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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, May 16, 2010
"Where Has All The Glory Gone"
Ezekiel 6-11

Life seems to go by quickly doesn't it? Here we are already in May. As life goes by quickly, we also find ourselves getting older each day. A baby is born, grows to adulthood, and eventually passes from this life.

General Douglas MacArthur's famous statement eases the aging process when he said,
 "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away."

Perhaps that's why other statements have been made about the aging process.

"Old postman never die, they just lose their zip."

"Old scoutmasters never die, they just smell that way."

"Old deans never die, they just lose their faculties."

Old doctors never die, they just lose their patients."

Aging is certainly an unusual and somewhat mysterious process, but we are reminded that unless the process can be stopped, and dealt with, we are a people most miserable.

Then when we think about the bad attitudes that are displayed in our lives at times such as selfishness, jealousy, partiality, destructive criticism, and added to that the immorality and deceitfulness that plagues our nation, we are made quickly aware that we can't help ourselves in any of these area. We need help from the true, living, personal, and eternal God.

Coming to our text in Ezekiel 6-11 today, we find that Ezekiel keeps telling those of the nation of Israel in exile that the only ONE who can deal with the many spiritual issues that they face in aging and with sin itself, is to turn to the true and living eternal God.

But the sad commentary is that the people of Israel in exile would not listen to Ezekiel, and those back in Jerusalem would not listen to what God had to say to them through Jeremiah the prophet.

The question I ask in such dire circumstances is this: "How did Israel get into such a pathetic and lethal situation?"

Yes, "How did this people who once followed God, were chosen to be a holy nation, a peculiar treasure of God out of all the other nations to show forth the glory of God, stop listening to the Lord and not obey HIM – the very God who delivered them from Egyptian bondage and brought them into the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey?"

Put in one succinct question: "How did the nation of Israel who started out so well with God become so disobedient to HIM?"

I. Israel's problem described (Ezekiel 7:22).

1. The secret place had been profaned.

There is what I call one of the most amazing verses in the Bible found in Ezekiel 7:22.

It reads, "I shall also turn my face from them, and they will profane my secret place; then robbers will enter and profane it."

God is telling Israel in exile, that the reason they are in captivity is because the nation has not guarded the secret place.

What had happened to the secret place?

2. A description of what had happened to the secret place.

From Ezekiel 6 we are told that Israel had become involved in idolatry (6:6, 11)

From Ezekiel 7 God continues to use Ezekiel to tell the people that idolatry is the reason for God's judgment coming upon the people (7:20-22).

Then in Ezekiel 8, through the Lord's vision, Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem from Babylon. There he is given a picture of what was happening in his home town, Jerusalem, and particularly God's temple.

Note 8:1-5 – IDOL WORSHIP – To the north gate of the inner court where the seat of the idol of jealousy resided. Evidently the idol of jealousy was an image of some goddess – provoking the true and living God to jealousy.

8:6-13 – SPIRIT WORSHIP – animal deities were carved on the wall of the temple, and worshipped by the religious leaders of the day. Zedekiah's family had been faithful under Josiah but now had become involved in idolatry. Seventy elders, religious leaders, were there worshipping such idols (8:11).

8:14-15 – WORSHIP OF TAMMUZ – a Babylonian deity, husband of Ishtar, who after his death supposedly became god of the underworld. Some thought that he was a vegetarian-deity, dying in the heat of summer and rising in the spring. **Awful immorality was connected with his worship.**

8:16-17 – WORSHIP OF THE SUN - Twenty-five religious leaders between the porch and the altar of the temple were worshipping the sun.

God says that such acts are an abomination (8:6,13,17). The strongest word that God can use to describe that which is against His holy character.

The nation of Israel had become involved in gross idolatry leading to base immorality, as they substituted false gods for the true and living biblical God who had chosen the nation to be His people. They had substituted the glory of the eternal God for the glory of man-made idols.

3. The secret place defined.

What is the secret place that Israel had profaned by bringing in idols and worshipping the sun?

What did our text tell us?

"The entrance of the court" – 8:7.

"Carved on the wall all around" – 8:10.

"The entrance of the gate of the Lord's house" – 8:14.

"Behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar" – 8:16.

The secret place is the temple in Jerusalem that is being defiled by idolatry. The house of God, where His glory came to manifest His holy and gracious presence to the people, is being rejected by the people.

