

God Reveals His Heart In Two Parables To The People In Judah

Some people are offended by statements they read in the Bible or hear from a preacher or teacher. For example, some people do not like to hear that God considers them to be wicked or to be an evil person. They may not like Romans 3:10-11 which says,

There is none righteous, not even one;
There is none who understands,
There is none who seeks for God;
All have turned aside, together they have become useless;
There is none
who does good,
There is not
even one.
Romans 3:10-12 (NASB)

If they think they are a good person or that they need to have a positive self-image, then those two verses may offend them. Romans 6:23 might offend them too! It says,

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

At this point, I can imagine that God might seem to be unfair and is not concerned for people. Worse yet, maybe they think God enjoys killing people. I can imagine some people think that God uses scare tactics to motivate people to do

something that they do not want to do. Sadly, those who have such thoughts do not understand God. They have never read all of the Bible. Maybe they never read John 3:36 which reveals God's heart. It says,

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
John 3:36 (NASB)

This verse reveals that God loves us. It also tells us how we

can escape His wrath. Why? He loves us. This is not a threat. He is urging us to repent and believe in Jesus so that we can escape spiritual death. He is showing us that He loves us! In our study, I urge you to ask, "How does God reveal His heart to us?"



INTRODUCTION TO THE LAMENTATION. Our study is from Ezekiel 19:1-14. This chapter is the last one in the third series of prophecies which started in chapter 12. This prophecy was written in 592 B.C. The Babylonian invasion started four years later in 588 B.C. Here is the first verse of chapter 19,

"As for you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel." Ezekiel 19:1 (NASB)

It is important for us to notice that Yahweh is speaking. This verse is a continuation from chapter 18:1. In that verse we are told that Yahweh is speaking to the prophet Ezekiel. This means that the words that are recorded in this chapter are from Yahweh and not from Ezekiel. Obviously, the prophet wrote them down, but Yahweh spoke them to the prophet. Notice that Yahweh said, “As for you.” That is, Yahweh is speaking to Ezekiel and He said, “Take up a lamentation.”

The word lamentation is translated from the Hebrew word “qina” which refers to a dirge or an elegy. It refers to a poem of bereavement or a mourning song that expresses great sorrow. It was usually sung or read at a funeral. This

means that God gave the prophet Ezekiel a funeral song to speak to the people. It was about the “princes of Israel,” or the last kings of Judah. The lamentation contains two parables. The first parable is about a lioness and her two cubs. The second parable is about a vine. Both parables are connected to the kingdom of Judah. Judah is symbolized by a lioness or a mother in both parables.

PARABLE OF THE LIONESS AND HER TWO CUBS . Verse 2 starts the first parable. Yahweh said,

“And say,

‘What was your mother?

A lioness among lions!

