

Ezekiel

Oracles of Judgment Against Israel

Ezekiel 6:9-10

February 01, 2020

Today

Ezekiel has accepted God's call and now he embarks on a crazy and heartbreaking 22-year ride.....

God's people still believed that He would protect His Temple and never allow Jerusalem to be destroyed. Ezekiel's task was, in part, to burst that bubble. Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed and the people would know exactly WHY God allowed it to happen.

2nd Object Lesson – Siege and Fall of Jerusalem {586 BC}

- Get a brick and write "Jerusalem" on it.
- Build a siege wall with a ramp – pitch camps – place battering rams on every side – put an iron plate between you and the city – face the city and lay siege to it.

3rd and 4th Object Lessons – Ezekiel bears the iniquity of his people.

- Lie on your left side for 390 days – 1 day for every year of Israel's sin. {no clear understanding of time period covered}
- Lie on your right side for 40 days – 1 day for every year of Judah's sin. {no clear understanding of time period covered}
- Set your face toward Jerusalem and prophesy against it.
- Ezekiel cannot move until the days of the siege are completed.

5th Object Lesson – Judah's spiritual uncleanness and coming Famine

- Mix wheat, barley, beans lentils, millet and spelt and make bread for yourself
- You will eat the bread – 20 shekels by weight per day - during the 390 days you lie on your left side.
- You will bake the bread over human dung / Ezekiel complains and God changes it to cow's dung

Ezekiel 4:16-17 - He then said to me: "Son of man, I will cut off the supply of food in Jerusalem. The people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in despair, ¹⁷ for food and water will be scarce. They will be appalled at the sight of each other and will waste away because of their sin.

6th Object Lesson – Judgments Against Jerusalem – God is bringing a lawsuit against His people for breaking the Covenant

- Shave your head and beard
- Divide the hair into 3 sections by weight
- When the siege comes to an end:
 - Burn 1/3 inside the city {Ezekiel's brick}
 - Strike 1/3 with a sword around the city {Ezekiel's brick}
 - Scatter 1/3 to the wind
- Take a few strands and tuck them away in your garment {promise of a preserved remnant}

Ezekiel 5:5-7:27 - This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. ⁶ Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees..... ⁸ "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations. ⁹ Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. ¹⁰ Therefore in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds. ¹¹ Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will withdraw my favor; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. ¹² A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword. Then they shall know that I am the Lord. {see Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 for consequences of breaking the Covenant}

There is no doubt that God is angry. He has always been faithful to these people, yet at every turn, they have been unfaithful to Him. **HOWEVER**, His anger is not like our anger. His is a holy, righteous anger against the persistent and intentional way the people have broken the Law and abandoned the Covenant – and what idol worship is doing to them. But, don't think for a moment that God is happy about what is going to happen – His heart is breaking!

Ezekiel 6:9-10 - Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me-- how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices. ¹⁰ And they will know that I am the LORD; I did not threaten in vain to bring this calamity on them.

14 months later, Sept. 7, 591 BC - Once again Ezekiel was minding his own business. He was in his own house with some elders of the people when suddenly the Hand of the Lord was upon him. Jesus stood before Ezekiel and he was taken in vision to the Temple – to the inner court where a foreign idol had been set up. Ezekiel is to be a witness in God's legal case against Judah.

- Evidence 1 – A foreign idol has been set up and is being worshipped in God's Temple. – 8:5-6
- Evidence 2 – Animal worship by the 70 elders / leaders of Israel – 8:8-12
- Evidence 3 – Women sitting and weeping for the god Tammuz – Who died and came back to life every year – 8:14
- Evidence 4 – At the entrance to the Temple 25 men – their backs are to the Temple and they are facing east worshipping the sun – 8:16

The trial is over and God announces that probation has closed for His people. They are divided into 2 groups –

- A faithful remnant who are marked in their foreheads
- Those who have embraced false worship.

God leaves the Most Holy Place {9:3} and announces the sentence: Spare all those who have the Mark in their foreheads and utterly destroy everyone else – beginning in the Temple [see 1 Peter 4:17].

Now slowly, as Ezekiel watched, God's glory went up and paused at the entrance of the Temple. He took His place on the throne and moves out of the Temple:

Ezekiel 11:17-20 - Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.' ¹⁸ "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. 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. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

The 4 Mighty Angels spread their wings and the glory of God hovered above them. When the glory of God reached the Mount of Olives, it paused briefly and was gone. **God leaves His Temple 4 years before the final destruction in 586 BC.**

Ezekiel came out of vision and shared everything he had seen with those in captivity in Babylon.

