

August 15

Ezekiel 1-7

So let's just start off by admitting...Ezekiel does some freaky stuff. He is a visual aid machine. He reveals things from God that people do not want to hear.

Ezekiel, or Zeke, as I like to call him, can be difficult to understand, or relate to its strange images or try to identify the meaning of its symbols. A lot of it is about the immediate future of Zeke. Some of it, the future about 80 years distant, and some about the new heavens and new Earth to come.

As the prophecy opens, Ezekiel is 30 years old and is already a priest. He is about to become a prophet as well. Today we read about Ezekiel's call and there are several items I'd like to point out.

First of all, Ezekiel's call comes in the form of a vision and like the other prophets who attempt to record similar experiences; he has difficulty finding human words that describe it adequately.

The vision of the wheels within the wheel beside which the four living creatures stood is a famous one indeed. The wheels are new, but the creatures sound a lot like what Isaiah saw at the time of his call into ministry or the ones about which we read in the fourth chapter of Revelation. Ezekiel's unique contribution to the picture is that each creature had four faces -- that of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle.

Man is the epitome of all God has created. The lion and the ox were the kings among the wild beasts and the domestic animals -- what Genesis calls the cattle and the beasts of the earth. The eagle is the king of the birds of the air -- so the living creatures somehow represent the Kings of all the creatures.

Symbolism matches gospels - lion, Matthew, lion of tribe, fulfillment, and teaching

Ox - Mark, action, strength and power of Jesus

Luke - man, humanity of Jesus

John - Eagle, divinity, bread from heaven, return to Father, 10,000 ft. Perspective

There are some interesting parallels not only to the gospels, but also to Isaiah, and the Book of Revelation, especially in Ezekiel's attempt to describe the appearance of heaven and of the figure upon the throne who is the Lord -- surrounded by a brilliant radiance.

One other point all of the vision recorders of scripture are in total agreement on is the subject of the proper response of a human to a glimpse of the divine. Ezekiel says, "I fell face down!" That is consistent with Isaiah, the Apostle John and also with the Apostle Paul. Face down in the presence of the Almighty -- that is the appropriate posture when you are in the company of a Holy God.

I hope today that with all the surreal images chapter 1 creates, you didn't miss the simple message of chapter 3. It is perhaps the most important part of the reading we did today because it directly applies to you and me just as much as it did to Ezekiel for the simple reason we too have been directly called by God to be His messengers, His voice. We too are watchman.

God says that the watchman is accountable for delivering the message that has been entrusted to him. If the recipient of the message is not responsive, doesn't listen and therefore dies in his folly, God says you will not be responsible in anyway because you faithfully delivered the message. But, if you fail to warn a sinner and he dies because of his sin, then you, the watchman have a share in that guilt and God says you will be held accountable for the blood of that guilty sinner. We are watchmen and we are responsible to warn men and women of the terrible consequences of disobeying God.

Whenever God is going to do something big, He first tells His people about it in advance, leaving all kinds of hints so that when He acts it will not be missed. After due notification has been made, the event occurs just as God has said it would. After the event, someone comes along with a God-given interpretation. Ezekiel is the warner and the interpreter...

Sometimes God allows His servant to become a spectacle simply to draw the attention of the world in a very dramatic way to His message. I also believe God uses such demonstrations to confute the 'wisdom' of the world. It pleases God to use "foolish" things to show His ways are much higher than our ways and His "foolishness" much wiser than the world's greatest wisdom. Never forget that the cross seems like utter foolishness to the world but it is the wisdom of God.

I have a question for you today. How do you respond when Gods asks you to do something weird. When he prompts you to call a friend or talk to a stranger or bring some extra food or give some additional cash to a person in need? It is probably not as wired as lying on one side day after day. Or stomping on a model of your city. But if you pray and ask him to lead you, he often takes you places you cannot predict - doing things that are out of the ordinary. Are you willing to do that?

Open your prayer time today and ask God what he wants you to do!! If you do, you'll be on a great adventure with cool story by days end.

The last thing I want you to see today is that God has a special name for His servant Ezekiel. He calls him "Son of Man." "Son of Man" is the name that Jesus took for Himself. He found it first here in the Book of Ezekiel and also in the prophecy of Daniel. In using this name, he emphasized his own humanity and his connection with these two great characters. More when we get to Daniel...