

## THESE THREE MEN

Text: Ezekiel 14:12-23

For several decades I have contemplated these most unusual statements, i.e., "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job..." (Ezekiel 14:14a, 16a, 18a, 20).

When the Babylonians carried the Israelites into Babylon, The people of God were discouraged. They gave up and laid their harps on willow trees. They lost their vision and they lost their voice but Ezekiel never lost his vision of God or voice for God. Notice the comparison in Psalm 137:1-4: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" Ezekiel was one of the captives carried away into Babylon and he, too, was by a river, but his response to the captivity was very different. Ezekiel 1:1: "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."

The prophet had great concern for the unrepentant and hypocritical heart of the people of God. The elders of Israel are exposed for their secretive sins in Ezekiel 8:12: "Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth." He further declared in Ezekiel 14:3, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?" God looked deep into the heart of His rebellious people and saw them on a course in which they will crash and burn.

God points out three of His most righteous men as examples. But He is quick to point out that even though they were some of the most righteous men the earth has ever known, righteousness could not be transferred to any others, even their own children. This is illustrated graphically in Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-20. Compare Deuteronomy 24:16 and II Kings 14:5, 6. Exodus 20:5, 6 says the visitation upon the iniquity of parents falls upon the generations of those who, like their fathers, hate God by living idolatrously. But the promise is secure that mercy is given to those who love God and keep His commandments.

We cannot be exhaustive in our study today, but we can at least bring you three truths that may be why God chose to set these men up as a examples to the nation and to all of us individually.

### I. NOAH OBEYED GOD WITH PATIENCE.

Genesis 6:5-8, 3, 22. II Peter 2:5: "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon

the world of the ungodly.” We observe that this preacher of righteousness warned and builded for 120 years.

Hebrews 11:7.

Hebrews 10:36: “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” James 5:8: “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

I Thessalonians 5:14: “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”

Imagine it, Noah preached and builded the ark for 120 years and the only ones that join him in the Ark were his sons, their wives and his wife. The grace that found Noah equipped him to offer that grace to a lost world that refused to repent.

Isaiah volunteered to go and speak for the LORD by saying, “...Here am I, send me.” (Isaiah 6:8b), He inquired in Isaiah 6:11,12, “Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.”

Psalms 86:15: “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.” God’s mercy is an established attribute. And for this we should all be very thankful! (Lamentation 3:22).

## II. DANIEL WOULD RATHER DIE THAN CEASE COMMUNICATION WITH GOD.

Daniel 6:3-10.

Daniel developed an excellent spirit through intimacy with God. Knowing full well that according to the law of Medes and Persians, the law could not be changed. This brave prayer warrior was prepared to die rather than cease praying.

We see in Daniel 10:11-13 that he was a man greatly beloved by God. And his prayers were so powerful, his prayers commissioned angels!

As we approach our next character greatly esteemed by God, we discover when Job lost everything including all his children, he went directly to the Lord in worshipful prayer as revealed in Job 1:20.

## III. JOB TRUSTED GOD WHEN IT SEEMED ALL THINGS WERE AGAINST HIM.

Job 1:5, 8. Job could not transfer his righteousness to his children. Job 1:10 discloses the fact that Satan had run into the protective hedge about Job. This principle is found in Psalm 125:2 and Hebrews 1:14. We see that God gives Satan permission to take virtually everything from Job to show Satan that Job served God in spite of everything, even when it seemed everything was against him.

This was the lament of Abraham in Genesis 22:36: “And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.”

Job 1:22 and Job 2:9, 10 show us the trust of Job that followed him all the way through the book of Job.

In Ezekiel 24:15-18, God escorted Ezekiel into the saddest journey of his life. J. Vernon McGee said of Ezekiel, "In many ways, he spoke in the darkest days of the nation. He stood at the bottom of the valley in the darkest corner." Like Noah, he exercised patience. Like Daniel, he stayed in unbroken communion with the LORD, His God. And like Job, his heart was broken with his personal loss.

Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson are examples of Christians who carried on in spite of what the world would call setbacks.

Noah, Daniel and Job challenge all of God's people in all times to live in such a way that God Himself would speak of your faithfulness to future generations. King David's "swan song" speaks of this godly goal: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come" (Psalm 71:17, 18).

-Pastor Pope-