

Ezekiel 13-16 • Chapter Study

INTRO

Since it's been a couple weeks since our last study, let me give a quick recap.

Ezekiel was a prophet to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

The Babylonians have already conquered the Kingdom of Judah.

But in their first conquest they **spared** Jerusalem, choosing to make it a **vassal** state.

To ensure they'd send the annual tribute, the Babylonian king **Nebuchadnezzar** hauled off the Jewish King **Jehoiachin**, along w/a huge group of hostages from among the rich & middle-class families.

These were resettled not far from Babylon in a Jewish colony called Tel Aviv.

Before he left, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah as the new ruler of Jerusalem.

It didn't take long before Zedekiah's royal counselors had persuaded him to rebel against the Babylonians, refuse to send the tribute & link up with the Egyptians to resist Babylon.

All of this was doomed to fail, because God was USING the Babylonians as the agent of His judgment of Judah.

For generations they'd worshipped idols, & done so in the most morally abominable ways.

Though God warned them time & again to repent & return to Him, they'd refused; so the long warned judgment had finally come in their defeat by the Babylonians.

The prophet Jeremiah was now in Jerusalem, warning Zedekiah & his cronies NOT to resist Babylon, but they ignored him.

Ezekiel's call was to share a similar message w/the Jewish exiles in Babylon who hoped they'd soon be going home.

No – as Jer. had made clear – they'd spend 70 years in Babylon before being allowed to go back.

And they needed to settle down, be prosperous, & prepare the next generation to return and rebuild their shattered city & kingdom.

On Sunday, we looked at the concluding vs. of ch. 12, where God told Ezekiel to tell the exiles their cute little saying that the visions of the prophets regarding Jerusalem's destruction were old & obviously not going to come to pass was dangerous. Because though the delay had been long, it was now over.

Jerusalem, the city they'd come to think was unsinkable, was about to go under.

Ch. 13

Here in ch. 13, God speaks about the foolishness of listening to **false prophets**.

You see, there were some, both back in Jerusalem – encouraging Zedekiah to rebel against Babylon, and there among the exiles in Tel Aviv.

There were **2 types** of false prophets.

The first group were **would-be seers** who thought they **really could** divine the future.

They thought what they said **would** come to pass >> & people **liked** what they said.

Despite their sincerity & the comfort they announced, **they were wrong**.

These men thought faith ought to always be positive & that as long as they were sincere, they were okay.

But it's not enough to be sincere; you can be sincerely wrong. They were.

The 2nd group had a **sinister** motive.

These were frauds who knew what they were saying was false, but operated out of greed.

They knew what people wanted to hear, so concocted messages that were calculated to earn them reward.

In order to make their message more **appealing**, they pretended to use magic & divination to discover what the future held.

Sadly, their picture of a prosperous future was conditioned on the people's compliance with what these false prophets announced they needed to do.

And that often included committing horrible atrocities.

¹ And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’ ” ³ Thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! Their message came from their own imagination, not God.”

⁴ O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts.

Not only was their message untrue; it was also *dangerous*.

An agricultural people *hate* foxes because of the damage they do to crops.

They live in the wilderness, along the edges of cultivated fields.

Hiding during the day, they come out at night, slip into the fields & vineyards and consume large amounts of produce.

That's what these false prophets were – spiritual parasites.

⁵ You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord.

They've not helped Israel in her time of need.

Instead of shoring up the holes in the spiritual wall protecting the people, the false prophets encouraged people to pretend there *were no holes*.

What was so desperately needed, & what *true* prophets like Jeremiah & Ezekiel proclaimed was *repentance*.

That's how you plug a spiritual hole; by turning from sin back to God.

⁶ They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the Lord!' But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. ⁷ Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken."

For all their earnestness, sincerity and best intentions, God had not sent them.

They were putting words into God's mouth He had not said.

The spiritual descendants of these false prophets are alive & well & still making their pronouncements today.

I must do something now that will make some of you uncomfortable.