It would be like if this place were the actual temple of the Lord and I brought a statue of Buddha here today and set it on the table in front of this pulpit and said today were going to worship Buddha and follow his teaching. That would be an abomination to the Lord of glory.

But I believe the secret place is more than just the temple proper. I believe it is also the Holy of Holies where the Mercy Seat was placed, and where the High Priest went once a year to offer sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the people by placing blood of the animal on the mercy seat. The blood applied brought God's forgiveness for the High Priest and the people.

The idolatry of the people was profaning that secret place, the Holy of Holies, where God's justice and mercy met through the blood applied to the mercy seat for their forgiveness before God.

The idolatry of the people of Israel had stabbed the eternal God's holy, and merciful heart. In so doing they were using the eternal God's temple to worship false gods, plus committing gross immorality.

The situation could not get any worse.

Israel had broken the first and second commandments that they should have no other gods before the true and living biblical God. They were not to make graven images or idols.

What happened when Israel lived in idolatry?

II. The outcome of Israel living in idolatry.

1. They tried to find peace but they did not find any (Exodus 7:25-26).

In the midst of devastation, they will seek peace but find none. They will even seek a vision from a prophet, but the law will be lost from the priest.

When the secret place is not guarded, there is no direction from the Lord.

2. Confusion had set in – no understanding of who God is and what God is about. Double-mindedness.

3. No conscious acknowledgment of God's presence – He has left us (Ezekiel 8:12).

To those in Jerusalem, God, even though He might be around, He was not interested in them.

4. They were saying that they were not accountable to God.

He has no bearing on our lives. God is irrelevant. They had become so submerged in idolatry that the biblical God's omniscient, omnipotence, and omnipresence was no longer necessary.

Question: How did Israel get into such a state of idolatry where they were confused about who God was, what He could do, and that they were no longer accountable to God.

God warned Israel way back in Deuteronomy 5-8 to not intermarry with the foreigners in the land He was giving Him lest they turn to their gods. God warned Israel not to take for granted His blessings on them lest they become proud and forget the LORD their God – forget the source of their blessings.

Forgetting God as their source and going after other gods would bring God's eventually judgment upon Israel.

5. God's judgment was soon to come in 586 B. C. when Nebuchadnezzar would make his final thrust into Jerusalem to destroy the city and temple (II Kings 25:11-21).

But where was the eternal biblical God in all of this?

III. The biblical God is alive and well despite His temple being made into a temple of worshipping idols.

1. Ezekiel 8:4 – Ezekiel was shown that the glory of the Lord was still at the temple in Jerusalem.

God was telling Ezekiel that in spite of the gross idolatry in His temple, that His glory, His person and presence had not been captured. He was alive and well regardless of Israel's rejection of Him and their making His house a house of idolatry, a house of robbers.

2. Ezekiel 9:3 – Then the glory of the God Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple.

The word, cherub, can refer collectively to the cherubim over the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies. Of course this is where God's presence in His glory would come because that Ark of the Covenant represented the very presence of the biblical God.

3. Ezekiel 10:4-5 – Stated again that the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple.

But now what Ezekiel saw of the presence of God's glory is displayed to Ezekiel again (10:1-3, 5-17).

4. Ezekiel 10:18 – The glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.

5. Ezekiel 11:22-24 – The glory of the LORD departed from the temple in Jerusalem and stood over the mountain east of the city.

This did not mean that God would no longer care for His people who had profaned His secret place. Judgment was coming, but God promised in Ezekiel 11:15-20 that they would eventually return to their land and turn to the LORD.

In fact in Ezekiel 9:4, God would place a **mark** on those who would be sorrowful over their idolatry, and turn to the Lord. There would be a remnant even in the judgment that came upon the city.

It is well to note that the word, mark, is the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet written at that time like a cross. Persons so marked would be spared.

Regardless, God's presence could no longer come to the temple filled with idolatry.

When Christ returns to earth the second time, He will come to the millennial temple described in Ezekiel 40-48. The glory of the LORD returning in Jesus Christ is described in Ezekiel 43 as Jesus would come into Jerusalem via the eastern gate. As the glory of the LORD departed eastward from the temple, the glory of LORD in Christ will come from the east opening the eastern gate of Jerusalem which is now closed.

