

The Open Heaven of God's Heart



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Introduction

As we continue to seek for Christ throughout the chapters of Ezekiel, we will come to many places of intense heartbreak because of how Judea and Jerusalem had failed the Lord. Like them, such “discoveries” of our failures and the need for more of Christ formed within us can lead to discouragement, depression and even worse. It is of the utmost importance to keep ourselves centered in the heart of Jesus concerning His Bride and Body. We must view ourselves at all times from our position in Christ, realizing our relationship in the New Covenant based on His Cross. If we depart from the safe haven of the heart of Jesus and view things from a position of separation, we will miss the purpose for which the Lord makes us aware of our lack. God’s heart of pure love towards His people never falters. His view never changes. The same vision of God’s heart and reality in the open heavens of chapter one abides throughout every chapter, page and word of the book. It is for this reason I am briefly returning to chapter one. I believe it is important for us to remember the foundation of acceptance, love and hope God began this book with so that we might proceed through some of the upcoming chapters refreshed and with God’s view in mind.

The Biggest Rut in History

Have you ever been in a rut? A “rut” could be defined as something stuck in old, dead patterns that seem unbreakable and unchangeable. A synonym for rut is “furrow”, something that has taken the same path for so long that there is a deep groove in the ground that inevitably forces things to move in its flow. Everything seems to be drug down into the inertia of the “rut”. Everything seems to tend towards its hopeless patterns. Just when things need to get better, the rut overcomes and pulls you back into its debilitating flow. It is ruts like these that make people afraid to hope for change. It is ruts like these that

make people doubt God and His power. God gave us His Word to speak to us during these ruts. The biggest rut in the history of humanity just might have been during the book of Lamentations. Consider the condition of the people in Jerusalem in Lamentations chapter 5:1-18: ***“Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. Our necks are under persecution: we labor, and have no rest. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand. We got our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine. They hurt the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honored. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it”***. Living in ruts for a long time produces a condition in people, as just declared in Lamentations chapter five. Overwhelming failure can make the human heart grow weak and the eyes of our faith grow dim. Let us look specifically at the effect this condition was having on the people of Judea.

The Joy of our Heart is Ceased - Verse 15

Their heart is losing the joy of Jerusalem. In Lam. 5:15, it declares that the “joy of our hearts is ceased”. The joy of this people's hearts was bound up in what Jerusalem represented to them. During that time period, the Temple in Jerusalem was the place where the presence of God found habitation and rest. Their blessed relationship with the Living God was to cause this people to be the “joy of the whole earth”. “Zion” was an affectionate name used for Jerusalem. In Psalm 48 David wrote, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion... God is known in her palaces for a refuge”. Zion's reaction to finding herself in such a state of desolation (as defined in Lamentations) was to let go of the inner sweetness and faith in knowing that she stilled belonged to God. She was leaving God's heart and finding her identity in the rubble of her broken earth life.

Our Heart is Faint - Verse 17a

Their heart is losing faith and growing weak. Once Zion had lost her joy in oneness, her heart began to break and faint. It is impossible to press through failure, trial and tragedy without the inner security that God still deeply and fully loves you. If we believe that the Lord has forsaken us because of our sins and failures, then our hearts will grow sorrowful and lose their first love. A weak and doubting heart will slip further away from God, Who so deeply loves us and died to bring us into Himself. We can lose faith that Christ will ever manifest through us as Life.

Our Eyes are Dim - Verse 17b

Their heart is no longer turned towards the Lord. The more the heart doubts the Lord and embraces its carnal view of things, the dimmer the eyes of faith become. Because of so much failure and destruction, the people were losing sight of the vision, which was God's vision and their eternal purpose.

Whereas before when times were better they would have looked up into God's heart and purpose for them, now they are bowed down to the earth in sorrow and emptiness. They no longer consider that the Lord's heart and purpose has not changed (Ps 33:11). They mistakenly assume that their condition and trial is proof of the Lord's rejection.

Because The Mountain of Zion Was Desolate, The Foxes Walked Upon It

Because of the desolate condition of Zion, the people just let the foxes roam freely in their midst. In the Song of Solomon 2:15, the foxes are defined as foreign elements that try to break the branch from the vine as they nibble on the tender new growth. Foxes are animals that frequent desolate places where they can roam undisturbed. The groom exhorts his bride to passionately take away these foxes that are trying to break up their union. Yet, at this point in the history of Jerusalem, she no longer has the faith or passion to fight off the things that are attacking her relationship with God. She now allows the foxes to roam freely and continue to break down the already damaged condition of her heart and faith. She has believed the lie that her failures have separated her from the Lord, therefore she believes there is no use fighting the good fight of faith anymore. If you look at Jerusalem's outward appearance at this time, it looks like the foxes have won.