But it's in harmony with what Ezekiel does here: *Call out false prophets*.

They're sincere, but wrong.

And it's my duty as a shepherd to protect the flock by pointing out danger.

There's a wide realm of error & a large crop of teachers, preachers & self-proclaimed prophets announcing a false message of a Triumphant Christendom.

While it goes under different names & has several flavors, some of which loath each other, the main message is consistent

That the Church will grow, fill the entire Earth,

capture & redeem the institutions of society,

install righteousness in the governments of the world,

& then Jesus will come back to give us a pat on the back for the good job we did.

This goes by lots of different labels.

Post-Millennialism - Kingdom Now – Dominionism – Triumphalism -

Christian Reconstructionism – Theonomy

Another branch or flavor is the Apostolic-Prophetic Movement, AKA The Kansas City Prophets -

Third Wave Charismatics – Latter Rain – & Manifested Sons of God

Some of the heralds of these non-biblical theologies are . . .

RJ Rushdoony - Gary North - Greg Bahnsen - David Chilton - Gary DeMar - Kenneth Gentry -

Rick Joyner - Paul Cain - Bob Jones - Mike Bickle - James Goll - John Paul Jackson

These all proclaim that it's the Church's destiny to take over the Earth.

So, things will get better & better until it all culminates in the visible return of Christ.

Their Millennium comes as a result of the *Church ruling*, rather than *Jesus reigning*.

Now – if that's the case, what do we do with Matthew 24, Luke 21, 2 Thess 2, and just about all of Revelation?

Because those paint a picture of the future that is very far from the rosy picture of all these clowns.

The Bible says very clearly that the last days are marked by a huge increase in deception, violence, famine, pestilence, & evil.

Indeed, Jesus returns at the point that all hell has broken loose!

In Matt 24:22 Jesus Himself said of the end times –

Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Listen, these guys may be *sincere in their desire* that the Church would grow & take over the world.

It's a nice thought; that we'd *actually make disciples of all nations*.

But they've reinterpreted what Jesus said to mean we install *Christian governments* in every nation.

Even though they know what an unmitigated disaster that's been in the past under the Holy Roman Empire & other nations where Church & State have merged, they arrogantly declare that under *their* rule, it'll be different this time.

They'll do it right!

They're just modern day version of the crowd Ezekiel speaks to here in v. 7 –

Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken."

⁸ Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I *am* indeed against you," says the Lord God. ⁹ "My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord God. ¹⁰ "Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, 'Peace!' when *there is* no peace—and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered *mortar*— ¹¹ say to those who plaster *it* with untempered *mortar*, that it will fall. There will be flooding rain, and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear *it* down. ¹² Surely, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where *is* the mortar with which you plastered *it*?' " ¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will cause a stormy wind to break forth in My fury; and there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and great hailstones in fury to consume *it*. ¹⁴ So I will break down the wall you have plastered with untempered *mortar*, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord.

The false prophets announced *peace*, while Ezekiel predicted *destruction*.

And instead of, as it says in v. 5, patching up the moral & spiritual holes in the wall protecting the people,

...

They'd just plastered over the flaws.

Even if you've not been to Israel, you've likely seen pictures of ancient ruins.

You know they look like this . . . [rough stone wall]

What most people don't realize is that they did NOT look that way when they were lived in.

Most such walls were plastered w/a chalky paste that smoothed out the wall.

But the rains eroded it and it had to be renewed every couple years.

The false prophets were doing nothing but plastering over huge problems; covering them in a veneer of warm & fuzzy religious sentimentality.

God is going to send a storm of judgment that's going to expose them as lairs.

¹⁵ "Thus will I accomplish My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it with untempered *mortar*; and I will say to you, 'The wall *is* no *more*, nor those who plastered it, ¹⁶ that is, the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when *there is* no peace,' " says the Lord God.

Now God turns to deal with the false prophets who knew what they were saying was bogus but used it as a means of gaining wealth & power.

Most of these were women . . .

