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Grace Evangelical Church
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"When Man Gets The Glory"
Ezekiel 12-14**

"What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form, in moving, how express and admirable – in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god (So penned Shakespeare through the character, Hamlet).

In spite of man's ability to think and reason, in spite of his dexterity, and in spite of his handsome form, in spite of all his accomplishments, he is still limited in what he can do.

Man's days, though, according to Peter are like grass. As the flower of the field flourishes. When the wind passes over it, it is no more.

One would think that man's fleeting life would cause him to wake up to the reality that he isn't as great as he may think he is.

In our world today, such is not the case. For who in the public arena receives the glory today?

It is man in his reason that is god - that receives the glory. Such is called humanism.

One writer says this about humanism. Humanism is that which relies on reason. Such qualities as courage, love, and perseverance provide emotional drive for successfully coping with difficulties, but it is reason that finds the actual solution.

What humanism says, then, is that people shape their own destiny. They rely on themselves in all situations. No supernatural power is involved. Sometimes there may be a little adding of a dab of religion in the mix,

Did you hear what Ted Turner said about the oil leak in the Gulf? "I'm not a real religious person, but I'm somewhat religious. And I'm just wondering if God is telling us he doesn't want us to drill offshore,"

Interesting how God is brought into the midst of humanistic thinking when a certain agenda is being promoted.

No criticism that I heard from the mainstream media regarding bringing God into the picture.

But when all is said and done, man really gets the glory in our world today. His reason remains supreme. He starts with himself and ends with himself.

This was basically Israel's emphasis in the time of Ezekiel when he ministered to those in Babylonian exile around 590 B.C.

Ezekiel told the people of Israel that they needed to repent and turn to the Lord because of their disobedience to God. They would not listen to the priest, prophet, and watchman of Israel. The people continued to give man the glory rather than the true and living God.

The question I ask when man is given the glory rather than God is this:

"What happens in a society when man gets the glory?"

Our text today provides us some answers.

When man gets the glory . . .

I. He thinks all things will continue as they are (Ezekiel 12:22-27).

1. Man's thinking.

Note the words, "The vision is for many years from now, and he prophesies of times far off" (12:27). Ezekiel was saying that the judgment of God was coming upon Israel for their disobedience.

Instead of taking heed to God's message, the people were saying that the time of any kind of judgment was far off. It will not come.

Later in New Testament times the same idea was prevalent.

Peter tells us about it in his second letter concerning the second coming of Christ.

"Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as it was from the beginning of creation" (II Peter 3:4).

In Ezekiel's day (590 B. C.), and

In Peter's day (A.D. 65).

Skepticism about the promises of God were prominent.

God's delay caused the people to think that all things would continue as they were.

Such thinking today has taken on the description of uniformitarianism, which is man's idea that the natural laws and processes have never yet been interrupted. All things will continue as they are now and in the future because of the past.

The past, then, is used to interpret the present and the future. Therefore we don't need to fear the future.

This is the whole basis of the evolutionary theory today. Man looks at how slowly erosion and other developments have taken place. That being the case, it must have taken millions and millions of years for our planet and life to come into existence.

So instead of acknowledging any kind of God involvement, man just keeps on trusting his reason, thinking that all things will continue as they are.

2. The biblical God's response.

What is the biblical God's response?

God used Ezekiel to give another sign to the people of impending judgment if they tried to escape from it. The LORD directed Ezekiel to prepare baggage for exile, and then go out at night, dig a hole through a wall and go through it as if he were escaping. He was to cover his face so that He could not see (Ezekiel 12:1-7). It was to be sign to those who would try to escape captivity in Jerusalem, but would be captured in the process, and taken to Babylon as blind men.

What did God say about those who were saying God's judgment was far off in time?

Note Ezekiel 12:25, "I will no longer be delayed, for in your days I shall speak the word and perform it. "

Then Ezekiel 12:28, "None of my words shall be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed."

Nebuchadnezzar came in 586 B.C. and took the rest of the inhabitants in Jerusalem captive to Babylon. Another sign that God told Ezekiel to carry out was to eat his meals in fear and trembling (12:18) to warn the people of this coming judgment.

What does God say today to those who deny the coming of Christ – saying that all things will continue as they do now?