Assuming God Feels the Same Way We Do

***Lamentations 5:20-22 "Wherefore dost thou forget us forever, and forsake us so long time?
Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.
But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us."***

In these verses we find the Judeans believing that God is feeling much the same way that they are! Similar to their own condition stated earlier in verses 15 through 17 of this same chapter, they declare that the Lord's heart that once loved them has now forgotten and forsaken them. They believed His eyes were no longer upon them, and that He had turned away from them. God calls Zion "the apple of my eye" in Zechariah 2:8. Yet now they trust that God's view of them has grown dim. They believed that the Lord's heart of love had grown weary with their transgressions and now He rejects them utterly. It is a perfect recipe for depression and despair. To not know the Lord's true heart will defeat us in our very core.

The Condition of the Captives In Babylon

The book of Lamentations describes the condition of Jerusalem at the time period when the book of Ezekiel begins. However, Ezekiel was not in Jerusalem, but among the captives of the second deportation taken into Babylon. We have already looked at the condition of the Judeans in Jerusalem; let us now look at the condition of the captive Judeans in Babylon. Much like the people in Jerusalem, the Judeans in Babylon were in a state of disillusionment. These captives had been removed from everything they had once found identity in and placed hope in. They had lost homes and homeland, temple, traditions, careers, and all they had once known as "life". Such a complete removal from all that is familiar and stable can overwhelm someone enough to put them into a state of shock. This was a people of broken dreams and shattered hopes. Ezekiel had already been living in the midst of these captives for ten years by the first chapter of his writings. In fact, he was a priest and prophet dwelling among hearts of broken faith and

devastated hope. He was in the midst of a people who had lost their vision. The God many of the captives understood was fabricated from hearts that no longer looked up to see what was in God's heart, assuming He had forsaken them.

Life in Captivity

Eventually the shock will begin to wear off and the people readjust in Babylon. It is during the readjustment that there is a danger of readapting to life without the core beliefs that were once so vital. It would be easy for a people to become jaded by the crisis, and as a result let go of their destiny. Where there is not hope, there is no purpose. If someone truly believed that their failures or a crisis destroyed their union with Christ and ruined their calling to be a vessel of His Life, they could feel without purpose in this world. Someone with such a mindset might easily leave their "holy vocation", that sacred calling from the heart of God to be His, and settle for a profane and secular life, void of the eternal purpose for which they were born. This would be the true tragedy, not the earth crisis. Many choose to settle for less in their state of disillusionment, and in so doing begin to build a life and identity in Babylon. In Babylon, many Judeans would let go of their eternal purpose, forget all that "Jerusalem" meant to them and to God, and conform to the world. Most of them had a comfortable life in Babylon, but it would be "Son-less" life of disillusionment. Others simply could not forget Jerusalem, and were found weeping by the rivers of Babylon, ***"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion" (Psalm 137:1).*** It was by one of those "rivers of Babylon" that God opened the heavens of His heart to Ezekiel regarding these people.

God Busts Heaven Wide Open and Shows His Heart!

In Babylon they are weeping, in Jerusalem they are utterly rejected. ALL are defeated and depressed, feeling forsaken and forgotten. We find the people of God at this point in history in a rut of defeat, rejection and toxicity. If you turn in your Bible to the last chapter and verse of the book of Lamentations, you can read these final words: ***"But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us" (Lam. 5:22).*** These final words sum up how the people believed God felt about them. These words sum up how WE may think God feels about us when we fail and are stuck in a rut of depression, grief, or unbelief. Isaiah 55:8-9 declare, ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts".*** It is at this **VERY POINT IN TIME** that God busts the heavens wide open and shows His true heart to Ezekiel. Prepare yourself to be shocked at God's response to the very people who think He has rejected them. Let us now turn the page in our Bibles from Lamentations to Ezekiel chapter one and verse one, ***"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God"***. God explodes onto the scene with an opening of His heart and Person in eternal Glory. He shows Ezekiel what is settled in His heart concerning His people above time and circumstance. This vision reveals the glorified Son and His Body in resurrection. It opens to us how God sees us in His Son. It bursts through the dark clouds of condemnation with Son-beams of acceptance in our oneness with Christ. This vision shows a people

united with the risen Son and filled with Life. Here, in God, we see a people filled with the glory of God, and carrying His throne. Here we see our true identity, sealed in God's heart and settled in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:4). The deepest need in God's people at this time is not to fix their problems or get better; it is to SEE GOD'S HEART concerning them. God, who is our Father, knows what we need. Jesus, who is our Life, loves us at all times. The Holy Spirit has been sent to bear the reality of God's true heart into our hearts so that we might really know God.

