

MAYHEM

Finding God in the Chaos of Life

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 2: Burning Out | 3.4.18 | FOLLOW THE STORY ON FB @FACEBOOK.COM/THESTORYHOUSTON

The purpose of this series is to learn how to persevere in hard times by growing:

- more mature in faith
- more aware of our spiritual blind-spots
- and deeper in biblical literacy (especially the Old Testament)

To achieve this purpose, we're exploring the book of Ezekiel, the Old Testament prophet who lived during the time of the Babylonian Exile and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (587 BC). Ezekiel has been called the Prophet of Doom, and he occasionally referred to himself as "the funeral director," because of his gloomy proclamations. **What, if anything, did you know about Ezekiel before starting this series?**

Ezekiel was a Jewish priest (1:3) who later heard God's call to become a prophet.

Hebrew prophets didn't merely _____ the _____;
they _____ about the _____.

Anytime you read the Bible, it's important to understand the *historical context*. What major historical events were taking place as Ezekiel spoke?

I doubt many of us have ever personally experienced something as horrific as the Babylonian Exile and the fall of Jerusalem, but you can probably still relate to Ezekiel's message on some level. Regardless of who you are or where you're from, the effects of persistent, high stress on your body, mind, and relationships are always grim. **Briefly describe the most stressful time in your life. How did the stress impact your mental, physical, and spiritual health?**

According to Ezekiel, the people have brought their troubles down on themselves. What did they do to deserve this kind of stress?

Think back to your most stressful seasons of life so far. How much of your own mayhem do you think you brought down on yourself?

Ezekiel 15

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, how is the wood of a vine different from that of a branch from any of the trees in the forest? Is wood ever taken from it to make anything useful? Do they make pegs from it to hang things on? And after it is thrown on the fire as fuel and the fire burns both ends and chars the middle,

is it then useful for anything? If it was not useful for anything when it was whole, how much less can it be made into something useful when the fire has burned it and it is charred?"

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: As I have given the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest as fuel for the fire, so will I treat the people living in Jerusalem. I will set my face against them. Although they have come out of the fire, the fire will yet consume them. And when I set my face against them, you will know that I am the Lord. I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful, declares the Sovereign Lord."

What does "the vine" (or "the tree") often represent in the Bible? (Hosea 10:1, Romans 11:17-24)

What is the sole purpose of a vine (Genesis 1:11)? How were the people of God in Ezekiel's day missing the point? In what ways are we still missing the point of our purpose today?

In verse seven, God says, "...when I set my face against them, you will know that I am the Lord." Ezekiel frequently repeats this refrain - *then you will know I am the Lord*. Why do you think it's so important to God that people know He is the Lord?

John 15:1-13

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

How do you think Jesus serves as the vine that nourishes the branches?

What do you think someone is supposed to do when they've felt distant or "cut off" from the true vine of Christ? (See Romans 11:17-24)

Think of a few patterns, priorities, or principles that you need to address and adjust in order to be a branch on the vine of Christ. How can you make a habit of drawing your sustenance and significance from Jesus?