

WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT ON THE ROAD TO HELL

EZEKIEL 21:8-10 • TV116A

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Ezekiel 21:8-10

“Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth?”

I want you to open your Bible today to the book of **Ezekiel**. I’m going to be reading two verses of Scripture found in **Ezekiel 21, beginning with verse 8**.

I have a very solemn subject today. I will be speaking to you on the subject: “**WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT ON THE ROAD TO HELL.**” It is a very solemn warning voiced by the prophet Ezekiel.

In **Chapter 21:8**; let me read this text to you: *“The word of the Lord came to me; son of man prophecy, and say, thus saith the Lord, a sword is sharpened and polished. It is sharpened that it may make a great slaughter. It is polished that it may glitter (flash like lightning). Shall we then rejoice; shall we then make mirth (make merry)?”*

My friend; Ezekiel, while only a young man, was taken captive along with many of his friends by Nebuchadnezzar and he was placed by the river Kedar and there he prophesied for 22 years in captivity. He spoke to Israel for God. He sent messages of mercy and he sent messages of warning.

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But, the prophecies he delivered were not heard and in the seventh year of his captivity, just three years before God destroyed Jerusalem and the temple was burned down, God spoke a special message to Israel by the mouth of this prophet Ezekiel, a message of warning, and a fearful message.

He said: *“Son of man; prophesy and say, thus saith the Lord I sharpen my sword; there’s going to be a great slaughter. I’ll polish my sword that it may flash and glitter like lightning.”*

Well, these messages were sent to Jerusalem by this lone prophet down by the riverside, but they did not hear. They ignored every prophecy. They ignored every warning of the wrath to come.

The Scripture says, *“It was a time of great hardness of heart, a time of great indifference in the land of Israel.”* And this indifference was marked by three things:

First of all: Everything was mirth and sensuality!

The people were making merry. The people were given to materialism. They were given to fun and games and they were given to materialism. The Scripture says, *“Everything, was mirth and sensuality.”*

Secondly: The prophets and preachers of that day were crying *“peace, peace!”*

What was remarkable was that the people liked to have it so. They didn’t want to hear the truth. They didn’t want to hear this man who spoke for God; they wanted to hear the man who said, “everything is all right.”

Ezekiel said: “Everything is not all right,” but they didn’t want to hear him. The prophets of the people cried *“peace, peace.”* Even though there was no peace, they liked to have it so.

The third mark or state of this utter indifference and hardness of heart was this: First of all everything was mirth and sensuality. Secondly, the prophets did not cry out against it; they did not warn the people. They were not faithful to the people. They talked only of love and not of wrath. They talked only of mercy and not of righteousness.

Thirdly: The House of God was no longer a house of prayer but it was a house of ritualism, ceremonialism and dead religion!

This lone prophet described by Charles Haddon Spurgeon as the lone prophet by the river heard the thunder of approaching judgment. He saw God arming Himself for war. He saw the glittering sword of justice in God’s hand and he cried out.

“The sword of the Lord is sharpened; the sword of the Lord is polished. There’s going to be a great slaughter. Shall we continue to rejoice, shall we continue to make merry? Shall we continue to cry peace, peace, when there is no peace?”

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We've reached the point of no return; prepare to meet God. Is not our day much like that day? Are we not in the same situation as Jerusalem of old?

When I read this prophecy and when I studied these marks of indifference and hardness of heart I thought that's the perfect description of our day. Is not everything today fun and games? Is not our day marked by mirth and sensuality?

Everything's a joke. Old age is a joke. Death is a joke. Heaven's a joke. Hell is a joke. Anytime people talk about preachers, they make a joke about him. When they talk about church they have to make a joke about it.

Men do not hesitate to make light of the most sacred things that we know anything about. Everything is fun and games. Everything is a joke. Our whole day is given to entertainment and materialism; that's the mark of this day.

That was the mark of indifference and hardness of heart in the days of Ezekiel. In this day of Jerusalem's doom, just preceding its destruction and the burning of the temple. Everything was mirth and sensuality and that's the mark of 1980.

Secondly: The preachers; what did they cry in Ezekiel's day, "*peace, peace, when there was no peace.*"

God was at war. God was just on the verge of bringing total destruction upon these people. And down there among the people the preachers were saying "God is love; everything's all right, all is well."

Where were the sons of thunder, where are they now? Where are the voices of warning, where are they now? Where was the conviction of sin, where is it now? Where were the cries for mercy, where are they now?

God is love, God is Holy, God is gracious, God is merciful, and He surely is. God is wrath and God is just and God is righteous and God, "*will by no means clear the guilty.*" God will deal with men according to His justice and His righteousness.

