

Ezekiel 6-7    “And They Shall Know that I Am the LORD”  
Psalm 74; 1 Thessalonians 5

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There is a certain pattern to these chapters:

The word of the LORD came to me (6:1)

    Thus says the Lord GOD (6:3)

        And you shall know that I am the LORD (6:7)

        And they shall know that I am the LORD (6:10)

    Thus says the Lord GOD (6:11)

        And you shall know that I am the LORD (6:13)

        Then they will know that I am the LORD (6:14)

The word of the LORD came to me (7:1)

    Thus says the Lord GOD (7:2)

        Then you will know that I am the LORD (7:4)

    Thus says the Lord GOD (7:5)

        Then you will know that I am the LORD (7:9)

        And they shall know that I am the LORD (7:27)

Did you hear that refrain?

“they (or you) will know that I am the LORD.”

The knowledge of God does not come through academic study.  
The knowledge of God does not come through contemplation.

The knowledge of God comes from his mighty deeds in history.

    If all you do is think about what God “should” be like,  
        he will remain a construct of your own brain!

    The God you *wish* existed would be at your beck and call.

    You would ask for him to prove that he existed, and he would show up at your command.

But the sort of God that would do whatever you wanted,  
    would not be worth knowing!

The true knowledge of God comes through seeing his mighty deeds in history.

That phrase “then you shall know that I am the LORD” is used 9 times in Exodus,  
especially in the context of bringing judgment upon Pharaoh  
and delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt.

It is used twice in Kings –

    in the context of God coming as the Divine Warrior to deliver his people.

Isaiah uses the phrase the same way.

So the idea “then they will know that I am the LORD”  
is all bound up with the idea of the LORD coming in judgment against his enemies.

That's what makes its use here in Ezekiel so frightening.

Because Ezekiel is talking about how God is coming in judgment upon his own people!

We encountered it first at the end of last week –

When God vents his anger against Israel – then (Ezekiel 5:13)  
“they shall know that I am the LORD.”

Of the 88 times the phrase is used in the Bible, 72 are in Ezekiel.

Then they will know.

Then *you* will know that I am the LORD,  
when I come in judgment and fury against my own people.

We sing of this in Psalm 74.

Psalm 74 asks God to remember four things:

remember your congregation (your people – v2)  
remember Mount Zion (your dwelling place – v2)  
remember your covenant (your promises – v20)  
and remember the land (that you promised Abraham – v20)

All of this, Asaph asks, *not* because of how important we are!

Rather, he says, “Arise, O God, defend *your* cause.” (v22)

As we sing Psalm 74,

as we ask God to remember his promises,  
it is not because of who *we* are –  
but because of who *he* is,  
and especially because of who *Jesus* is.

Remember, O LORD, what you have promised to your Son, Jesus Christ!

Sing Psalm 74

Read 1 Thessalonians 5

Our passage today boils down to two basic points:

1. Idolatry leads to Destruction (chapter 6)
2. And it's too late – you're already an idolater (chapter 7)  
so prepare to die!

And we need to understand how profoundly this speaks to us today!

Iain Duguid helps us understand the appeal of idolatry:

“Baal was the storm god...the god of power and fertility,  
who if appeased could deliver victory in battle,  
and in peacetime the rain so vital to cultivation...”

“Asherah, his consort, was the goddess of fertility,  
perhaps better known to us in her Greek form as Aphrodite...” (112)

Much of pagan worship involved sexual intercourse with temple prostitutes.

In other words,

“Baal and Asherah were in effect the patron saints of sex and guns and rock ‘n’ roll,

promising to deliver a potent mixture of satisfaction  
to the desires for power, success, and pleasure.” (112)  
Humanity hasn’t changed much.  
This summer’s list of Hollywood releases demonstrates  
that sex, guns, drugs, power, success, pleasure –  
still drive the human race in a never-ending quest for satisfaction.

What idols do you bow to?

Do you bow to the idol of your career –  
where you sacrifice your family to get ahead at work?  
Do you bow to the idol of your family –  
where you sacrifice everything else  
so that your children have everything they need to succeed?  
Do you bow to the idol of personal pleasure –  
where you sacrifice others to your cravings?

What drives you?

Sex?  
Ambition?  
Knowledge?  
Power?

C. S. Lewis put it well when he said,

“if we consider the unblushing promises of reward  
and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels,  
it would seem that the Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak.