Specific Timing

The very first sentence in the book of Ezekiel is EXTREMELY SIGNIFICANT. ***“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God”***. Notice how specific it is concerning the precise time when the heavens open. Ezekiel identifies the exact day it happened. God is not randomly sharing His heart with Ezekiel. God's timing is perfect and He is answering the cry of His people. He is responding to their deepest need. He is giving them vision so they do not perish (***Prov. 29:18 - “Where there is no vision, the people perish”***). He wants them to know His heart and focus on Him rather than their temporal trial (II Cor. 4:18). The first word in the book of Ezekiel is also important: “NOW”. Now, at the very moment when the people thought it was all over, God reveals the truth of Who He really is and Who they really are in Him. Now, when they felt that they had utterly failed, God is showing them that they have not lost their purpose. Now, when everything looks ruined, God shows how they are held in Christ in realms of His glory, destined to be the Body of His fullness. Now, when the people could no longer fall back on religious types and shadows, He is drawing them into intimate oneness and Life.

NOW, in the middle of the biggest rut in history, God busts heaven wide open and shows His heart. We see that ZION HAS NOT DIED IN GOD'S HEART... and He does not want it to die in their hearts either!!! The heavens are flooded with a vision of the risen Son and His risen body full of glorious Life. There is wild splendor and magnificent glory in this view of the risen Christ. This vision is FULL OF HOPE and REALITY. The earth may be lamenting and overcome, but we must look up and be of good cheer because HE has overcome the earth in His death and resurrection and raised us up with Him to partake of His glory, both now and forever! The people thought God had forgotten them and that His heart no longer cared. In the open heaven we see God overflowing with acceptance, purpose and glory concerning His people and their true identity in His Son.

Depression is Our Enemy... Based On A Lie

The people in the book of Lamentations thought this: “Why do you continue to forget us? Why have you abandoned us for so long? Restore us, O Lord, and bring us back to you again! Give us back the joys we once had! Or have you utterly rejected us? Are you angry with us still?” Much of their sorrow and lamenting came from not knowing God's heart for them. They felt rejected and forgotten when all the while they were accepted and dearly loved. We cannot find God's heart in our circumstances, feelings or opinions. We find God's heart in God. If we do not see Him, we will believe what we think, feel and see around us. This leads to unbelief and depression. Depression tries to kill our faith and shut the flow of

the heavens of God's heart into us, His earthen vessels (II Cor. 4:7). Depression comes because we think God's heart has changed based on our condition in the earth. If depression reigns rather than faith in God's heart, the "NOW" of Ezekiel chapter one will go unnoticed.

Now Faith

The heavens may feel like brass and tragedy may seem to triumph when we believe that our failures have defeated God's passion to bring forth His Son in us. God's Passion was played out at Calvary where His Son was crucified for us and as us. YES, our flesh was utterly rejected and crucified, but because Christ has died and rose again, NOW we are utterly accepted in the Beloved. In the darkest moments of our lives, the Cross upon which we were crucified is still true. THERE, crucified with Christ, our flesh was "utterly rejected" (Lam. 5:22 / Rom. 6:6). NOW, in Christ, we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). Eventually, as it is in heaven (in Christ) will come forth in earth based on Christ's victory at Calvary. Our place is to ABIDE in the truth as it is in Jesus (Jn. 15:5). Our place is to believe in God's heart. NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things yet manifest (Hebrews 11:1). Now faith believes the open heavens of God's heart and calls that reality, and not temporal things. Now faith finds its evidence in God, not in the earth. Now faith lives in the heart of God.

Conclusion

God sees us in His Son; nothing can touch or change that. May we turn the page from the depression of Lamentations to the "now faith" of God's open heaven in Ezekiel chapter one. May we look up like one of the captives at the river Chebar in Babylon, and realize that we are not in captivity, we are in Christ. May we abide in God and be filled in the land of our captivity. One glimpse into the open heaven of God's heart and we can begin to stand again. Amen.



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