

Who Will Fill The Gap?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 November 2022

[0 : 00] in Ezekiel chapter 22. Ezekiel chapter 22, the end of this chapter from verse 23 down to the end.

In particular, just that verse we mentioned before, verse 30. And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, but I should not destroy it.

But I found none. And what's the biggest gap in our society today? You think about all the different things that are going on around us in our day and in our time.

We hear talk of many different kinds of gaps that exist. There's gaps in wealth. There's gaps in education. There's gaps in housing.

There's gaps in leadership. There's all kinds of social gaps and various different kinds. Of gaps. But they're not new to our day.

[1 : 00] There are gaps that have been there for generation after generation. And even when you look back here in Ezekiel's day, there were these gaps in society then.

There was gaps in all kinds of ways in his day as well. But there's a gap that's common in Ezekiel's day and a gap that's common in our day that is probably the most serious of all the gaps that exist. And it's a gap that if it were filled would make such a difference. And it's that gap we find in verse 30. Looking for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach, stand in the gap before me for the land that I should not destroy it.

Ezekiel's day was a day when leadership changed quite often. Kings would come and kings would go. And the nation would be blessed under a king who was a godly king.

As we're looking here at Ezekiel's time, it was a time as an ungodly king ruling over them. And because of this, there wasn't one who was standing in the breach, as he says here.

[2 : 17] When we think of our own day-to-day as well, and we look around us and we think of our nation and the nations of the world. And the leaderships that we have over us in different places.

Leaders that have come, leaders that have gone. Times of great blessing under good godly leadership. But times of such great uncertainty when God is neglected and when God is rejected. And what Ezekiel is saying to us here is so relevant to our day-to-day as well. And it's this urgency, this great need to cry out to God.

To call upon him. And to see, not that we're looking for one who will fill the gap, as Ezekiel was in his day. But that today we have one who has filled the breach.

Who has filled the gap for us. What we read of in the book of Hebrews chapter 7. The one who is a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

[3 : 19] The one who is a priest forevermore. In Ezekiel's day, there were kings and prophets and priests who so often failed the people. Failed to lead them well.

Failed to lead them in prayer. But here today we come together as people who we would long to stand in the gap. And we feel unworthy of it.

Even as we ask men to come up and pray here. As we lead in prayer. We're not worthy to stand in the gap. But we pray in the name of the one who is.

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who fills the breach for us. And we're taught much of prayer in God's word.

The importance of it individually. The importance of it as a church. The importance of it nationally for a nation and our nation. And not least are we taught in the Lord's prayer.

[4 : 20] There we are taught of our dependence. And our focus being on the Lord. On the Lord Jesus Christ. And remembering that every need can be met in him.

So as we look ahead to a national day of prayer. This later this month. We've been reminded in the prayers. We remind ourselves again. It's not just a focus on one. Special day of prayer.

Important as that is. It's the importance of continuing in ongoing prayer. And the question this evening for us. Are we construction workers?

Are we involved in the work of construction here in our church and in our society? And what do I mean by that? Well, I mean just what it means here. To stand in the breach.

To fill the gap. To build up the wall. That's what Ezekiel was talking about here. The example, illustration of a wall was what the cities were formed with.

[5 : 23] And when a place was broken down in the wall. It was weak to attack the city. And so today we think of the breach in our society. That godly breach.

Where there's a lack of godly wisdom. Godly hunger. Godly leadership. And prayerful people. The challenge to us today and always is. To be a people who stand in the gap.

And who stand in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed. So Ezekiel has this great challenge. But also a great reminder to us as well.

That when we seek the Lord. He is so able to bless. So from our reading here in Ezekiel. We're seeing Ezekiel writing to a day and a people.

Very much like our own day and people around us as well. God being shunned. Leadership lacking. Sin being rife. And much prayer.

[6 : 21] Being needed. And so our thoughts are going to turn to this passage. But also remembering what we read in Hebrews. That here we have a Lord and a God.

Who is there for us. Who is there to be called upon. The people here in Ezekiel's day. Just like our own world. So many people live with this attitude that.

Everything's going to be okay. Everything's going to work out in the end. Everything's going to fall into place for me. Hoping that things are going to change. But not seeing where ultimately we need to look for this change to come.

Where ultimately our greatest hope is found. And if our nation does at all look to God. It's so often just a token gesture. So often just when something needs to be done.

You just look back a few weeks now to the funeral of Her Majesty the Queen. And how the word was so central to all that was done on that day.

[7 : 26] How much she had given instruction of what would be read. What would be sung. The order of things. The word of God would be central. And that was followed.

And people had to read the word of God. I'm sure many of them against their own desires. Not understanding the power of what they were reading. And yet there we saw leaders.

And many powerful people involved. In praying and in reading the word of God. And we pray that that would impact. That that would change. So it's not just a token gesture.