And we may go on crying "peace, peace," to this generation, but my friends, the Scripture says: There is no peace outside of Christ. Christ is the Prince of peace. He's the king of peace. He's the only one who can bring peace.

Outside of Christ there is nothing but wrath and judgment; "*Our God is a consuming fire,*" outside of Christ Jesus.

What is the third mark of this state of utter indifference just before God steps in in wrath and judgment? Everything is mirth and sensuality. The preachers cry "*peace, peace,*" all is well, when all is not well.

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Thirdly: The house of God was no longer a house of prayer and it was no longer a place of worship!

But, our Lord, when he drove out the money changers said: *“You’ve made my house a den of thieves.”*

What’s the church today? Describe the church today as you see it. I’ll describe it as I see it; I see the church today as big business. Money is more important than the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

Numbers, the number of people attending is far more important than the presence and power of the Spirit of the living God. The church today is big business. The church today is a social club. The church today is a place of singing and entertainment. God said, *“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”*

Is it a house of prayer? Is it a house of meditation? Is it a house of worship? Is it a house where God meets with His people and speaks to their hearts and exhorts them and strengthens them and inspires them? Is that the house of God today? No sir! It’s big business; *“it’s a den of thieves.”*

The mark of this day is *“eat, drink, and be merry”* as it was in the days of Noah. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, *“they ate and drank and they married and given in marriage and did not know until the flood came and took them all away.”*

This is the day of indifference, it’s the day of hardness of heart and everything is fun and games, materialism. Everything is given to sensuality, satisfying and pleasing and pampering this flesh. And the preachers are crying: *“All is well, peace, peace.”*

We have one of the greatest religious revivals known to mankind (and that’s true too). There’s not much spirituality but a lot of religion, not much presence of God, but a lot of noise because the house of God is no longer a house of prayer, it’s no longer a place where men go to meet God; *“it’s now a den of thieves,”* its big business.

It’s a social club; it’s where men go to meet one another. We may have passed the point of no return; I do not know. Maybe this is the lone prophet by the riverside crying out, swimming against the stream, saying what nobody else is saying or dares to say.

The day may be spent, the night may be drawing near, and the day of grace may be over. The dark clouds of God’s wrath may be gathering. His sword may be right now, *“sharpened for a great slaughter. It may be polished that it shall flash and glitter like lightning.”*

The voice ought to be heard. God is sharpening His sword. Hell is moving up to meet you at your coming and He says: *“These shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous unto life everlasting.”* That is why I am bringing this message, *“when the lights go out on the road to hell.”*

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My friend; judgment, condemnation, and the wrath of God are not pleasant subjects and they usually meet with much opposition from the natural man.

And it may be that someone's already turned off his television set and he says: "I don't want to hear these things." Well, they didn't want to hear Ezekiel either. They wouldn't hear him. He cried out in the seventh year of his captivity; "God is sharpening His sword. God's arming Himself for war. There's going to be a great slaughter. Three years later the city fell and the temple was burned and the people were destroyed.

This may be the voice that God is using in this day, I do not know but you'd better listen. Sure we have a message of mercy but we also have a message of warning. Sure we have the good news that Christ died for sinners, but we have the message of warning, if sinners do not find Christ to be their refuge and hiding place and secret dwelling place. They are going to have to deal with the wrath of a Holy God.

I want to point out several things today that I think are important. There are several reasons for preaching judgment. I would rather preach grace but there are several reasons for preaching judgment. I would rather preach mercy and love and salvation by the blood of Christ Jesus but there are reasons for preaching eternal punishment and the first reason is this:

First of all: It's in the Bible!

Now, that's a good reason isn't it? We are told to "*preach the word,*" not the part of the Word that appeals to us, not the part of the Word that we think will appeal to the people but we are told to "*preach the Word.*"

And judgment for sin is not the invention of men; it is taught in the Word of God. Endless hell is in the Bible just as often as endless heaven; did you know that? Well, why do we talk all the time about endless heaven and we have nothing to say about endless hell?

Secondly: There's another reason why judgment for sin ought to be preached and eternal punishment, it's because it's not possible for a man to accept (or believe) part of the Bible and not believe the entire Bible.

Can you accept the mercy of God and reject the justice of God? Can you accept the love of God and reject the wrath of God? "*He that believeth on the Son of God hath life. He that believeth not the Son of God hath not life but the wrath of God abideth on him.*"

What do you want to do, cut that verse in two and just quote some of it? "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord,*" to everyone who believes in Christ Jesus.

Now, what do we do? Do we just quote half of it and leave off the other half? Well, that's not honest. What kind of spiritual leader is it that only tells people part of the truth? Paul said: "*I*

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kept back nothing profitable unto you: I have not shunned to declare unto you all (the whole) council of God.” It’s not right to withhold that which is true from those to whom we preach.