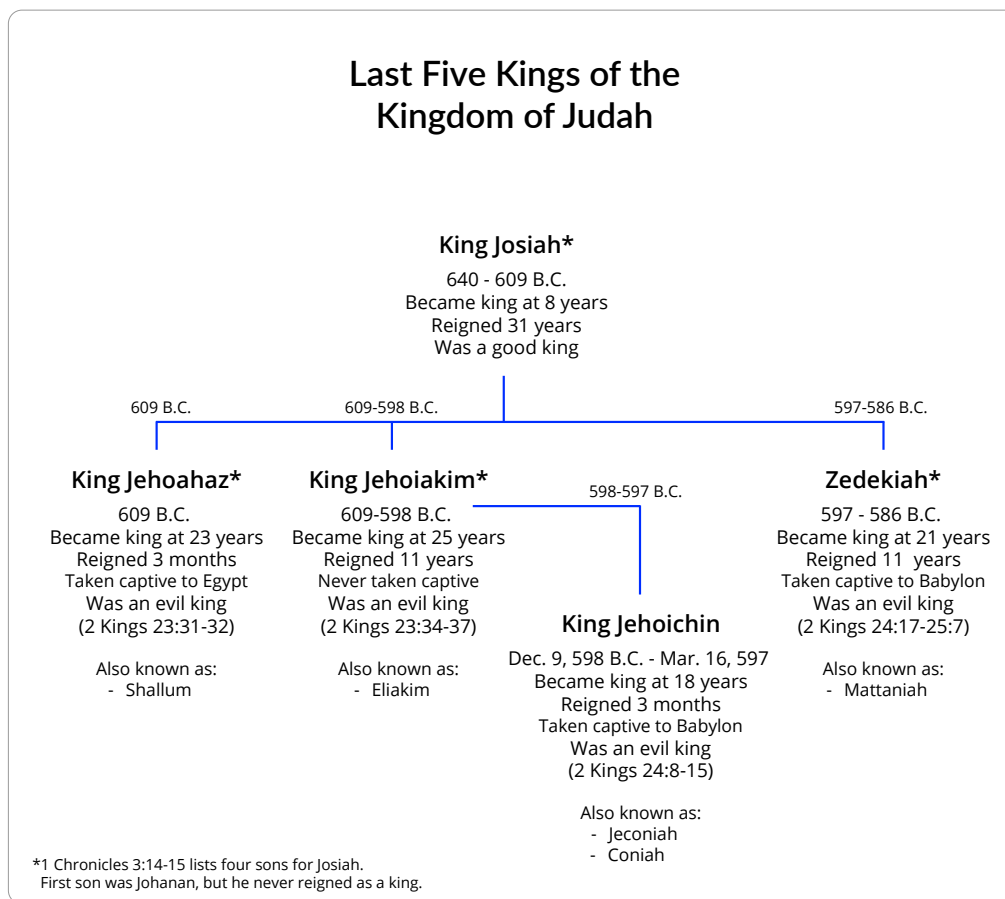
She lay down among young lions,

She reared her cubs.’”

Ezekiel 19:2 (NASB)

As I have already said, the lioness in verse 2 symbolizes Judah.

This parable is about two offspring of King Josiah. However, King Josiah had four sons according to 1 Chronicles 3:14-15. His first son never reigned on the throne of Judah, but Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah did reign as kings in Jerusalem over Judah. While King Josiah was a good



king, his three sons were evil. The two parables in this chapter are about Jehoahaz, Jehoichin, and Zedekiah. We should note that Yahweh calls them princes and not kings. He may have done this because they were evil.

Now verse 2 tells us that the lioness had cubs. Verses 3-4 tell us what happened to one of the cubs.

“When she brought up one of her cubs,

He became a lion,

And he learned to tear his prey;

He devoured men.

Then nations heard about him;
He was captured in their pit,
And they brought him with hooks
To the land of Egypt.”
Ezekiel 19:3-4 (NASB)

Notice that verse 3 does not say the first cub but “one of her cubs.” This cub became a lion, that is, a king. Verse 4 says the nations heard about him. Then he was captured and taken captive to Egypt. This cub symbolizes Jehoahaz who became king in 609 B.C., when he was twenty-three years old (2 Kings 23:31-32). His capture in verse 4 is symbolized according to the custom of hunting lions.

Verses 5-9 are about the second cub. Verses 5-7 say,

“When she saw, as she waited,
That her hope was lost,
She took another of her cubs
And made him a young lion.
And he walked about among the lions;
He became a young lion,
He learned to tear his prey;
He devoured men.
He destroyed their fortified towers
And laid waste their cities;
And the land and its fullness were appalled
Because of the sound of his roaring.”
Ezekiel 19:5-7 (NASB)

Now the parable states that the lioness saw that she lost her cub. So, another of her cubs became a lion or king (v. 5-6). 2 Kings 23:34-37 reveals there is a twenty-five year gap in the middle of verse 5 between the words “lost” and “she.” The gap corresponds to Jehoiakim’s reign as king. He reigned in the white space. Therefore, the last part of verse 5 says she took another cub, which was Jehoichin. He became a king in 598 B.C. when he was 18 years old. 2 Kings 24:8-15 says that King Jehoichin was as evil. His evil is described in verses 6-7.

Verses 8-9 tell us what happened to the second cub.

“Then nations set against him

On every side from their provinces,
And they spread their net over him;
He was captured in their pit.
They put him in a cage with hooks
And brought him to the king of Babylon;
They brought him in hunting nets
So that his voice would be heard no more
On the mountains of Israel.”
Ezekiel 19:8-9 (NASB)

Just as King Jehoahaz was taken captive, Jehoichin was taken captive too! Yahweh permitted these men to reign for only three years. Notice that we are told in verse 9 that King Jehoichin was captured and taken captive to Babylon. That agrees with 2 Samuel 24:8-15. We should note that the word “hooks” appears to refer to a hook that was put into the nose of captives. Then the captives could be easily led about with a rope through the hook.

This is the end of the first parable about the two cubs. This parable focuses on the two kings who were taken captive by a foreign empire. King Jehoahaz was taken captive to Egypt and King Jehoichin was taken captive to Babylon. Imagine, two kings of Judah taken captive by Gentile empires! That had not happened to a king of Israel before.

PARABLE OF THE VINE. The second parable is about the nation of Judah. It begins in verse 10.

“Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard,
Planted by the waters;
It was fruitful and full of branches
Because of abundant waters.
And it had strong branches fit for scepters of rulers,
And its height was raised above the clouds
So that it was seen in its height with the mass of its
branches.”
Ezekiel 19:10-11 (NASB)

This parable is about a vine and a vineyard. We have already learned from chapters 15 and 17 that a vineyard was symbolic of the southern kingdom of Judah (Psalm 80:8-11; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15:1-5; 17:6-10). So, to be consistent, we should

understand this parable to also be about the kingdom of Judah.

