

Handout: Ezekiel Lesson 3

The accounts of Ezekiel's symbolic acts and their interpretation present those of us on this side of salvation history with the same responses as Ezekiel's original audience:

1. Like Ezekiel's fellow countrymen and women in exile, we might view the prophecies and their physical challenges as nothing more than entertainment (see 33:30-33).
2. We might puzzle over what kind of individual would submit to performing such undignified acts.
3. Our preconceptions of the role of God may cause us to be offended by Yahweh's violent pronouncements, and we might dismiss them as un-Christian and contrary to our understanding of God.

However, to react in these three ways, rejecting the pronouncements of God and Ezekiel's obedience to them is to misunderstand the profound theological nature of God's message communicated to Ezekiel:

1. To live in a unique covenant relationship with Yahweh and in the acceptance of that privilege means taking on the responsibilities of the conditions of that relationship. Jesus emphasized our responsibilities when He said: *"Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more"* (Lk 12:48).
2. If we truly believe God is just in all His dealings with a sinful mankind, those of us who presume upon the goodness of God's grace must also reckon with the justness of His divine wrath against those who claim His goodness but reject and abuse His promises.
3. God guards His covenant relationship with His people with a passionate and exclusive love. Those in covenant with Him have a mission to bear witness to that relationship in a public view to those who do not yet know Him. God set Israel among the pagan nations as His "firstborn son" (Ex 4:22) so they might witness His loving care of His people and their prosperity in their relationship with Him to their "brother" nations. Since Israel failed publically, she must bear the humiliation of her punishment publically

The Israelites were to provide a public witness to the other nations of their belief in the One True God of Israel; therefore, the punishment for Israel's sins must also provide a public witness.

In 6:3-7, Yahweh says everything in Jerusalem is to be swept away by the swords of the enemy:

1. The altars dedicated to false gods that they failed to destroy in repentance.
2. The incense altars where they burned incense worshipping false gods.
3. The destruction of their cities.

6:10 is the first use of the phrase *10 Then they will know that I am Yahweh...* repeated as either "they" or "you" will know 70 times, identifying Ezekiel's mission and the theme of the book.

In 6:11, sword, famine, and plague are three disasters that are the result of war and are judgments of suffering repeated in other covenant judgments of the prophets. The same triple threat is in the curse judgments of Leviticus 26:25; Jeremiah 14:12; 21:9; 27:8, 13; 29:18. The three scourges will overtake three kinds of people: those "far off" and those "near at hand," meaning

those outside the walls of the city and those inside the city and those “who survive” or “are spared” the sword.

In 7:14, *The trumpet sounds, all is ready, but no one goes into battle, since my fury rests on all alike.* The trumpet announces Yahweh’s divine judgment as it did for Jericho and will at the Last Judgment (1 Thes 4:16). Also see the Seven Trumpet Judgments in Rev 8:2-10:7.

The vision that begins in Chapter 8 takes place in September 592 BC. The material in Chapters 8-11 narrates a single visionary experience. The vision begins in 8:1-3 with the date, location, audience of exiled elders, and the weight of God’s hand falling upon Ezekiel. The weight of God’s hand begins the vision in which a brilliant human figure seizes him, and the spirit transports him to Jerusalem. The visionary experience will end in 11:22-25 with Ezekiel carried eastward by the spirit as he is “lifted” up and taken back to Babylon where Ezekiel tells the elders everything he saw.

Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem is in two parts:

- Part I concerns the abominations and the consequences (8:5-10:7).
- Part II concerns secret political clique or faction within the Temple leadership (11:1-21).

Part I also divides into two parts:

1. An account describing four abominations taking place within the Temple precincts (8:5-18).
2. The death of the rebellious wicked and the command to burn the city (9:1-10:7).

The abominations Ezekiel witnesses taking place in the Temple in 8:10-17:

1. Unclean animals offered in sacrifice.
2. Representations of pagan idols carved on the Temple walls.
3. The religious leadership worshipping pagan idols by offering incense to them.
4. Women practicing rituals in honor of the pagan god Tammuz.
5. Men worshipping the pagan sun god.
6. Men burning and inhaling substances to cause hallucinations.

In 9:9-10, Yahweh’s answers Ezekiel’s question concerning the promised terrible destruction of the people of Judah and Jerusalem by citing four causes for His harsh judgment:

1. The extent and intensity of the people’s sins.
2. The violence and bloodshed that fills the land.
3. The perversity/injustice that fills the city.
4. The charge that they claim Yahweh has abandoned them and no longer sees their sins.
5. Their failure to show mercy to each other.

The fifth cause reminds us of Jesus’ warning in Matthew 6:14-15, *“Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.”* Also see Mark 11:25.

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ISRAEL'S LITURGICAL AND CIVIL CALENDAR YEAR

Month	Liturgical year order	Civil year order	Modern equivalent	Feast days & agricultural season (+ = God ordained feast; * = national feasts)
Abib (Nisan)	1	7	March/April	+Passover 14 th , +Unleavened Bread 15-21 st (sacred assembly on 15 th and 21 st) , +Firstfruits on Sunday of Unleavened Bread holy week. Spring equinox 15 th . The "Latter rains"& flood season, beginning of barley and flax harvest
Ziv (Iyyar)	2	8	April/May	Dry season, apricots ripen
Sivan	3	9	May/June	+Weeks (Pentecost) 7 weeks or 50 days from Firstfruits as ancients counted; wheat harvest, dry winds, early fig harvest, grapes ripen
Tammuz	4	10	June/July	Hot, dry season: grape harvest
Ab	5	11	July/Aug.	Hot, olive harvest
Elul	6	12	Aug./Sept.	Dates and summer figs
Ethanim (Tishri)	7	1	Sept./Oct.	+Trumpets = 1 st , +Day of Atonement =10 th +Booths (Tabernacles) = 15-21 st & 22 nd sacred assembly; Fall equinox 15 th ; "Former (early) rains," plowing & seed time
Bul (Heshvan)	8	2	Oct./Nov.	Rains, winger figs, wheat and barley sown
Chislev	9	3	Nov./Dec.	*Hanukkah (feast of dedication); winter begins
Tebeth	10	4	Dec./Jan.	Coldest month, rains and snow in mountains
Sebat	11	5	Jan./Feb.	Growing warmer, almond trees in bloom
Adar	12	6	Feb./March	*Purim; spring: "Latter rains" begin, citrus fruit harvest
<p>+ Seven annual feasts are God ordained feasts (Ex 12:1-28; 43-51; 13:1-10; Lev 23:5-44; Num 28:16-39); *Hanukkah and Purim are national feasts proclaimed by the people and are not God ordained (1 Mac 4:36-61; 2 Mac 10:1-8; Esther 9:20-32). The Feasts of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles fell respectively on the spring and fall equinoxes. The ancients counted without the concept of a 0-place value: i.e. Jesus in the tomb 3 days from Friday to Sunday.</p>				
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