

Would Ezekiel have stood a better chance in our Churches today?

Ezekiel chapter 4

As we have seen in the previous studies the Children of Israel were so rebellious towards their God after years of false Prophets who deluded the people with vain hopes and winked at their sins. It was necessary for God to equip a man to tell them of their pending doom.

Ezekiel was a Godly Jew living in the midst of his people that God chose to give them His message and warnings. He had to be specially prepared for the task. He had to live with them seven days with his Spiritual eyes opened by God to see the depth of sin they had sunk to.

There was a remnant in the city that still worshipped God, kept the feasts and as we shall see later God knew who they were.

You may wonder why God was so harsh toward Israel when all the other Nations round about were heathen, worshipped other god's and wicked as well.

We will stop just here and clear that point up first.

In Genesis chapter 1: 26

God said let us make man in our own image. After Our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air over the cattle, over the earth and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

God wanted a perfect being to commune with, and to manage the earth for Him so He created man and woman. These beings called Adam and Eve were to multiply and produce a Nation of God fearing people.

As we know His two created beings disobeyed and gave that dominion (the authority to rule the earth) over to Satan. Sin took hold and God had to destroy evil in His pursuit of a Godly nation so He sent a flood and only Noah and his family survived. Sin still prevailed and man wanted to build a tower to heaven to become gods, again God intervened and spread the people over the earth and confused their language.

God then promised Abraham He would make his seed number as the stars of the heaven and the sand of the seashore. Abraham's seed were to be God's own people and would show the world the wonders of God and how to live a victorious Godly life they were called the Children of Israel. They like all before them disobeyed and became a rebellious and wicked bunch of people.

That's where we are with our studies, I hope that gives you some idea why God kept pursuing these people to drawing them back to Himself, only to find these people did not

want God they wanted to be like other Nations and they will continue to do so until the second coming of Christ when their “Spiritual eyes” will be opened and they will call upon Him and say “blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord”

In the first two studies we saw how God equipped Ezekiel to preach to his fellow citizens. His congregation was no worse than the congregations in our churches of today.

Israel was a sinning Nation, today the Nations of the world are sinning Nations. One might think that the sins of Israel were different and therefore far worse than the sins of today, no they are not. In the eyes of God sin is sin and when we are told that a lie cannot enter into heaven, we all need to look about ourselves and see with “Spiritual eyes opened” like Ezekiel’s were.

This means that Pastors and Leaders need to study to show themselves approved of God, and give God’s message to the people, but the congregations need to take that word to their hearts and with their Pastors help deal with any sin that may hold back a much needed outpouring of the Holy Spirit or even the Lord’s return.
(See Study 2 re Oral Roberts)

We now begin the first of the mimes that God gave to Ezekiel to act out in the temple courtyard. God went to extraordinary lengths and a great deal of detail to show the Children of Israel how much He loved them and also to warn them of impending destruction if they persisted in their rebellion against Him.

Israel had the prophecies of Jeremiah some years before warning them of God’s judgment. Jeremiah’s style was beautiful and tender to a high degree, very elegant in the way he presented God’s message but Israel did not respond to such preaching. God had to use a man with a different temperament and impart God’s very heart and use much more dramatic illustrations to get through to His people. As we know even this approach did not work

Verse 1

Son of man take thee a tile and lay it before you and portray upon it the city, even Jerusalem.

Assyrian and Babylonian records were scribed onto slabs of pottery. Some were barrel shaped, some octagonal and some flat but all made of strong terra cotta. They varied from 1ft to 3ft tall and covered with very small writing. They were placed at the corners of the Temples for all to read and this is where many have been found in very good condition and according to the writings which often recorded the history of the Kings of the time are found to be 3000 to 4000 years old.

It was on such a tile or piece of terra cotta that Ezekiel was to draw the outline of the city of Jerusalem.

Verse 2 says:

Lay a siege against it, build a fort against it, cast a mound against it, set the camp against it, and set battering rams against it.

Besieging a city was a long and exacting process. To build a fort required watchtowers to be erected at even spaces round the city, from which a good deal of watching and harassing took place.

To cast a mound against the city required building an inclined road tight up against the wall made from every available material found nearby. This included trees, stumps, stones, earth etc so the attackers could bring their war engines up the incline to the top of the walls and climb in.

Setting up camps against the city meant placing men in camps right round the city making noise of war such as sharpening tools, spears, merriment and so on and at night keeping the camp fires fully ablaze.

