

JEHOVAH SHAMMAH

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Date: 26-11-2023

Scripture: Ezekiel 48:35

Every time I receive the offering, the one word that always comes to mind is the word 'Jireh'. We are able to give this offering because our God is a Jehovah Jireh, the God who constantly is giving to us. Along with all the other names that we have for Him, we are able to bring such a wonderful sense of harmony and equilibrium into our lives. Jehovah Shalom – as we think about the peace that God can bring into our hearts, for example.

This Sunday, I want to take you to the last chapter in the book of Ezekiel, the 48th chapter. By its very nature, Ezekiel is an interesting book, one that we don't really go to often, but one which has got so much to offer. Let us focus today on the last verse.

Ezekiel 48:35

"The city (talking about Jerusalem) shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there," (or Jehovah Shammah).

As we look at this word, it's interesting that he's talking about a Jerusalem to be. it's in the future. Why is it that he brings out this particular aspect and says "The Lord is there"? it's because through the book of Ezekiel, we can see three major divisions.

The First Division: Talks very vividly about all the sins of Ezekiel, the judgment, the captivity, the destruction of the capital. Then it also talks about the fact that God left the Temple. We see a very vivid portrayal of the vision that Ezekiel sees of the glory of God lifting up off of the Temple, and then leaving and going. Can you imagine that visual? Apart from it being such an awesome sight to behold, one would think that it would be such a frightening sight to think that God is leaving. And that's the vision that Ezekiel sees. All of that is captured in the first 10-11 chapters of Ezekiel.

The Second Division: Here we see how the neighbors of Judah are being condemned because of their idolatry, their cruel treatment of God's people. These were the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Philistines, the Tyrians, the Sidonians, and the Egyptians. God's anger is against them for the way in which they have treated Israel and Judah.

The Third Division: Here, Ezekiel talks about the restoration of Jerusalem, the restoration of both Judah and Israel, that there would be one nation, that they would repent of their sins and God's Holy Spirit would be within them. Then he talks about the fact that God's feet would rest upon Jerusalem and it would be said that God is there, Jehovah Shammah.

- When we look at the history of the Bible, starting with Genesis, we can see that God has always been present. Right in the Garden of Eden, we read this beautiful account (and at the risk of being covetous of Adam and Eve) I think how wonderful it was to just be walking and talking with God in the garden. Can you imagine that! in the cool of the day, having conversations with God! But that's what Adam and Eve had. God was present there.
- God was present with Abraham.
- God was present when the children of Israel were led out. You could see His presence in the cloud that came during the day, and the pillar of fire in the night.
- God was present on Mount Sinai when the cloud enveloped that whole mountain and the glory of God settled there.

- God was present with David.
- God was present with Solomon when he built the temple and the glory of the Lord came down and filled the temple. This was before Solomon left God and went after his own ways.
- God was present in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – the form of the fourth man that I see is like the Son of God.
- God has been present where two or three are gathered in His name.
- God has been present in the church and continues to be.

And yet, there came a time in the history of Israel and Judah, when God was not present, when His glory left the Temple.

As we move into this Advent season, it is such a wonderful stark reminder of God's presence with you and me, in the gift of His Son. Emmanuel – God with us. Yet, I think, as we look at the absence of God with the children of Israel, and ask the question: Is it possible for God to be absent in our lives? is it possible? God's word says that He will be with us. But the question for us, beloved, is it possible for us to push Him away that He no longer is with us? The Bible tells us that nobody can pluck us out of His hand. But the fact is, beloved, that as long as you and I have free will, and we do have free will, even after we are saved it is possible for us to walk away from God by exercising free will. Just like the children of Israel went into the kind of apostasy that they went into, the kind of evil that they imbibed, it is possible too, for us to walk away and find ourselves in a place where God is not.

Romans 1 is a reminder of what happens when God is not with us.

¹⁸*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, that is God's truth, the truth about God is put down by evil, by the unrighteousness of people.*

¹⁹*because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. It is possible for us to know about God because God has placed within us a conscience. God is saying, "From within, you know everything about me."*

Then He says, ²⁰*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. All to say, that everything about God is visible to us. There can be no excuse to say that I don't know that there is a God. For God says, "Within and without, I've given you enough evidences that I am who I say I am."*

²¹*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

²²*Professing to be wise, they became fools,*

²³*and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible mankind, of birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures. In thinking that they were wise, they were actually exchanging the glory of God for things that were made by humans.*

²⁴*Therefore (such a powerful word – because of what God has told us before) God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. Why?*

²⁵*For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. What happens when that happens?*

²⁶*For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions (God let them go); for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,*

²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Hear this! We are talking or looking at ones who deliberately push God away and say: I don't want to have anything with God, with a holy God. Here's the thing! Sometimes as Christians, we can fall in that. We think that we can go about all the trappings of being Christian, but the thing is that when we talk about "I'm going to be in heaven one day", the reality of heaven is not that the streets of heaven are paved with gold. The reality of heaven is not that there will be seraphim and cherubim there. The reality of heaven is not that there will be thousands who will be singing "Holy, holy, holy, Holy to God." The reality of heaven is that it is filled with the presence of God. That's the reality of heaven. On earth, if we push God away, then there is no way that you can think of being in heaven, where heaven is filled with the reality and presence of God. That's how dangerous this position is, to say that God is not my Jehovah Shammah. I'm in a place where God is not. Not only is that a dark place to be, it must be a terribly lonely place to be. It's a place that has no future with God.