IV. The parallels of Ezekiel's day with our day – 2010.

1. Our nation.

Our nation is not a monarchy as the nation of Israel was. We are suppose to be a democracy, yes a republic. At the same time, there is no doubt that the United States of America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles.

Not all of the founders were genuine believers in Jesus Christ, but many of them were.

Men like John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Samuel Huntington, Robert Payne, Benjamin Rush, Roger Sherman, Richard Stockton, and John Whitherspoon, just to name a few who were signers of the Declaration of Independence – were followers of Jesus Christ.

These men, along with others, had the understanding that without the biblical God honored in a nation, the nation would not survive.

Hear the words of John Adams, *Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Second President of the United States*

[I]t is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue.

(Source: John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Little, Brown, 1854), Vol. IX, p. 401, to Zabdiel Adams on June 21, 1776.)

[W]e have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. . . . Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

(Source: John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co. 1854), Vol. IX, p. 229, October 11, 1798.)

Hear the words of Benjamin Rush – *Signer of the Declaration of Independence.*

By renouncing the Bible, philosophers swing from their moorings upon all moral subjects. . . . It is the only correct map of the human heart that ever has been published. . . . All systems of religion, morals, and government not founded upon it [the Bible] must perish, and how consoling the thought, it will not only survive the wreck of these systems but the world itself. "The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." [Matthew 1:18] (Source: Benjamin Rush, *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, L. H. Butterfield, editor (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 936, to John Adams, January 23, 1807.)

Daniel Webster - *Early American Jurist and Senator*

[I]f we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.

(Source: Daniel Webster, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1903), Vol. XIII, p. 492. From "The Dignity and Importance of History," February 23, 1852.)

As we watch what's taking place in our country, there is certainly a parallel to Ezekiel's day. The idea of the biblical God in the public arena is being shoved farther and farther under the rug. Even a cross, said to be legal was stolen. Some want to do away with the National Day of Prayer. In government some are afraid to say who our enemy really is. We have to be politically correct for fear of offending someone.

In fact, the U.S. Constitution does not mention the separation of church and state. One of the purposes in designing the first amendment was to prevent the establishment of a preferred religious group. It does not in any way prohibit the free exercise of one's religion in public life.

These words, "separation of church and state" were used by Jefferson in responding to a letter sent to him in 1805 regarding his beliefs. He replied that they should stay in their places saying that there should be "a wall of separation between church and state." Of course those words today, have been taken out of context and used as a lightning rod to try to keep God out of the public square in different venues. The implication, being, that they are part of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

But then Jefferson said in his Inaugural Address in 1805 that there is a wall of separation around the church to protect it from any infringement by the federal government. He agreed with the founders not wanting there to be national church. It's interesting to note that the preamble of the Wisconsin Constitution recognizes God's presence in the state when it says that the people of Wisconsin are grateful to Almighty God for our freedom. I'm wondering if the Freedom from Religion Foundation has read that recently.

That's why we need to pray daily for our leaders and nation that there will be an understanding of and action to look to the biblical God for His wisdom so that we can continue to enjoy the freedoms of this great country. **There should be a National Day of Prayer every day.**

Only when the biblical God and His principles are followed for governing a people will we continue to have the freedoms we still enjoy in this country. Only the biblical God has created each of us equal, and has endowed us with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

2. The church.

Even in the so-called world of Christianity, some in the emergent church are departing from what the word of God actually teaches adding their own interpretations. There is an emphasis in some circles on seeking to make people feel good rather than pointing out that we are sinners in need of the Savior, Jesus Christ. I call it gospel light.

I'm not trying to be negative here, but only point out that when a nation fails to recognize who the biblical God is, and the church starts to depart from the truth of God's word, the downward slope like unto Israel is starting to take place. **"The Secret Place,"** the acknowledgment of God's presence " is being corrupted. Could God's glory, His presence, be in the process of leaving this country and some churches in our beloved land?

That's why we need to keep praying for a spiritual awakening in our country, and a revival in the church of Jesus Christ. We should be praying every day for our leaders, our country, yes, our world, as we see economic woes, and the desire among some to have a one world government.

3. Believers in Jesus Christ.

1. Know one's position.

For the believer in Jesus Christ, God is not living in buildings made with human hands. One day when Christ returns to earth at the end of the tribulation period, He will reign from Jerusalem in that millennial temple where His glory will fill the temple and the world.

