*Introduction*

You may be thinking that this was a strange reading to have this morning, after all it's Old Testament, It's referring to Israel and their idolatry and also their judgement!

What on earth has that got to do with me?

As Christians born again by the saving work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we can easily fall into the trap of thinking and believing that the OT has nothing of interest to us. That it is part of the Old covenant and we are under a new covenant, which we demonstrated through the partaking of communion.

BUT... we have to take the whole council of God and not just the parts we like.

Therefore in the Old testament we see the life and times of Israel, Gods chosen people, we see their failings and their judgements we can learn much about the way we are to live - in Christ, as his people grafted into the people of Israel - we are related to the Jews by adoption! Praise God!

So as I was seeking the Lord for this morning, I believe He took me to this passage that we have read.

The question therefore, we have to ask is - What does this say to ME today?

This chapter talks of two main themes:

Idolatry & Judgement.

They are connected, but they also stand alone.

**What is idolatry?**

The concise English dictionary states:

IDOL - An image of symbol of a deity consecrated as an object of worship; a person honoured to adoration; anything on which we set our affections inordinately

IDOLATRY - The worship of idols; excessive attachment to or veneration for any person or thing.

God himself commanded when he gave Moses the law:

***EX 20:2-7‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.***

***‘You shall have no other gods before me.‘You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.***

***‘You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.***

Now back in Ezekiel 8 we read of the Priests in the Temple, in fact it was the seventy elders of Israel, the rulers, those who were supposed to be zealous for God, who were performing the temple sacrifices etc. What are they doing in the darkness? they are worshipping idols - in Gods house!

At the entrance to the North gate of the Temple women were there - mourning, not for their sins but for Tammuz.

It is unclear exactly who or what Tammuz was, but the nearest I can get to understanding is he is linked to the underworld and sun god worship, but I may be wrong.

The point is they were committing idolatry in the temple of God.

In the chapter we read at the beginning we see that these idolaters were then seeking the face of the Lord by going to the Prophets.

The result of this is that God asks the question of the prophet Ezekiel "*Should I let them enquire of me at all?*"

***EZEKIEL 14:6 ‘Therefore say to the people of Israel, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!***

Now let us bring this first part up to date and apply it to ourselves.

*"Are you (and I) setting up idols in our hearts and lives"*

and at the same time, are you coming to Church to seek Gods face?

God says to us 'REPENT', get rid of those things - then we will be the people of God, and He will work in and through us.

The second part of this chapter deals with judgment.

What is this judgment coming for?

***12The word of the Lord came to me: 13‘Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful***

When we go back to the original Hebrew, the word for country is the same root word as for Nation and people (*am*), therefore it can refer to us as individuals as well as a nation of people.

Quite clearly here, unfaithfulness is a sin.

So what is this chapter saying to us today?

Quite clearly this country, this people, has turned its back upon God in a variety of ways - it has introduced laws that clearly go against Gods word. it has allowed detestable things to happen such as the abortion of babies and it has decided that creation is incorrect and that the theory of evolution is, thereby taking God out of the equation.

GB has been unfaithful and has sinned.

The Church too has been unfaithful to God by allowing and often welcoming with open arms these ungodly things.

We to as individuals are unfaithful and sinning if we allow things contrary to the word of God in our lives.

God says within this section that even if you have faithful men like Noah, Daniel and Job amongst you, it will not help, for they can only deal with their own salvation.

Noah had a testimony of being faithful:

***GEN 6:8-9But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.....***

***Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.***

Daniel was a faithful man of God and although in exile with every excuse available to him to conform to the rules of the new king, said

***DAN 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way.***

Job - what a testimony he had, so much so that God said to Satan about him:

***Job 1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.***

***8Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.’***

But their testimonies will not help us. We to have to be faithful and live upright and blameless lives.

WHY? Because judgement is coming!

Both judgement on the world and personal judgement.

The righteousness of these three great men of God, will not save others, they can only save themselves by their righteousness.

Jesus Christ, the son of God who came to this world and died upon the cross for our sins and then rose again in victory over sin is the only one who can save.

Only through faith in Him will we escape the coming judgment.

Once saved we are called to be faithful.

*Conclusion*

We live in a time when all the things Jesus talked about in Matthew 24 about his return are in place, we live in a time when the visions of Daniel and all that he saw are in sight, All that the prophet Ezekiel saw is coming together and Israel is back in the land.

When you saw the acts of terror in Paris last week, what did you think? Did you think that the world is falling apart.

Things aren't falling apart -- they are falling into place.

Judgement is coming and it is time for people of God to get rid of their idols and walk faithfully with their God.

For those who do not yet know Christ, it is time to give your life to him, to repent, to turn from your sins and sin no more, and ask him to be your Lord and Saviour.

Amen