¹⁷ "Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them, ¹⁸ and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Woe to the *women* who sew *magic* charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive?"

These are mediums & sorceresses who've adopted the occult practices of Babylon.

They used amulets and special clothes that were supposed to be imbued with magical power.

The Jewish exiles in Babylon were frantic to know what the future held.

But instead of listening to the true word of Ezekiel, they were running to fortune-tellers.

And seeing there was profit to be made, many women had adopted the religious rituals of Babylon and claimed they could tell the future – for a price of course.

They were ancient versions of palm & Tarot card readers - crystal ball gazers.

¹⁹ And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?"

What's this? Killing people? How so?

Well, along with their announcements of a prosperous future, was the condition that it would arrive **only if they did certain things**.

It's not difficult to see how this devolved.

"You will have a prosperous year if you give me a bushel of barley."

"2 bushels."

"2 bushels & a gold bracelet."

"If you give me your next child as a servant."

"If you slander so & so."

"If you murder so & so."

Then, to a judge who comes to have his fortune read – "If you find so & so innocent and let him go."

²⁰ 'Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I *am* against your *magic* charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds. ²¹ I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord. ²² "Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. ²³ Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I *am* the Lord." ' "

Ch. 14

¹ Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.

This is now the **2nd** time that the Jewish elders came to Ezekiel.

The **1st** was in ch. 8. They will come a **3rd** time in ch. 20.

They recognize he's a real prophet, but they have a hard time complying with what he says.

² And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ³ "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?

God told Ezekiel the elders had **divided loyalties**.

They worshipped other gods **in addition** to the Lord.

So God poses his messenger a question – Should He speak to them?

God decides, **Yeah**, He will . . .

⁴ "Therefore speak to them, and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, ⁵ that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols." ' "

The elders assumed they could believe in God **AND** idols.

Why not – all the other nations did?

And besides, they were in Babylon now; idol-central!

But as diligent **religionists**, they knew they couldn't actually set up a statue or shrine because the 10 Commandments forbade it.

So they just erected various idols in their hearts & minds.

This looks back to what we saw in ch 8 & examined in depth in the sermon "*The Image Factory*." God nukes the idea He can be just 1 among many values, motives, dreams, desires, & purposes in our lives.

As Jesus said in Matt 6:24, no-one can serve 2 or more masters.

There can be only one.

In light of today's **pluralism**, it's appealing to keep our options open & acknowledge many ideas as all equally true.

It's gotten to the point where people have given up on the idea of True-Truth.

Now all that matters is that no one dare claim THEIR version of truth is alone correct and everyone else is wrong.

That's the chief sin.

It's a world where the new Golden Rule is, "Live & let live."

But Christians simply CAN'T live by that because Jesus said that He and He alone was the Way, the Truth, and the Life and that eternal life was obtained ONLY by believing in Him.

There are NOT many ways to God. There's only 1.

So the Gospel sets us at odds with the world.

But – and here's what glorious; as we faithfully share the Gospel, while it results in hostility from the world, the souls of men & women are saved.

⁶ "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations."⁷ For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself.⁸ I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord. Those idolaters who **pretend** to be religious will be publically exposed & shamed.

⁹ "And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the Lord have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel.¹⁰ And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired,¹¹ that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God," says the Lord God.' "

When an idolater came before a prophet to enquire of God, the prophet was to say **nothing**.

If the prophet went ahead & DID say something, because there was a reward to be gained, he'd himself fall under God's judgment, but what he said would be used by God to effect judgment on the idolater.

The point for us to glean from all this is that we simply can't out-manuever God.

¹² The word of the Lord came again to me, saying:¹³ "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it.¹⁴ Even *if* these 3 men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord God.

¹⁵ "If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts,¹⁶ *even though* these 3 men *were* in it, *as* I live," says the Lord God, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate.

¹⁷ "Or *if* I bring a sword on that land, and say, 'Sword, go through the land,' and I cut off man and beast from it,

¹⁸ *even though* these 3 men *were* in it, *as* I live," says the Lord God, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered.

