**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 1:4-24 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).

Ezek 25-28 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 7:3-8). They were being told “peace, peace.” (Jer 6:13-15, 8:11-12)

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

Ezek 2:5,7 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?

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**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.

Ezek 5:1- The haircut parable. The point: From those to whom much as been given, much will be expected. (Luke 12:48) This certainly applies to us!

For a Jew, cutting off the hair and beard is a very humiliating thing—far more than it would be for us. (Ezek 7:18)

v. 2 fire, sword and exile.

v. 3 The remnant motif. God will protect a remnant. (but even some of them will suffer v. 4) Fortunately, for them, Malachi 3:6 applies. “I, the Lord do not change. So you; O descnedants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

v. 5 “I have set you in the center of the nations.” God has made us a city on a hill. With this comes great responsibility (and potentially great punishment for rebellion against the mission)

Being on God’s side is not necessarily a blessing, if we are not faithful.

**Ezekiel 6 & 7: Judgment on Israel (along with a ray of hope)**

Judgment, not only on Jerusalem, but on all Israel/Judah—on the mountains of Israel.

Ezekiel 6:2 “Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel.

v. 8 But a remnant will be saved from the devastation. I hope that we are among that remnant. When God saves us, we need to remember the depths we sank to and from which we turned. v. 9 like them, we need to “loathe ourselves for the evil we have done and for our detestable practices.

v. 10 An ominous passage. At final judgment, how will people “know that I am the Lord”? “I did not threaten in vain to bring calamity on them.”

“And you will know that I am the Lord” is in Ezekiel 72 times.

Jeremiah 7:1 The end has come. The time when one can repent has been reached.

v. 4 We can reach a point that God shows no pity. God’s love and mercy are, at least in a sense, at odds with his justice. God’s love and his justice met at the cross so that for those who accept Christ, God’s love supersedes his justice. For those who worship idols and reject covenant with God, his justice supersedes his love. Not that his love fails, but that justice prevails. In the words of Amos 5:24 Let justice roll on like a river.

Illustration: A person in the Niagara River reaches a point at which it becomes impossible to escape the current.

v. 7 Doom!

v. 19-22 (read it) Quite an image “they will throw their silver into the streets and their gold will be an unclean thing. On the day of judgment, everything we thought of as awesome, we will realize it was in fact an abomination. The “almighty peso” is not so powerful.

Things you can buy Things you cannot buy

Medicine health

Books knowledge of God, wisdom

Position character

Attention love

What have you relied on? How much assistance will it bring you on the Day of Judgment?

**Ezekiel 10,11**

Ezekiel 10:1f Ezekiel sees God on his sapphire (royal blue) throne, over the cherubim, in the temple. In all this, God rules. This is one of the themes of Ezekiel.

10:18 The glory of the Lord departs from the temple. Very significant. As in 30AD vs 70 AD God departed the temple before he allowed the Gentiles in to defile it.

May this never happen to us!

Jerusalem is doomed.

11:22-23 The end of the road. God leaves the temple. A foreshadow of what will happen to us if we are unfaithful to God (and the nail in the coffin of Calvinism’s P in TULIP)

v. 23 God left the temple and went to the Mount of Olives (above the mountain East of the city) to observe/wait for the destruction of the city by Babylon. This is a foreshadow of Jesus, rejected by the people Matthew 23:37. As a result her house will be left desolate Matthew 23:38. Matt 24:1 Jesus then left the temple until they are willing to welcome his coming and went to the Mount of Olives. Again, God left his temple and left it to be destroyed by the Gentile (in this case by Titus and Rome). Once more, the glory of God has left his temple and gone to the Mt. of Olives, leaving behind a doomed, empty structure.

**Ezekiel 12 Ezekiel acts out the final destruction of Jerusalem and going into exile.**

(read 12:1-16)

Ezek 12:3 Son of man, pack your bags…. Ezekiel performs a visual prophecy. Like Ezekiel, we, too have packed our bags and are exiles. We are a remnant. We are strangers in a strange land. We are aliens and sojourners (Heb 11:13f)

v. 3 Do it “in their sight.” He made a big fuss about this and, presumably, drew a great crowd. Like acting out a skit in which normal things are done in a purposefully exaggerated way. Going through his stuff, making a lot of noise.

Pack your bags, dig through the wall (what wall? His house?)(v. 5), cover your face (v. 6) do it at night (v. 7)

This is a prophecy about Zedekiah (v 10). And of course, this is exactly what happened. They dug through the wall and left at night (v 12). Zedekiah was blinded and carried off into exile (He will not see Babylon v. 13) and died in Babylon. All this happened exactly as Ezekiel acted out (Jeremiah 52:4-11 2 Kings 25:1-7) Truly, Ezekiel was a prophet and, belatedly, the people realized he was a prophet.

But I will spare a remanant (v. 16)

**Ezekiel 16 Shameful history**

The most comprehensive list of Judah’s sins. This is an analogy for Judah, but it is also an analogy for us to consider.

A parable of God’s relationship with Israel.

Ezek 16:1-2 What should we do about the detestable practices of the religious: confront them!

God: v. 2-5 You were the lowest of the low, the poorest of the poor, the weakest of the weak, but I loved you nevertheless.

v. 6-7 (read vs. 6) I made you live. I planted you and made you the most beautiful of jewels.

v. 8-14 I entered into an intimate relationship with you. (gave you a covenant) I made you a queen.

v. 15f But you trusted in your beauty and became a prostitute. (1 Cor 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive) Daniel 4:30 Is this not the great Babylon that I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty? You loved God’s gifts to you, not the God who gave them to you. Your blessings became a curse to you.

v. 43 The antidote: remember the days of your youth.

This is us before we were saved!

Praise God and how amazing!!! Ezek 16:60 But I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth. This reminds me of Hosea Ch 3

Ezek 16:62 I will establish a (new) covenant with you, which will include your sisters (Sodom and Samaria). This is the Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31.