Setting battering rams against the city were engines of war comprised of large tree trunks suspended on chains hanging from moveable towers that could be placed against a wall or door to swing and batter it until a hole was made.

Ezekiel was told to lay siege against the city in the drawing form on this tile. He may have drawn the images of these sieges on the tile to leave no doubt in the minds of Israel what the tile meant.

Verse 3.

Moreover take thou unto you an iron pan and set it for a wall between you and the city...and you shall lay siege against it.

This iron pan or plate was meant as a protection for Ezekiel as he threw stones and rocks over the iron wall to the drawing of the city, much as archers used their shields as protection as they shot arrows towards the enemy. God said this was to be a sign to the house of Israel. No doubt Israel had seen these images in real life as they went to war many times, it was not new to them.

Verse 4.

Lie thou also upon your left side and lay the iniquity of the House of Israel upon it according to the number of the days that you shall lie upon it you shall bear their iniquity.

Ezekiel was to lie on his left side in the middle of the Temple courtyard for a few minutes each day for 390 days and then lie on his right side for a few minutes each day for 40 days to portray both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah to represent these two kingdoms crushed to the ground in defeat.

This embarrassing procedure was to depict Ezekiel bearing Israel's iniquity. (Isn't this a type of Christ's work on Calvary?) It is said that Ezekiel's prophetic work was over a

period of 21 years so The Children of Israel had more than enough time to repent of their sin and turn back to God.

These 390 days and 40 days were to represent the years of their rebellion counting both Kingdoms, the actual siege lasted about 2 years.

The Lord showed Extreme displeasure of the Northern Kingdom splitting the Nation and going into idol worship. (1Kings 12:16-20) Some teach that the 40 days representing The Southern Kingdom of Judah was included the 390 days total so be it. Some use these verses to make every day a year or every year a day in all places of the Bible, it has always been my belief that we take the Bible literally unless the verse specifically says to the contrary, and in this narrative it would be silly to think Ezekiel was to lay on his side 390 years! Verse 5 The Lord God makes it clear that each day represents a year.

Each day after this mime Ezekiel was to get up and explain to the people what God was saying to them, warning of pending judgment, each day they ignored him and probably laughed and passed by on the other side.

Verse 7

Therefore set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem and your arm shall be uncovered and you shall prophesy against it.

He was to set his face towards the siege of Jerusalem and uncover his arm. His eyes fastened on the drawing of the city, looking intensely and uncovering his arm denotes the fact that both Israel and Judah were naked before their God in His judgment.

Ezekiel was to tell the people what this mime meant and again give them opportunity to repent. How many times do Pastors and Leaders have to spell out the salvation of the Lord and give opportunity for the sinners in the church to repent before their God? How many times are they ignored?

Verse 9:

Take thou also unto you wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and fitches and put them in one vessel and make thee bread thereof according to the number of days that you lay on your side, three hundred and ninety days shall you eat thereof. And your meat which you shall eat shall by weight, twenty shekels a day from time to time you shall eat it. You shall drink also water by measure the sixth part of a hin from time to time you shall drink it.

Most of the food Ezekiel was to gather was every day ingredients that made up Israel basic diet. This was to be mixed up like an unappetizing porridge but God said he was to cook it over a fire made of human dung. This would make the food unclean to every one in Israel and whilst Israel was in no Spiritual condition to be concerned about that, Ezekiel was, and asked God if he, being the Spiritual leader with God's special message could use cow's dung in stead. This was still a sign of uncleanness.

Twenty Shekels is about 10 ounces, and a sixth part of a hin was about half a pint. This was the ration for one day. A half a pint of water per day in the hot sun of the Middle East

was very little indeed and God was showing that water would be at a premium. So the food and water had to be measured out each day and all Israel saw this as they walked by or came to stare and mock.

God was to show Israel that there would be a great famine and food would be very short indeed and they would eat unclean food among the gentiles. Ezekiel was to ration the food and drink out daily and eat it in the courtyard to show the lesson God wanted the Children of Israel to know. They were going to eating this type of defiled bread being cooked on a fire of dung and to eat it among the Gentiles and gather food where ever they could. This was totally against the Law of Moses and their upbringing.

Verse 16

Moreover He said to me Son of man I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem and they shall eat bread by weight and with care and drink water by measure and with astonishment.