But that our nation, our people would be turned towards God. So there's a call here. For a prayerful individual to come into the midst of the people in Ezekiel's day.

But today as we come in the name of Jesus Christ. We are all called to be a praying people. So we're going to look at this passage.

[8 : 24] And just see how frightening it is in many ways. But also to see the glory of the grace of God in this as well.

It's a call for us to pray. But as you look at this passage as a whole. You see just how serious this call is. For all that's happening and taking place in their midst.

The first thing I want us to see is from verse 24. There's an image there that speaks to us in a powerful way.

Son of man say to her. You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. There's a word here for the nation then. There's also a word here for our own nation too. When you look at this version.

[9 : 19] When it speaks about rain. Especially throughout the Old Testament. Rain was withheld by God. To bring a judgment upon the people. And rain was poured down from heaven.

To bring blessing on the people. So often the image that you see that God uses. And here there's a reminder to us. Of not just one aspect of this.

But many different aspects. Of both blessing and curse on the people. Son of man say to her. You are a land that is not cleansed.

Or rained upon. In the day of indignation. As I said. The blessing of God comes with rain so often. In Deuteronomy chapter 28.

You have two examples in that passage. One where it speaks of the blessing of God pouring out rain. In verse 12. The Lord will open the heavens. The storehouse of his bounty.

[10:17] To send rain on your land and season. And to bless all the work of your hands. So when the people follow God's instruction. Follow God's commands.

The Lord is able to pour down a blessing. But then later on in that chapter. In verse 23 of Deuteronomy 28. It says. The sky over your head will be bronze.

The ground beneath you iron. The Lord will turn the rain of your country. Into dust and powder. It will come down from the skies.

Until you are destroyed. There's both an image there of drought. And a devastating flood. From God. And here in this verse in Ezekiel.

In verse 24. It's almost like there's a reminder to the nation. Of all the different ways. In which God is working in their midst. The reminder that he has blessed them in the past.

[11:16] What he has done for them. How he has led them. How he has been with them. There's also the reminder too. Of how there's a time of need. To bring judgment.

And drought. And famine upon them. Even a time of devastating flood. It's almost like God is using every means possible. To bring his people to their senses.

It's a reminder of God's anger. And his judgment. And you just read through this chapter. It's full of God's judgment. Because the people have turned away.

Turned away on every level of society in their day. From the leadership at the top. Right down to the people. They've turned away from God. And God is using every means possible.

To try and bring them back to their senses. Devastation on a large scale. Right down to individual things going on. When you think of our own times.

[12:15] Our own age just now. The way God has spoken to us. The way God continues to speak to us. Through so many different things. In all the needs around us.

When we think of the devastation of COVID. The financial crisis. The wars going on. Natural disasters. Disasters almost on a weekly basis. God's voice is speaking powerfully.

God is reminding us. Of the power and authority that he has. He is shaking us as a people. And yet are we listening? We're just like the days of Ezekiel.

God is looking to see if there's one. Who will stand in the breach. Before me for the land. That I should not destroy it. But there was none to be found.

It's a great reminder to us. Of our need to call upon the Lord. God is shaking us. With a purpose. But as well as reminding us.

[13:17] Of God's judgment. And our need to call upon him. There's a reminder to us here. Of God's grace. He's not destroyed.

The people. And you think of that psalm. That we sang. Psalm 106. And there we were reminded of. The grace of God towards his people.

In all that he had done. What did they do? They formed an idol. And made it of an ox out of gold. This was their God. God would have destroyed them.

But there was one to stand in the breach. Moses. And you think. Now here he is. Is there anyone who will stand in the gap? And he says no.

And judgment is poured out. But not full destruction. And in our day and age. Today as well. We see this. But ourselves as well.

[14:16] There is a need for us. To listen to God. Because his judgment. Is all around us. But we have a great message.

Of hope too. A rejection of God. Deserves his anger against us. But he withholds it. For a time. He gives every opportunity. To turn.

And that's a day. We're living in today as well. To call upon a people. To turn to the Lord. And twice. In the book of Ezekiel. You have us. The same verse.

Repeated. And it reminds us. Of the grace of God. And you read through Ezekiel. There's so much judgment. But twice. He says this. In chapter 18.

Verse 32. And in chapter 33. Verse 11. He says. Say to them. As surely as I live. Declares the sovereign Lord. I take no pleasure.

[15:12] In the death of the wicked. But rather that they turn. From their ways. And live. Turn. Turn from your evil ways. Why will you die? O house of Israel.

That is the mercy of God. That is his call. To a people today. Turn. Turn from your evil ways. Why will you die? O house of Israel.

God. Today. We recognize God. Withholding his wrath. To a point. As he calls on us. To turn. And no greater. Do we see that. In what he has done. Through Jesus Christ. Who for our sake. Went to the cross. Who stood in the gap.

