

HTPC Adult Sunday School
The Prophetic Call Narratives – Week 6

Ezekiel

I. Historical Setting and Contextual Considerations

1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there. (Ezekiel 1:1-3)

- The Exile of King Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:13-17)

10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it, 12 and Jehoiachin the king of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself and his mother and his servants and his officials and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign 13 and carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, as the LORD had foretold. 14 He carried away all Jerusalem and all the officials and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained, except the poorest people of the land. 15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the chief men of the land he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 And the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, 7,000, and the craftsmen and the metal workers, 1,000, all of them strong and fit for war. 17 And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

- Ezekiel is an _____ among the _____.

- The Condition of Exiles

“Wholesale loss of faith threatened. This was aggravated as Jews, torn from their homeland, came into firsthand contact, most of them for the first time, with the great centers of world culture. Jerusalem, which in their parochial minds was the very center of Yahweh's universe, must have seemed by comparison poor and backward indeed. With evidences of undreamed of wealth and power around them, the magnificent temples of pagan gods on every hand, it must have occurred to many of them to wonder whether Yahweh ... was really supreme and the only God after all.”¹

4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! 6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! (Psalm 137:4-6)

¹ John Bright, A History of Israel, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 2000), 348.

- Jeremiah and Ezekiel

“[N]o melody can be devised more perfectly complete than that which appears between these two servants of God.”²

II. Theological Concerns

A. “I am the LORD”

2 “Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3 and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. 4 Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols. 5 And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. 6 Wherever you dwell, the cities shall be waste and the high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down, and your works wiped out. 7 And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 6:2-7)

When you have among the nations some who escape the sword, and when you are scattered through the countries, 9 then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations. 10 And they shall know that I am the LORD. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them.” (Ezekiel 6:8b-10)

13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols. 14 And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then they will know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 6:13-14)

B. “The Temple of the LORD” – Ezekiel 8-10

6 And he said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations.” (Ezekiel 8:6)

3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. 4 And the LORD said to him, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.” 5 And to the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not

² John Calvin, Commentaries, Volume XI (Ezekiel) (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 55.

spare, and you shall show no pity. 6 Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.” (Ezekiel 9:3-6)

C. Dry Bones

1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” (Ezekiel 37:1-3)

III. The Vision (1:4-28)

A. Its Function and Design

- ✓ The vision grants _____ to the prophet.
- ✓ The vision cultivates _____ and the _____ of God.

B. Its Meaning

- ✓ Divine Presence (1:4)
- ✓ Divine Power and Governance (1:5-21)
- ✓ Divine Glory (1:22-28)

Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. (Ezekiel 1:28b)

“... the knowledge of God does truly humble us, while the Prophet also teaches that men cannot be brought to order unless they are laid prostrate.” John Calvin³

IV. The Call (2:1-3-3)

A. “Son of Man, I send you ...” (2:1-2)

B. The Ministry ‘among the exiles’ (2:3-7)

4 The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ 5 And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 7 And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.

³ Ibid. 107.

C. The Scroll (2:8-3:3)

10 *And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.*

1 *And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."* 2 *So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat.* 3 *And he said to me, "Son of man, **feed your belly** with this scroll that I give you **and fill your stomach** with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. (Ezekiel 2:10-3:3)*

V. The Commission (3:4-15)

A. Ministry Context Revisited (3:4-7)

7 *But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart.* (Ezekiel 3:7)

B. Ministry Provision (3:8-11)

8 *Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads.* 9 *Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house."* (Ezekiel 3:8-9)

C. Benediction (3:12-15)

12 *Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake: "Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!"*

VI. Observations and Implications

- What is the "dominant thought" that shapes Ezekiel as he ministers among the exiles, and why?

- Points of Contact

- ✓ With Isaiah

- ✓ With Jeremiah