In a land of plenty, where cool water was flowing freely they could not understand how their God, who they now took for granted would treat them in such a manor. But God would cut off their supply of food and water during the siege to the point that some even killed and cooked their children to keep alive.

I would ask the reader to pause and think of the depth to which Israel had sunk. This was the nation that God ordained to show to the world what living with God, a life given over to Him could be like. In fact that type of life was never shown to the world.

Satan saw to it that sin completely interrupted that desire of God, using the very beings God created to bring it about. What a Spiritual battle must be raging in the heavens over you and I and indeed His Church today.

The Church is supposed to reflect the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him. It is supposed to offer peace, hope, healing, friendship and all the other attributes of God the Father but as someone put it to me some time ago “those outside church can get all that in the local pub and not have to give up a Sunday”!

There is no doubt that our nations are far from God, some more than others, and just as Israel continued their daily living, their daily business, daily shopping and life in general, oblivious of their sinful state or ignoring it, which kept them from God, so do our nations.

At the time of writing there is a global turndown in the world’s economy. A day does not pass without the news programs filling up their time on air telling of thousands of redundancies, job losses. Many companies, some high street names, some employing thousand of people are going bankrupt. There are greedy men in large banks defrauding thousands of innocent savers who now have lost their money and investments from which they hopped to get a pension. Some have been driven to suicide, leaving wife and children to the mercy of the state.

Does anyone think we can continue like this? Don't you think God is displeased with His people and His heart is crying out for fellowship, worship and praise from the people He went to the cross for? Or do we, like The Children of Israel want to bury their heads in the sand and hope it will pass by soon.

It is no use relying on our Governments. Anyone can see and hear them pontificate on the news programs, but actually say nothing. They offer no hope because they do not have the answer to the world's problems and in most cases they contribute to them.

Only The Lord has the answer as Ezekiel was trying to tell Israel. Do you think God will not close down the food chain, the money supply, allow a water shortage in the year 2009/2010 to make us sit up and take notice of Him. He did in Israel and they thought God would not let this happen to them but He did, because of sin. Oh these are perilous times don't take God for Granted.

No! I haven't got a chip on my shoulder, I have an ache in my heart, a longing desire for God's church to be visited by the Holy Spirit to bring us all (including me) closer to the Father so we can show the world our Jesus is the answer to their needs. I know dozens of other Christians who feel the same and join with me in Prayer to bring this about how about you?

Chapter 5

And you, son of man take a sharp knife, take a barber's razor and cause it to pass upon your head and upon your beard, then take balances to weigh and divide the hair.

In Old Testament times the shaving of the hair and the beard represented shame and was the sign of a leper. God was showing His people they were now "spiritual lepers" The next verse shows how Israel was "cut up" and destroyed and scattered to the four winds.

Some of our Jewish friends of today living in all parts of the world are descendents of that original scattering by God in Ezekiel's day. But they have a future prepared by God Himself in the great day of the Lord when we will join with them in worship to our great King in His new Kingdom.

Verse 5

Thus says the Lord God; This is Jerusalem; I have set in the midst of the Nations and countries that are round about her.

This cry of God "this is Jerusalem" shows the total disappointment, frustration and heartache of the very Godhead. We may say something like "so this is what you have come to" or "after all I have done for you this is how you repay me." But for God to say it with that meaning, He must have felt extremely disappointed and as we have seen full of wrath.

Jerusalem was placed in the centre of the other nations with the purpose of shedding upon them the light of the Gospel. But she rebelled against the truth and became like the heathen

she was to set an example to, she worshiped their gods and sank morally lower than them all.

Verse 6

She has changed My Judgments into wickedness more than the nations and My Statutes more than the countries that are round about her for they have refused My Judgments and My Statutes they have not walked in them. 7 Therefore thus says the Lord God; because you multiplied more than the nations that are round about you and have not walked in My Statutes nor kept My Judgments neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you.

The idea of this verse is that the heathen nations were at least true to their gods and not forsaken them for another gods, where as Israel, who once knew the only true God maker of heaven and earth had rebelled and deserted Him for false gods.

Verse 8

Therefore saith the Lord God behold I even I am against you and will execute Judgment in the midst of you in the sight of the nations.

What a terrible thing it is to have The Lord God against you! Who can stand against GOD? These people were in a very bad way.

Verse 10

Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of you and the sons shall eat their fathers and I will execute Judgments in you and the whole remnant of you will I scatter into all the winds.