That we could never stand in. Who bore our sins. And we are to call. On the name of the Lord. Through Jesus Christ. That he would spare us.

[16:07] And many people. From that great wrath. Poured out on the day of judgment. We see our nation. And the nations of the world. And the great need.

Of prayer. And that the breach. Would be rebuilt. That there would be people. To stand in the gap. To stand in the name of Jesus Christ.

And know his power. But we also see here. Just how. The wrath of God. Is deserved. Again when you.

Continue reading down. From verse 24. You just see. How the whole of society. Is rotten to the core. There is corruption. From the top.

To the bottom. And the cause. A rejection. Of God. They have completely. Turned. Away. And. Ezekiel. Is looking.

[16:59] To the people of God. To the children of Israel. And describing. The kind of place. That it's become. And if you just read through. About the prophets. The priests.

The princes. The people there. You see the mentioned. Through verse 25. The conspiracy of her prophets. Verse 26. Her priests have done violence.

Verse 27. Her princes in her midst. Are like wolves. Her prophets again. In verse 28. Have smeared whitewash. For them. Verse 29. The people of the land.

Have practiced extortion. And committed robbery. It's just a list. Of one thing. After another. The nation. Is thoroughly corrupt. From top.

To bottom. The government. You would call it. Today. Has become greedy. Accepting bribes. Ruling in their own interest. They've become dishonest.

[17:53] For their own gain. You look at the priests. They've failed in their duty. They were supposed to represent God. To the people. But instead. They're looking after their own interests.

They began to deny. The supremacy of God. And instead. Looking at things. In a very materialistic. Kind of way. They're more interested.

In their own physical needs. And the spiritual needs. Of the people. The prophets. They've become liars. It says. The prophets have smeared. Whitewashed. For them.

Seeing false visions. And divining lies. For them. Saying. Thus says the Lord God. That powerful voice. And yet. What does the Lord say? The Lord has not spoken.

You're speaking lies. To the people. You're deceiving. The people. You're giving them false hope. Predicting. Prosperity. When God has taken so much away. Predicting victory.

[18:50] When God is bringing defeat. Upon them. So there's a seriousness. On all the leadership. Of the people. And then you see. This runs down. To the people.

In verse 29. The people of the land. Have practiced extortion. Committed robbery. They have oppressed. The poor and the needy. They have extorted. From the sojourner. Without justice. Corrupt leaders. Leads to corrupt followers. And so. It goes on. Society. Society. Has turned away from God. And the ripple effect.

Just goes right down. Through. All the people. On every level. Of society. That's the kind of day. That we're living in.

How does it not resonate. Into our own day to day. From the very top. Down through all the levels. Of life and society. Right down through all the people.

[19:47] There is this corruption. There is this self-interest. And a denying. Of God. It's like a volcano. Which erupts. The lava.

Spews out from the top. And begins to run down. Right down. The side of the mountain. Into all the valleys. And channels. It'll find. Destroying. Everything in its way.

That's what moral corruption. A moral decline. Is like. Destructive. But instead of that. What do we need? We need to stand.

In the breach. We need to look. To the Lord Jesus. Without Christ. Our lives are deserving. Of judgment. We are to look.

To him. Being careful. Not being deceived. By the ways of this world. But looking for blessing. That's found in him. So instead of the volcano.

[20 : 43] With its lava. Spewing down. And destroying. We are looking. To pray. For the blessing of God. That we sing. And hear of. In Psalm 133.

We're going to sing it. At the end. That Herman's Jew. Upon the hill. Of Zion. It descends. The Lord bestows. His blessing there. The life. That never ends. That's what we want. To pray for. And so. The devastation. And destruction. Of our moral corruption. That instead. We would pray. The Lord's blessing. The Lord's peace. Peace to descend. Like the Jew. On Herman's hill. And to see that peace. Of God. Just wiping away. All the tears. Wiping away. All the suffering. By people turning. To the Lord. Jesus Christ. That is to be. Our prayer. And just finally.

[21 : 39] That's what we want to see. God's search here. For a people. To pray. One who will stand. In the gap. Lest the nation. To be destroyed. And he says.

But I found. None. What a day. They were living in. When there was no one. To stand in the gap. Praise God. We have one. Who has stood. We have a great. High priest. Over us. In whose name. We pray. Our Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. And we must remember. The power. That there is. In prayer. Through him. As we live in a day. Of such moral corruption. And we think of our leadership. And all that's going on around us. And think. Is there any. Who will stand. And pray. Well. We are called. You and I. To stand. In the name of Christ. And pray. For God's healing.

[22 : 35] On our land. For godly wisdom. And leadership. To come in. From the very top. Right down. Through our society. To pray. To this God.

