

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel

Message 6

September 27, 2015



The Prophet Ezekiel by Fresco Basilica Di Sant Agostino Augustine Pietro Gagliardi 19th Century

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EZEKIEL BECOMES ISRAEL'S WATCHMAN

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Ezekiel 3:12-21

¹²Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place. ¹³And I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing. ¹⁴So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me. ¹⁵Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

¹⁶And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ¹⁷Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. ¹⁸When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. ¹⁹Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. ²⁰Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. ²¹Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul (ASV, 1901)

EZEKIEL BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

Ezekiel 3:12-13

¹²Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place, ¹³And I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing (ASV, 1901).

The conclusion of this meeting with God is the transportation of Ezekiel by the Chariot with the Cherubim driven by God's Spirit. Similarly Elijah was physically carried from the earth to heaven by the Spirit (Hebrew ruach).

II Kings 2:11

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (ASV, 1901).

God is outside time and space and is therefore not bound by its constraints. Ezekiel is now lifted up into the eternal environment from which God will impart instructions for him to take back into time and space, that is, the earth to convey God's Word to the captive Israelites in Babylon. From this moment Ezekiel would begin to receive the various commands from God directed to him to provide the proper motivation for him to carry out God's Will effectively. The rushing sound was the wings of the Cherubim kissing (Hebrew *nashak*) each other as the wheels of fire add to the deafening sound experienced by the prophet. The Cherubim were moved to praise at the conclusion of His launching of Ezekiel's ministry for God when they said, "*Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place.*"

EZEKIEL EXPERIENCES THE VENGEFUL EMOTIONS OF GOD

Ezekiel 3:14

¹⁴So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me (ASV, 1901).

As God's Spirit lifted Ezekiel up from the earth and took him away he began to experience a strong emotional bond with the spiritual attitude of Jehovah God toward the nation Israel. The terms *in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit* are used to describe a highly emotional state like he is hot with anger after his spiritual encounter with God. This is not a bitter anger. The Hebrew word; *mar* which means bitter is also used to reference an emotional state of bitter disappointment. This is a more intense emotional anger leveled at the Jews for their hard heartedness toward sin and God Himself. This is deeper and more hurtful and stable as in preparing carefully for vengeance administered with a *measured* Divine retribution. God displayed this attitude before the Great Flood. He said that it repented Him that He made man.

Repentance as it is used of God generally means to change *in the objects* of His actions. Other Scripture says that God repented that He made Saul king (I Samuel 15: 11). Then we see in I Samuel 15: 29 that God does not repent. This can't be a contradiction. The resolution to this seemingly contradictory set of verses is one of perspective. That is, the perspective of a human and our God. God may seem to change His mind when man has changed his attitude toward Him. God's attitude is conditioned by man's attitude. That is, God responds to man one way when man is obedient and another way when man is disobedient. From the human perspective it seems that God has changed His mind. From God's perspective he simply deals with each situation in a different manner. The Hebrew word for repent is *nacham* which has the same root letters as Noah (Hebrew for comfort). The meaning for this word is "comforted" and it means that God was comforted or justified in His decision. God was painfully and deeply hurt that His creation was so sinful. The degree of pain was like that of a young person getting a spanking and weeping

with gasping breaths over the abrupt administration of a physical correction. God was genuinely pained over the earth's sin as surely as He is today too.

While Ezekiel is experiencing is that a transformative attitude or outlook adjustment God is guiding him through with unyielding power and love. God is preparing him for his mission and coming along side him to guide and support him all the while bonding closely so Ezekiel embraces and assimilates the emotions that God is exerting toward the Nation Israel in their sin.

EZEKIEL IS TAKEN TO TEL-ABIB

Ezekiel 3:15

¹⁵Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days (ASV, 1901).

This is now the very first scene of Ezekiel's ministry. He was carried to *them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar*. The name in Hebrew means the "mound of ears of corn" (the name is used in the name of the Passover month, Abib). This location has not been identified and its position depends on the position of the river Chebar with which it is identified. He is among the exiles by the river Chebar and remains silent. He just sits there and listens for seven days while he collects his thoughts regarding the overwhelming experiences he has just been through. He is silent as he prepares to deal with the people of the exile. Seven days has specific meaning in Scripture related to the Jews in the Mosaic Law. For example the ordination ritual for a priest was seven days (Leviticus 8:33) and it was the specific amount of time for ritual cleansing (Leviticus 14:1-9) as well as the time allotted for mourning (Genesis 50:10; I Samuel 31:13). Similarly Job while with his three friends sat upon the ground for seven days and seven nights. Nobody spoke a word. His friends saw that his grief was very great (Job 2:13). Job broke the silence by cursing his day. Ezekiel knew of Job and referenced him (Ezekiel 14:14, 20), which probably caused him to identify with him as both of them experienced deep grief from God. The mourning period was how Ezekiel accustomed himself to the major task ahead of him. However it would be God that broke the silence with his first specific mission for Ezekiel.

THE FIRST INSTRUCTION

Ezekiel 3:16-17

¹⁶And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ¹⁷Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me (ASV, 1901).

