**Ezekiel Sermon #2**

**God’s Calls a Prophet**

**Themes in Ezekiel:**

1. The sovereignty/glory of God. (Ezek 1:4f). Theodicy.

2. The utter sinfulness of human beings. Israel sinful from birth (23:3) and worse than Sodom (16:46-48)

3. The inescapability (and justice) of God’s judgment.

Points #2,3 are virtually absent from today’s preaching.

4. The return of the King and the restoration of God’s remnant to glory

Review from last week: God’s man or woman must:

**I We Need to See God**

Ezekiel 1:1-28 Ezekiel sees the cherubim and God on his throne

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

Ezekiel 1:28-2:8 Ezekiel’s mission: Say to them: This is what the Lord says… Whether they listen or fail to listen. For they are an obstinate and stubborn people.

**III We Need to Eat the Scroll**

Ezekiel 2:9-3:15

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

**IV We Need to Be God’s Watchman**

**Ezekiel 4 & 5 Dramatic symbolism. Physical prophecy**

**Ezekiel acts out a number of prophecies as dramatic symbol. (also Ch 12)**

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

Remember, it is 592 BC and Ezekiel has just begun his prophetic ministry.

1. drawing of the city.

2. siege works = attack of Babylon a ramp, camps, battering rams….

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? God will besiege us if we are stubborn and refuse to listen.

What will that siege look like? A lost job, an illness, persecution, lack of a spouse?...

Bad things will happen to you, but God will be behind it if you refuse to listen.

Ezek 4:4-8 v. 4 “bear their sin” = suffer the consequences for their sin Is 53 “for he bore the sin of many”

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? (yes. 597 BC)

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. (since the reign of Josiah)

v. 8 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. (Ch 12 proves this, as Ezekiel is at his house in the evening)

Ezekiel 4:9-17 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. “because of their sin.”

Purpose of this physical prophecy: Do not rely on the temple and God’s support of Jerusalem. Don’t dress the wounds lightly. Do not say the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. All will go into captivity.

Ezek 5:1-6 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!

v. 1 For a Jew, cutting off the hair and especially their beard is a very humiliating thing—far more than it would be for us. (Ezek 7:18) (ex: Zane!)

v. 1 Take scales. Very dramatic.

v. 2 This is right after he finished the siege parable.

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 descendants 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.

People are looking at us. Their salvation depends on us!

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.

Ezek 5:7-13 It will get really bad.

v. 10 eating their own children (fulfilled in Lamentations 4:10)

Thank goodness for Ezek 5:3.

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

Ezek 6:1-3 for example. 6:14 Then they will know that I am the Lord

Ezek 7:1 The end…

Ezek 7:16-22 (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 dollar” is not so powerful.

Things you can buy Things you cannot buy

Medicine health

Books knowledge of God, wisdom

Position character

Attention love

They will throw their football jerseys out into the street.

They will throw their awesome, pretty clothes into the street.

They will turn over their dune buggies and burn down their real estate projects.

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

v. 27 Then they will know…

Ezek 8 Even the leaders—the priests—are committing idolatry right there in the temple.

Ezek 8:9-11 Elders of Israel

Ezek 8:14-15 Women

Ezek 8:16 Bowing down to the almighty dollar, bowing down to sensual sin, bowing down to their alcohol and their weed.

Ezekiel 9:1-6 The vision is continued.

9:1-2 Executioners from the North with a war club. Babylon.

9:3 God is in command here (not Nebuchadnezzar)

9:3 God moves to the threshold of the temple. He is about to abandon his temple his city and his people!!!!

v. 4 “Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.”

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn (about sin).

Similar to Rev 7:1-17

Righteous are sealed from judgment, but not from suffering when God comes in judgment.

Conclusion: When people sin, all suffer but not all are punished.

Theodicy

There is a big difference between suffering with the guilty and suffering because we are guilty.

For us, this “seal” this “mark” is the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

9:5 Kill without pity or compassion. Not that God does not have pity or compassion, but for some of us, God’s justice trumps his love for us.

God’s love and his justice meet at the cross. For those who repent, love triumphs over justice. For those who do not, his justice triumphs over love.

9:6 Begin at my sanctuary…. Judgment, of course, begins with the elders/leaders. 1 Pet 4:17

Summary:

**God will hold his people accountable.**

**God will protect a remnant**

**God holds the “religious” especially to account**

**God will judge the world due to sin, but those who worship him will be sealed from final judgment.**

**Ezekiel 10,11 God abandons his people**

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 24:1-3 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)

Ezek 18:2 The fathers eat sour grape and the children’s teeth are set on edge.

In other words, the children inherit the effect of what their parents did. They were applying this to the situation of being disciplined by Babylon. It is our father’s fault, not ours.

[There is a grain of truth to their complaint (for example 2 Kings 21:10-18) if we are talking about corporate consequences for sin]

18:3 God says that every person will be taken as an individual and will be accountable, before God, for what they do individually.

We should be aware that a vast swathe of Christianity does not agree with this most basic doctrine. They are called Calvinists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Dutch Reformed and the majority of Protestants. They believe that we are totally depraved and guilty of the Original Sin of Adam.