We are half-hearted creatures,  
fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us,  
like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum  
because he cannot understand what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.  
We are far too easily pleased.” (The Weight of Glory, 1-2)

And children, let me ask you:

what motivates you?

Let me put it this way:

what do your parents use to motivate you to do your “chores”?

Computer games?

Wii?

Playing outside?

Having friends over?

What drives you?

Another way of getting at is to ask another question:

What do you get upset over?

Your brother took the toy you were playing with?

The older kids don’t give you a chance when you are playing with them?

All these things begin to reveal our idolatries –  
because they show us that we're not thinking of the glory of Christ!  
We are thinking of the glory of our own kingdoms.

But God will not let you stay there:  
he will – sooner or later – make you “know that he is the LORD”!  
And either that knowledge will be your delight and joy –  
or that knowledge will destroy you.

Because the knowledge of God comes through his mighty deeds in history –  
and those deeds will either save you or destroy you.

For the last couple weeks we've zoomed in and looked at Ezekiel in detail.  
But if you want to understand what Ezekiel is doing,  
we need to zoom back out and see the big picture.

Last time I asked you why you would worship a god who destroys his own people.  
Last time we saw that Israel had rebelled against the LORD –  
and that they were *worse* than the nations around them.  
They knew better – and yet they rebelled against the LORD their God.

But *why* does God destroy them?  
Why does God have a right to destroy his own people?

That may sound like a silly question!  
He's God!  
He gets to do what he wants – because he's God –  
it sort of goes without saying, right?

No.  
There are times when God does not get to do “whatever he wants.”  
What times are those?  
When God has said – when God has promised –  
what he will do.  
Let me put it this way,  
God said to David, that David would have a man sit on his throne forever.  
Could God then decide, “No, I'm tired of David,  
let's not do this David thing anymore!”  
No!  
When God promises,  
he is bound by his promise – he will surely do it!

But, you see, this is where Israel went astray in their thinking:  
as we saw in Psalm 74, there were four parts to Judah's false sense of security:  
1) Yahweh's covenant with Israel, which led Jerusalem to assume that they could not be  
overthrown – Ezekiel will demolish this in 12:17-16:63; 18:1-32; 20:1-44; 22:1-24:14

- 2) Yahweh's commitment to the land, based on the 'territorial deity' – they viewed Yahweh as being obligated to defend "his turf" (or his "mountains" – think of E's address to the "mountains of Israel") – but E will say that Yahweh is handing his land over to foreigners (6-7, 21)
- 3) Yahweh's commitment to Jerusalem – the place where God's name dwelt – the temple as God's palace – but E says that Jerusalem *will* fall (4-5, 8-11)
- 4) Yahweh's covenant with David, guaranteeing an eternal throne to his seed – but E says that this is suspended (12:1-16, 17, 19)

They were right that God had promised all these things –

but they forgot –

they forgot that God's promise was coupled with God's warning.

What warning was that?

Today I would like to take you back to the warnings that lie at the root of Ezekiel's message.

We've now read enough of Ezekiel, that you will be able to hear it pretty clearly.

I'm going to read from Leviticus 26,

but I want you to keep an eye on Ezekiel 5-7 to see all the parallels.

I'm just going to hit the highlights, starting at Leviticus 26:1:

*26:1 "You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God. 2 You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. 3 If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, 4 then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit (then to verse 11)*

*11 I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. 13 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect. [so there is the promise!]*

*14 "But [always look out for the "but" – that is where the warning starts!] if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, 15 if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, 16 then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. (Ezekiel 7:21) 17 I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. 18 And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, 19 and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze [remember Ezekiel's iron skillet – with his face set against Jerusalem in ch. 4!].*

*22 And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted. (remember Ezekiel 5:17)*

*26 When I break your supply of bread (remember Ezekiel 5:16), ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. 27 “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, 28 then I will walk contrary to you in fury (Ezekiel 5:13), and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. 29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. (Ezekiel 5:10) 30 And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you (Ezekiel 6:3-5). 31 And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. 32 And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. 33 And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. (Ezekiel 6:6)*

Even the remnant theme can be found in Leviticus 26:44

*44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. 45 But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 6:8-10)*

The same themes appear again in Deuteronomy 28.

We don’t need to turn there right now,  
but you can hear what is going on.

Israel has put their trust in God’s promises,  
but with selective hearing,  
because the promises of God offer no security  
to those who refuse to take seriously  
the responsibilities that come with being in covenant with God.