This passage is the opening of the specific instructions that Jehovah God had for Ezekiel regarding Israel's sins. The closing passage for all His prophecies regarding Israel's destruction in 586 BC is Ezekiel 33:1-20. These two encapsulate the Words of God to the Nation Israel as a warning to repent before He would bring the Babylonians into Jerusalem one final time to destroy it. These two passages can be viewed a book ends

enclosing the prophecies as warnings to Israel before their final destruction. Again addressing Ezekiel as Son of Man, which identifies him as one of the Israelites and a human capable of communicating to other men while identifying himself as one of them. The Lord enters Ezekiel's inner soul giving him his identity and mission. He was to be a *watchman unto the house of Israel*. He was, like the watchman of a city on his tower, to be on the look out to warn men against coming dangers. The Hebrew word which gets translated a watchman is *tsopheh* means to be a look out or to be a sentry who's job it was to watch for then warn the community of impending danger. The impending danger in this case was the judgment that God was going to bring upon Israel if they did not turn from their wickedness in repentance and develop a relationship with the God of Israel. In essence God is saying, "tell them to repent and tell them I said it!"

EZEKIEL'S ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

Ezekiel 3:18-19

¹⁸When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. ¹⁹Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (ASV, 1901).

God explicitly tells Ezekiel that it is his responsibility as God's watchman and prophet to communicate this message of repentance. When the watchman sees danger he is to blow the trumpet (Psalm 19:11; Ezekiel 33:3-6). If the watchman fails to perform his important job the responsibility for the outcome lies with him. God says that *his blood will I require at thy hand* if he does not follow the orders given by the Supreme Commander of the Universe. Further He says that when he has carried out his responsibilities to warn of impending judgment and the wicked, *turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*. The Prophet was commissioned to warn the nation, but the warning was to be carried out to individuals. That is, one at a time or small groups. This way the response of the warning would be obvious to Ezekiel. He would quickly realize who was going to repent and who would not. Ezekiel will not suffer the fate of the wicked if he does as God has commanded and diligently carries out his responsibilities as the responsible watchman. The principle of blood accountability is expressed in the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:5-6). God describes the irresponsible, wicked watchman through Isaiah.

Isaiah 56:9-12

⁹All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. ¹⁰His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. ¹¹Yea, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds that cannot understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter. ¹²Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, a day great beyond measure (ASV, 1901).

With this in mind God is essentially saying to Ezekiel, “Do not be like them.” He was to not leave the post with which his commander had entrusted him.

The solemn truths concerning “judgment to come” upon an ungodly age and apostate “church” are not listened to and generally rejected. The man who warns of impending judgment and trusts the Bible as God’s Word is as unpopular with the people today as Jeremiah and Ezekiel were in their days. Judgment will come upon a wicked people group today as sure as it came upon ancient Israel. God will only tolerate sin for so long before He brings judgment. When a nation such as ours kills millions of unborn babies in their mother’s wombs and endorses as well as promotes sexual deviancy at the national governmental level God’s judgment will follow.

THE MESSAGE WILL EVEN GO TO THE RIGHTEOUS

Ezekiel 3:20-21

²⁰Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. ²¹Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul (ASV, 1901)

The righteous man also needed to be warned to prevent his turning from his righteousness and doing evil. It is not uncommon to see righteous people following evil people in sin if they think they can be unaccountable. The righteous people of Israel were in the company of evil wicked people and as such their influence could corrupt them. This common issue is warned of in the New Testament too.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals” (ESV).

If a righteous person had ventured away from the path of righteousness and let the wicked influence him, he too was in danger of death. In fact God was going to place an obstacle (stumblingblock) in that person’s life. It could be a trial some difficulty or a test. That man must be warned that he would die in his sins if he did not remain faithful. Everything that God puts in the way of the sinner, in order that the sin, which is in every soul, may come to the light, and become obvious for the purpose of exposing the sin so the sinner is aware of it and has an opportunity to turn from it. Such is the characteristic of the Mosaic Law. It was temporary and one of its purposes was to expose sin (Galatians 3:19). God has frequently placed His people in close proximity to sin so they can see their own condition.

Judges 2: 1-3 Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? "Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out before

you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you." (NASB)

Despite the Israelites previous corrections by God the attraction of the Amorites (Canaanites) sins were too much for them and they married into the Canaanite civilization and succumbed to their heinous sins. As a result, God left the Canaanites in the path of the Jews so they could be tempted by them. This could only lead to further sin and destruction of the Jews.

This was a major turning point in the history of Israel. God, who kept the Jews out of Canaan until the Amorites iniquity was finished, then kept them in close contact to tempt them. The Amorites would from then on irritate them and serve as a trap to the Jews. Later the Jews would be dispersed into many countries for their sins and suffer the effects of being in those heathen populations. This is the same situation He placed Cain into when He said that Cain must master the sin that was before him (Genesis 4:7). One must be aware that God is not trying to find out how man will respond to the test. God already knows the beginning of all things to the end of all things. He is letting man realize his own sinful condition by allowing him to make choices.

Is this God's fault for leaving the Amorites in close proximity to the Hebrews to "cause" them to sin? No, absolutely not. It is their own fault. For sin is in the human heart. Our Lord's half brother James accurately characterized this for us in his epistle.

James 1:12-16

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death. Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. (NASB)

Why then would He do this? It was done to cause them to realize the extent of their sin and tendency toward it. Sin easily besets us. It must be mastered. (Hebrews 12:1; Genesis 4:7)

NEXT MESSAGE: EZEKIEL BOUND BY JEHOVAH AS CONDITIONING

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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