custom was to have a time of mourning. Ezekiel 24:17. The general custom was for a person to cover his lips, cover his head, take off his shoes, and eat the bread of men which was brought by the neighbors, and spend a season in mourning.
3. Ezekiel made the decision, however, to keep on serving God. Ezekiel 24:18. Here is the great passage, “...at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.” What was he commanded to do? He was commanded to keep on preaching, to stay faithful; he was commanded not to quit. Think of the criticism that must have come his way! Think of the heartache that must have been his, but he had been called to preach! His wife died in the evening, but in the morning he was standing on the street corner, as a watchman on the wall, warning the people.

CONCLUSION: Nothing should keep us from doing the will of God. If we are sick, we should do His will; if we are persecuted, we should do His will; if we have adversity, we should do His will; if we have burdens, we should do His will; if there is a death in the family, we should do His will; if people do not understand, we should do His will. Everything in life should be centered around the doing of the will of God for our lives!