

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel

Message 7

October 4, 2015



Ezekiel: The Priest-Prophet of God by Frank Salisbury Cir. 1954

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Pentwater Bible Church

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God Conditions The Prophet Ezekiel

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EZEKIEL'S SPEECH IS REMOVED

Ezekiel 3:22-4:8

²²And the hand of Jehovah was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. ²³Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of Jehovah stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. ²⁴Then the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet; and he spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house. ²⁵But thou, son of man, behold, they shall lay bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: ²⁶and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

***4**¹ Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem: ²and lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it round about. ³And take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face toward it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel (ASV, 1901).*

Ezekiel 3:22

²²And the hand of Jehovah was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee (ASV, 1901).

After seven days of silence in the midst of the other Israelites God came to Ezekiel as depicted with the phrase “*the hand of Jehovah was there upon me.*” In this phraseology Ezekiel is describing the beginning of the encounter the God of the Universe was initiating with him. This was how Ezekiel described the manner in which God began to open the line of communication to him. God tells Ezekiel to *Arise*, from the quiet contemplative position he has been in and *go forth into the plain*. God is now going to address Ezekiel again with direct revelation and instructions. He is telling him to go to “the” plain. By using the definite article in front of plain it is clear that location was known to both to the Lord and Ezekiel as well as those living in Babylon at that time. The Hebrew word that gets translated in the English Bibles as plain is *habeeekah*. In the Hebrew Bibles it is “valley” not plain. This direction to the valley was not a causal direction. There was purpose in selecting this particular location to reveal the Shekinah Glory again to Ezekiel.

This spot was the site of the original Biblical city of Babel. This was also the spot where the tower was built by Nimrod in defiance of God's commands. Here God confused their language from one to many and caused them to disperse from the valley (Genesis 11:1-9). This would be the ideal resting place for God's Shekinah Glory to rest on the earth near the exiles in Babylon. There were 70 original nations after the Flood, corresponding to the 70 names in chapters ten and eleven of Genesis. Immediately after that from the line of Shem who was one of Noah's sons, God chose Abraham to be the first Hebrew and He blessed him with a unique unilateral covenant. The nation that would come from him was chosen to carry a divine message to a world hostile to Godliness. Now intriguingly because of their sin God caused them to be subjugated to the first evil kingdom Babylon. The Israelites did not live up to the destiny that God had for them. Nevertheless God had not forgotten the covenant He made with Abraham (Jeremiah 31:35-37; Romans 11:2-4 etc.). In fact He organized the nations of the earth around the nation Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

⁸When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, When he separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel. ⁹For Jehovah's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance (ASV, 1901).

The first worldly kingdom in defiance of God is the very nation God uses to punish the people of Israel. Now God is bringing His prophet Ezekiel to the very place where this evil empire was created to again expose His Shekinah Glory to him and instruct him in the manner in which he will prepare and approach the Israelites.

GOD'S PRESENCE AGAIN HUMBLER EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 3:23

²³Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of Jehovah stood there, as the glory, which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face (ASV, 1901).

Jehovah God is again completely revealing Himself with the Cherubim and the Golden Chariot. This is the Divine Presence of God who left Jerusalem and was guarding the Jews in exile. The Chariot again hovered as the text says, "*Jehovah stood there.*" This is another sign that He had not forgotten them. Ezekiel's response is the same with this experience; he humbles himself in submission to God. Rashi the Jewish rabbi sees the humble characteristic of God in His going to the valley and waiting for Ezekiel instead of Ezekiel waiting for God as in a king coming in a procession while his subjects wait upon him.

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

Ezekiel 3:24

²⁴Then the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet; and he spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house (ASV, 1901).

As God's Spirit entered Ezekiel to communicate with him in the most intimate manner as He cause Ezekiel to stand up. This was a Divine gesture of strengthening for Ezekiel. He then told him that he must shut himself up within his home. With this command it seems that God is taking away Ezekiel's ability to be the Watchman that God commanded him to be. So now he will separate himself from the very people that he has been charged with warning what is coming to Jerusalem. This is the first of a number of restraints God will place on His prophet. The first one, which God told him to shut thyself within thy house, does not actually mean that he was never to leave his house (Ezekiel 5:2; 12:3). He was to refrain from openly fraternizing with the other Israelis. God would have him periodically perform specific tasks out of his house but only at the Lord's direction. Often the Jewish leaders came to his house so as to hear the communication from God (Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1; 20:1).

