**Ezekiel Sermon #1**

**God’s Calls a Prophet**

**Themes in Ezekiel:**

1. The sovereignty/glory of God. (Ezek 1:4f). God’s sovereignty demands both the destruction of Jerusalem and the salvation of God’s remnant. Theodicy.

2. The utter sinfulness of human beings. Israel sinful from birth (23:3) and worse than Sodom (16:46-48) Ezekiel 23 is so graphic it is offensive to some.

3. The inescapability (and justice) of God’s judgment. This is the main theme of Ch 1-24 Ezek 14:12-20 (esp v. 14) Even Noah, Daniel and Job could only save themselves!

Points #2,3 are virtually absent from today’s preaching. A healthy balance of grace, love, peace as well as fear, holiness and judgment are called for.

4. The return of the King and the restoration of God’s remnant to glory. Ex A few hairs tucked away 5:3 the faithful marked 9:4

Background:

Ezekiel 1:1-3

The situation.

Jerusalem/Judah was been defeated 597 BC by Nebuchadnezzar.

Jehoiachin the child king is in exile and his uncle Zedekiah is on the throne as a regent.

Zedekiah is a very weak king (Jeremiah “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”). In 586 the people will force him to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar (fulfilling the prophecy in Ezekiel)

Ezekiel 1:1 30 years old when he began his ministry as a prophet. (also the age when he could act as a priest)

v. 2 5th year of Jehoiachin’s exile 592 BC

Ezekiel has been in captivity already for five years, with 10,000 captives: the “cream of the crop” of Israel. (2 Kings 24:14)

One would think that Israel would have been softened up by now. One would be wrong.

**I We Need to See God**

Ezek 1:4-21 Ezekiel sees the glory of God—a prerequisite for being a prophet of God.

This is a vision of God on his throne, surrounded by the cherubim, coming in judgment. It is the Day of the Lord.

Apocalyptic literature, so the idea is to get the dramatic picture.

On the throne, surrounded by the cherubim (Rev 4:6f). The roving chariot symbolizes that God can be anywhere. Like other ancient kings who brought their throne with them as they traveled.

The cherubim are the ones who guard God’s holiness (they guard Eden, they were worked into the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies, they sat above the mercy seat and around the throne of God in Rev 4.)

There is a parallel vision to that in Ezekiel 10 when the presence of the Lord departs from the temple, leaving Jerusalem defenseless before the Babylonian army.

Break it down:

1:4 cloud, flash of lightening (also fire in v. 13) = judgment From the North = Babylon

v. 5 four living creatures = cherubim Rev 4:6b-8 Identified as such in Ezek 10:1

v. 10 four faces man, lion, ox, eagle Most powerful creatures of earth, wild, field, air.

v. 12, 17 move God’s judgment coming like a chariot

v. 15-18 Wheels in wheels, with eyes all over = searching to protect God’s holiness (the version in Ezek 10:12, Rev 4:6 has eyes all over).

v. 22-28 The throne of God. v. 28 rainbow = hope (hope recalls Lam 3:22-23)

Q: How do you see God? Like an old man with a beard?

The message of Ezekiel 1:4-28 God is coming to judge Judah! Jim McGuiggan: “This is no social visit.”

When God comes, it is called the Day of the Lord. Is the Day of the Lord a good day? Depends.

Likewise, Jesus is coming back, and he is coming in judgment (unlike the first time he came, which was to bring salvation, not judgment. John 12:47). 2 Cor 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

Q: How do you see God?

If you would be a “prophet” for God you must first “see” God.

CH I just sets the scene. God is on his throne. Theodicy. Just like Revelation. Now the story starts.

**II We Need to Stand Up for God**

Ezek 1:28b -2:8a Ezekiel’s mission (v. 4 say to them: this is what the Lord says.)

Is this not our mission? (not our purpose but our mission)

2:1 “Son of man” (*ben-adam*) stresses his humanness (as opposed to God’s holiness). Used as an enigmatic title by Jesus.

v. 1 Stand on your feet. It is good to prostrate ourselves before God, but we need to get up from there to take action.

Note: The Spirit comes into Ezekiel as he stands up. This is like Ezekiel 37 Valley of Dry Bones. Ezekiel the first of a remnant God will raise up through the Holy Spirit. When we were given the Spirit we were commissioned as ministers.

v. 4 Ezekiel needs to be obstinate and stubborn. Why? Because the people are obstinate and stubborn. Remember: 5 years of captivity had not yet humbled them.

Why do they continue to be stubborn? They are holding out hope. Jerusalem has not yet been destroyed. They were listening to what their itching ears wanted to hear (2 Tim 4:3-4) They were trusting in the temple, rather than the God of the temple. (Jeremiah 7:4). They were being told “peace, peace.” (Jer 6:13-14, 8:11-12)

People in the world are still hoping that the world can meet their needs. It cannot!