II Peter 3:5 – God has created the world – there is His direct intervention.

II Peter 3:6 – God brought the flood and the world perished, so God directly disrupted His laws!!

So Christ will come and bring His intervention into the world bringing His judgment.

The God of the Old and New Testaments is clearly stating that man's idea of uniformitarianism is not true.

In fact, the second law of thermodynamics states that any isolated system will go from order to disorder, or the availability of energy decreases.

Hebrews 1:10-11(Psalm 102:25) tells us that the Lord creates the earth and the heaven, but they will perish. They will become old like a garment, and as a mantle you will roll they up. Like a garment they will also be changed, but you are the same, and Your years will not come to an end."

When man gets the glory, his reason is supreme there is:

- (1) No Creator**
- (2) No intervention of God into history.**
- (3) No promises of God that are true and completely reliable.**

Of course just the opposite is true.

(1) The biblical God is the Creator (Genesis 1;1FF).

(2) The biblical God has intervened into time.

He brought the flood. He brought judgment upon Israel, and then returned the nation to its land.

Jesus Christ became incarnate. God has intervened into time.

(3) The biblical God's promises are true.

Promises of Christ's first coming came true as the prophets predicted. His second coming will also come true based upon God's unchanging word.

Sometimes it seems that God should be quicker in fulfilling His promises.

But II Peter 3:8-9 tells us that God has delayed His promises so that people will have an opportunity to respond to Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

"God is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

In Ezekiel's day God was giving His people time to respond to the message of repentance. In that sense, God was delaying His judgment.

God is still giving people an opportunity today to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith. He is delaying His coming for that very reason.

3. Our response.

This is a great reminder for all of us.

**Those needing salvation, the Scripture says that today is the day of salvation (II Corinthians 6:2).

**If you need to make some changes in your spiritual life, in relationships, or in some decision you are trying to make.

God tells us to "Redeem the time, for the days are evil" (Galatians 5:16).

An incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops in Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game was finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed and the rest of the regiment were capture.

Nolbert Quayle said, "Only a few minutes' delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and unexecuted resolutions.

'Tomorrow' is the excuse of the lazy and refuge of the incompetent."

Gloria Pitzer has written this clever little poem:

**Procrastination is my sin
It brings me naught but sorrow.
I know that I should stop it
In fact, I will...tomorrow.**

When man gets the glory, he thinks all things will continue as they are. Time is on his side.

When God gets the glory, the follower of Christ obeys God's word now. Teaches one's children to obey the Lord now. Lives one's life in light of eternity not in light of time.

When man gets the glory, he things all things will continue as they are.

Secondly, when man gets the glory,

II. Every life-style is acceptable – no moral compass (Ezekiel 13).

1. Morality and the value of life are turned upside down (Exodus 13:18-22).

This chapter deals with those who were false prophets representing the false gods, and the false prophets who were speaking lies in the name of the LORD God of Israel.

They were caught up on the world of idols and the occult following their own spirits (13:3), and were having false visions and lying divination (13:6-7).

Note as well more of their actions (Ezekiel 13:18-22).

The sorceresses were using their occult powers to put curses on the innocent and promising life to the law breakers. What's happening here?

Right was wrong and wrong was right.

Think about what takes place in country regarding abortion. The lack of understanding of what gives true value to physical life. The entire illegal immigration fiasco in our country is cause for grave concern. Laws already on the books are not enforced. Think about what is glorified on television? Lawlessness and immorality.

2. Wickedness was encouraged (Ezekiel 13:22).

Note the text.

"Because you disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief, but have encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way and preserve his life . . ."

We live in a day when sex outside of marriage is not immoral. In fact to some marriage is passe. Same sex arrangement,(for it's not marriage biblically) is not immoral. Man wants to live his life without any consequences. He promotes condoms and wants same sex arrangement to be legal the same as marriage between a man and woman.

Seventeen colleges, including Princeton and Yale, are offering students the choice of co-ed dorm rooms this fall. That takes the total number of colleges and universities that have the arrangement to more than 50.

Caleb Price, social research analyst for Citizenlink, said the policies were initially promoted by gay and transgender activists, but have recently become more mainstream.

"There's a politically correct move to deconstruct gender and sex in all arenas of society," he said, "with college housing being just one test laboratory for this social experiment."