“All souls are mine” And therefore all are predestined to salvation, if they will have it Romans 8:28-30

18:5-18 God’s justice. Does this contradict Exodus 20:4 No! Both are true, and this is borne out by Ezekiel as much as any book in the Bible. The sin of one can cause the suffering of another, but not the punishment of another.

18:5-9 A righteous man who (unrealistically) commits no sin (note the high proportion of social justice in this list…)

18:10-13 A son does evil the father did not do. The righteousness of his father will be irrelevant in his relationship with God.

18:14-18 Now, the reverse case. The grandson acts as the grandfather. He will not be punished for what his father has done.

Q: Is this works salvation? Answer: No. It is a crystal clear statement that when it comes to individual relationship with God, we stand on our own.

Just in case it needs to be restated: Ezek 18:20 repeating Ezek 18:3 but expanding on it applying v. 5-18.

18:21-24 The final state of our relationship with God/repentance will determine where we end up with God. (However, we should remember Hebrews 6:4-6 and 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Ezek 18:22 None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered. How encouraging!!!

Ezek 18:24 None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. How scary a thought!!!

Ezek 18:25-29 Humans try to call God unjust in this.

Q: Does this make (human) sense? If a murderer repents and decides not to murder, do we let him off the hook? No!!!!

Parable of the workers in the field Matthew 20:1-16 (God: “Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or envious because I am generous?” 20:14) Humans are repelled by this, but this is God’s justice.

Ezek 18:30-32 Here is the bottom line on the issue of eternal consequences for sin.

The bottom line is this: Judah as a whole, and most of the individuals in Judah need to repent. Let’s worry about this fact and trust the rest to God’s providence and sovereign will, trusting in both his justice and his grace. All this debating about whether God is just and who is to blame is just a waste of hot air. God has no intention to get into debates with us about his justice (as evidenced by Romans 9:14-18) Our job is to repent!

I will judge you, each according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. (v. 30).

God’s plea to all of us: Why will you choose to die, O house of Israel? (v. 31)

18:32 God desires that no man be lost. God desires that all men be saved. 1 Tim 2:4 Calvinism is a lie! The T and the P in TULIP are false doctrine, according to Ezekiel 18:30-32.

Q: Does this mean that God’s will is not always done? Yes (if so, then why pray it in the Lord’s prayer) It is God’s will that we have free will. In the broadest sense, God’s will is always done.

Ezekiel 23 Ohola and Oholibah

Oholah is Samaria/Ephraim/Israel/the Northern Kingdom

Oholibah is Jerusalem/Judah/the Southern Kingdom

The Hebrew words Ohola and Oholibah derive from the word for tent or tabernacle.

Ohola her tent

Oholibah my tent is in her

This is R rated stuff.

23:5-10 Oholah began her prostitution in Egypt, and continued it with Assyria.

23:18-22 Oholibah was worse than her sister! First she prostituted herself with (trusted in) Babylon. Then she prostituted herself with (trusted in) Egypt. v. 20 is amazingly shocking. Sin is disgustingly ugly!!!!!! This is what our sin is like! We call it “pro choice” We call it “social drinking” “alternative lifestyle” I was “frustrated” “hormones”

Oholah’s and Oholibah’s mistake was that they were not satisfied with God. Are you satisfied with what God has given you? 1 Timothy 6:8 If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

23:22 Here is the take-home lesson. I will give you over to what you gave yourself to.

v. 28 You will become the very thing you hate. This is what sin does!!!! It will “take away everything you have worked for. John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus came that we might have life!

v. 49 Then you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.

Ezekiel 24 The cauldron Ezekiel refuses to mourn.

Jan, 588 BC A date to mark down. This is the date when Nebuchadnezzar put Jerusalem under siege. Here, as before, Ezekiel proves that he is a prophet—capable of knowing the future, as news of the siege certainly did not come for several months. The city did not fall for about two years.

24:6 The cauldron with the encrusted layers of stuff is Judah with her unrepented sin.

24:6 Empty it piece by piece without casting lots for them. Babylon will destroy indiscrimitately.

Ezek 24:12 Sin is a “heavy deposit.”

24:11,13 When God has finished pouring his wrath on Jerusalem it will get really hot, but then the impurity/encrusted junk in the pot will finally be cleaned.

v. 14 I will not have pity (as illustrated by Ezek 24:15-24 when Ezekiel does not mourn for his wife)

Ezek 24:15-24 God tells Ezekiel to not mourn over the death of his wife.

24:15 I am about to take away the delight of your eyes. (Judah is the delight of God’s “eyes.” Yet, do not lament or shed any tears.

The point: God loves Judah as Ezekiel loves his wife. But because of their sin, God will destroy Judah and will not mourn over it.

Q: How did God feel about the people in Sodom and Gomorrah? He loved them intensely.

It is not that he did not love Judah. Far from it.

v. 21 God: You are so proud of the Tabernacle—it is the object of your affection as is his wife to Ezekiel. It will fall, and you will not mourn.

v. 27 Ezekiel will be prophetically silent for two years—until news of the fall of Jerusalem arrives.