One morning about 7:30 or 8:00 my telephone rang and the lady on the other end of the line said, “My sister-in-law is threatening to jump off the bridge in Ashland, (the bridge that crosses between Ashland, Ky. and Cole Grove, Ohio over the Ohio river) she listens to you on the radio occasionally and it may be that you will be able to help her or persuade her against her committing suicide. She’s on her way to the bridge now.”

So, I got in my car and drove down to the bridge and I parked and I waited until I saw a lady start walking up the walkway, up the center of the bridge. I got out of the car and followed her.

She stopped right in the middle of the bridge and started looking over the edge and I slipped up behind her and took her by the arm in a very firm grip and I began to talk to her.

She said: “Why don’t you go off and leave me alone.” I told her who I was and she said: “Oh, I’ve listened to you on the radio but she said I’m not a believer; I’m not a Christian.”

She told me about how unhappy her life was, how unhappy her married life was and how unhappy she was with her children and how all of these things had just piled up and forced her to the point of suicide.

She said: “There’s nothing you can do to stop me, not a thing, so you may as well go on and leave me alone.” But I said: “I wish you wouldn’t.” I talked to her about Christ and the Gospel and salvation and nothing seemed to help.

Finally, I said: “Well, my dear lady; if you kill yourself in unbelief, without knowing God in Christ Jesus, you are going to hell.” She looked at me and her eyes popped with fire and she said: “I don’t believe in hell.”

Well, I turned loose of her arm and I was hoping this would get results. I stepped back and said: “Well, jump and find out; you will find out five seconds after you leave this bridge whether there’s a hell or not.”

She said: “Do you really think there’s a hell?” I said: “The Bible teaches that there is a hell and I fear the wrath of God. You better fear the wrath and judgment of God too. *“By the fear of God men depart from evil.”*”

She said: “I still don’t believe there’s a hell.” I said: “Well, try and find out.” She said: “I don’t want to.” I said: “Well, let’s go home. Will you go home with me and you and my wife and I will talk it over and read the Word of God and pray together and she did.

But my friend; I wouldn’t be honest with people if I didn’t tell them that God is going to punish sin. I wouldn’t be telling you the truth if I told you everything was love and no wrath, that

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everything is mercy and no judgment, everything is grace and no righteousness. God will punish sin!

Secondly: Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is responsible for the doctrine of hell!

This is not the invention of the apostle Paul. In fact, Paul said very little about it. Christ is the one that talked about hell, judgment, and eternal condemnation. A man who denies endless punishment and eternal death, his conflict is not with the preacher.

You may feel like your conflict is with me but it's not. It's like Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira: *"You haven't lied to me; you've lied to the Holy Spirit."* Your conflicts with God, not with me and your argument's not with the messenger; it's with the one who sent the message.

There's no need to get angry at the preacher. Your anger is against God almighty. Christ is the one that taught this doctrine of hell. Listen to him in **Matthew 5:22**; now listen to the Word of God:

Christ said: *"Whosoever shall say thy fool shall be in danger of hell fire."* In **Matthew 10:28**, He said: *"Fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."* **Matthew 23:33**, He said to the Pharisees: *"You generation of vipers; how can you escape the damnation of hell?"*

In **Mark 9:43 through 48** He talked about: *"If your right hand offend you, if your right foot offend you, if your right eye offend you cut them off, pluck them out. It's better to go through life with one eye or one hand or one foot than to have two to be cast into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched."*

In **Luke 16:22** he talked about, *"the rich man who died and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment."* And he said: *"Father Abraham; send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and touch my tongue, I am tormented in this flame."*

This is Christ speaking. This is not a fanatical, radical, street-corner preacher; this is Christ Jesus the Lord talking. And your conflicts are not with me or any other preacher who dares to warn you of the certainty of death and the certainty of judgment and the eternity of hell; it's Christ that taught this.

And in that story that he gave about the rich man in hell; he told us some things about hell, if you want to know some things about hell. Everybody seems to be taken up with the fire in hell but that's the least of our worries. I'm not sure it's literal fire anyway but it doesn't make any difference.

First of all: Our Lord said: "Hell is a place of memory that causes the heart to ache and break and grieve, memory"

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He said: *“Son; remember, remember, in your lifetime you had good things and now you are tormented.”* Just spend your time remembering. Spend eternity remembering all the good things, the opportunity, the privileges that won’t be there now.

Secondly: And then hell is not only a place of memory; it’s a place of truth realized too late!