Can you imagine that, the famine and pestilence was so bad, the food had become so scarce, the water had all but dried up and they were reduced to cannibalism! This had happened before in 2 kings 6; 28 and to happen again with the siege by the Romans in AD70.

The rest of the chapter reflects the pain God had for His people and His wrath and Judgment that was to be poured out upon an unrepentant nation.

Chapter 6

And the Word of the Lord came to me saying, son of man set your face toward the mountains of Israel and prophecy against them. And say, you mountains of Israel hear the Word of the Lord God. Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys: Behold I even I will bring a sword upon you and I will destroy your high places. And your altar shall be desolate and your images shall be broken and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the dead carcasses of the Children of Israel before their idols and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

Your dwelling places and cities shall be laid waste... and your works may be abolished... and you shall know that I am the Lord.

I have typed out a number of verses related to chapter 6 in case you do not have a version of the King James Bible.

This chapter is about God telling Ezekiel to prophecy against the mountains. It is in the mountains that the evil nations round about worshiped their false gods. Trees, stones and wooden pillars were set up and sacrifices were offered up on these mountains. The Children of Israel had always worshiped God in His Tabernacle in the wilderness according to the Law of Moses and then the Temple when Solomon built the first House of God, a Sanctuary for God to dwell in. This Temple was in Jerusalem on a hill yes but not on a mountain.

Here Ezekiel was to set his face toward *the mountains of Israel*, so they had evidently followed the ways of heathen and built altars to worship all sorts of images and gods. But the One true God said He would bring a sword and destroy your high places. He also said He would cast down their slain men before their idols as an offering to their strange gods. He said He would lay the dead carcasses of their children before those idols and scatter their bones round about their altars. God will not tolerate any other altar other than His Sacred Alter and for us today, it is the Cross.

Verse 8

Yet will I leave a remnant that you may have some who shall escape the sword and they who escape shall remember Me among the nations whither they shall be carried captive, because I am broken with their whorish heart which has departed from Me and with their eyes which go a whoring after idols and they shall loathe themselves which have committed in all their abominations.

Thank God for the remnant! There is always a remnant. You will find in any church the few who will be praying and interceding in the background for the Leadership or the Pastor, or the lack of prayer or lack of Bible study and so on.

It is that remnant that will recognise their lives need adjusting before God and do something about it while the rest complain, moan, and gossip spreading even more trouble holding up the manifestation of the Holy Spirit who is waiting at the door to come in and fill the Saints of God.

God said His heart was broken with Israel's determined idolatry. Let the modern church make sure we do not break His heart because of our, modern idols and our lukewarm attitude.

The phrase "and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed" will not be fulfilled until the second coming of our Lord.

Chapter 7

This chapter tells of the result of their continued sin and rebellion towards God. It speaks of a rod that blossomed and pride that budded. Nebuchadnezzar was the rod that had blossomed he had grown rich had built Babylonia into a force to be reckoned with. He had prepared for war and waiting in the background ready to strike. Pride has blossomed was the continued determination of Israel to continue in sin, God's blessings to Israel had been turned into license they took God for granted.

The streets were not safe to walk down; violence had risen to unimaginable proportions Jerusalem was not a place to be, sin and rebellion against God had brought the nation to its knees. There was no buying or selling, and business was at a standstill. God's message to them through Ezekiel was "*the time has come*" and "*the end is come, the end is come*" "*All hands shall be weak and all knees shall be as water,*" Verse 18 tells that they put on sackcloth and ashes and made themselves bald before God in a last minute effort to repent but it was a waste of time. Their silver and gold could not buy them salvation.

We have covered a lot of ground in this study and I hope as you read it over again, the Lord will open up even more to show the sins of Israel, how it removed them from God's favor, how it broke God's heart and His judgment had to fall because the wages of sin is death.

Remember the nations of the world today are no better than that of Israel; is the 'church' any better than the people of Israel? O that God would send a Prophet of Ezekiel's stature, but then would we receive him or be like those wayward Children?

Now I realise that we are talking about the people under the Old Testament Covenant and we are this side of the Cross-, with a whole New Covenant in place, Praise the Lord. But don't you think that being able to read and learn from those under the Old Covenant, our response and character of life should be lived at a much higher level?

We have the Scriptures, a far greater revelation of who God is and His redeeming grace. We have the very indwelling of God by His Holy Spirit living within each one of us now, which they did not have. Yet in our hearts and attitudes, can we perhaps see some reflections of ourselves in what we have been studying?

We shall look further into this next study.