The one who knows Jesus Christ today as personal Savior has the Lord living in him or her spiritually.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Yes. God, the Holy Spirit lives in the believer.

"Or do you not know, that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

The believer is also indwelt by God, the Father (I John 4:15).

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God."

The believer in Jesus Christ as personal Savior has God living in Him spiritually, actually the Trinity.

The believer is a temple of God, and the word temple is referring to the Old Testament HOLY OF HOLIES, the most inner sanctuary of the temple.

It is I believe the secret place of God's dwelling – which is in the believer in Jesus Christ.

That means that each of us here who knows the Lord as personal Savior, God lives in us.

We are GOD'S SECRET PLACE.

That's the believer's position in Christ. Each believer has God living in his or her life – the secret place.

Amazing, whether you have heard that for the first time or many times. God's person, His presence is alive spiritually in each believer in Jesus Christ.

2. Practice the presence of the Lord in your life.

The challenge for the follower of Jesus Christ is to take care, yes, daily care, (we are to take of the cross daily) of the secret place, one's life, or heart where Jesus lives spiritually.

How does believer take care of the secret place in his or her inner life daily where God lives spiritually?

(1) Enjoy fellowship with your Lord each day.

Philippians 3:10; Psalm 1; 73; Lamentations 3:22-24.

A daily personal time with the Lord is essential for the believer to take care of one's secret place.

A conscious awareness of God's presence in one's life during one's tasks during the day is also essential. God is only a thought away.

(2) Never get over the price that has been paid for God's redemption for you.

We just referred to I Corinthians 6:19 –20.

"For you are bought with a price."

The word bought, is the word, redeem – redeemed with a price. What price? The precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Peter tells us in his first letter that we have not been redeemed with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood as of lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

We deserve damnation. Christ comes and gives His life blood for us to satisfy God's righteous demands, so through faith in Christ we could be declared righteous, without any condemnation.

That's why the Lord has directed us to commemorate His table. We do that monthly here, but it is a time to see how we are doing in the secret place in our inner lives.

May we never get over that God has showed us mercy. The apostle Paul never got over that. At the end of his life in writing to Timothy in his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, "I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was more that abundant" (I Timothy 1:13-14).

Here is one of the greatest servants of God that has lived on planet earth, and toward that end of his life, he never got over the mercy of God shown to him. God's mercy, His great love for Paul, motivated him to serve the Lord with enthusiastic joy.

When we start taking our life with the Lord for granted just like Israel did of old, who forgot the price that was paid for their redemption from Egyptian bondage, some of God's glory will not be evident in our lives. We can start down the slippery slope into idolatry.

May we never take for granted God's redemption for us regardless of our age.

(3) Always realize who you belong to.

"Or do you not know, that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (I Corinthians 6:19).

Since the Lord paid the price for our redemption, we belong to Him. We are His property, so to speak, a part of His forever family.

That means wherever we are, whatever we are saying, whatever we are doing, we belong to the Lord. We are the chosen one's of God, a people for God's own possession (I Peter 2:9).

That's why when Paul reprimands some of the Corinthians about getting into immorality, he tells them to wake up to the reality that their body belongs to God. Immorality was sin. They need to get right with God and glorify God in their body.

(4) Have a living defense - Guard the secret place – Guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23).

"Watch over your heart (your mind, your inner being) with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life (your spiritual vitality).

That's why the Bible tells us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:14).

What Paul is saying is that Jesus Christ is the defense for the believer in HIM.

It involves guarding the mind – using the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith– using the mind of Christ. It involves guarding the emotion – using the breastplate of righteousness, and girded with truth – loving the Lord our God first.

It involves guarding the will – using the gospel shoes to do God's will and please Him every day.

Israel let it's defense of depending on God go. They eventually went into gross idolatry. It can happen to us if we don't have a living defense, Jesus Christ Himself.

(5) Be on the daily offensive (Ephesians 6:17-18).

What is our offensive weapon? Ephesians 6:17 tells us to take (imperative – command) the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. That also includes prayer (Ephesians 6:18).

No believer can survive in this old world that's no friend of grace without knowledge of the Word of God and using the Word of God on a daily basis, while involved in daily prayer.

Have some verses memorized that you can use to thwart off the temptations of the old nature, the world, and the devil himself. How did Jesus defeat the evil one when tempted by him? He used the WORD OF GOD (cf. Matthew 4:1-11). Use such verses as I Peter 1:16; Philippians 4:13; Galatians 6:9; Philippians 4:19; John 17:17; Philippians 4:6-8.