I want you to hear that again:

The promises of God offer *no security*  
to those who refuse to take seriously  
the responsibilities that come with being in covenant with God.

Think of how the New Testament puts it – in Hebrews 10:26-31:

“if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth,  
there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,  
but a fearful expectation of judgment,  
and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses  
dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

How much worse punishment, do you think,  
will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God,  
and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,

and has outraged the Spirit of grace?  
For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’  
And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’  
It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

In all times and places, it is true that:

### **1. Idolatry leads to Destruction (chapter 6)**

*6:1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3 and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. 4 Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols. 5 And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. 6 Wherever you dwell, the cities shall be waste and the high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down, and your works wiped out. 7 And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the Lord.*

Note the chiastic form of chapter 6 in your outline:

1. The Word of the LORD to the Mountains of Israel (6:1-2)
2. Idolatry Will Be Wiped Out (6:3-7)
  3. But I Will Leave a Remnant (6:8-10)
  2. Idolatry Will Be Wiped Out (6:11-14a)
1. Then You Will Know that I am the LORD (6:14b)

The Lord GOD issues a challenge to the mountains, hills, ravines and valleys of Israel:

*Behold I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.*

But it is not just “idolatry” that will be destroyed:

it is also “idolaters.”

God says that he “will cast down your slain before your idols.

*And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols.” (v5)*

There is a theme that runs throughout the scriptures –  
“we become what we worship.”

And if “we become what we worship” –

then you need to understand Ezekiel’s favorite word for idol!

The word throughout Ezekiel is *gillulim* –  
which is used 39 times in Ezekiel, but only 9 times in the rest of scripture.  
Interestingly enough,  
the word appears in Leviticus 26:30  
where the dead bodies of rebellious Israel  
“will be cast upon the dead bodies of your idols” (*gillulim*).

I want you to think about this picture.

Because this is the picture that Ezekiel uses to craft his image of idolatry.

When the idols are cast down,

then it is as though the lifeless corpses of the pagan gods are lying on the ground.  
Even so, when idolaters are destroyed, their bodies are cast down,  
and their lifeless corpses are lying on the ground.

In 2 Kings, chapter 10,

there is a particularly infamous episode  
where Jehu rose up against the wicked house of Ahab  
and destroyed the temple of Baal.

When he does this, it says that he turned the temple of Baal into a latrine.

(Some of you may remember what phrase I used to describe that!

I won't repeat it here! You can listen to it on Sermon Audio!)

The image of Baal and all those who worshiped him  
are joined together in death as a public outhouse.

This word *gillulim* has similar associations.

It is taken from the word “galal” which means “to roll”  
but it rhymes with *siqqusim* – which means “detestable object.” (5:11)

Can you think of any detestable object that comes in a cylindrical shape?

I'm trying to be polite here.

I really am.

But in chapter 4 God told Ezekiel to cook his bread on human dung,  
and now God uses a word for “idol” that has very similar associations.

And this is the word that Ezekiel will use more than any other word  
to describe idols.

(You've heard of “sacramental worship” – well, this is excremental worship!)

And in verses 4-6 God says that idolatry and idolaters will be wiped out and destroyed.

*And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the LORD.* (v7)

Notice especially the bones strewn around the altars.

It's going to be a while before we get to the hopeful chapters of Ezekiel,  
so let me give you a preview:

In Ezekiel 37, Ezekiel will stand in a valley of dry bones –  
the dead idolaters of the house of Israel lying all around him.

Is there any hope for Israel?

Can these bones live?

Verses 8-10 offer a glimmer of hope,  
because God promises that he will leave a remnant (v8-10).

*8 “Yet I will leave some of you alive. When you have among the nations some who escape the sword, and when you are scattered through the countries, 9 then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations. 10 And they shall know that I am the Lord. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them.”*

Ezekiel is supposedly speaking to the mountains of Israel.

He is speaking “towards” those who still live in Israel,  
but those who hear his voice are the exiles in Babylon.

*You* are supposed to remember the LORD!

*You* are supposed to remember how the LORD has been broken over your idolatry.  
*You* are supposed to be loathsome in your own sight for all your evils.

When you see your sin in the light of God’s glory and holiness –  
you should loathe yourself.

When you look at your sin, do you loathe yourself?  
Are you loathsome in your own sight?  
Do you see how grotesque and misshapen you are,  
compared to what you should be!

