

031 Would Ezekiel? Part 6

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

Ezekiel Chapter 12 The King James Bible throughout

For several years now God's Prophet Ezekiel has been preaching to the Children of Israel by way of mimes and displays and explaining these mimes, which portray the wrath of God and the warning of God's pending judgement upon them because of their rebellion against Him. Although by this time God had removed Himself from the Temple and said He was no longer their God what an awful place to find yourself to be without God. We have seen how the Priests have fallen short of their responsibility and accountability to God's people and have "winked" at the nation's sin and even joined them in their evil activities.

In chapter 12 we read that God now deals with the prince or king of Israel. Ezekiel was to act as though he was going to escape from the City:

Verse 3: Therefore thou son of man prepare you stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight, and you shall remove from your place to another place in their sight, though they be a rebellious house.

Ezekiel was to pack his belongings as though he was going to move them to another place. It was not a futile exercise; he was not pretending to move and it was not a mime. He was to *move from his place to another place*. God left no doubt in the minds of Israel and certainly not in the mind of Zedekiah there was going to be an escape attempt by someone to get away from Jerusalem at some point.

Ezekiel was to dig through the wall *in their sight* he was to carry his baggage on his shoulders and go through the hole he had made in the City walls. He was to cover his face and look to the ground. He was showing this was a secretive escape and he did not know what the mime meant or who it involved. The people asked the question "Ezekiel what are you doing?" and God had to tell him what it all meant.

This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem.

Note the scribe under the influence of the Holy Spirit uses a lower case P for prince, and did not even call him king. The Holy Spirit uses the word prince and not king because God did not recognise Zedekiah as the true king of Israel, only as one who was a temporary leader. The kings of Israel had to come from the line of David that was to bring in the King of kings, Jesus Christ at the appointed time.

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There were politics involved in the choosing of Zedekiah, which we won't go into now, but he was a bad king and condoned all the wrong that was going on in Israel.

As we now know Zedekiah made an escape attempt just as God had showed Ezekiel and Ezekiel had shown Israel. You will find details of this futile attempt in 2 Kings 25.

*And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign in the tenth month in the tenth day of the month that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his hosts, against Jerusalem and pitched against it and they built forts against it round about.
2. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.
3. and on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city and there was no bread for the people of the land.
4. and the city was broken up and all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between the walls which is by the king's garden (now the Chaldees were against the city round about) and the king went the way towards the plain.
5. and the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.
6. so they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah and they gave judgement upon him.
7. and they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with fetters of brass and carried him to Babylon.*

So for two years the siege took place and the food supply in the City ran out leaving a desperate people. It is believed that one third of the inhabitants of Israel died of famine and the resulting plague this could well have been nearly half a million people. We remind ourselves this devastation was the result of sin and rebellion against God and man taking his life in his own hands and not obeying God.

We saw in a previous study that famine was prophesied and Israel was to ration the food and water, Ezekiel prophesied in chapter 5: 10 that fathers would eat their children and children eat their fathers. And again in 2 Kings 6:28.29 at the siege by the Chaldeans of Samaria so they had this indictment imbedded in their history and they were about to experience it again in connection with the siege by the Romans in AD70.

Verse 11

Say I am your sign: like as I have done so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity.

Verse 12

And the prince who is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face that he see not the ground with his eyes.

The Lord knew the incredible detail of this escape by Zedekiah and he showed Ezekiel who enacted the escape details out for the Children of Israel well before it happened.

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My net also will I spread upon him and he shall be taken in My snare and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it though he die there.

Zedekiah, disguised so as not to be recognised with a few of his belongings on his shoulder, head bowed low left the City by night through a hole in the wall and fled to the plains of Jericho. God used the Chaldean army to surround him and take him to Riblah where they blinded him then took him to Babylon where he died.

Those who know that they must surrender their lives to Jesus will do their best to run from Him, if not physically then in their minds and in their hearts but Jesus will pursue you even into the “desert” to show His love for you. Don’t fall into the hands of Satan he will promise you everything and take your soul if you follow him.

There are a couple of verses I would like to highlight back in Chapter 8 verse 12 that are relevant to this study just as the Temple Priests were beginning to sin before the altar of God in the Temple they made the excuse that:

... The Lord sees not, the Lord has forsaken us.

Chapter 11 verse 5. God replies:

*...for I know the things that come into your mind **every one of them.***

We all would do well to read those verses again very slowly. We go about our daily life and many go to places and do things that disappoint our Heavenly Father, some seek out the dark to do them in. Maybe because of delayed answer to prayer, things you have urgently brought before the Lord about your home, marriage, business, health and have not received an answer from the Lord yet and our thoughts are the same as these men in Israel. “God has forgotten us” “He doesn’t care” “Where is He?”