7th Object Lesson – Certainty of Captivity

To help the people see what their destiny looked like, Ezekiel was instructed to pack like a person going into captivity:

- Pack your bags and bring them out for all to see.
- In the evening dig a hole in your wall, go through the wall, throw your bags over your shoulder and walk out into the darkness.
- Cover your face so you can't see where you are going.

Ezekiel 12:11 - Say to them, 'I am a sign to you.' "As I have done, so it will be done to them. They will go into exile as captives.

8th Object Lesson – Fear and Anxiety as God's judgment falls

- Tremble while you eat
- Quiver with anxiety as you drink

Ezekiel 12:19-20 - Say to the people of the land: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says about those living in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel: They will eat their food in anxiety and drink their water in despair, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence of all who live there. ²⁰ The inhabited towns will be laid waste and the land will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

Apparently, some of the people determined Ezekiel's visions applied to some distant future event and they were not taking him seriously:

Ezekiel 12:28 - Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Chapters 13 and 14 condemn:

False Prophets who were lying to the people – telling them that everything would be fine – when in fact they were just making stuff up to be popular:

- **Ezekiel 13:8-10** - Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because of your false words and lying visions, I am against you, declares the Sovereign LORD.....¹⁰ "Because they lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace...

False Prophetesses who practiced divination and magic:

- **Ezekiel 13:22-23** - Because you disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no grief, and because you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save their lives,²³ therefore you will no longer see false visions or practice divination. I will save my people from your hands. And then you will know that I am the LORD."

Elders who came to Ezekiel in order to inquire of God while still worshipping idols:

- **Ezekiel 14:4-6** - 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When any Israelite sets up idols in his heart and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face and then goes to a prophet, I the LORD will answer him myself in keeping with his great idolatry. ⁵ I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.' ⁶ "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: **Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!**

Right in the middle of all this judgment, God reveals His heart. He loves these rebellious, stiff-necked, idolatrous people. He had rescued them. Taken care of them. Loved them and caused them to become prosperous. In spite of all that God had done for them, they chose to be unfaithful and lived wildly promiscuous lives – behaving worse than prostitutes or the inhabitants of Sodom. They worshipped idols and even sacrificed their own children to the gods. The ingratitude and forgetfulness of these people is staggering!! God has ALWAYS been, faithful, patient, long-suffering, forgiving and gracious and in return His people turned to images of wood and stone.

- **Ezekiel 16:59-60** - This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. ⁶⁰ Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

In addition to thinking that the events Ezekiel prophesied about were in the distant future, there was also a misunderstanding regarding who was responsible for the current mess. It was believed that the current generation was being punished for the sins of their fathers. So, Ezekiel was instructed to set the record straight. Each person is responsible for their own life and is accountable to God and will be judged by Him for their own actions.

- **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!**

The destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is moving swiftly to its conclusion. So that there is no further misunderstanding regarding the coming events, Ezekiel reviews AGAIN the sins of Israel {Chapters 19-23}.

9th Object Lesson – Signs of Grief

- Moan and sigh with bitterness in front of the people

Ezekiel 21:7 - And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming. Every heart will melt and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every knee become as weak as water.' It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD."

10th Object Lesson – 2 Sign Posts

- 1 sign post leads to Rabbah, the capital of Ammon
- 1 sign post leads to Jerusalem
- Nebuchadnezzar will have to make a choice – go to Ammon or go to Jerusalem. He will choose Jerusalem

Ezekiel 21:24 - Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because you people have brought to mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do-- because you have done this, you will be taken captive.

Finally, on January 15, 588 BC {the 9th year – 10th month – 10th day} Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem.

11th Object Lesson – Ezekiel’s wife dies suddenly

- God tells Ezekiel that his wife, the object of his greatest affection, would die suddenly.
- He would not be allowed to mourn for her in any way – he was to go about his business as though nothing had happened.
- His behavior was so odd that the people asked him what was going on.....

The Temple, the object of greatest affection for the people, will be destroyed {see Leviticus 26}. This will be the greatest tragedy in the nation’s history. Their center of worship will be burnt to the ground and Jerusalem will be destroyed. Their freedom will be lost, their land and homes will be confiscated, many people will die and the majority will be taken into captivity. This is definitely something worth crying over, but the people would not be permitted to mourn. **BECAUSE**, despite repeated calls for repentance the people and their leaders had persisted in sin –

- **2 Chronicles 36:15-16** - The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

Therefore, this judgment should not be a surprise. The Law of Moses did not allow for mourning those who had been justly executed for their crimes and in like manner the citizens of Jerusalem had no right to mourn for the just destruction of their city.

586 BC rolled around. A messenger came from Jerusalem to report the destruction of both Temple and City. As prophesied, Ezekiel’s “muteness” was immediately removed - his 7-year ministry of announcing the impending judgment against Judah was over.

No Take Aways this week