

A GOD WORTHY OF WORSHIP

Ezekiel 1-3

Charles Dickens:

Tale of Two Cities begins:

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”

That epitaph may some day be pronounced over *our* times.

We enjoy advantages of modern civilization.

In spite of modern benefits, our culture is in decline.

Little difference between lifestyle of pagans and we who call ourselves Christians!

George Gallup: *“Never have so many people claimed to be Christians; Never has it made so little difference!”*

Why has our lifestyle become conformed to the world?

Primary cause: *we’ve adopted cheapened concept of God!*

Danger demonstrated by God’s people in O.T.

Israel had visible evidence of God’s presence for 1000 yrs

They got used to having God around;

they began to take Him for granted.

They’re glad to have Him around

–as long as He meets *THEIR* expectations!

God’s people forgot greatness & glory of God.

Swindoll: “Cheap view of God leads to cheap lifestyle!”

Every doctrinal error & every practical failure
can be attributed to mistaken view of God

Paul David Tripp: “They’ve lost their sense of awe!”

God sent Ezekiel to warn God’s people of danger of that attitude.

When people see what God’s about to do, the whole world will realize who God is!

MINISTRY OF THE PROPHETS

–People delight to study prophecy:

“Pastor, I’m glad we’re going to study Ezekiel (Daniel, Revelation).
I love prophecy!”

Function of prophets is often misunderstood.

Purpose is *NOT* to announce future events!

Prophet is ***God’s spokesman***,
to **proclaim God’s Word**

–**announce what God has said.**

When prophet *does* speak about the future, he does it

to motivate his listeners

to change their life

–***NOT to hold a prophecy conference!***

To motivate listeners to change lifestyle.

To call God’s people back to Him!

EZEKIEL’S TIMES

–Key to understanding Israel’s history: **Deut. 28-30**

God promises blessing when His people are committed to Him

–**when they’re faithful;**

He promises hard times when His people rebel and turn away from Him.

History of Israel is filled with *disobedience* to God

In spite of warnings, “God’s people *persist in sin* & idolatry.

They develop *hardened attitude* toward prophets’ warnings

Judgment’s coming –Babylonian captivity = **“the exile”**

Ezekiel was taken captive in 2nd deportation

–11 yr before destruction of Jeru

God calls Ezekiel as spokesman to exiles in Babylon

EZEKIEL'S MESSAGE

For generations, God's people have *defiled* name of Yahweh.

GOD IS ABOUT TO GLORIFY HIS NAME

Repeated theme:

"YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD!"

They're about to find out

Whom they've been playing around with!

God will defeat His people, destroy their city,
and send them to captivity.

Following judgment, He will restore them again.

They'll learn Who He is, because of *all* He'll do:

both judging and restoring

Israel & pagan nations will know Yahweh is Lord!

PROPHET'S CALL 1-3

Intro. to prophet himself.

Ezek historical context 1:1-3

1:1 *"In the 30th yr, in the 4th mo. on the 5th day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened & I saw visions of God."*

As a priest, Ezekiel knew the law well.

He personally observed failure of their spiritual leaders.

Ezek has an encounter with God that changes the course of his life:

Ezekiel's vision of God 1:4-28

Vision introduces the book,

to call attention to seriousness of their failure.

Contains elements which cause us to ask, *“What does it mean?*

Ezekiel tells us what it means!

1:28 “This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord!

Why would God reveal himself like this?

**Ezekiel comes face to face with God’s glory–
glory which has been defiled by God’s people
He sees what God’s people need to see:**

How great their God is!

Israel has been playing games with glorious, powerful,
majestic God!

They need to see God’s glory & be humbled before Him!

Ezekiel responds as God’s people *should* respond:

He falls down and worships!

**Oft repeated sequence–Moses, Isaiah– See God’s glory,
worship Him, realize their unworthiness, God cleanses
and uses them.**

Ezekiel sees God’s glory;

the people have forgotten Him

God is about to send His own reminder,

so they’ll never again forget Who He is!

Ezekiel’s Commission 2-3

His call as a prophet 2:1-3a “He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand up on your feet, and I will speak to you.’²As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. ³He said, ‘Son of man, I am sending you to the

Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me."

God's Spirit gives strength needed to obey & serve God!

Ezekiel's charge:

Say what GOD has said,

whether people like it or not

whether people respond to it or not

There's not a chance they'll pay attention to his warning!

But, when God is done with them,

they'll KNOW God's spokesman,

has been there!

His appropriation of the message 2:8-3:3 *"But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you" ...^{3:3} ...So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth."*

Ezekiel is to eat scroll on which words of judgment are written.

God wants *him* to absorb message he's about to proclaim.

Then take the message to the rebellious people.

It contains sad words against his people.

When he ate it,

he didn't sense a bitter flavor;

it was as "sweet as honey"

God's prophet has to live with tension between bitter and the sweet— judgment is bitter; but the end result is sweet!

The prophet sees judgment, but he doesn't *just* see judgment.

He can see beyond the judgment, because he has seen God.

He has seen God's glory and knows he can trust Him.

This glorious God doesn't make mistakes!

Conclusion: In midst of people that forgot God's glory, God reveals Himself to person who recognizes that He's worthy of worship

Ezekiel recognizes that God's glory obligates us to submit to Him and obey Him.

LESSONS FOR US:

Our God is still just as great as Ezekiel's God!

Ezekiel reminds us of how great God is; how important it is to trust & obey Him ***He hasn't changed!***

We can't take God for granted, without suffering consequences!

If we just worship a god of sticks and stones, made in *our* image, we don't have to worry about him!

If we worship the omnipotent Creator/Sovereign God of the universe, we'd better recognize His greatness, and His right to rule over our lives.

What difference does knowing the God of glory make in our life?

Bottom line: **The Sovereign Lord has spoken!**

As God's people, we must commit ourselves...

to know what He has said. => God's Word

to do whatever He wants us to do.

Do WE take God for granted?

Do we respond appropriately to His glory?

**What would we bring to God as an offering,
if we responded appropriately to His glory?**

When we see God as He is, we will respond with appropriate worship, which will include giving to God all that He deserves—our lives, our talents, our possessions.

That was Ezekiel's response!

How will WE respond?

What offering do we bring to our glorious sovereign Lord?