

Why God? Why?

A message delivered to
MAYER COMMUNITY CHURCH

August 22, 1999

TITLE: Why Christian? Why?

TEXT: Ezekiel 18:30-32

THEME: Repentance

THRUST: The pathway to a new heart is through death

INTRODUCTION:

This past week the world was shaken

Tuesday in Turkey – tremors were felt 185 miles away
shock waves are still rippling through the world’s societies.

The initial reports stated that there were 11 dead.

24 hours later, the estimate was over 2,000!

By Saturday morning, the death toll
was reported at 10,000 and climbing
with estimates that it could top 40,000.

On Wednesday, the *Arizona Republic* headline
cried out: “Why God? Why?”

How would you answer that question?

In many ways, we have become callous to death.

We see it on TV, we pay to see it acted out in movies,
we read about it in our newspapers,
and we prepare for it with our life insurance policies.

Have we considered that it takes 40,000 dead
from a few seconds of violent shaking
to wake us up to the fact of God?

Suddenly the reality of *God*
comes rushing into the void of our wounded consciousness
and it’s now politically correct to mention God
in a context other than
the normal blasphemous use of His name.

The survivors in Turkey are blaming their government
their government is blaming the building contractors
and the whole world is blaming God!

Christians should be shouting: “Why world? Why?”

God’s voice thundered through the prophet Ezekiel

Why Christian? Why?

Ezekiel 18:30-32 "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. ³¹ Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have

committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²
For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent
and live! NIV

The World declares, “Why God? Why?”

“Why did all these die?”

The Christian is pleading, “Why world? Why?”

“Why won’t you come to God?”

God is saying, “Why Christian? Why?”

“Why will you die?”

May I suggest to you, no, I will boldly state to you
that until the *Christian* answers to God,

according to His Word,

the world’s questions will only intensify.

When *Christians* stop hiding their light under a bushel (Mt. 5:15)

the *world* will start finding answers to its questions.

The Church has become the bushel that hides the light!

One individual stated about the Christian church,

“There is too much of man and not enough of God.”

Israel went through the same dilemma!

God warned them.

God wanted them to repent.

He gave them a period of grace.

He said that He took no pleasure in their death!

Last week, when we looked at Peter’s call to repentance

in Acts 3, he was preaching to religious people!

God gave those people a period for repentance

before He brought judgement.

God finally went to war *against* them.

He went to war against them in Jeremiah’s day

by bringing Babylon into the holy city.

He went to war against them in John’s day

by bringing Rome into the holy city (70 A.D.-Titus).

God is calling us to repentance.

In our passage from Ezekiel,

He tells us several things:

1. Warning of judgment

We’ve been speaking of this for several years.

2. Repent of sin – Change our attitude about sin.

3. Rid ourselves of sin – Change our actions away from sin.

4. Make a new heart and a new spirit.

In **Ezekiel 11:19** those words were a matter of promise

Ezekiel 11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. NIV

This is the promise of the New Covenant.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them KJV.

When Peter preached at the day of Pentecost

he was preaching to individuals from all over the world
he was preaching about this promise.

Then, when he preached again in Acts 3,

he was preaching to people who considered themselves godly.
He was preaching to “churched” people.
His words to them, as we saw last week
were “repent and be converted”.

In our passage here in Ezekiel 18

the prophet Ezekiel is speaking to God’s people
and the *new heart* and *new spirit* he speaks of
are a matter of precept.

In other words, it is now our responsibility.

In other places, God tells the people
“to break up their fallow ground.” (Jer 4:3)

Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap mercy, and *break up your unplowed ground*; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. NIV

There is a “heart” problem

that God’s people have to guard against.

- A hard heart

According to Romans 2:5

a “hard-heart” is *caused* by lack of repentance.

When God calls you and I to repent,

and we refuse, our hearts become hard!

The *cure* for a hard-heart is to repent.

The *way to make a new heart* is to repent
and rid ourselves of our sin.

According to Psalm 95:8

a “hard heart” is caused by refusing to obey God.
The *cure* is to repent of our disobedience
and return to obeying His commands.

We cannot make a *new heart* while the *old heart*
is cluttered with past transgressions.

v.31 states, “Cast away from you all your transgressions....”

If you have been immoral – cast it away
If you have been lying – cast it away
If you have been gossiping – cast it away
If you have been stealing – cast it away
If you have been coveting – cast it away

Whatever form the *sin* takes
whether it is an action an attitude or a failure to do
cast it away – and begin the process
and it is a process – of making a new heart
and a new spirit.

How? By *dying*!

Here is the paradox of Christianity...

God says “*Why will you die?*”

God says “*Choose life that you might live*”

and then He tells us that the way to *life* is through *death*.

John 12:23-25 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies,
it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ The man who loves his life
will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
NIV

The path to *Life* is through *death*.

First, through Jesus’ *death*

Secondly, through your own.

The picture before us is

if we don’t have a new heart we will die!

The only way to get a new heart is to die!

Either way, we die

At least one of those ways guarantees eternal *Life*!

The World is asking questions.

The Church is asking questions.

But our attention should be riveted

on the question God is asking: “*Why will you die?*”

We have been too willing to live our lives

pursuing life without death
than we have been to die in pursuit of *Life!*
The call is for *you* to repent and begin making a new heart!

CONCLUSION: Hymn #490 *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*