Who is able. There is a gap. That needs to be filled. By a praying people. But sometimes. The devil will have us think. What difference. Will my prayer make. Well. We must remember. To whom we are praying. And the power. That he has. And sometimes. It's good for us. Just to remind ourselves. Of the power. Of answered prayer. And I'm sure. Many of you. Can look back. In your own life. And see. The wonderful ways. In which God. Has answered prayer. Be it in a personal sense. For someone. Around you. Or even. Hearing of other stories. Around you.

[23 : 28] Of people. Who have had wonderful answers. Of prayer. Being answered. Maybe you've read. Of stories. Of praying people. In the past. You've got your own. Favorite story. You like to go back to. Well. There's a couple. I was reading recently. I just want to share them. With you. As we come. To a close. Just to remind us. Sometimes how. Simple prayer. Can achieve. So much. And the two little stories. I want to share with you. Both involve. Little children. Praying. As a reminder to us. That that's the way. We come to God. In prayer. As little children. Dependent on God. As our father. In heaven. The first was a story. Told by Helen Rosevear. I mentioned it. A few weeks ago. In a different story. That she told. About her own suffering. When she was a missionary. But she told this wonderful story. Of answered prayer.

[24 : 24] She said. A mother. At her mission station. Had died giving birth. To a premature baby. And we tried to improvise. An incubator. To keep the infant alive. But the only hot water bottle. We had. Was leaking. Beyond. Repair. Repair. So she said. We asked the children. To pray for the baby. And for her sister. And one of the girls. Responded in prayer. And said this. Dear God. Please send. A hot water bottle. Today. Tomorrow. Will be too late. Because then. The baby. Will be dead. And dear Lord. Please send. A doll. For her sister too. So she won't feel. So lonely. It's a simple. Little prayer. Isn't it? Well that afternoon. A package arrived. From England. This was all the way.

[25 : 20] To Africa. To Sair. And the children. Watched as the package. Was opened. And much to their surprise. Under some of the clothing. Was a hot water bottle. And immediately.

The girl. Who had prayed. So earnestly. She started to dig. Into the box. All excited. If God sent that. She said. I'm sure he sent a doll. And there it was.

At the bottom of the box. A doll. For the little sister. It's amazing. How. Five months. Before that time. Back in England.

A group. Who had been praying. For this mission. In Africa. Had packed up. This box. With a doll. And a hot water bottle. And it arrived. The very day.

They needed it. It's a reminder. To us. That God hears. And answers. Prayer. Simple prayers. Offered. In faith. Another story.

[26 : 18] I read. Was about a young boy. Who was in hospital. In Glasgow. This is going back. A good number of years. Now. He was 10 years old. And he hadn't been well. All his days.

He'd suffered ill health. He'd come from a very poor. Family. And here he was. Lying in hospital. Awaiting an operation. That would help him. If all went well. And the doctors.

And the surgeon. Who were going to be with him. In his operation. They came round. To see him. Before the operation. And little boy. Asked him. Will one of you. Pray for me. They all gave a little smile.

But none of them. Would pray. They weren't familiar. With what it was. To pray. So the little boy. Said I'll pray myself. And he offered up. A little prayer. He said Jesus.

May you take care of me. And help those. Who will be with me. In surgery. That all would go well. Just a simple. Little prayer. Well the boy. Went through the operation.

[27 : 16] And the next day. After the operation. Had been done. The surgeon. And the doctors. Came round again. To see him. And everything. Had gone. Even more. Had gone better.

Than they'd even imagined. It might. In the first place. And the surgeon. Who had done the operation. Said to him. Well you're Jesus. He heard your prayer. And the boy's response. Was well. I knew he would. And now doctor. I'm going to pray for you. As just a reminder. To us. Of simple. Faith.

To come. With a childlike faith. To remind ourselves. Who it is. We are coming to. And who we are coming. Through.

The one who fills. The gap for us. The Lord Jesus Christ. The one who we read of. In Hebrews 7. Where it says. Consequently. He is able to save. To the uttermost.

[28 : 11] Those who draw near to God. Through him. Since he always lives. To make intercession. For them. On the day of Ezekiel. There was a gap.

And no one was found. To fill it. Well today. There is a major gap too. There is a breach. In our land. In our nation. In the nations of the world.

We praise God. That we have us. Have a. One who makes intercession. For us. One. In whose name we pray. The name above every name. The Lord Jesus Christ.

So may we have the faith. To come. And pray. In his name. For his blessing. To run down. And be poured out upon us. As a people.

And as a nation. Let us. Take up the work. Of construction. And be a people. Who will stand in the breach. And stand in the name.

[29 : 09] Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praying. His blessing. On us. May God bless. His word. To us. Well we'll conclude.

By singing. To us please. That's Psalm. Psalm 133. Thank you.