¹⁹ "Or *if* I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast,

²⁰ even *though* Noah, Daniel, and Job *were* in it, *as* I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness.”

²¹ For thus says the Lord God: “How much more it shall be when I send My 4 severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it? ²² Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, *both* sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. ²³ And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it,” says the Lord God.

A kingdom, nation, or community cannot expect to escape judgment by relying on the righteousness of a few of its members.

A corrupt people cannot be exonerated because a few saints live among them.

Nor can a godly ancestor secure insurance against a corrupt family.

As we’ve repeatedly seen, the message of both Jeremiah & Ezekiel was that it was now too late to avoid judgment; Jerusalem was doomed.

All that people could do was repent individually & so avoid the full weight of God’s wrath.

That was the lesson of the 3 God refers to here.

Noah, Daniel, & Job were all preserved *thru* times of great distress & trouble because of their steadfast hope in God.

Ch. 15

¹ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ² “Son of man, how is the wood of the vine *better* than any other wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest?

The answer to that is a clear – “It’s not better.”

Vines are good for only one thing – producing fruit.

Their wood is wholly unfit for any purpose whatever.

³ Is wood taken from it to make any object?

No!

Or can *men* make a peg from it to hang any vessel on?

No way. That’s a sure way to break something – hang it from a peg made of vine-wood.

⁴ Instead, it is thrown into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned. Is it useful for *any* work? ⁵ Indeed, when it was whole, no object could be made from it. How much less will it be useful for *any* work when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned? ⁶ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; ⁷ and I will set My face against them. They will go out from *one* fire, but *another* fire shall devour them. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I set My face against them. ⁸ Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,’ says the Lord God.”

Ezekiel is not to have any hope that the coming siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians will have any positive effect on them.

They still won’t repent!

Just as the city was no good before the siege, it would be no good during and after.

All of this was just *proof* of how ripe it was for judgment.

Ch. 16

Israel is depicted as a wildly adulterous wife, engaging in prostitution w/Egypt, Assyria & Babylon.

But her illicit lovers would become her abusers.

The imagery here is uber-strong & may shock some of us.

But it’s fitting because in their worship of idols, the people of Israel engaged in some really nasty sexual perversions.

For those of you new to the Bible, understand that the relationship between God & His people is often likened to

marriage.

The Church is called the bride of Christ and Israel was often referred to by the prophets as Yahweh's wife.

So *idolatry* was spiritual *adultery*.

The practices condemned in this chapter include sex acts w/idols & ritual, cultic prostitution performed *in public*.

¹ Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, ³ and say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity *are* from the land of Canaan; your father *was* an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.

Their great ancestor was Abraham who hailed from Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia.

The people there were *Amorites*.

While the Amorite Abraham was their *father*, it can be said that the *land of Canaan* was their *mother*, & when they'd first arrived there the dominant people group were the *Hittites*.

These 2 influences, Abraham & Canaan were the key formative factors in shaping them as an ethnic people.

⁴ As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse *you*; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. ⁵ No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.

Israel's beginnings were far from noble.

She was more like the unwanted child of a peasant household with too many mouths to feed than the treasured son or daughter of a royal house.

So she was tossed out and left to die – like the babies we occasionally hear about that are found in a dumpster in some alley.

⁶ "And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' ⁷ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. *Your* breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you *were* naked and bare. Against all hope, this abandoned foundling lived because God showed her favor.

She made it through childhood and into puberty.

But she was still without name or place.

All of this speaks of the time from Abraham up thru their slavery in Egypt.

Now the scene shifts . . .

⁸ "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time *was* the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord God.

The Exodus & Mt. Sinai where He offered to make them His own people and they agreed to be His people, He their God.

⁹ "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. He gave them His Word.

¹⁰ I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹ I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. ¹² And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing *was of* fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate *pastry of* fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. From the time they entered into Canaan up through the Judges to Saul & David, it was a time of slow, steady growth & prosperity until it reached its zenith under Solomon.