I have felt like that having 7 years of continued pain and had 6 surgeries in 5 years. I have said to my family in desperation “I think God is a million miles away” One of them said “Well He is, He fills the universe, but He is also near to bless and comfort in the time of need” Yes I have felt Him walk with me on many occasions. You may be going through a similar test and you feel God is a million miles away. The Psalmist felt the same thing but he recognised that God was everywhere he said: Psalm 139: 8

If I ascend up to heaven You are there: If I make my bed in hell behold You are there.

You cannot get away from God, as we have seen in our studies our continued sin our disobedience and our rebellion towards Him may make Him withhold Himself from us. We may have sent Him to the rafters in our church but we also have His promise never to leave us nor forsake us. He may be withheld but He is never very far away but that promise carries with it conditions on our part.

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What a wonderful merciful God we have.

These Priests in the Temple were using God's apparent lack of presence as an excuse to do wrong.

Do we really think that the God who created heaven and earth cannot see what's going on in our lives? Do we really think that this great God of ours does not know the smallest thoughts that go through our minds (**every one of them**)? He says He can so we had better sharpen up on our life styles and repent or our outcome could well be similar to Israel's. None of us can outwit God.

Chapter 11: 2.3

Then he said unto me Son of man these are the men who devise mischief and give wicked counsel in this City.

Which say, it is not near: let us build houses: this City is a cauldron and we are the flesh.

The leaders told Israel that they were like flesh in a cauldron of iron. That Jerusalem was impregnable, that they could be prosperous, build houses, buy more camels, enlarge their dwelling place, send their children to better schools, enjoy better holidays with their friends, get a second 4x4, buy a second home in the sun, invest in stocks and shares, strive for promotion to make it to the top! Who needs God, church or Christianity?

It's funny in a way if it wasn't so tragic; things are not so different from the days of Israel than they are today. Israel's Priests and false prophets told them that they were safely surrounded by iron as it were and this false message made them complacent with a false sense of security. Church leaders today give watered down messages because they want the congregation to "feel" good, rather than speak the truth about the true condition of the church.

But God knew their thoughts and showed them through a mime as Ezekiel lay on his side behind a sheet of iron throwing stones at the drawing of the walls of Jerusalem on the sheet of clay pottery, that the weapons of the enemy would breach the walls. (See Study 3) They said that Ezekiel's prophecies were not true and God had left them, but God said He knew their every thought:

Verse 15 And they shall know that I am the Lord when I shall scatter them among the nations and disperse them in the countries.

Verse 22; 23 Son of man what is that proverb that you have in the land of Israel saying; The days are prolonged and every vision fails?

Verse 23 Tell them therefore Thus says the Lord God I will make this proverb to cease and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel but say to them The days are at hand and the effect of every vision.

We see in verse 22 that Israel turns the words of a longsuffering God into a mocking proverb "*the days are prolonged and every vision fails*".

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Their faith in their God was not built up or encouraged by their Leaders to trust God's word.

All they had to do was look back and remember the times God had given them victory in battle, provided them with water in drought and food in the desert. They had proved God on many occasions but with weak leadership they all followed one another down a path of disbelief.

God called them "*vain visions*" and "*flattering divinations*" and will be shown to be lies. Verse 23 The Lord gives the Prophet a new proverb "*The days are at hand when the true vision will be fulfilled*"

Unless we as His people get to know His word, study it and believe it and not *rely* on Pastors and Leaders and others to tell us or give us their opinions we too could be lulled into the false belief that Jesus is not coming back yet.

I am sorry to mention my Father again but he taught us that the Lord could come back at any time to the point my wife who I was courting then, and a few other young people wondered if we would ever get married at all.

That's over 54 years ago! But I will tell you now that teaching kept all of us walking that straight and narrow path ever looking for His return and ever ready to meet Him. Of course I have wondered "how long" and was Dad right. But if you read your Bible and watch the TV news you will begin to see the pages of the Bible unfold on your screens particularly in today's world.

Also, sorry for another personal story, I have studied the Bible to find out about the Lords return for some years now and I heard a TV preacher say something different to what I had been reading.

Did I switch my belief because the preacher was a TV evangelist? NO WAY. I got my Bible out and studied the subject again asking the Lord to show me the truth. After a couple of days I was convinced I had it right the first time which has been confirmed by many other Bible teachers since.

You see I had to get His word into my spirit just like Ezekiel was told to eat the scroll (Study 2) to get God's word in his spirit I did the same. You must do the same too, if you don't you will have all manor of thoughts in your head many of them false and could well be saying that the Lord's return must have been delayed or He is not coming back yet because Pastor so and so says and you will live accordingly, with doubt in your mind and that's all Satan wants of you...doubt in your mind.