Use the Word of God when temptations come. Be on the offensive.

(6) Stay alert at all times (I Peter 5:8).

We need rest physically, but spiritually, believers can go on vacation or go into neutral. Peter learned the hard way of not being alert at all times spiritually. That's why he denied his Lord. Why he floated in idolatry, for he trusted in himself rather than the Lord when the chips were down.

His words speak volumes: "Be sober – (Be vigilant – imperative). Be on the alert (Be awake (spiritually), Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8).

That is satan wants to cause believers in Christ to become casualties. Devour means to drown or swallow up the believer's testimony.

(7) Keep your eye on the goal (Titus 2:11-13).

Paul told Titus that the grace of God had appeared bringing salvation to all men (the incarnation of Jesus Christ). The grace of God was instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED HOPE AND THE APPEARING OF THE GLORY OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR, CHRIST JESUS (Titus 2:11-13).

Live in the light of Christ's any moment return. LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED HOPE !!!!

(8) Finish well (I Timothy 4:7-8).

Paul wrote in his last letter, which was to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me , but also to all those who have loved His appearing" (II Timothy 4:7-8).

Such only happens as the believer takes daily care of the secret place in one's inner life in one's personal relationship with the LORD!!

When the secret place is not taken care of the believer may if not careful end up like Israel, where the glory of the Lord, in one sense has departed, because that individual's life no long pleases the Lord or glorifies Him.

Yes, old soldiers never die, they just fade away.

Such is true of the physical life.

But it's not true for the believer who daily takes care of his secret place with his Lord.

What does the Paul tell the Corinthians?

Though the outward man is decaying – yes, fades away losing its human glory given by the LORD, the inner man is being renewed day by day (II Corinthians 4:16).

In other words, the glory of the LORD in a believer's life, who takes care daily of the secret place, has the glory of the LORD shining through his or her life.

In fact, I believe this is what the man of Proverbs meant when he penned,

**"A gray head is a crown of glory. It is found in the way of righteousness." (Proverbs 16:31).
"The glory of young men is their strength. And the honor of old men is their gray hair." (Proverbs 20:29).**

Those who guard the secret place given evidence by their gray hair that they have been walking with the Lord – finishing well.

May we learn from the nation of Israel that we need to take care daily of the "secret place" lest we fall into idolatry and not be able to show forth the glory of God in our attitudes, words, and actions.

The story is told of the man who was the keeper of the spring. The reason he was there was to take care of the filtering system that the town had constructed to make sure that the water that was used from there was healthy drinking water.

The town that used the spring was lower than the spring so the filtered water that was used was piped into the town water tower for use.

The keeper of the spring did his job faithfully each day making sure that the water was healthy for drinking and other purposes.

Things went along well for a time. Then the community started having trouble financially. So the town leaders met to see how they could cut some of their expenses. Eventually, they started talking about the money spent to keep the keeper of the spring on the job. Since everything was A-okay with the water, they decided to discontinue the keeper of the spring's job. Such was a good move approved by the town leaders.

Time went by but soon it was discovered that people in the town were becoming sick. It was not just one or two, but a number of town folk became sick.

Research was done to find out where the trouble was. Eventually, they traced the problem to the drinking water. They discovered that they had discontinued the keeper of the spring's job.

Immediately, they contacted him, and he soon had the filtering equipment up and running, and eventually the town had clean and safe drinking water again. The sickness never returned again.

You and I are the keepers of the springs, yes, of our lives. Idols of various forms will try to cause us to discontinue taking care of our spring, our secret place with the LORD.

We not must yield!

- ◆ **Enjoy fellowship with our Lord on a daily basis.**
- ◆ **Never forget that you have been redeemed at the greatest price – Christ's blood.**
- ◆ **Always remember you belong to God.**
- ◆ **Use the eternal defense – Christ.**
- ◆ **Use the eternal offense- God's Word**
- ◆ **Stay spiritual awake at all times. If you do sin, God will forgive if you confess your sin. Then you are to keep following Him.**
- ◆ **Keep your eye on the goal – Christ's any moment return.**
- ◆ **Finish well – God will reward!**

Let's in the power of the Holy Spirit do all to the glory of God!!!

