

"Upon this rock I will build my church"

Matthew 16:18

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ENDURING PRINCIPLES FROM EZEKIEL (No. 4)
"THEY SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD."

INTRODUCTION

This exact phrase is used at least 25 times in the book of Ezekiel, and words to this effect are found through the scriptures. The various contexts in which this and similar phrases appear seem to indicate that God is giving us more than simply evidences for the existence of a "god." He seems to be revealing some of the defining characteristics of Himself, the only true and living God. This is timely because so many in our subjective world have formed their own private notions of God without considering what God has said about Himself. Many are heard to say, "I like to think that God is..." or "I think that God would not..." or "I think that God would..." When we seriously consider the various ways in which God describes Himself, we can begin to replace our "I think" statements about God with some "God has said" statements about God. When we truly accept and believe what God has revealed about Himself, the two ought to become one and the same thing. What "I think" about God ought to be what "God has said" about God.

DISCUSSION

From the book of Ezekiel, let's notice some of the attributes of God as revealed by God Himself. As we do this, notice that what can be known concerning God is a matter of certainty ("They shall KNOW..."). Notice that these things that can be certainly known concerning the true and living God provide us with a basis for comparing the God of the Bible with the false "gods" of the world and the false notions concerning God that are held by uninformed people ("...that I am the Lord").

The true God is just and therefore wrathful. "Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols" (Ezekiel 6:13).

Those who are punished by God will know that He is the Lord (Ezekiel 5:13; 6:10,14; 7:27; 12:15; 25:14,17; 26:6; 28:22; 29:9; 30:19,25,26; 39:6).

Those who see and hear of God's righteous judgment will know that He is the Lord (Ezekiel 12:16; 28:23,26; 29:13-16; 30:8; 38:21-23). Some of the categories of sin for which God expressly punishes men ought to cause us to understand how seriously He regards disobedience. He will punish idolatry (Ezekiel 6:7,10,13,14; 14:6-8), abomination (Ezekiel

7:4,9; 33:29), not walking in His ways (Ezekiel 11:9-11; 12:15,16,20; 20:38), speaking nonsense and envisioning lies (Ezekiel 13:8-14), unfaithfulness (Ezekiel 15:6-8), covenant-breaking (Ezekiel 17:18-21), mockery of God and His people (Ezekiel 25:1-7,8-11; 26:1-6; 35:12,15), and evil-doers (Ezekiel 25:15-17; 28:20-23,24,25-26; 29:6; 35:1-6,9). In all of this He will punish men only according to what they deserve (Ezekiel 7:27).

The true God is merciful and therefore forgiving of those who will repent according to His terms. “And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 16:62,63).

His mercy remains with those who will remain mindful of their former evil ways and not return to them (Ezekiel 20:41-44; 34:27,30,31; 36:8-11,23,33-36,37,38; 37:6,13,14). He is able to purify by punishment those who will repent (Ezekiel 22:19-22). Those who see and hear of God’s mercy will know that He is the Lord (Ezekiel 37:28; 39:27-29).

The actions and judgments of the true God are always right, and His people need to recognize this under all circumstances (Ezekiel 24:15-24,25-27). Those who say that they could never be happy in heaven if they have knowledge of loved ones who have been lost ought to read and meditate on these verses very carefully. While there is no Biblical reason for assuming that God will erase our memories of loved ones, there is clearly a need for us, then and now, to recognize that God’s actions and judgments are, and will be, perfectly right.

The true God has the ability and the desire to elevate the truly humble and to humble the proud (Ezekiel 17:22-24; 22:6-16; 29:13-16,21; 30:6-8,19,25,26; 32:15).

We cannot impress Him with our greatness. We cannot cause Him to notice the applause that we may receive from men.

The living God has instituted, under His various covenants with man, distinctive institutions to be honored by His people (Ezekiel 20:10-12,18-20).

They are His. They are not yours to modify.

We have a great need to recognize what God has established and simply be the people that He has called us to be.

CONCLUSION

May we be careful, in our thoughts and in our teaching concerning God, to recognize and honor Him as He is and not as we would have Him to be.

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