But notice that in verses 8-10, there is, as yet, no promise about what *God* will do.  
There is only the assurance, “and they will know that I am the LORD.  
I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them.” (v10)

This doesn’t get any easier!  
Not only are we supposed to loathe ourselves,  
but God is going to do “this evil to them.”

Some of you may struggle with this:  
God is doing *evil* to them?  
What does it mean that God *does* evil to them?  
The word “evil” is used to refer to any sort of “bad thing.”  
There are natural evils (natural disasters: earthquakes, famines, etc.),  
and there are moral evils (war, murder, stealing, adultery, idolatry).  
God never sins.  
But God does bring disaster – God does bring evil upon people.

As Jeremiah will say in Lamentations 3:37-38  
“Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?  
Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come?”

And that is the point of verses 11-14.

*11 Thus says the Lord God: “Clap your hands and stamp your foot and say, Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, for they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. 12 He who is far off shall die of pestilence, and he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who is left and is preserved shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them.”*

*13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols. 14 And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”*

To put it simply,

anything that stands in the way of whole-hearted devotion to the LORD your God  
will be destroyed.

And if you are devoted to that idol, more than you are devoted to the LORD your God,  
then you will be destroyed with it!

Please remember the context.

Where is Ezekiel?

Babylon.

It would have been easy for the Israelites to say:

Look at the Babylonians!

They are the real idolaters!

Compared to them, we're faithful!

Can you find the slightest hint of that in Ezekiel?

Even so, the Word of the LORD has come to you today –  
and you may not compare yourselves to the nations around you.

And this is why we need to hear the warning of chapter 7:

## **2. And it's too late – you're already an idolater (chapter 7)**

*7:1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “And you, O son of man, thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel: An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. 3 Now the end is upon you, and I will send my anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations. 4 And my eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity, but I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”*

*5 “Thus says the Lord God: Disaster after disaster! Behold, it comes. 6 An end has come; the end has come; it has awakened against you. Behold, it comes. 7 Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land. The time has come; the day is near, a day of tumult, and not of joyful shouting on the mountains. 8 Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you, and judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations. 9 And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. I will punish you according to*

*your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who strikes.*

*10 Behold, the day! Behold, it comes! Your doom has come; the rod has blossomed; pride has budded. 11 Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness. None of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their wealth; neither shall there be preeminence among them. 12 The time has come; the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all their multitude. 13 For the seller shall not return to what he has sold, while they live. For the vision concerns all their multitude; it shall not turn back; and because of his iniquity, none can maintain his life.*

*14 They have blown the trumpet and made everything ready, but none goes to battle, for my wrath is upon all their multitude. 15 The sword is without; pestilence and famine are within. He who is in the field dies by the sword, and him who is in the city famine and pestilence devour. 16 And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, each one over his iniquity. 17 All hands are feeble, and all knees turn to water. 18 They put on sackcloth, and horror covers them. Shame is on all faces, and baldness on all their heads. 19 They cast their silver into the streets, and their gold is like an unclean thing. Their silver and gold are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord. They cannot satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity. 20 His beautiful ornament they used for pride, and they made their abominable images and their detestable things of it. Therefore I make it an unclean thing to them. 21 And I will give it into the hands of foreigners for prey, and to the wicked of the earth for spoil, and they shall profane it. 22 I will turn my face from them, and they shall profane my treasured place. Robbers shall enter and profane it.*

*23 Forge a chain! For the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence. 24 I will bring the worst of the nations to take possession of their houses. I will put an end to the pride of the strong, and their holy places shall be profaned. 25 When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there shall be none. 26 Disaster comes upon disaster; rumor follows rumor. They seek a vision from the prophet, while the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders. 27 The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”*

1. The Word of the LORD: Final Judgment Has Come (7:2-4)
2. I Will Judge You According to Your Ways (7:5-9)
  3. Wealth Cannot Protect You (7:10-14)
  4. Strength Cannot Protect You (7:14-18)
  3. Wealth Cannot Protect You (7:19-22)
2. I Will Judge You According to Your Ways (7:23-27a)
1. And They Shall Know that I Am the LORD (7:27b)

Chapter 7 is addressed to the *land* of Israel.

Ezekiel is the only biblical author who speaks of the land of Israel in this way. The word for “land” here is “adamah.”

In Genesis 2 we heard of how God formed the Adam (the man) from the adamah (the ground).