¹⁴ Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it *was* perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,” says the Lord God.
Now things start to fall apart.

¹⁵ “But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who *would have* it. ¹⁶ You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. *Such* things should not happen, nor be. Under David & the first part of Solomon’s reign, the nation worshipped God alone. But beginning with Solomon’s later half and into the kings that came after, the people began setting up their own religious shrines and idols on the tops of hills – which were sacred under the old ways of the Canaanites who’d lived there before.

¹⁷ You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them.
Yep – that’s just what it sounds like.

¹⁸ You took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. ¹⁹ Also My food which I gave you—the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey *which* I fed you—you set it before them as sweet incense; and *so* it was,” says the Lord God. ²⁰ “Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. *Were* your *acts* of harlotry a small matter, ²¹ that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through *the fire*? There were several ways the people would offer their children as sacrifices, but one of the most common was to place them on the out-stretched arms of an idol.

The child then rolled down the arms, into the mouth of the idol & into the flames.

²² And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood. ²³ “Then it was so, after all your wickedness— ‘Woe, woe to you!’ says the Lord God— ²⁴ that you also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place for yourself in every street. ²⁵ You built your high places at the head of every road, and made your beauty to be abhorred. You offered yourself to everyone who passed by, and multiplied your acts of harlotry. Sin is **progressive**; it’s its nature to get **worse**, more perverse, cruel, sinister, evil. So, it got to the point where worshipping idols on the high places wasn’t enough.

They set up shrines in their cities & towns.

Then booths on street corners.

Their lewdness became public, right out in the open.

Nothing made anyone blush anymore.

²⁶ You also committed harlotry with the Egyptians, your very fleshly neighbors, and increased your acts of harlotry to provoke Me to anger. ²⁷ “Behold, therefore, I stretched out My hand against you, diminished your allotment, and gave you up to the will of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior.

They **out idolatried** the **inventors** of idols!

²⁸ You also played the harlot with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; indeed you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. ²⁹ Moreover you multiplied your acts of harlotry as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea [Babylon]; and even then you were not satisfied. ³⁰ “How degenerate is your heart!” says the Lord God, “seeing you do all these *things*, the deeds of a brazen harlot. ³¹ “You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your high place in every street. Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned payment. A prostitute gets paid for her service.

Israel became utterly wanton – & went after idols in the most grotesque manner without concern for what or why.

³² You are an adulterous wife, *who* takes strangers instead of her husband. ³³ Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry. A harlot who pays rather than IS paid! > The point here is the ***utter perversion*** that had gripped them.

³⁴ You are the opposite of *other* women in your harlotry, because no one solicited you to be a harlot. In that you gave payment but no payment was given you, therefore you are the opposite.”

In vs. 35-41, God tells them all the lovers they’d courted would come & instead of bringing love, they’d abuse & destroy them.

⁴² So I will lay to rest My fury toward you, and My jealousy shall depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more. ⁴³ Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but agitated Me with all these *things*, surely I will also recompense your deeds on *your own* head,” says the Lord God. “And you shall not commit lewdness in addition to all your abominations. ⁴⁴ “Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use *this* proverb against you: ‘Like mother, like daughter!’
What had happened to the Canaanites would happen to them.

⁴⁵ You *are* your mother’s daughter, loathing husband and children; and you *are* the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children; your mother *was* a Hittite and your father an Amorite. ⁴⁶ “Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, *is* Sodom and her daughters.
Samaria had been judged by God for their wickedness 150 years before.

And the people of the kingdom of Judah to the south of Samaria had used them as a proverb of utter wickedness – as they had of Sodom, the much older city that had been destroyed in the days of Abraham. It was unthinkable for the Jews of Ezekiel’s day to think of Jerusalem on the same level as Samaria & Sodom. This would be like people in Montecito being likened to leprous street-beggars in Calcutta. It was highly offensive because all their lives they’d considered the Samaritans & people of Sodom as utterly despicable.
But – it’s the comparison God makes!