Ezekiel 3:25-26

²⁵But thou, son of man, behold, they shall lay bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: ²⁶and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house (ASV, 1901).

The false prophets back in Jerusalem had been telling the people that this sojourn in Babylon was only temporary and the people generally thought that there would never be a possibility that God would allow the Temple to be destroyed. They enjoyed a long history of Divine intervention in Israel and they thought that no matter what they did their eternal salvation, as well as temporal security was assured. The truth is the false prophets were lying to the people. Meanwhile back in Jerusalem the prophet Jeremiah was prophesying of Jerusalem's destruction if the people did not stop sinning. However, their message sounded better than what Jeremiah's truth to them sounded. Consider the conflicting messages of Hananiah the prophet who spoke lies and Jeremiah who spoke the truth regarding the last and final invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, which in Babylon Ezekiel was also warning about. This dialogue recorded by Jeremiah was occurring at Jerusalem in the August-September time frame of 593 B.C., which was the same time that Ezekiel was beginning to prophesy in Babylon. This was a continuation of a prophecy, which Jeremiah gave directly contradicting Hananiah's message.

Jeremiah 28:1-17

¹And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet, who was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of Jehovah, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, ²Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Jehovah's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried to Babylon: ⁴and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went to Babylon, saith Jehovah; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. ⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of Jehovah, ⁶even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: Jehovah do so;

Jehovah perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of Jehovah's house, and all them of the captivity, from Babylon unto this place. ⁷ Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people: ⁸ The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. ⁹ The prophet that prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Jehovah hath truly sent him. ¹⁰ Then Hananiah the prophet took the bar from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. ¹¹ And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon within two full years from off the neck of all the nations. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. ¹² Then the word of Jehovah came unto Jeremiah, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the bar from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ¹³ Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast broken the bars of wood; but thou hast made in their stead bars of iron. ¹⁴ For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may served Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. ¹⁵ Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah: Jehovah hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. ¹⁶ Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will send thee away from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken rebellion against Jehovah. ¹⁷ So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month (ASV, 1901).

So God warned Ezekiel that if he were out roaming about speaking God's truth to them they would likely *lay bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them*. In fact God would also cause his speech to be temporarily stopped. It would not be permanent (Ezekiel 3:27; 33:22). God did not want Ezekiel to reprove these people for they would become indignant and abuse him. The Lord would occasionally open his speech and cause him to speak certain carefully chosen words, which the Lord was giving him. He had to face the stubborn rebellious exiles and by his seclusion and dumbness God was providing an effective sign of the peoples helplessness without the Lord. At this time an open rebuke to the exiles would not be effective. The symbolic nature of Ezekiel's visions would be communicated over time and after it saturated in them the people would be in a better frame of mind to accept God's Word. The Lord finally ended Ezekiel's silence about seven years later. (Ezekiel 33:22).

Ezekiel 3:27

²⁷ But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house (ASV, 1901).

God confirms that He will open Ezekiel's mouth, temporarily restore his speech for specific messages He wants to convey to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. When Ezekiel spoke it would be preceded by "*Thus saith the Lord Jehovah.*" Ezekiel was not to force the message on anyone or attempt to convince those who would not listen. By keeping the prophet dumb except for allowing him to speak "Words of the Lord," God was limiting

the totality of Ezekiel's words to those of God alone and not permitting any idle communication of his own. This was a sign to the nation of God's displeasure with them and letting them know of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. Some would hear and most would not. Just as in the days of Noah were most people would not listen until it was too late. Then they blamed Noah and the Lord for their problems. They had 120 years of hearing Noah preach but they did not listen (Genesis 6:3). There is a time when the Lord's long suffering comes to an end. After which the punishment is meted out. It always happens. This account from the Pseudepigraphic Book of Jasher clearly depicts the results of men not obeying the warning of God that His judgment is immanent.