But then just as the Children of Israel who had the same thoughts as we are talking about woke up one morning to find the enemy at the door. You may well wake up one morning to find Jesus has already been and gone, with perhaps some of your family, some of your church friends maybe your wife or husband or your children.

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But it would be too late!

Those people sinners and saints, who say God is not coming back yet, those Pastors and Teachers who “predict” we have plenty of time and the Lord’s return is not yet, miss-lead and delude congregations into a false sense of security. A Pastor I know told us in his sermon we have about 500 years before Christ’s returned! (Isn’t he going to get a shock?)

Whilst none of us know the exact date or time of His return neither did the Children of Israel. They were busy enjoying life ignoring the warning message of Ezekiel, when suddenly the enemy was at the door! **Suddenly!**

Thank God there *are* Pastors and Teachers who do teach the Lord’s imminent return and warn their congregations that they must be ready to meet their Saviour or Maker; Saviour if you have accepted Christ as your personal Saviour and Redeemer, live a Godly life and know that your name is written in the Lambs book of life; ...Maker if you do not know Jesus at all and have rejected the message of Salvation and continue to live as though you can do without God altogether. Just remember 2 seconds after Jesus returns, in the blink of an eye you will know it is too late to repent.

The Children of Israel did exactly that. At the last seconds of the enemy breaking through the walls of Jerusalem they cried out to God but God would not hear them. He will not be played with then or now.

Chapter 13 1-7

Son of man, prophecy against the prophets of Israel that prophecy and say thou to them that prophecy out of their own hearts, Hear the word of the Lord...

Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirits and have seen nothing. O Israel your prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. You have not gone up into the gaps neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.

They have seen vanity and lying divination saying, The Lord said: and The Lord has not sent them and they make others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have you not seen a vain vision and have you not spoken a lying divination whereas you say The Lord said it, albeit I have not spoken?

Personally I do not understand how or why anyone could possibly stand up in church and ‘prophecy’ in the name of the Lord Jehovah and say stuff that is not true but comes out of their own heart. They say personal things that are of no help to people who are under attack from Satan and desperately need to hear the encouraging word of God.

Many of these prophets are visiting speakers because they speak that which God has not given them and then move on to other churches leaving the mess they cause behind for the Pastor to clean up. We have all seen it and heard it and some with a more discerning spirit have had the unfortunate tasks of counseling, praying and helping those through the disappointment and sometimes-spiritual damage these false prophets leave behind.

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God doesn't like them either He calls them foxes in the desert.

Foxes would climb all over the ruins of cities and build their homes there and scavenge for food and God says these prophets were like the foxes finding profit in their own city among their own people taking advantage of their fellow citizen's time of trouble: Preaching that Ezekiel's warnings were not from God, telling them they had plenty of time to enjoy a prosperous life, give generously to my ministry and in so many weeks God will do this or that.

There is a seduction about false prophecy because it tells people what they want to hear when God wants people to hear what they NEED to hear. False prophets are well aware of this and feed on desperate people.

Verse 8, 9

And My hand shall be upon the prophets who see vainly and who divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of My people neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel neither shall they enter into the Land of Israel and you will know that I am the Lord God.

The Judgement of God upon these prophets was that on the day of restoration of Israel which would soon come to pass, these false prophets would not be included, in fact they would have no part in the Church, *the assembly of My people*, people of God *in the writing of the house of Israel* and even the Land of Israel, *neither shall they enter into the Land of Israel* in other words they would loose their souls, and their names would be blotted from God's Book of Life.

I know that comment will upset a few folks who believe that cannot happen but your argument must be with the Word of God not me! In verse 8 God Himself says He is against false teaching: that is 'spoken vanity' that promote 'lies' and God says HE IS AGAINST YOU. My belief is that surely false prophets who lead people saved or not saved astray, away from the path of obedience that leads to God and eternal life cannot be expected to sit with Jesus in His Kingdom. If they can, if they do then all that we are studying about the sins of Israel, the judgement of God upon His *own* people, the false prophets, the need for Ezekiel's warnings to His people to repent is unnecessary and a waste of time. I know this is the Old Testament but all scripture is for our education to lead us to God. Any way I do not expect every reader to agree with everything I write, we must all stand before God and answer to Him for ourselves.

Verse 5

You have not gone up into the gaps neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord

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In battle the walls were often breached causing weak defenses and it was the duty of the Priests and prophets the “spiritual leaders” of the city to stand in the gaps and fight and defend the city for their citizens. A Jewish friend of mine and founder of a Christian TV program that teaches about Jerusalem told me there were about 4000 priests and elders in Jerusalem at any one time so there was a small army of men available to stand in the gap for Israel. They were to fill and repair the gaps as best they could to stop the enemy coming in until the battle was over. Instead of encouraging the people and offering them hope, to repent and turn to God in the time left to them, the false prophets and weak Priests would not stand in the gaps for Israel at all.