In Ezekiel God identifies the prophet as the son of Adam (the son of man), and he identifies the place where he is from as the adamah Yisrael (the land of Israel).

Israel has put their hope in God's blessing on the land.

The land was supposed to bring forth fruit for harvest.

But now the harvest has come –

(the word translated “end” is the word used of harvest time)

harvest time has come – and the fruit is entirely rotten.

The point that we need to hear from Ezekiel 7

is that “the end has come” –

this is it.

God is not going to delay any longer.

The time has come for judgment to fall.

God's eschatological judgment – the final judgment – is going to fall on Israel.

And that is why God says that he will judge them and punish them “according to their ways.”

In 7:5, God says “Disaster after disaster” –

This is literally, “evil after evil.”

The time has come; the day is near.

Israel had expected the day of the LORD to be a day of rejoicing,  
as God triumphed over his enemies.

But now, as judgment day approaches,

Ezekiel can see that judgment day is a day of disaster and tumult –  
“not of joyful shouting.”

*Then you will know that I am the LORD who strikes.*

Paul says in Romans 8, “if God is for us, who can be against us?!”

But the opposite is also true,

if God is against us, who can rescue us from his hand?

Then in verses 10-22 we hear that “resistance is futile.”

Wealth cannot protect you from the judgment day.

Don't bother going out to battle (v14) because against the power that rises against you  
there is hope of victory!

You can't run away, either.

The sword, famine, pestilence – you cannot escape! (v15)

*And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys,  
all of them moaning, each one over his iniquity.*

And in case you didn't get it the first time,

we hear again in verses 19-22 that wealth cannot deliver –

because their wealth “was the stumbling block of their iniquity.”

If your heart is set on riches – if your mind is set on possessions –

if your god is your belly – if acquiring and consuming is what you live for –

then wealth has become your god.  
Jesus said that no man can serve two masters –  
you cannot serve both God and mammon –  
you cannot serve both God and money.

And so God says that he will hand Jerusalem over to “the worst of the nations”  
and the final judgment will fall upon the city.  
“Disaster comes upon disaster”  
(literally, “evil comes upon evil”);  
rumor follows rumor.

And the people will *seek a vision from the prophet,*  
*while the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders.*  
*The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair,*  
*and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed with terror.*  
*According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them,*  
*and they shall know that I am the LORD.* (7:26-27)

To put it simply, this is a picture of hell.  
Ezekiel is talking to people who grew up with the covenant promises of God.  
God is speaking to his rebellious people,  
and he is saying, because you have refused to love and obey the LORD your God  
you will now be destroyed.  
Because you have preferred your idols to *me*,  
I will give you what you have asked for.  
If you prefer the wages of sin to the inheritance of the sons of God,  
then fine – I’ll give it to you!  
Go to hell!

And that is where Ezekiel’s message ended that day.  
But *I* cannot stop there!

I would like to close by reminding you of two images in these chapters.  
1) the mountains of Israel  
2) the bones of Israel

Here in Ezekiel 6-7, God proclaims judgment upon the mountains of Israel,  
and declares that he will strew the bones of Israel around their altars.  
You *will* become what you worship!

But in Ezekiel 36-37, the proclamation of hope  
will begin with an address to the mountains of Israel,  
and the dry bones will hear a promise of life from the dead.

This is why we read 1 Thessalonians 5.  
Because in 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul uses the same language of the day of Lord

as a day of destruction and judgment upon all those who dwell in darkness,  
but he also says, that we do not belong to the dark.  
“For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.  
But since we belong to the day, let us be sober,  
having put on the breastplate of faith and love,  
and for a helmet the hope of salvation.  
For God has not destined us for wrath,  
but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.”

Jesus has passed through the final judgment.

Jesus has taken upon himself the wrath and curse of Jerusalem, the curse of Adam,  
so that those who believe in him, might not perish but have everlasting life.

Because he was raised from the dead and seated in glory at the right hand of the Father,  
therefore all those who trust in him have passed through judgment and death –  
we have been baptized into his death –  
so that we might be raised up to newness of life –  
so that we might participate in his resurrection life!

Therefore, I say to you,

repent of your sin – repent of your idolatries –  
you are clinging to something that is worthless!  
You are clinging to dung!  
And if you will not give it up, then you will become dung too!

So repent, and believe the gospel –  
the good news that Jesus Christ has fully paid for all our sins with his precious blood!