

TRUSTING THE WRONG THINGS

Ezekiel 12-14

“Blondie”: Dagwood: “Do your parents let you watch much TV, Elmo?

Elmo: “Only when we watch it together”

“Last night we saw a show that had sex and violence and cheating and lying and stealing”

Dagwood: “Why’d they let you watch that?”

Elmo: “They had to; **it was the 6 o’clock news!**”

Prime-time TV in 1967: Lead characters in “The Time Tunnel” were sent hurtling through a “time vortex” to days before fall of Jericho. They were taken to Joshua.

One of them tells him: **“We come from a time in which your God is our God.”**

40 years ago our society had a common understanding of the biblical story.

That common understanding no longer exists.

People no longer have a clue who that God is!

40 years ago, atheists knew who the God is that they didn’t believe in! In their minds they were rejecting the Judeo-Christian God.

Today no one’s sure Who God is!

People say they’re “very spiritual people” –but that doesn’t mean they know God!

People who say they don’t believe in God, just mean they’re not “into religion!”

They don’t want anything to do with a God who controls their life!

Faced with the imminent danger of judgment, people deny the threat.

They deny the reality of the God who is the source of their impending destruction!

2 Pet 3 warns: in end times people will make fun of idea of God's judgment:

"God has never intervened before in human history, why should we think He'll start now?"

These people are "**deliberately ignorant**" of two times when God *did* intervene in history:

3 ...in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. **4** They will say, "**Where is this 'coming' he promised?** Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." **5** But **they deliberately forget** that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. **6** By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. **7** By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. People *deliberately reject* the evidence for creation and the flood.

Did Peter have a glimpse of our day, or what?

False optimism is common among people who don't know God.

They don't *want* to acknowledge that God will judge the world.

A problem arises when the same attitude develops among *God's people!*

Ezekiel is dealing with that problem.

**WHAT ARE GOD'S PEOPLE TRUSTING IN
EZEKIEL'S DAY?**

Israel has moved away from God. They're in rebellion against Him.

God's judgment is coming.

Instead of acknowledging their condition and repenting, they deny the danger. *God would never judge them!*

Denying the danger

False optimism will never protect people from God's judgment.

Their *false optimism* couldn't protect Israel from God's judgment!

SIGNS (symbols) AND MESSAGES ANNOUNCING JUDGMENT 12-19

Ezekiel uses signs, messages, and parables to call them to turn back to God.

The people aren't interested in repentance.

False prophets encourage them to feel good about themselves

Ezekiel warns them that their optimistic attitude is misplaced.

They're trusting the wrong things! A false hope!

Judgment is coming—on their generation—whether they're ready or not!

TWO SIGNS 12:1-20 [FIVE MESSAGES 12:21-14:23]

Sign # 1. SIGN OF REMOVING EZEKIEL'S BELONGINGS 12:1-16

12:1-11 God tells Ezekiel to pack his bags and move in view of the people.

Message: God is about to send them into captivity.

2nd part represents the prince **12:12-13**

(King **Zedekiah**, who ruled over Israel, though Jehoiachin was still alive in Babylonia)

Zedekiah will be taken captive

He will not see it (Babylonia)!

He will die there —in a foreign country

Nevertheless, a remnant will be preserved. **12:16**

They will publicly acknowledge their sin.

They will learn that He is Lord

Sign # 2. SIGN OF TREMBLING 12:17-20

Ezekiel was to eat & drink before people, trembling, as from fear.

The people of Israel will eat in fear, trembling.

Their towns and land will be destroyed and desolate SOON!

Result (again): *“They will know that I am the Lord!”*

[After introducing these two signs, Ezekiel proclaims . . .]

FIVE MESSAGES announcing the impending judgment **12:21-14:23**

Message # 1. A PROVERB REJECTED 12:21-25

False proverb: “The days go by, and every vision fails!”

Time is flying by and God isn’t judging as the prophets said.

God responds to their proverb:

Don’t misinterpret the delay!

God hasn’t forgotten!

The judgment is sure (=> 2 Pet. 3:3-9)

– 1000 years are like a day

Time is an issue from a human perspective, but not to God.

God's not in a hurry!

He's giving them time to repent.

Instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to turn to God, they're laughing at Him!

They will soon pay a price for their attitude.

True proverb: "The days are near and every vision will be fulfilled!"

It's going to happen in their days!

Message # 2. A SAYING DENIED 12:26-28

Another false saying going around: "The prophecy is far off!"

"The vision he sees is for many years from now; he prophesies of times far off."

Many believe judgment is coming eventually; just not in OUR time!

WE don't need to worry about it!

The truth: The delay is over! Judgment is near!

This generation will see fulfillment.

God's judgment is *IMMINENT!*

**Message # 3: AGAINST THE FALSE PROPHETS
13 1-3, 6-10**

False prophets are claiming God has spoken when He hasn't

Instead of preaching God's Word, they're telling people *what they want to hear.*

It sounds nice; but it isn't from God.

They announce "Peace!" when Jerusalem is about to fall.

They are lying.

God hasn't spoken to them.

They promise what people want to hear!

God is against them!

They will be cut off from their land and never come back again. 13:14

When He acts, *they will know just Who this God is!*

Message # 4: AGAINST THE ELDERS 14:1-11

The Elders were their national *political* leaders.

They were respected and people followed them.

They should have been *leading* people in God's ways.

But their example caused people to stray from His ways.

The elders come to Ezekiel for advice.

He condemns them for their idolatry

He exhorts them to repent.

Those who refuse will be judged.

If they go to a prophet for counsel, without leaving their idols, God will intervene and deal with them personally 7-8

If the prophet fails to condemn them, both the prophet *and* the elders will be judged by Him directly 9-10

Result: "*They will be my people and I will be their God.*" 11

Message # 5. IMPOSSIBILITY OF SAVING THIS GENERATION 14:12-23 13-14

[Same message repeated 3 times concerning other judgments God will send against them]

Sin demands punishment, unless they repent.

They will not be delivered, regardless of who intercedes for them.

4 X mentions 3 *just* leaders of history—*powerful intercessors*;
no one will get them out of this!

They couldn't even protect their own sons and daughters.

21-23

A remnant will be preserved through the judgment.

God's love for His people is still evident.

CONCLUSION

Prov. 14:12 : "There's a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

That was the end for Israel: *DEATH!*

That generation died in exile.

God is serious about this!

He wants His people to be a *holy* people—even (especially) in the midst of a pagan society! *Holiness matters!*

We must not depend on *our* criteria or logic, more than God's Word.

Too often we, like Israel, are prone to listen to others.

People lead us astray, telling us what we want to hear.

We'd better make a commitment to obey God's Word. Period.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERN SOCIETY

What is God's message for modern (post-modern), 21st century people?

Our culture is facing a similar decline.

People think "*God will never judge US!*"

Even if He *does* intervene, it's not likely to be

during *my* lifetime!

Peter describes end times: **2 Pet. 3:3-10** *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? . . . 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: **With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.** 9 **The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** 10 **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.** The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ...*

People misinterpret God’s patience.

God waits to give people time to turn to Him.

He’s NOT waiting because He doesn’t care

If people in our society don’t take the opportunity, they will be judged, like Israel!

God’s patience won’t last forever!

How should that message affect OUR lives today?

[Peter answers the question:]

3:11-14 *11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, **what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives** . . . 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 14 So then, dear friends, **since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.***

Best way to prepare for His coming is godly living!

Are WE ready for His coming?