This man in hell, he said: *“I’ve got five brothers on the earth. Warn them that they come not to this awful place.”* He wasn’t concerned about that awful place when he was like you and me full of life and vitality but he found it out too late, truth realized too late.

Thirdly: Hell is a place of great suffering, suffering of soul and body, not just bodily suffering but soul agony.

Fourthly: Hell is a place of no return! Our Lord said: *“Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed. No one can cross from there here or from here there.”* That’s hell. Hell is darkness. Hell is separation from God. Hell is eternal sin and eternal darkness.

Fifthly: Hell is a place of unfulfilled lust! *“He that is filthy let him be filthy still. He that is unholy let him be unholy still.”*

The doctrine of judgment and hell is based on three cardinal facts. Now, I want you to get this; I want you to listen very closely to me. The doctrine of hell, the doctrine of eternal punishment is based on three cardinal truths. If these three things are not true, there’s no defense for eternal punishment, eternal condemnation.

There’s no defense of preaching. There’s no reason for preaching if these things are not true but they are true and hell is based on these three facts:

First of all: God is holy, God is just, and God is righteous!

The Lord said: *“The soul that sinneth it shall die.”* He said, *“Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.”* He says, *“The wages of sin is death.”* He said, *“I will by no means clear the guilty.”* God has given a law which must be honored.

God almighty has set forth a righteous judgment that must be satisfied and His righteousness and His holiness and His justice is more important than any individual or any groups of individuals for His character is the foundation of His throne. God is and shall be, always shall be holy, holy.

“Who shall approach unto his presence, he that hath clean hands and a pure heart?” Now, the way our hands are cleansed and our hearts are purified is not in our own merit but in Christ’s. And outside of Christ God has got to deal with us in justice and righteousness.

We don’t want justice. We want what the Publican in the temple wanted, mercy. Hell is an eternal punishment and is based on this foundation; God will punish sin because God must punish sin, because God is holy.

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Secondly: Sin is a voluntary act, that's right; sin is a voluntary act!

"This is condemnation, that light is come into this world and men love darkness rather than light." It's voluntary. No man is forced to do evil. Christ said, "They hated me without a cause."

The Scripture says in **James 1:13 and 14:** *"Let no man say I am tempted of God." Every man is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own lust.* Lust bringeth forth sin, sin bringeth forth death, and death bringeth forth hell. Sin is a voluntary act!

These three things are the foundation of eternal condemnation. God is holy, man is sinful, willingly sinful, and voluntarily sinful and:

Thirdly: God spared not his own Son!

Now, you go to Calvary and you will see the will of God to save sinners. *"God so loved the world that he gave his Son. God sent his Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them born under the law."*

You go to Calvary you will see God's purpose to save. If you go to Calvary you will see the love of God for sinners and the love of Christ for sinners: *"Having loved his own which were in the world. He loved them even unto the end."*

He said: *"No man takes my life from me; I lay it down. I have the power to take it up and the power to lay it down."* If you will go to the cross you will see the price paid for redemption, the life of God's Son, the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh what a price!

**"Jesus paid it all
All the debt I owe
Sin left a crimson stain
He washed it as white as snow."**

But, my friends, also if you will stay at Calvary long enough you will learn something else, that God will punish sin, even when it's found on His only begotten, well-beloved Son. Do you see that?

If God spared not His own Son, who was not a sinner by nature, who was not a sinner by choice, who was not a sinner by practice, who knew no sin, but was a sinner by representation, who was a sinner by imputation, who was a sinner standing in the stead of another, if God wouldn't spare Him; will He spare you, me and the rebels of this world? Not hardly!

Last of all: There is plenty of light on the road to hell, there's plenty of light!

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Paul said to King Agrippa: *“This wasn’t done in a corner;”* you know about it, you’ve heard about it. You’ve taken the name of salvation itself in vain.

You have struck your thumb with a hammer and cried: “Jesus Christ or God almighty, or hell or something like that.” The very word you are saying are words of life, life in Christ. This wasn’t *“done in a corner.”*

The kingdom of God is no secret lodge. Creation declares the glory of God. Your conscience preaches to you, the Gospel is preached unto you. *“There’s a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world”* but someday that light is going to go out like it did for Jerusalem in the days of Ezekiel.

He cried out to them, he said: *“You are just full of foolishness and mirth and sensuality and your preachers are crying peace, peace, and there is no peace.”*

“And you have turned the house of God into a den of thieves and a playground. You have turned the house of God into a place of entertainment. You have turned the house of God into everything but a house of prayer.”

God has sharpened His sword and God has polished His sword and He’s getting it ready for a great slaughter and the terrible dark clouds of God’s wrath are gathering against this generation.
It’s time to repent before the lights go out on the road to hell!