Ezek 2:5 Whether they listen or fail to listen…. We need to remember that it is not our job to convert people, but to speak to people.

v. 5 Q: Do the people around you know that a prophet has been among them?

Mcguiggan: “*Successful* evangelism is faithful proclamation by word and life.”

v. 5 They knew a prophet had been among them. Q: How? How will people know you are a prophet among them? Because we declared the counsel of God.

Later on, when they finally come to their senses, they will remember the one person who truly spoke the words of God to them. We need to be that person. Even if they do not, on Judgment Day we need to be clear of conscience in this regard.

2:6-8a Do not listen to the world. V. 8 “listen to what I say to you.”

Which do you listen to, the world or to God?

**III We Need to Eat the Scroll**

Ezek 2:8b-3:3 Ezekiel eats the scroll. Message: I. We need a personal encounter with God (1:4f) II. We need to stand up for God III We need to digest his Words (parallel Jeremiah 15:16, Rev 10:9-11 in which it tasted sweet but because sour in the stomach)

Q: Have you, like Ezekiel, eaten the scroll?

v. 4 now go and speak. We need to eat the words before we speak them.

Ezek 3:4-9 Why are these people not responding to Ezekiel? They have heard it all before. They are very religious. Religious people are had to convert.

v. 4 speak my words to them. Again, this is his commission.

v. 5 not obscure speech. Theirs is not a language barrier, but a heart barrier.

v. 7 We need to remember this. It is not us they reject, it is God they reject (assuming that we have not been obnoxious or rude or weird is some way)

3:8-9 God’s solution: We need to be as hard and stubborn as they are.

[3:10-15 Ezekiel sits silent for seven days. Distressed and Depressed.]

**IV We Need to Be God’s Watchman**

3:16-21 The watchman of Israel. Context: this is a warning/encouragement to Ezekiel that it is time to start delivering the message.

Ezekiel not too fired up about his mission.

v. 18 I will hold you accountable for their blood.

Sobering words. I do not want to be accountable for the “blood” of my family, neighbors, friends, coworkers, etc.

We hear about God’s love

We hear God wants to bless us.

Do we hear warning’s of God’s coming judgment?

Are we unwilling to be the Watchman of Israel? We need to teach Eph 2:1-3 and Eph 2:4-10.

In Ezekiel the bad news comes before the good news.

We will get to the good news, but…

I. We need to see God.

II. We need to stand up for God.

III. We need to eat the scroll.

IV. We need to be God’s watchman.

**Ezekiel 4 & 5 Dramatic symbolism.**

Ezek 4:1-3 Parable/acting out the siege of Jerusalem. (which actually happened 587-586 BC)

1. drawing of the city.

2. siege works = attack of Babylon

3. iron pan = Q: Is it God behind this iron pan—separated from his people? God is no longer hearing the cries of his people. Ezekiel is now a prophet, but no longer a priest (intervening)

Ezekiel is acting the part of the Lord in this parody.

v. 3 It will be under siege and you will besiege it = The Babylonians will besiege the city but, behind the scenes, it will be the Lord who is besieging the city, with the Babylonians as his agent. Q: Application to us?

v. 5-6 Ezekiel continues this behavior for 430 days. Bizarre behavior. Q: How do you think the people responded to this bizarre behavior? Did the people understand what Ezekiel was acting out?

390 + 40 = 430 years = length of the captivity in Egypt (acc to Ex 12:40-41) captivity symbol

390 years = time of the sin of Israel/Samaria/Northern Kingdom

40 years = time of the sin of Judah/Southern Kingdom.

So this vision represents the fact that all of Israel will go into captivity “in Egypt.” (Hosea 8:13 Egypt = Assyria Rev 18:2 Rome = Babylon Rev 11:8 Rome is symbolically Sodom or Egypt) Their expectation that the exile will be partial and temporary is wrong.

Q: Did Ezekiel actual lay down in the street for 430 days? More likely he went home at night, but came out again every day to act out this spiritual play. He did not literally lay down 24/7 as he cooked his food.

v. 4 “bear their sin” = suffer the consequences for their sin Is 53 “for he bore the sin of many”

4:9-11 Mixture of grains and weighing out grain and water = scarcity of food and water during the siege, rationing. 0.25 kg of grain is starvation rations. “Ezekiel’s bread.”

4:12 Eat food cooked over human excrement = without the temple, you will be unclean during your exile. (Hosea 9:3-4 a good parallel)

4:14-15 Please, no! God grants this concession.

4:16 A specific prophecy about the conditions in 587-586 BC in Jerusalem.

Purpose of this physical prophecy: Do not rely on the temple and God’s support of Jerusalem. All will go into captivity.