Man has justified gambling as a way to raise money for state purposes. I was listening this week to a man on the radio who had become deeply involved in gambling regarding the National Basketball Association teams – sports betting. Eventually, he was caught and sent to prison for 13 months. He lost his wife and four daughters. Now he is trying to rebuild his life and relationship with his family. Yes, gambling encourages greed, materialism, and discontent. It discourages honest labor, encourages “get rich quick” thinking, and encourages the reckless investment of God-given resources.

The odds of winning the lotto jackpot are 14 million to 1 – better odds of getting hit by lightning.

3. A false sense of peace was promoted (13:9-16).

(1) The message of the false prophets.

The false prophets are telling Israel that there will be peace (13:10).

They see visions of peace (13:16).

No war or judgment is coming. All will be well.

(2) The reality of what was going to happen.

Regardless of what the false prophets in Jerusalem were saying, God’s judgment was about to come upon the city for their disobedience to the Lord. The false prophets whitewashed over what was really going to take place.

They see visions of peace when there is no peace (13:16).

Man’s desire is still to somehow have world peace. The middle East is always a concern. The constant desire our administration has for a peace accord between Israel and the PLO continues to be an on-going scenario. North Korea has flexed its muscles again by attacking a South Korean ship. Iran continues to be a threat as it keeps on with its development of a nuclear weapon. Then the economic crisis in Greece and other European countries having economic challenges along with the United States, remind us that the world is in need of some kind of peace. In all of this, there has been a mention of a one world currency and even a brief mention of some kind of one world order.

Of course, all these happenings are paving the way for the Antichrist to come on the scene, and with his charismatic personality unite the world into a one world economic system, a one world government, even a one world religious system, as he will work closely with the one world false church.

The Antichrist will bring a false peace for his rule will be identified by everyone taking his mark in order to buy or sell. In the middle of the tribulation period (3 ½ years) he will turn on the one world church and then set himself up in the temple as god demanding worship. Eventually, his power and the power of others will be ultimately put down by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, when He returns to earth at the end of the tribulation.

Only Jesus Christ can give us as individuals personal peace with God (Romans 5:1), and with one another (Ephesians 4:32). Only Jesus will bring true peace to our world in His time.

When man is glorified, he thinks all things will continue as they are now. In the process he loses his moral compass.

But thirdly, when man is glorified,

III. Every belief is acceptable (Ezekiel 14:13-14, 16, 18).

The elders in exile, hearing Ezekiel’s message, came to him, for they were anxious about Jerusalem’s future, and asked Ezekiel about it

Israel still seemed to think that they might escape God’s judgment. After all, as this chapter indicates, some had faith in the Lord and some were involved in direct idolatry.

In fact the elders who came to Ezekiel were involved deeply in idolatry. They had set up idols in their heart (14:3).

What was happening is that the elders thought that they could have God's help and have their idols as well.

They had become so blinded by their own trust in themselves and their idols that they had forgotten how holy God was.

The elders thought that they could mix their beliefs – idolatry with the true and living God, for every belief was acceptable.

Note the outcome of such thinking.

(1) One's beliefs aren't that important to God. The important thing is to have faith. The object of one's faith is not important. You believe what you want and I will believe what I want. We can believe in idols and have some concept of God.

(2) God will treat all people the same (14:14).

Evidently the thinking was that the righteous and the unrighteous would be delivered from the coming judgment.

Yes, all will be delivered by God, who is a God of love, which idea is still prevalent today!

But God declares that the righteous, men like Noah, Daniel, and Job, could not deliver the unrighteous by their righteousness.

(3) All beliefs can be one big happy family (14:16).

God continues to remind the people through Ezekiel that men like Noah, Daniel, and Job, righteous men, could not deliver the unrighteous by their righteousness, even their sons and daughters who were unrighteous.

What did Paul say in the full revelation on Mars Hill to the philosophers at Athens in the midst of idolatry?

". . . . the Divine nature is not like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man who He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:29-31).

One's beliefs, then, are important to the biblical God. He is the true object for faith through Jesus Christ. God loves all people but they have a responsibility before Him. For Jesus Christ makes the difference and is the one each person must accept as personal Savior to escape the eternal judgment of God.

There can be no mixing of men's idolatry and ideas with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God is only available through faith in Him.

