

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 3, 2016

Ezekiel 6:1–8:18. Divine judgment on the people of God for idolatry.

Revelation 2:12–29. To the churches of Pergamum, and Thyatira.

Job 33:1–7. Elihu tells Job to listen to him.

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 6:1–8:18. These chapters contain messages of coming judgment. In **chapter 6** the message is on idolatry as the cause of judgment, a judgment that would consist of God bringing a foreign sword to destroy Israel’s high places (**6:3**). High places were in Canaan before Israel arrived, and God commanded Israel to destroy them (Num. 33:52). Israel was to worship only at the tabernacle, placed at Shiloh. By Ezekiel’s time the high places were again flourishing in Judah. They included altars for sacrificing animals to false gods, incense altars for offering incense to the gods, and idols which were physical representations of the gods (**Ezek. 6:4**). Israel’s pernicious idolatry was a cancer that had to be eradicated. **Chapter 7** includes more description on the nature of God’s judgment as He is depicted as being angry (**7:3**) and without pity (**7:4**); and He would destroy her according to her “conduct” and “repay” her for her detestable practices (**7:8-9**). In **chapter 8** God took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in a vision to show him the wickedness in the Temple. Consider the “detestable” things worshipped in God’s own Temple in **8:7-15**. The people of God had turned “their backs” on God (**8:16**) and were now worshipping “crawling things and detestable animals and all of the idols of the house of Israel.” No doubt, these were idols of Egypt, Canaan, and Babylon. How creepy! Notice the point of no return in the statement, “Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them” (**8:18**).

By proper knowledge and by proper love. The nation of Israel was blessed with a gracious Lord to know, love, worship—the opportunity to walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*—a fruitful land to enjoy, and a holy law to obey. Their love for the Lord and their obedience to His law would determine how much blessing He could entrust to them in the land. The Jewish people knew this very well. The generation that first entered the land obeyed God’s covenant, as did the succeeding generation, but the third generation provoked the Lord, broke their “marriage vows,” and prostituted themselves to idols (Judges 2:10–13). They disobeyed the law, defied their Lord, and defiled the land, and the Lord would not accept that kind of conduct. First, He punished them in their land by permitting seven enemy nations to occupy the land and oppress the people, as recorded in the Book of Judges. But each time God delivered Israel from their oppressors, the Jews eventually returned to the worship of idols; so He finally took them away from the land, some through death and others through exile in Babylon. It’s a tragic story, but it reminds us that the Lord is serious about His covenant and our obedience. The root cause of all of the idolatry found in this section in Ezekiel is lack of faith. No believer with a robust faith in God is going to worship crawling creatures. In our last Bible class, I noted that faith is more an act of love for something that exists than anything else. This means that a person loses faith when they lose their love for God, which explains the warnings in the New Testament of how love for Mammon destroys

love and obedience to God (Matthew 6:24). All one has to do to lose their faith is to start loving the things of the world more than God (2 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:15-16); thus, the necessity of walking in the Lord by *proper knowledge and proper love* as first priority in our lives. Failure here is failure complete. In sum, the believer who does not actively walk with the Lord will, sooner or later, no longer be able to “see” the Lord that they have neglected—in sum, the absent Lord becomes increasingly more absent day by day until it seems He is no longer real; thus, the attrition and final loss of faith.

Revelation 2:12–29. Let us note a few details on these two churches. **Pergamum** is a center of Roman government, and its main god is Caesar. Christ says to his people, ‘I know where you live—where Satan has his throne’ (2:13). The Roman governor at Pergamum has ‘the right of the sword’—that is, the authority to execute people. But Jesus Christ introduces himself as the one with true authority: ‘The one who has the sharp, double-edged sword’ (2:12). The Christians at Pergamum have a tough assignment. The age-old temptation to compromise with paganism, which goes back to the days of Balaam, is now freshly spiced with the teaching of the Nicolaitans. But Christ calls his people to lead pure lives now, all the while the world tempts young people in areas of sexual promiscuity and rejection of principles of divine establishment. **Thyatira** is a busy center of commerce (2:18-29). Christ introduces himself to the Christians at Thyatira as ‘the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze’. He is a God of penetrating purity and unshakeable power. The church at Thyatira is loving, faithful and growing in influence. But there is a serious problem with a self-styled prophetess called Jezebel. This woman, while claiming to speak from God, is leading Christians astray with idol food and forbidden sex. Her immorality is an image of spiritual unfaithfulness. Christ warns that there will be terrible consequences both for herself and for others. Satan is always very effective in areas of sex and ‘mysterious new teachings.’

By proper knowledge and by proper love. As we review these messages to the churches, we can see the dangers that still exist for the people of God. Like Ephesus, we can be zealous and orthodox, but at the same time lose *proper love* for Christ. Or, like Pergamum, our love for the Lord can become corrupted by compromising with the world. Or, like Thyatira, our love can exist yet lacking in the kind of discernment that is necessary to keep the church pure. Like Pergamos and Thyatira, we may be so tolerant of evil that we destroy our living relationship with the Lord and invite His judgment. God’s exhortation to these churches (except Smyrna) is, “Repent! Change your minds!” This is a mandate for believers who are not living *by proper knowledge and proper love*. If we do not repent and deal with sin in our lives and in our assemblies, the Lord may judge us and remove our lampstand (Rev. 2:5). How tragic it is when a local church gradually loses its faith as believers no longer even see the value of attending a local church. It is no longer seen as a good worthy enough for the effort—such was not the case with the first Christians (Acts 2:42-47). “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!”

Job 33:1–7. Elihu requests that Job listen carefully to him. Note in this section how Elihu is assuring Job that his words were sincere and given by God’s Spirit, so Job had no reason to be afraid. Right?

By proper knowledge and by proper love. With considerable verbosity Elihu ordered Job to listen (**33:1**) and answer (**33:5**). As much as possible Elihu puffed himself up so that Job would respond as if God himself were addressing him. However, the believer who walks with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* will not find himself angry at those who do not agree with him, for he lives for the Lord and not for man. Moreover, by walking with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love*, he will develop true humility, which will insulate him from the dangers of focusing on self, whether he is the one speaking to someone else, like Elihu, or finds himself the object of someone’s arrogant preaching, like Job. The believer who walks with the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* becomes an imitator of the Lord (Eph. 5:1), and as such is characterized by grace, mercy, humility, and with an attitude of live and let live rather than lording over people. The believer that walks with God will find peace as he finds true humility with His God: Micah 6:8. *He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?* Elihu needed to understand that Job does not have to agree with him. And Job needs to learn that he does not have to listen to Elihu, who thinks he is wisdom incarnate. Living with and for the Lord enables us to relax regarding others and their decisions, knowing that each person is responsible before the Lord, not us!

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don