Standing in the gap is a very important ministry today. Sometimes people find the enemy hard to fight; maybe they have done well in the battle of sickness, wayward young children of the family, marriage problems, unsaved partner, job loss, business failure and lots more because the enemy will attack from all sides. They may have battled for a long time but they have become tired and battle worn and their faith has weakened. It is at that time they need someone to stand in the gap with them to help fight off the enemy, to encourage and build a stronger faith in Jesus through prayer, intercession and maybe fasting.

The person who stands in the gap must be strong in the Lord committed to the task and one who will not weaken in the battle. Because they stand on behalf of Jesus, these folk are hard to find, often people will say “I will pray for you” but you are never sure that they will. A person recognised to be a ‘gap holder’ if you like, you can have confidence in them that they will walk things through with you.

Many in our church and some in other churches ask my wife and me to stand in the gap and help see them through a problem, more so my wife Pauline. The Lord told her many years ago He wanted her to stand with people who need someone to walk with them through difficult times and she takes that calling very seriously indeed and the Lord knows He can trust her with such a mission. He often wakes her in the early hours and she has to go down stairs and read and pray about what God has put on her heart.

Israel should have had such a ministry from their leaders but they failed miserably. If it is not your calling to stand in the gap for the people in your church why not find someone who has such a heart? Ask The Lord to show you who He wants to take on such an important task. Every church should have responsible people used to a committed prayer life to stand in the gap, to intercede, to be an armour bearer and to bring them and God together through Jesus. Satan is well organised in battle so should the church be.

As The Lord shows us in Ezekiel this is one of the Pastors jobs, but Pastors need support and may find it difficult to do all things well. If you feel a calling from The Lord to do such a ministry that will support your Pastor in such a way and you have prayed long and hard about it, then talk to him. Don’t be hurt if he says no, it is a very special work and sometimes very private, you must be a trustworthy Christian.

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Verse 10

Because they have seduced My people saying Peace and there was no peace and one built up a wall and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.

11. Say to them which daub it with untempered mortar that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower: and you O great hailstones shall fall and a stormy wind shall rend it.

12. Lo, when the wall is fallen shall it not be said unto you Where is the daubing wherewith you have daubed it?

Walls were made of beaten mud mixed with straw pressed hard into moulds or boxes giving a shape and consistency then placed onto the wall built up layer on layer. The sun then baked the mud bricks hard. Verse 11 speaks of an overflowing shower or great hailstones or even a stormy wind could break down the wall or wash it away because it had not been protected by mortar and lime.

If the mortar was mixed with lime it gave a much stronger protection, the storms, wind, hailstones could not prevail against the mortar and the wall was a strong protection for the citizens of the city. If the lime had been left out it was called untempered mortar providing no protection from the elements or indeed the enemy.

The Lord seems to go to great lengths to talk about this untreated mortar and it was obviously important, but what dose it mean?

Pastors and Bible students may well have their own opinion as to what the lime meant to the mortar.

We are dealing with weak Priests whose example to those they are responsible for under God produced a weak, wicked and rebellious congregation. We are highlighting the failure of false prophets telling the congregation all is well and there is peace when there was no peace, telling them what they wanted to hear not what God told them to say.

It is my opinion that the mortar is a type of The Holy Spirit, which is lacking in many of our modern churches today. We have our programmes, our choirs, our choir director, our board of directors, our stained glass windows, the sale of our coloured prayer cloths and healing water, our fancy names for our leaders and Oh so much more to make up our modern 21st century church, but can we really be sure that The Holy Spirit is binding our churches together as God wants?

Our Pastor has done his best to unite the churches in our town by way of Praise, Worship, Prayer and Bible reading together; it really was on his heart. How many churches signed up, how many meetings have we had? NONE. Maybe there is no lime in our town's mortar!

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We have seen many of our modern day churches fall along with their fun parks their swimming complexes, buildings and parkland grounds, all put together with mud and straw packed together with millions of money invested; But when God blows His wind of testing down the houses have fallen.

Verse 14

So I will break down the wall that you have daubed with untempered mortar and bring it down to the ground so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered and it shall fall and you shall be consumed in the midst thereof, and you shall know that I am the Lord

Be sure if we leave The Trinity out of anything we do for God the enemy will have a field day with *our* work.

Now this is my opinion on these verses and my answer to why God has spent six verses on untempered mortar, you may not agree and have another point of view...I respect that totally.

God bless you as you study these pages.