Each individual is responsible to God for making that decision, that commitment to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and eternal life. No one can make that decision for you.

In one of the churches we pastored , we had a cleaning lady with whom I would talk to about the Lord. She would tell me that I should put a good word in for her.

Each of us must make that personal decision to accept Christ as one's Savior.

The gospel of Jesus Christ can't be mixed with any other idea of man. One is justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Sola Scripture. Sola Christ, Sola Grace. Sola faith.

When man gets the glory, he thinks

1. Everything will continue as it is.

2. Every life-style is acceptable – no moral compass.

3. Every belief is acceptable.

How do we as followers of Christ not glorify man or ourselves, but glorify the Lord in our lives?

Paul gives us the answer in Romans 15:1-6.

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME."

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The key to not glorifying man or pleasing ourselves is in the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives seek to please the LORD in all we think, say, and do.

Then God will be glorified in and through us!!!

Bob Welch tells the story when he and a photographer left home on a three-day newspaper assignment. They were bound for Columbia Gorge where the Columbia River carves a mile-wide path between Washington and Oregon; where he would be far from the world of 9 to 5 deadlines, routines, errands, and rushing kids to baseball practices, and making sure that he hadn't left any socks on the bedroom floor.

He continued that it hadn't been a perfect farewell. They were all tired, cranky and spiritually about a quart low.

He had been busy getting ready for his trip; his wife, Sally, had been busy fretting because his three days of freedom were going to mean for her three days of extra responsibility.

His 8 year old asked him if he were going to come to his class sing on Thursday night. He told his son that he was sorry for he would be out of town. He gave his wife, Sally, a quick kiss, and was on his way.

For the next couple of days despite the threat of rain, Bob and his photographer friend explored the gorge: thousand-foot walls of rising on either side of the Columbia.

Along with the land and water being intriguing, the windsurfers, the sailboarders were as well. There were thousands of them spending days on the water, their nights on the town, their mornings in bed. Every fourth car had a license from all over the country – a board on top. Others were well-established yuppies there for a week of vacation.

He asked himself, "Where had I gone wrong?"

On our last night, the cloudy weather continued, and my mood needed sunshine.

As he stared out the motel window at the river below, Bob felt a sort of emptiness, as if he didn't belong. Not here. Not home. Not anywhere.

Just as the winds of the gorge were whipping the river into whitecaps, so were the winds of freedom buffeting his beliefs. God. Marriage. Children. Work. He had anchored his life on such things, and yet now found himself slipping.

Bob asked himself, "Have I made a mistake? Have I sold out to the rigors of responsibility? Someday, when I was older, would I regret not having gone with the wind?"

He was getting read for bed when he spotted it – a greeting card in his suitcase, buried beneath some clothes.

It was from Sally. Picturing cows, the card simply said, "I'll love you till the cows come home."

Bob stared at the card, repeating the words to himself. He looked at the same handwriting he'd seen on love letters, on a marriage certificate, on two birth certificates, on a will.

Something inside of him melted.

His wife's promise refocused his blurry perspective. In an instant, he knew where he belonged.

The next day, after a two hour interview, a six-hour drive, and a three-block sprint, he arrived at his son's school, anxious and out of breath.

He rushed into the cafeteria. It was jammed. He weaved his way through the crowd of parents to get a glimpse of the kids on stage.

That's when Bob heard them - 25 first-grade voices trying desperately to hit notes five years away.

"The sun will come out, tomorrow, bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun."

Finally, he spotted his son Jason on the front row. He was singing, but with less enthusiasm than when he's been told to clean his room.

Suddenly his eyes shifted his dad's way, and his face lit up. He had seen his dad.

In the sea of faces, Bob caught sight of Sally and his other son. After the program, the four of them rendezvoused. He felt no emptiness, only connectedness.

As Bob closed the story he said this, "For me, having it all wasn't in following the wind. It was there with three people who awaited my return. I had come home." (From "More To Life Than Having It All, by Bob Welch).

Following the wind, one glorifies, pleases, oneself that leads to the way of separation from God.

Letting God's love fill your heart through faith in Jesus, empowers you to please Him in all that you do where He is truly glorified, and your destiny is His presence.

May that be true in our lives this week!!!