Immediately, we are told the vine had much water, many branches, and produced fruit. That is, the vine was healthy and prosperous. Verse 11 also reveals this vine represents a nation since it was ready for rulers or princes. Verse 11 also says that its reputation was higher than the clouds and was noticed by others. This would seem to correspond to the nation under the rule of King Solomon.

Verse 12 describes a sudden or rapid collapse of the nation.

“But it was plucked up in fury;
It was cast down to the ground;
And the east wind dried up its fruit.
Its strong branch was torn off
So that it withered;
The fire consumed it.”
Ezekiel 19:12 (NASB)

1 Kings 11:9-13 tells us that because King Solomon’s heart was not completely devoted to God but instead he worshiped gods and goddesses, or demonic religions, his kingdom would be divided. Gradually, the kingdom declined year after year and century after century. But verse 12 tells us that suddenly the vine was plucked off and thrown down to the ground. The east wind represents the Babylonian empire. The result was the vine was destroyed. Who is the vine? He was Zedekiah, the last son of King Josiah.

Verse 13 now looks to the future. It is a prophecy about what would happen to Zedekiah.

“And now it is planted in the wilderness,
In a dry and thirsty land.”
Ezekiel 19:13 (NASB)

Since Zedekiah is the vine, this verse tells us that it was replanted in a wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. That is, he was taken captive to the city of Babylon which is in a desert. He was the last man to rule the kingdom of Judah. Notice that Ezekiel never called him a kingdom.

Verse 14 is another prophecy. This one is about the future collapse of the kingdom of Judah.

“And fire has gone out from its branch;
It has consumed its shoots and fruit,
So that there is not in it a strong branch,
A scepter to rule.”
This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.
Ezekiel 19:14 (NASB)

Remember the parable is about the kingdom of Judah, which is the vineyard. The prophecy states that the shoots and fruit would be consumed. There would not be any strong branches to produce a leader. Worst of all, there would not be any scepters to rule for the time of judgment had arrived. There would not be any kings. Israel would cease to exist as an independent nation. From 586 B.C. until 1948, it would be ruled by foreign empires until Israel became a nation again in the land of Palestine. The people of Judah would be punished for abandoning Yahweh and worshipping other gods and being very wicked. Prophecy tells us that someday the Messiah will return and set up His kingdom. This worldwide kingdom will rule the world. The capital city will be Jerusalem and the king will be Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION. Now I want you to notice the last line of verse 14. Yahweh told Ezekiel and He tells us, “This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.” Chapter 19 is Yahweh’s funeral song. It is His poem of mourning about what had happened and what was going to happen to the kingdom of Judah. Because of their rebellion, wickedness, and refusal to repent, the nation was going to be invaded, and the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be burned to the ground. So Yahweh mourned. We should remember Yahweh’s words from verses 23 and 32 of the last chapter,

“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?” Ezekiel 18:23 (NASB)

“For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.” Ezekiel 18:32 (NASB)

These words reveal God’s heart. He loved the people, the

kings, the city of Jerusalem, and His temple. In this chapter, Yahweh mourns. He was not happy that He had to judge His people. In Luke 19:41-44, we are told that when the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem were going to be destroyed by the Roman Empire, Jesus wept over the city.

Ezekiel 19 also teaches us first that Yahweh does not want to punish us or cause us to die. Second, if we will not repent, then we create a problem and He is forced to punish us and remove the evil. For if He does not suppress the evil, then evil will grow worse. Third, He must punish because His holiness and justice demands it. But fourth, He does not enjoy punishing anyone, or causing us to die.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee made this comment about the chapter,

By the way, who is concerned about you today? I suspect there are very few. Are the people where you work really concerned about you? Are the people in your church really concerned about you? Is your family concerned? A successful businessman once told me, "I honestly wonder who really cares about me today. Everybody, including my family, is only interested in what they can get out of me." How sad that is! But God is concerned about you, and He is concerned about me. That's quite comforting in this tremendous universe in which I live. I could get lost in it, I am so small. But He has His eye out and has a concern for each one of us.

The princes of Judah were people for whom not too many in that day wanted to shed tears. They were Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, two kings who were about as sorry as they come. God alone is concerned over them.¹

The message of Ezekiel 19 is that Yahweh does not enjoy disciplining or taking the life of anyone even when they refuse to stop sinning. That means when we sin, we force God to discipline us or take our life. So, He warns us to stop and gives us time to repent because He loves everyone (Romans 2:4-8). Remember Yahweh's words,

"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares

the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live." Ezekiel 18:32 (NASB)

¹ J. Vernon McGee. Ezekiel. Thru The Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishing. 1983. Vol. III., p. 475.