

CHAPTERS 14 and 15

The comfort of God's judgements

1. Division

- 14:1-8 - against idolatry;
- 14:9-11 - the judgement upon false prophecy is a blessing for God's people;
- 14:12-20 - the three righteous ones and the four judgements;
- 14:21-23 - the comfort of God's judgements;
- 15:1-8 - Jerusalem is a useless vine.

2. Exegetical peculiarities

- 14:3 - idols (literally dung gods), 6:4; set up their idols in their hearts, literally on the throne;
- 14:7 - strangers: they must also, on threat of the death penalty, keep away from idolatry and from all abomination, Leviticus 20:2; 18:26; 17:10; Exodus 12:19;
- 14:9 - induced: the RSV says "deceived," given over to deception, and subsequently to be given over to that by the LORD.
- 14:11 - there is still comfort, Exodus 6:6;
- 14:13 - unfaithfulness, as in marriage: it points to the covenant relationship between Israel and the LORD.
- 14:21 - four judgements: Leviticus 26:26,22,25;
- 15:2 - wood of the vine - fruit bearing wood is soft and fragile;
- 15:4 - two ends and the middle: the North (kingdom of the ten tribes) and the South (kingdom of the two tribes) and Jerusalem in the middle.

3. Contents

3.1 Against idolatry (14:1-8)

The elders come to the prophet to seek counsel from the LORD. Ezekiel sees them humbly bend their knees and raise praying hands

and is happy in anticipation. But the LORD, Who knows their hearts, says that they may not even ask their questions. Their inward state is such that in their hearts idols are sitting on the throne. More than likely they have first sought counsel from the idols and now in despair come to the LORD for counsel.

A stumbling block, a snare, not only for themselves but especially for God's people. Exodus 23:33; Deuteronomy 7:16; Judges 2:3.

Proverb - the people will remember it and will even make a proverb of it.

3.2 The judgement against false prophecy is a blessing for God's people (14:9-11)

Induced - allowed himself to be tempted and talked into giving an answer from the LORD. So strong is the prohibition to give these idolators a word from the LORD, that the LORD threatens any prophet, who still wants to try it, and allows himself to be talked around, that He will cause that prophet to commit even more foolishness. He will even be excommunicated from God's people.

In this manner His redemption comes and God's people are liberated from those who would lead them astray.

3.3 The three righteous ones and the four judgements (14:12-20)

The sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts, Compare 5:17; 2 Kings 17:25. They are covenant judgements.

They are related to their idolatry:

- famine - they leaned on Baal for their prosperity.

The LORD had warned time and again that man only lives from His promises and not by bread alone (Deuteronomy 8:3); and He had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey;

- wild beasts - they worshipped animals in a secret chamber in the temple, 8:10;

- sword - they had made such an effort in flattering other nations by taking over their idols; they even said: we want to become like the other nations by serving their idols, 20:32;

- pestilence - that is a fatal illness. And they even worshipped the sun because of its health giving and life sustaining power. They rejected the LORD Who had promised that not one of the diseases of Egypt would afflict them, Deuteronomy 7:15 and Who promised: I am the LORD who heals you, Exodus 15:26.

Three righteous people: Noah, Daniel and Job. At Abraham's intercession the LORD says that He would spare Sodom provided ten righteous people could be found in that city, Genesis 18:22. But these great ones from the Old Testament are not able to turn away God's judgement.

Noah was the only one of the first humanity whom the LORD found righteous, Genesis 7:1; for 120 years a preacher of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:5, when once the long suffering (patience) of God waited, 1 Peter 3:20; heir of righteousness, Hebrews 11:7;

Daniel was already known. He was carried away to Babylon earlier, before Ezekiel, namely under king Jehoiakim (Daniel 1:1) His righteousness was obviously known to the exiles.

Job who, in his suffering, does not lose his blamelessness and fear of God, was found righteous by God.

Moses and Samuel are also mentioned as powerless intercessors, Jeremiah 15:1. God's people are saved only through Jesus Christ, Isaiah 53:5.

The end of the matter is: everyone is personally responsible.

3.4 The comfort of God's judgements (14:21-23)

Other people will come from Jerusalem. These will also come as exiles to Babylon. Once there they will meet the exiles who already live there. That will be a comfort, says God, because these people (even whole families: sons and daughters) are, personally and through their witness, God's proofs. Believers will be able to see in the demeanour and way of life of these people that the LORD is just in His judgements and that His punishments are righteous and well deserved: Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 119:75; Isaiah 26:9.

They will praise the LORD for it, compare the Song of Moses about the destruction of Pharaoh and the army of Egypt, Exodus 15:1-21; later the song of Moses and the Lamb, sung by God's delivered people, Revelation 15:3-4.

3.5 Jerusalem is an outcast vine (15:1-8)

The image of the vine is used by the LORD to denote all Israel: Deuteronomy 32:32; Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 2:21.

This vine is barren, does not bear fruit (compare the barren fig tree as an image for God's people, Luke 13:6-9). This is evident: they have not done what God had demanded; they also have made no progress on the road of sanctification.

4. For the discussion

1. The LORD Himself says that when the enemies destroy and kill, they are bringing God's judgements. How should we apply that to the catastrophes of today, also with respect to health and sickness? Can you say that they also come by God's hand (Compare Lord's Day 10)?
2. Where does personal responsibility fit in with regards to pious parents?
3. How is the relationship between our place in the church (as God's covenant people) and our own place before the LORD? Can you say that we enter death totally alone and then have to appear before the LORD?
4. May we only lament about the increasing apostasy and secularisation? Should we not praise the LORD for His righteousness in that? And even find comfort in it?
5. In what way do we see that God gives people up to their sin (compare Romans 1)?
6. In what way does the service of Baal (the seeking of peace and prosperity in one's own power) become evident today?