Jasher 6:12-25

¹² And still the sons of men would not return from their evil ways, and they increased the anger of the Lord at that time, and did not even direct their hearts to all this. ¹³ And at the end of seven days, in the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, the waters of the flood were upon the earth. ¹⁴ And all the fountains of the deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹⁵ And Noah and his household, and all the living creatures that were with him, came into the ark on account of the waters of the flood, and the Lord shut him in. ¹⁶ And all the sons of men that were left upon the earth, became exhausted through evil on account of the rain, for the waters were coming more violently upon the earth, and the animals and beasts were still surrounding the ark. ¹⁷ And the sons of men assembled together, about seven hundred thousand men and women, and they came unto Noah to the ark. ¹⁸ And they called to Noah, saying, Open for us that we may come to thee in the ark--and wherefore shall we die? ¹⁹ And Noah, with a loud voice, answered them from the ark, saying, Have you not all rebelled against the Lord, and said that he does not exist? and therefore the Lord brought upon you this evil, to destroy and cut you off from the face of the earth. ²⁰ Is not this the thing that I spoke to you of one hundred and twenty years back, and you would not hearken to the voice of the Lord, and now do you desire to live upon earth? ²¹ And they said to Noah, We are ready to return to the Lord; only open for us that we may live and not die. ²² And Noah answered them, saying, Behold now that you see the trouble of your souls, you wish to return to the Lord; why did you not return during these hundred and twenty years, which the Lord granted you as the determined period? ²³ But now you come and tell me this on account of the troubles of your souls, now also the Lord will not listen to you, neither will he give ear to you on this day, so that you will not now succeed in your wishes. ²⁴ And the sons of men approached in order to break into the ark, to come in on account of the rain, for they could not bear the rain upon them. ²⁵ And the Lord sent all the beasts and animals that stood round the ark. And the beasts overpowered them and drove them from that place, and every man went his way and they again scattered themselves upon the face of the earth.

GOD GIVES AN EXAMPLE OF THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

Ezekiel 4:1-3

¹ Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem: ² and lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it round about. ³ And take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face toward

it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel (ASV, 1901).

There would be four graphic signs as illustrations of what God was going to do.

1. The sign of the tile.
2. The sign of the prophet's physical position.
3. The sign of famine and the defiled bread.
4. The sign of the shaving of the head and the face.

This is the first of four symbolic signs regarding the impending doom that Jerusalem would undergo. The false prophet Hananiah, king Zedekiah and most of the exiles would not accept the warnings. God cause Ezekiel to use very graphic illustrations to get the point across to the Jewish people in Babylon that disaster is coming. The mission of Ezekiel was to dispel the false hope of a speedy return to the land. After he had received his commission he is commanded to use four visual signs as teaching tools, which were to teach the captives that the last invasion of Nebuchadnezzar would soon come upon their beloved city Jerusalem. The word translated a tile is actually a Hebrew word *lehvanah* which means brick. The Babylonians used clay bricks to communicate and maintain records. Wet clay in the form of bricks was formed and cuneiform text was inscribed upon them. Archaeological finds have uncovered thousands of these. bricks were almost square, fourteen by twelve inches. Ezekiel was commanded to draw into the soft clay of one of these bricks a depiction of a city. The drawing was to represent Jerusalem. Next he was to show Jerusalem in the state of siege. The coming assault on the city was vividly pictured in this first sign.

Jerusalem was at that time a well-fortified city, which would take the Babylonians many months to break through the walls. First the Babylonians would build a long-term camp around the city. Next they would starve the inhabitants out by halting the supply lines of food, supplies and weapons. Next they would erect siege works against the city. These were towers or walls of earth erected all around Jerusalem. The ramps were a gradual incline from the ground to the upper levels of the walls. This allowed the army to start battering the walls close to the top where the stones were smaller and more vulnerable to the battering rams. This would all be depicted in Ezekiel's model. Once the siege started it was inevitable that they would break through the walls providing no means of escape for the Jews.

Finally the Prophet was also to take an iron pan (literally: plate) and use it for a wall of iron between him and the city and set his face against it. In all this the Prophet was to show Jehovah's action against Jerusalem. It also symbolizes the hardness of the hearts of the Jews against God and His prophets. As fire on the griddle blackens it so too does the sins of the people blacken their hearts until they are willing to repent.

NEXT MESSAGE: EZEKIEL & THE POSITIONS AND DEFILED BREAD

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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