⁴⁷ You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as *if that were* too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways. ⁴⁸ “As I live,” says the Lord God, “neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom:
Now, if stopped right there, I’ll bet most of us would assume the next words were that they gave themselves over to ***homosexuality***.

That’s not what God says. Look . . .
She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit*.

The ***abomination*** God refers to is just the ***moral result*** or ***end-point*** of their ***real sin*** – which was an arrogant attitude of independence from God.

What we find here is an important insight into one of the biggest issues of our day – ***homosexuality***.

Many people assume God judged Sodom & Gomorrah because of homosexuality.

The old term ***Sodomite*** comes from the story of Sodom’s destruction in the book of Genesis.

But in this passage, Sodom’s ***real sin*** is identified as an indolent, self-sufficient arrogance.

Yes, it found its final manifestation in homosexuality as Genesis & the word abomination here reveals.

The real issue was their over-weening pride.

It's in Romans 1 we gain insight into how homosexuality is a moral indicator of a culture's condition & nearness to judgment.

While this is a bit of a rabbit trail from Ezekiel, in light of the debate happening today, I think we need to do this. Romans 1

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

The existence of God is not some deep, dark, mysterious thing that requires a degree in philosophy or some kind of spiritual encounter to know.

The reality & existence of God is both rational & intuitive – ***to all people***.

That they ***push such knowledge away*** is because of their rebellion against God.

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, Simply said – Creation requires a creator that is both eternal and all powerful.

You don't; have to be a genius to know that; just to have a brain.

²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

All the evidence and reason points to God's existence.

But if God is real, then truth is too and there's real right & wrong.

But people want to do what they want to do without feeling bad about it, so instead of admitting they're wrong & need to be forgiven, they instead pretend God's not there.

Once they do that, they gut themselves of the ability to think rationally, because one of the first things rationality says is: God is real!

So . . .

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

See? This is precisely what we're reading about in Ezekiel!

Man is an incurable worshipper; he has to worship something – because it's what he was made for.

So when he refuses to worship what he was made to worship, he makes up subs – idols.

But once he starts down this road, he's not satisfied because idols aren't real and CAN'T satisfy.

So his worship of idols gets weird, sick, twisted . . .

²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

This charts the course of man apart from God.

Now, Paul shows where all of this ultimately ends up if men and their societies fail to repent.

It get's worse and worse until it reaches the end point, described in the next verses . . .

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions.

He stopped resisting their headlong pursuit of sin.

He withdraws His Spirit and lets them go

For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Homosexuality.

But it isn't just an individual's same-sex attraction Paul refers to here.

There have been people who've known attraction to their own sex since the dawn of time.
What's in view here isn't individual homosexuality; this is societal acceptance of it.
Watch . . .

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave THEM over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

This is why our culture is now in its death throes – because homosexuality has been normalized and embraced by the legal system.

It's not longer seen as a moral evil.

On the contrary, what's evil is the person who dares to say that homosexuality IS wrong.

It's THAT very thing Paul refers to here as the end point of a culture that has nothing left but to be judged.

And that's why the litany of sin and perversion he gives here in vs. 29-31.

Sum all that up in one word and you have PRIDE!

The thing that led to Sodom's ruin.

⁵¹ “Samaria did not commit half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done. ⁵² You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also, because the sins which you committed were more abominable than theirs; they are more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters. **Again**, it was utterly shocking for them to be called **worse** than the Samaritans & people of Sodom. In vs. 53-63 God says once judgment has come, He'll move to restore all 3 sisters of Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem.

⁶⁰ “Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you. ⁶² And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord, ⁶³ that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done,” says the Lord God.’ ”

This looks in part to their repentance there in Babylon and restoration to the land about a hundred years later. But ultimately, it looks to the day when Jesus Messiah rules over them during the Millennium.

It that day, the people of Israel will look upon their long rebellious history with regret & shame.