Charles Spurgeon, talking about this whole idea of Jehovah Shammah, said that we have multiple evidences of God's presence, and what we must do to make sure that His presence is always there. He says: "God is present when there is sound doctrine, where there is no falsehood, where the gospel is preached and truth is spoken. God is present when there is purity. It is incumbent upon us to be pure for God Himself is pure. Where God is, there is vitality." There is a sense of excitement about who God is and what we can do in His name.

He goes on to say: "A dead church is a reeking Golgotha, breeding place of evils, home of devils. A church that is alive is a little bit of heaven. Make sure that the members don't become cold and frigid. Let it not be that the frost has paralyzed everybody. And make sure that everybody is not living in a sub-zero environment. There will be a continuing visible expression of power, that you will see powerful prayer at work. You will see the work of the Holy Spirit. You'll see power in ministry. God is present when there's continuing power."

"God is present always when there is unity, when there is no backbiting, no quarrels, no cliques, when the church is not divided with personal ambitions or contrary doctrines or opposing schemes in the church. Jesus Himself, in His last High Priestly prayer, prayed for unity. Jehovah Shammah – God is there."

I have not found it easy to preach this sermon because it is a sermon that hits hard. Two, three times this morning I asked the Lord: Is this really what You want me to speak about? And two things the Lord laid clearly upon my heart. One was that there were some among this congregation who needed to come home, who've lived in a place far away from where God is, who've intentionally pushed Him away despite knowing everything about Him. Something that I've heard often, and typically from young people is: "I know everything about God; I'll find Him one day. Right now, I just want to have a little fun, enjoy myself." The truth is you don't have a guarantee on the next breath.

There's no guarantee that you will live another moment. None of us have that. It is so strong on my heart that this is what God wanted. He wanted those who have pushed Him away to reach out to Him and confess, ask forgiveness, and then come back under His banner.

The second thing was that there are many of you here who have breaking hearts for those close to you, who are far away from God. And my sense this morning is that God wanted me to pray for you and to invite you to stand in the gap for them. I don't understand standing in the gap. I just know that it's in the Word of God, that somehow, when we stand and say, "I stand in the gap for somebody," God is able to move in that person's life. Right here in Ezekiel, God says: "I looked for a person who would stand in the gap for the people, and I found no one." And I wonder today, whether you want to stand up and say, "I want to stand in the gap for this person that I know is far from the Lord."

So beloved, I'm just going to stop because that's where the Lord asked me to land; to pray specifically for these two areas:

- For those who are saying: Lord, I'm coming home. It's not been fun, it's not been easy being far away from you, but today I want to come home.
- If you know somebody who is far away, to stand up and say: I'm standing in the gap for this person.

So, I want to pray for these two areas, and I want to invite you to stand if either one of those two areas resonates with you heart. Would you stand where you are and we'll close in prayer.

Loving heavenly Father, we come to you Abba. Where else can we go? Lord, we have tasted and seen that You are good, so good. Lord, for those this morning who are saying, "I have tasted but wandered away. I'm in a far place, there is no joy where I am, Lord, and I want to come home." Welcoming them back, would You let them hear the joyful sounds from heaven as the angels rejoice? Would You hear their prayers of confession? Would You forgive them? Lord, we pray that You would hold them, that they would be able to say that the Lord is here.

Lord, for those in our lives whom we know are far away from You, willingly walking away, walking in sin. O Lord, we don't understand what this means to stand in the gap for them, but we do know that You ask of it. and so Lord, we stand. We stand in the gap for these loved ones and ask that somehow You would use whatever it is Master, our faith, our prayers, for them to reach into them, to revive things about You. Break the power, the shackles that hold them, and bring them back to You, Lord. o Master, would You do that? And Lord, if it's the start, if it's what You're asking us to do and it will take time, then help us to continue to stand. To continue to pray, to not give up till that one has been brought back to You and is in Your fold.

O heavenly Father, would You do these two things, and then would You just flood our hearts with Your shalom, Lord, Your peace, a peace that passes all our understanding, in every situation and circumstance and send us out with great joy. In Jesus' precious Name, we pray. Amen.
